

[Letter from Woody Guthrie to Archive of American Folk Song, March 14, 1946]

3520 MERMAID AVENUE, Brooklyn, 24, New York, 3-14-46

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The Archives of American Folk Songs, The Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.,

Custod i a an: Dear Sirs:

I deeply interested in getting ahold of all of the lists, catalogs, and so forth, of folk material, songs, ballads, and the likes, which you have on records there in your arch v i ves.

I know that I have seen some fairly large blue books of listings of titles and authors, performers and singers. I do not recall that these had any special name, but I am sure that you know the books that I mean. I am very anxious to obtain a copy of these books.

My reasons are several. I am a folk singer and composer of songs and ballads in the folk vein, writer of stories and articles along the same track, and my name is listed quite a number of times in all of your catalogs. Many people ask of me to give them information about your recordings and I need the books badly in my day to day business. I have taken part in Fourteen albums of Commercial records and have Five albums out under my own name as a guitar player, harmonica blower, and a singer. I have done songs and ballads for the Department of the Interior about the Pacific Northwest, the Columbia River, and the Grand Coulee Dam. And in addition to this have worked on all of the major radio nets, for all sorts of rallies of labor and the people, made up several hundred songs which are on the edge and rim of being published. I have been married twice and once to an Irish

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girl, once to a dancer, and have four children who are going to be troubling me about all of these catalogs and lists before many months go by. I looked at a few of your blue (fairly thick) catalogs the other night at the friend of a house's and could not find any kind of a title on the books, so must take this roundabout way of asking for your help. If they had a title I didn't see it. But maybe you folks go by color down there. Well, the catalogs I am talking a g b out are blue ones, mimeographed and listed and recorded and listed, charted, planned, and executed by the Lomaxes, John A., and Alan, and all of the other Lomaxes. Well as I recollect there was Three Books. If there is any charge for them you can charge me for them, and if not, you hadn't ought to. But I know how Washington is. And I guess that you do, too, being as to how you worked there so long. These books are blue, just mimeograph pages of songs and singers, and I think they are cataloged by states, and then by alphabets and then by relativity and then by the force of laws and numbers.

Maybe you still don't know what books I am trying to get. I am of the opinion that there is nothing in Washington that anybody knows how to get, and maybe that is why Washington has held up as long as it has, but I am not trying to get any more out of Washington than these lists and catalogs of American Folk Songs and who sung them and when. I don't have to be told why because my daughter asked me this question as I carried her on my shoulders to school this morning and I told her that nobody didn't know why. And she is in her why year this year. Everything with her is why. I am in myself in my second whyhood. And if you don't send me these books cod or sol or TS or something, I never will know why.

Your starch supporter Woody Guthrie

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