

Todd-Sonkin 1940 Fieldnotes

MIGRANT WORKERS' SONGS IN CALIFORNIA

by Charles Todd and Robert Sonkin

1940

AFS 4088–4158

TODD-SONKIN MIGRANT CAMP RECORDINGS Field Notes

Arvin Camp, Arvin California July 28, 1940

Locale

The Arvin Migratory Labor Camp was established by the Farm Security Administration in 1937 at Weedpatch California, near Arvin, in the cotton-growing region of the San Joaquin Valley. It was the first of its kind in California, and is notable as the scene of John Steinbeck's "Grapes of Wrath". At the time of these recordings it contained 145 families (650 persons). The camp consists of 106 metal shelters (steel, painted with an aluminum paint said to cut off the sun's rays perceptibly), 98 tents, and 20 adobes. At the peak of the cotton picking the camp population rises to 250 families, or 1200 persons. (Average family is 4.2 persons, said to be below the average for the nation). The adobes are assigned on a selective basis. The occupant must show a record of 6 months employment in agriculture during preceding year. The adobes are permanent homestead — including an acre of ground; we saw flower gardens, etc. Rent is \$8.25 per month. Rent for the shelters or tent platforms is \$.25 per week. The Comm. which chooses the residents of the adobes is a camp comm. The occupants of the adobes are "permanent" — the occupants of the tents and shelters may not stay in the camp for more than a year

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— altho they may move back after having lived elsewhere for a while. Manager, Mr. Fred Ross.

Diary

The machine was set up first in the dance hall, with the help of the Camp Manager, Mr. Fred Ross. A dance was scheduled for the evening (Saturday night), but no orchestra was available. The best fiddler in camp was on guard duty and refused to relinquish his post. Nor could he be persuaded to loan out his fiddle. Numerous attempts were made. but the dance was finally abandoned. The dance hall was a large rectangular building, well-lighted, and cooled by numerous fans blowing through wet burlap ("desert-cooler"). About fifty people, mostly children, gathered about the machine — all very shy, and deeply impressed by the notion that we were "guvment fellers". First attempts to interest them in singing brought dubious results. Most of the songs were what the old folks called "late ones". Finally, for testing, two little girls, Eileen Russell and Erlene Gibson, were persuaded to sing "On the Beach at Bali-Bali" in two part harmony, which was very well done. An attempt was made to record "The Convict and the Rose", but neither child remembered enough of it. At this point, a man interrupted and said, "What you want is some real old Break-down stuff, ain't it, Mister?" We assured him it was, and he promised to bring forth the next day.

We left the hall at ten p.m. after chatting with the campers, and letting it be known what we were after. Promise of some good songs the next day, but noted a general tendency to play-down any ability.

Arrived in camp next morning at 9 a.m. and set up machine in sewing room. Room was attached to the Office Building, and contained flat tables and a large weaving machine. (loom) Good bit of room-tone. Camp was very quiet, and a walk about the grounds showed most of the people lying about on beds, with the doors open— reading papers, playing cards etc. A few radios. Noted several guitars being tuned. Back at the Sewing room

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people were beginning to gather. Talked with a Mr. Russell about the migrant situation. He approved of "Grapes of Wrath", book and movie, and said it was true — every word of it. "We didn't expect no relief from the State — knew it was root-hog or die". Russell told us that one Sherman Eastman, now at Winters, Calif., was the original Tom Joad. Also suggested getting in touch with Mr. Bateman at Visalia Labor Homes for parallel stories — and yarns of the Smoky Mountains. Also man named Daly at Visalia. Favorite expression of Mr. Russell's was "It kicked the dog outa me" — referring to cotton picking.

Went into Sewing room with Charlie Springle from Bryan County, Okla., Tom Johnson, a medicine show artist from Oklahoma City, and Willie Judd. These three sat around the table, and we recorded a few stories. (Record 1 A- 2 and B- 1) All very self-conscious. Johnson a character, as it later developed. Best square dance "caller" in camp. Had dozens of tall-stories about his Uncle Moon and Uncle Ezra. Not a very successful record save for dialect. Wondering about best way to avoid mike fright. Finally put mike in back and had them tell story to Ed who sat opposite and looked very interested. Needs someone who can do that.

About 11 a.m. Nathan Judd wandered in with a guitar. Said he could sing some old ones which he learned back in Arkansas. Very hard to talk with — refused to open his mouth. About twenty years old, good looking and shy. Learned several of his songs from wax disk back in Arkansas. Called his songs mostly "sad songs and love songs". During the first number he had to be cautioned about tapping his foot too violently. It was very difficult to get his words, and he had a tendency to shift away from the Mike. (Record 2 A- 1, 2 B- 1, 2) Nathan's wife a pretty girl, aged 17, with one child. Extremely shy. Joined him later with a nasal soprano. Both sang with poker faces and looked straight ahead of them.

At this point had a struggle with children and their mothers, who wanted records made. Every child was a singing star. Among their offerings were "Dream Boat", "Little Sir Echo". Finally, however, little Estelle Spurlock came forward, and sang a song she learned from Gussie Stone — called "Nine Little Devils (Record 3 B- 1) A yodeling refrain. Estelle was

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9 years old, red hair and freckles. Lots of confidence and grim determination. Looked as though she would topple over backwards, but never missed a line.

As this went on a crowd began to gather in the room, and as we had to turn the fan off for every recording it became very hot. Bob noted that "The folks never seem to wipe the sweat off their faces like we do". True, the women didn't seem to worry over the large beads on their foreheads.

All shyness was disappearing fast. Instruments appeared by magic, and I estimated an audience of about a hundred. Keeping children from tripping over the mike cord was a problem, and at least three babies left their wails on our records. One little boy ran into the mike, but his father caught it and the child at the same time. A public spanking ensued.

Two solemn faced musicians entered, Luther Quinton with Fiddle and Floyd Jones with Guitar. Refused to answer when asked what songs they knew, but I gathered they knew "everything". First number (Record 3 A- 1,2) contained "Grady Watson's Favorite" which I mistook as "Lady Watson's" and was promptly corrected. Both from Oklahoma. Fiddle pretty squeaky. Impossible to get anything beyond music from these two. While they were tuning up, Mr. and Mrs. Trueman of Texas came in and announced that they were the "Texas Gospel Singers", and would like to hear themselves because they were "goin on the air soon". Both Migrants, but a little better dressed. Fake piousness, and somehow a little unwholesome. Mrs. Trueman played the guitar. Very fat. Probably had done a bit of street singing. "Firebrands for Jesus" etc. (Record 4 A- 1, A- 2) The other people seemed to resent them a little. One or two women walked out in noticeable anger. A confident pair, with a semi-professional touch.

Finally Mr. Ross, Camp manager came in with a song which had been written several months ago by an anonymous camper. It had appeared in the Arvin "Tow-Sack Tattler. (Record 5 B- 1). Ross didn't quite know how to do the song, but said it should be spoken to a square dance tune. Quinton and Jones volunteered with "The Wagonner". Made one

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recording, but Ross fell behind the music. His wife suggested another try. Song called "Cotton Fever". This time Tom Johnson joined in with the square dance calls, Fairly good, but Ross is no Okie. The fiddles tried to slow up but got off the beat.

After this was done, Nathan Judd reappeared with his wife and asked to do five more numbers, including one he could keep (a paper disk). They both marched solemnly to the chairs and went to work. Lura, Judd's wife said nothing, and sang as though some one had turned her on. (Record 6 A- 1, 2 B- 1, 2). After listening to "Maple on the Hill", I played Frank Luther recording and we discussed the variation in tunes. The Judds were skeptical of Luther's tune, but Rosetta Spainhard, Lura's mother, spoke up and said that the Luther tune was the "real old 'un". "T'other's a late 'un", she added. This interested me in Mrs. Spainhard and I asked her some questions. Finally gathered that she knew "Barbara Allen", "Little Mohee", and several others. Promised to sing them on Thursday, if she could find someone to play the fiddle. Had them written down somewhere. After some persuasion Mrs. Spainhard and her daughter, Lois, agreed to do "Little Mohee". (Record 5 A- 1) Lois, 25 yrs. old, Said her mother taught it to her about twenty yrs. ago in Kentucky. This was followed by "Three Wishes" which Mrs. Spainhard learned when she was 18. (Record 7 B- 1)

During these recordings, noticed a young man come in with a very ancient guitar on his back, and slip unobtrusively over to the side wall. At the first lull, he came over to me and said, "I'm Homer Pierce, the singin cowboy from way down in Missouri, and I'd like to do a couple of my own tunes for you". He was a small, fairly dirty lad with a black cap on his head pulled down over one eye. Lots of assurance. Said he worked in the cotton fields and had been in camp about two months. Claimed he had sung over the radio. Pierce turned out to be more or less the professional cowboy type, but his own songs were good. (Records 7 A- 1, 2; 8 A- 2, 3, B- 1) Pierce said he came from Southeast Missouri, but knew "Houston, Texas, a whole lot better". Has composed some twenty songs, "made up about most anything that comes to mind"... "Used to pick up as much as five dollars a

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night around the beer-halls". Learned to play a violin in two days — "pick up most any old instrument and play 'er". He reminded me very much of Woody Guthrie.

The final recording was made by Floyd Jones. He came up to me just as I was about to put up the machine and said he could play a harp. I jumped at that, and asked him where he kept it. "Right here", he said, and reached in his pocket. The "harp" was a harmonica — which he played with the greatest of ease. Very serious about his talent. Previously noted as a guitar player. His piece was "She ain't that Kind" (Record 8 A- 1)

Final visitor was a Mr. Whitworth who claims to be a music teacher. Knew all the old songs he said, and would have someone to sing them by Thursday. Asked me to bring some cheap disks along which he could buy. That presents one of the gravest problems of the whole project. Everyone wants to possess a record.

Arvin FSA Camp, Arvin, California.

August 1, 1940

Arrived in camp at three p.m., and set up equipment in Camp library. The Librarian left us in charge of the building for the rest of the day. She is a W.P.A. librarian ("I think these camps are wonderful — never believed it before"); her hours are from two to eight each day except Sunday. The library is a branch of the Wakersfield library. "Plenty of books— now have more than we know what to do with. So long as we have enough Western stories they're satisfied. There are just a few good readers in camp" (Librarian)

Most of the men were out in the field chopping grapes but plenty of women around. First visitors were Lois Judd, her Mother, Mrs. Spainhard, and Nathan — plus the two babies. Mrs. Judd offered to read her poem "Back to Arkansas". She had been "studying it up" for us. The poem first appeared in the Arvin Camp paper — "The Tow-Sack Tattler". Written in Sept., 1939. Asked her if she really wanted to go back to Arkansas. Reply: "Not now — I did then....We went back". (Record 9 B- 1). (Went back for 4 mos.) From Imo, Ark.

Library of Congress

At the request of a young man, Nathan on a borrowed guitar for which he had to find a certain clamp (his own had broken string — much discussion over how much a new one cost) sang “Wild Cat Woman and Tom — Cat Man” (9 B- 2). Couldn't get words.

Finally brought Mrs. Spainhard and Lois around to “Barbara Allen”. Discussion “Which is oldest tune;”. First recording attempt bad — machine speeded up — adjusted roller and made tests. (Record 9 A) She sang her “latest tune”. On record ten we got the oldest tune which she first heard twenty years ago in Asphalt, Ky. Lois preferred later tune, but liked this one “very well”. Nathan tried to join with guitar but couldn't get started. On record 10 B, we got the later version again — heard over the radio in Indiana. (preferred). On ten B Mrs. Spainhard suddenly went into another version. (Learned at same time — “I imagine one is as old as another” — very lively, mountain style — slightly modal.

Mr. Whitworth and family from Clinton, Ark. were called on in Unit 117. Mr. Whitworth had asked us to call on our last visit. Sprawled on the grass for a while with a dog, two boys, a guitar and Mr. Whitworth. A comfortable rocker outside the tent. Mrs. Whitworth stayed inside because she was “too dirty to be seen”. We talked to her through the screen. Went out and got Scarborough and began a conversation about old ballads. She remembered many of them — including “Pretty Polly”, and others. Whitworth said he had spent a lot of time and money on his own voice. A nice looking couple, with a little more refinement than some others. W. in blue trousers, and good shoes. After a long talk, they agreed to come over. Mrs. Whitworth appeared later in very clean blue sacks, with her hair well done, and looking about ten years younger than when we first saw her. Zelmer Ward came along with his guitar (Mr. W. had been coaching Zelmer for the occasion.)

Record 11...The first song was “The Wildwood Flower”, with Zelmer doing a fine accompaniment. This she learned from a Carter family record. During recording the Whitworth little boy laid on the table top, running a fever. Had stepped on a bur. Sonkin baffled by words to “Wildwood Flower” — ex. “I twined with my mangles and wavy black hair”. This was probably “I toyed with 2 Whitworth's Clinton, Ark. my bangles and waving

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red hair". This was followed by "Storms are on the Ocean". Another Carter Family song. On 11 B Mrs. Whitworth sang the "Santa Barbara Earthquake". Zelmer "pickin guitar". Learned in Arkansas Bottom about 15 years ago. On remaining space Mr. Whitworth gave us a few stanzas of "Stew Ball". (very different from Leadbelly's version. "Santa Barbara Earthquake" recorded by Southern Music Pub. Co. many years ago.

Record 12

Mrs. Whitworth sang "The True Sweetheart". She noticed Scarsborough's version, and was reminded of this one. "Learned from Mother when I was a little child". On A2, Mr. Whitworth and Zelmer offered two verses of "Sweet Betsy from Pike", On A 3 — "My Horses Ain't hungry" sung by Zelmer. Mrs. Whitworth had mentioned knowing this earlier.

B1 is a recording of an original poem by Mrs. Chapin. She came from Marshall, Arkansas, and arrived "a year this June" with seven cents. Came originally from Missouri. Wanted to be a school teacher. Had also lived in Iowa. Biography is in poem. Appeared In Sept. 29 issue 1939 of Tow-Sack Tattler. "I'm always writing some little old verses whenever we're off on a trip or anything, an' I Just wrote this down the last minute, an they asked me to let em print it in the Camp paper. Didn't like Cal. when we first came, but "changed my mind a lot since first came". "Landed here with just seven cents so we had to stay. "Cant live on scenery back in Ark."

Record 13.

Roy Carter, day guard, being sent to Firebaugh on 3 Whitworth's Clinton, Ark. Aug. 5, brought in the "Mangrum" trio. Carter said his father had been a "singing teacher". Used to have singing classes in their home. The "Trio" consisted of Gladys, 16; Lois, 13; and Monroe, 9 — from Okla. Monroe a little boy, very serious about his part. After this no., Carter and Whitworth whipped up enthusiasm for a group sing. see introduction to B. Included trio, Mr. and Mrs. Whitworth, and Carter doing high tenor. "Where we'll never grow old". The whole bunch very proud of the record. Carter's father used to be a singing

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teacher. Had singing classes in old home. No kin to Carter family. (Couldn't see what the Carter Family has that the Mangrum Kids, say, don't have).

Record 14

We still felt that something better could be done with "Cotton Fever". Mr. Ross had confessed (not for publication) to having written it. (Also wrote "As the Feller Sez" and a poem called "Migrant Boy" — in answer to P.T.A. remarks. Made one for Ross himself. Used Quinten and Jones again for music. Had musicians fade back at end of song.

A2 — Quinten and Jones did a square dance tune called "Billy in the Low Ground". Both refused to admit that they knew any tunes — had to be pried.

B1 — Mr. Ross sang "Waco Girl". Cf. "Wexford Girl", "Knoxville Girl". He insisted on being alone, so the Judds etc. went out and waited at the window. Mr. Ross learned Waco girl from a little girl in Indio camp. Dorothy Ledford

DOROTHY LEDFORD. Sang it from her text. See copy in notes. On B- 1 of the next record Lois Judd gave us her version of the 4 Whitworth's Clinton Ark. same ballad. Called it "Pearl Bryant", and said it was true story... "P.B". born in Frankfort, Ky. and killed by a man named Scott Jackson who carried her head around in a suitcase. (song omits this detail). This was told in an old book which Lois had read.

Record 15 (see above for B.) A- 1 is a poem by Mrs. Spainhard about cleaning up the Camp. Appeared Oct. 28, '39. "Lots of confusion in camp, you know, big bunch like there is here, kinda fussin around — had to clean up utility buildings and things like that."
A- 2 "DYING GIRL'S MESSAGE". Also gave us texts for several songs which were not recorded.

Record 16 WABASH CANNON BALL. (16 A- 1) "RAILROAD SONG". Text borrowed from woman in camp. Billy Jane Thompson, 12, Jonesboro, Ark., Willodean Judd, 12, from

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Russelville, Ark., and Virginia Wright, 13, from Lubbock, Texas. A- 2 — SPARKLING BLUE EYES. (Carter Family)

B. Drove over to Adobe 10 with machine to call on Gussie and Earl Stone. Two room house, with sleeping porch. Very clean and well furnished. Motto and poem about Mother on wall. Gussie, 18, was sitting on bed pouring over a road map. Had a difficult time talking with her. "Didn't know any songs — hadn't played since she got married four months ago". Gussie belongs to Ward family. This family, Harrison, Father, Zelmer, lives near a packing plant in Lamont. Mail delivered at Camp. Whole family except Mother sings. Mother (Ma Joad type) said she had been busy working so that the others could sing.

Sussie sang "Goin Down the Road Feeling Bad" with great spirit. 5 Whitworth's Clinton Ark. After half hour of persuading we got one more number — "Blue Eyes" (16 B- 2). Among other things, she explained that she was used to singing with her sister, and could sing alone. She is the one who gave the Spurlock girl the "Nine Little Devils" which she had learned in Arkansas.

Incidental

Fire call in afternoon up on the ridge, sixty-five men signed up. Got 30 cents per hour. One man went who had just put in a ten hour day.

Just as we left, a little boy broke his arm by falling off a a fence. Little towhead. Ross rushed out and picked him up. Carried to a car which wouldn't start. Mother became hysterical. Kid bit his lip and turned on her "Aw, shet up Maw...I ain't never hurt a bit.... Shet up, Maw." From then on not a word or tear from him. Arm broken squarely at the wrist. Father finally found a car that started and took him 16 miles to Bakersfield Hospital. Same boy who had been whipped the day before by his father — after which Ross had called father to task and threatened to send him to Labor Camp at Weedpatch. "Listen Ross, this is my kid!" etc.

Library of Congress

Shafter FSA Camp 8/3/40

We arrived at the Shafter Farm Workers Community at 3 p.m. The clerk on duty in the office (Mr. Riedel) directed us to the Camp store to find Mr. Dewey Rogers, assistant camp manager (title?) in charge of the camp during Mr. Ray Mork's absence on vacation (which started this same morning).

The store is a new, very neat building (the store in construction at Arvin will be of the same type). According to the wife of the store manager, the blueprints from the FSA office were "upside down". They indicated a slope to the roof which was obviously slanting in the wrong direction. The camp carpenter took it upon himself to change the plans, and the store at Arvin will be built according to this reversed scheme, too.

Dewey Rogers: heavy-set, rapid speech, eager to help. Took us first, to the recreation hall where Mrs. Pond and her daughter-in-law, Vernie Westfall, were conducting a play hour for the children. Weekly and Sat., 3:30 to 4:30 (this in addition to the WPA nursery school). Children were fed 2 meals per day at nursery. Mr. Pond, nephew of Major Pond, lecture bureau, was vice-chairman of the camp council and chairman of the finance committee. Explained that the council had appropriated money to provide candy for the children at the conclusion of the play hour.

To the library where we set up our machine. Dewey Rogers brought around O. C. ("Cotton") Davis, day guard of the camp. 2 Shafter FSA Camp Cotton Davis: 35, extroverted, full of gags and witty sayings. On being introduced said, in response to conventional "How are you?" : Here by being careful.

Played for Rogers and Davis a few of the records made at Arvin. Both especially pleased with the recording of Fred Ross, "Cotton Fever". Rogers (reflectively), "There's plenty of truth in that...16 bits a hundredweight..."

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Shafter Camp:

Larger than Arvin but has been decreasing in population since the potato harvest. At this times 124 families, (577 persons). Capacity 240 families, 245 counting 2 "isolation". These are distributed as follows:

40 labor homes

4 metal shelters

245 tent platforms

Population further decreased at time of our visit by absence of large numbers of men who were off fighting a forest fire "on the ridge". We saw a large Greyhound Bus taking some of the men off. 51 had gone the day before we arrived; 60 more had been called for today. (These figures may not be accurate: we heard several different sets of figures).

During our visit several persons told us how unfortunate they thought it was that we had not been able to come earlier when there was more "talent" in the camp: e.g. the Luker girls, etc. We felt, however, that there was 3 Shafter FSA Camp a great deal of talent in the camp: many skilled guitar-pickers, and at least a few good sources of folk-material.

After playing a few records for Rogers and Davis, we returned to the nursery thinking that we might record some of the children's games and stories. However, the games in progress were large group games and did not seem to end themselves to recording. One game, "New Orleans", in which the children were divided into two groups on opposite sides of the hall, interested us for a while. One group walked across the hall en masse to the other; after some sort of guessing routine had been run thru the visiting group turned and fled back to its side of the hall with the other side in pursuit. With uncanny regularity, each time the smoke of the flight had cleared away, one was able to see two or three of the smaller children who had been slightly trampled in the rush. At four thirty the candy was

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distributed: Mr. Pond ran out of candy, and had to run over the store for reinforcements. A total of 94 children were thus regaled. It seemed to us that many of them appeared at the moment of the candy distribution without having earned their reward thru participation in the games.

Visited the Davis home: metal shelter 4. Mrs. Davis, 30, suffering at the time of our visit with a sprained back. Family: one boy(15) and 3 girls. Davis family came from town between Oklahoma City and Shawnee. Here 3 years. Arrived in California in Feb. Cotton refused to take the 4 Shafter FSA Camp grant checks which were available. Feeling of independence outraged. Had worked for 8 years "off and on" for the Oklahoma Gas and Electric Co., and had made good money. Finally (in June of the year of his arrival) got job in the camp and has been here since. In later conversations Cotton revealed that he was dissatisfied with pay he was getting (\$80/mo.). Felt that the work he was doing in the camp entitled him to more money. Finally, in a burst of confidence, and swearing us to secrecy, revealed that he had been "selected" from a list of 500 applicants for a job with the Price blanket company: 20% commissions, etc. He seemed to think that this would be a step towards independence.

With Davis to look for Lloyd Stalcup, 14 year old boy who has written an original song about the migrants. Boy not at home: his mother, when Davis told her who we were and what we were interested in, asked: "Are you a striking outfit? If you are, we won't have nothing to do with you." She was easily placated and promised to send the boy around in the evening.

Conversation with Davis on the way back to camp (and over a bottle of beer) : indicated that the union had not been very successful in organizing in the Shafter Camp. Organizers were heels; stupid planning, etc. Still, camp has bad name with some of the growers; occasionally they refuse to hire men who live in the govt. camp.

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Shafter FSA Camp 7:30 p.m. Machine set up in the recreation hall. Started off by playing (audience 50–75) some of the songs recorded in Arvin. Explained what we were looking for. Audience gradually warmed up. Two women unconcernedly nursed their babies in the front row. In effort to win audience, even conducted short community sing (Record 17 A- 1 —Songs: “Playmates”). Classic performance.

17 A- 2 — Lloyd Stalcup. 14, mature face. Born Padukah, Texas. Age of 8 to Amarillo. Family to California for his brother's health (had asthma: now completely recovered: “you'd never know he had it to look at him”). Here 2 years. Sang original song: “Cotton Picker's Song”. Tune adopted from the theme song of the Rambling Cowboys, a radio group in Texas.

17 A- 3 — Lloyd Stalcup. A Stuttering Song. Learned it from a man in East Texas. Heard him sing it 2 or 3 times and learned it.

Lloyd's performances much appreciated by the audience. Our next performers were:

17 B- 1 — “East Virginia Blues”. Sung by Ernest Alston (15) from Russelville. Ark., here 1 mo. (before that 6 mos. in Arizona; Hardin Puice. 18, from Wagoner Co., Oklahoma, here 4 mos. They had learned this song from a Carter Family Record.

17 B- 2: Alston (guitar), Price (“harp”), : “CARELESS LOVE”.

17 B- 3; Spanish Two-step (same combination).

6

Shafter FSA Camp

We had given Harding 50 cents to run into town and get himself a new harp. Harding: very gangling boy; Ernie: better-looking, looked much older than 15. Ernie during all of our visit

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followed us around with his guitar offering to sing for us and trying to think of songs he could do for us.

Additional Notes — Shafter Page 1

Mr. Pond a nephew of Major Pond, founder of lecture bureau. Had clippings referring to famous uncle's birthplace in Wisconsin. Very proud. Major Pond had given him autographed "first" of "Huckleberry Finn". Wondered how much it would bring. Cotton Davis joined discussion and took us over to view "first" edition of Collected Poems by Scott. An American edition — about 1840 — with title page missing. Worthless, but explained that it had value as a "personal" thing. Cotton had consulted Bakersfield library, and obtained address of Los Angeles store. Also had Martin Tupper Proverbs.

Margaret Treat's Ballad Book. Shafter FSA CAMP

List of titles

1—CAN THE CIRCLE BE UNBROKEN

2—MAY I SLEEP IN YOU BARN

3—BLUE EYES

4—MY HOME IN MONTANA

5—THE GREAT SPECKLED BIRD

6—PENNIES FROM HEAVEN

7—RINFRO VALLEY

8—MAPLE ON THE HILL

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9-WABASH CANNON BALL

10-OLD FAITHFUL

11-SOUTH OF THE BORDER

12-ROLL OUT THE BARREL

13-NOBODYS DARLIN BUT MINE

14-EL RANCHO GRANDE

15-TWENTY ONE YEARS

16-ALL AROUND THE WATER TANK

17-BROTHER JACK

18-COWBOY JACK

19-THERE'S MORE PRETTY GIRLS THAN ONE

20-IT MAKES NO DIFFERENCE NOW

21-OUT ON THE TEXAS PLAINS

22-I'M JUST HERE TO GET MY BABY OUT OF JAIL

23-A LETTER FROM HOME SWEET HOME

24-DADDY AND HOME

25-WHEN ITS LAMP LIGHTING TIME IN THE VALLEY

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26-I WONDER IF YOU FEEL THE WAY I DO.

27-I WANT TO BE A COWBOY'S SWEETHEART

7

Shafter FSA Camp

By this time Margaret Treat, age 11, felt sufficiently bold to sing us the song she had promised. With the ubiquitous Ernie Alston playing the guitar accompaniment she sang "The Great Speckled Bird." Margaret, like many of the other migrants, keeps a "ballet book". In this she records the "ballets" (i.e., the words) of songs she is learning. We borrowed Margaret's ballet book later in the evening, and the following day copied out a text of the Wabash Cannonball which differs interestingly from that sung by the Mangrum Trio in Arvin. We also copied out the titles of the songs in her book. See this list.

The Great Speckled Bird (Record 18- A1) is one of the songs which Margaret has learned recently. As a matter of fact, she has learned it since her arrival in the camp.

Ernie Alston's parents are dead. He is here with his brother. He has been playing the guitar for about six months. He picked up his guitar for three dollars. He is from Russellville, Ark.

Other songs recorded that evening were by Mrs. Vernie Westfall, from Muskogee, Oklahoma, wife of L. D. Westfall (son of Mrs. Pond). Vernie (brought around by Mr. Westfall) recorded "Foggy Mountain Top" (18 A- 2), "Old Gray Beard a-Shaking" (18 B- 1), and the "Wabash Cannonball" (18 B- 2). The Westfalls and the Ponds are from Muskogee, Oklahoma. They represent, it seemed to us, a kind of more or less self-chosen intellectual aristocracy in the camp. Mr. Pond, as we were to discover at the 8 Shafter FSA Camp council meeting later, has a fine working knowledge of parliamentary law, and a certain natural dignity which enabled him to conduct the meeting of the council with great skill. Mrs. Pond, a rather nervous exophthalmic-goiter type, is very enthusiastic about the work

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she (and her rather reluctant daughter-in-law?) have recently started with the children of the camp. There is, however, a certain self-consciousness about the way she speaks of wanting to help the “poor, underprivileged kiddies”. We will always remember the pathetically grotesque figure she made that afternoon in the play group her arms stretched high above her head, as she tried to get the attention of the children for the game “New Orleans”. Mr. Westfall, editor of the camp paper (*Covered Wagon News*) — for which Job he gets \$5 a week — has a penchant for drawings of nude and semi-nude females which he stencils on the pages of the newspaper and which show thru the mimeographed text like a watermark. The following afternoon, when we visited the newspaper office, and Mr. Westfall was going thru some back numbers of the papers, a photograph fell out which he palmed quickly. Of these pictures more later (see report of the council meeting). Summing up the Ponds-Westfalls: they seem to represent the more self-consciously self-respecting element of the community. Thru their positions on the council, newspaper, etc., they are a group which is definitely “in”, (Both Mrs. Pond and Mrs. Westfall smoke, rolling their own). They smoke quite openly.

As the evening ended and the group broke up, and we were standing around talking, two young girls stopped to tell 9 Shafter FSA Camp us about their mother and the many lovely songs she knew. The mother, Mrs.. Mary Sullivan, was very modest but promised to sing for us the next day.

10

Shafter FSA Camp

Later, we set up the machine in the ironing room of the camp. Ernest Alston recorded a parlor version of 20B1 —I COME IN THE OTHER NIGHT AS DRUNK AS I COULD BE. Cotton Davis, who had been acting all along as our protector and special assistant (he understood exactly what we were after and, by God, was going to see that we got it), brought around Lloyd (“Red”) Harmon, taking him away from washing clothes.

Library of Congress

20B2 — CHICKEN REEL. Red Harmon, guitar; Willard Brewer, fiddle. Both of these men are from Oklahoma. Brewer has been here since 1932. He plays for the Old Folks Dance on Tuesdays. He explained that before coming here he had played the old tunes for a long time. Harmon has been here for 16 months. We later met Mrs. Harmon, carrying around a three weeks old infant (Caesarian birth according to Harmon). Harmon seemed unusually solicitous about her health. (We surprised Cotton Davis in a similar expression of concern about his wife's health. I think the expression he used was "How are you feeling, old girl?" This was an aside and was not intended to be overheard by the others present. Expressions of tender feeling seemed to be rare).

21A1 — RAGTIME ANNIE. Harmon and Brewer

21A2 — Blank test recording.

21A3 — THE WAGGONER. Harmon and Brewer.

21B1 — THE SHANGHAI. Sung by Willard Brewer, playing his own guitar accompaniment. This song he insists he learned in church one night. Brewer has a very smooth, professional 11 Shafter FSA Camp from one Jack Munsey over station KFOX in Long Beach.

21B2 — JOHNNY. Sung by Willard Brewer, playing his own guitar accompaniment. This song he insists he learned in church one night. Brewer has a very smooth, professional style; he sings with a great deal of spirit (although quiet); intensity of feeling (if such words are not too strong when applied to humorous songs of the nature of "The Shanghai" and "Johnny").

Around this time we knocked off for lunch. On the way back to the camp we stopped off at Lloyd Stalcup's place to pick him up and bring him back to the camp with us. With Lloyd

Library of Congress

were his brother John (who had asthma!) and Cotton Davis' boy Richard. The three boys belong to the same scout troop.

Back in the ironing room. Went down to Mrs. Sullivan's tent to call for her. Found her daughters busy arranging her hair.

Mrs. Mary Sullivan comes from near Warm Springs, Texas. She has been in California for three years. She is one of the recreation leaders in the camp (i.e., WPA), in charge of arts and crafts. Last year she went up to (Bakersfield?) once a week to attend classes in arts and crafts. Mrs. Sullivan is one of the few Okie women we saw who look younger than they really are. She is the mother of a very large family, but her figure is neat, 12 Shafter FSA Camp and has generally youthful appearance.

22A — LLOYD BATEMAN. Sung by Mrs. Mary Sullivan. Mrs. S. sings this song with great emotion. It was this song that her daughters had told us about, and had indicated they considered one of her best songs. At several points in the song she almost broke down, sniffing audibly. Her daughters giggled at this, but not, we felt, irreverently; rather thru a kind of embarrassment (cf. the youngster with the broken arm at Arvin: it was the idea of his mother making a kind of spectacle of herself that troubled him). The other members of the audience standing around as we worked were deeply moved by the song.

22B1 — Conclusion of LLOYD BATEMAN. Mrs. Sullivan thinks of her songs as complete things, and she was disappointed that there had not been room on one side of the record to catch the whole song. In general we found that these folk-singers like to finish a song once they have started it. Mrs. Sullivan's style of singing we thought of as singularly pure: she uses occasionally little slides and breaks in the voice which add to the pathos of the song. These breaks are not to be thought of as occurring haphazardly, but are to be considered part of the tune; for, whenever Mrs. S. repeats these tunes, or sings the same stanzas again, the breaks occur in almost exactly the same places. All of Mrs. Sullivan's songs were learned when she was quite small.

Library of Congress

22B2 — THE GROUNDHOC SUnG and played by our eager friend 13 Shafter FSA Camp Ernie Alston. Partly to give Ernie a chance to get the song off his chest, partly to give Mrs. Sullivan a breathing spell after her long song. Ernie says he learned this song from a boy in Ark.

23A — Mrs Sullivan, CUSTOM'S (Sic) LAST CHARGE. For this song Red Harmon picked an accompaniment. Several of our recordings of Mrs. Sullivan have guitar accompaniments by Harmon or one of the other guitar pickers in the camp. The problem of finding a guitar picker to accompany her was a difficult one. The people seemed to think that the guitar was a necessity, or at least a desirable complement to the song. Since so many of Mrs. S.'s songs have old tunes, in minor mood, the guitar accompaniment was difficult. One of our records has Mrs. Sullivan singing in one key and Red Harmon playing in another, both apparently perfectly aware of the discrepancy, but both doggedly determined to finish the song once they had started it. The result is appalling. We found that we preferred Mrs. Sullivan's songs when they were unaccompanied. The guitar accompaniments were almost always imperfect, and in a style less pure than the singing. Mrs. Sullivan's voice, alone, in some of her songs, is very moving.

23B1 — conclusion of CUSTOM'S LAST CHARGE.

23B2 — Lloyd Stalcup: TEXAS GIRL. Ernest Alston, guitar. For some reason or other Lloyd did not live up to the expectations we had of him. After the brilliant performance of the of the Cotton Pickers Song we expected better material 14 Shafter FSA Camp from him. This song, The Texas Girl, he said he had learned from a Gene Autry record. It is possible that even the Cotton-Picker's Song is less original than we think it is, and follows rather closely the pattern of the song from which the tune is borrowed. But even if this is true, it does not take away from the achievement which the song represents as a topical composition by a fourteen-year old child.

Library of Congress

By this time the ironing room, and the doorway to it, were fairly full of people, watching and listening, and anxious to perform. Cotton Davis corralled and brought in to us:

Merle Lovell. Handsome, middle twenties; rather hysterical laugh. As soon as he came into the room he squatted down with his back to the wall and, a borrowed guitar in his hands, began improvising. Squatted down beside him: We have found that squatting with these people helps to build up their trust in us! Lovell was in a bad way, still half asleep he informed us after a big night (Sat.). (Comes from East Oklahoma)

24A1: Merle Lovell: I RODE SOUTHERN? I RODE L. M. Learned this song from a record of Homer Cowhand (?).

24A2 — OKLAHOMA (Merle Lovell). Learned this song from a Bob Wills record.

15

Shafter FSA Camp

24B1 — MONEY AIN'T NO USE ANYWAY — Merle Lovell. From a Gene Autry record! It became apparent that Merle Lovell's repertoire is built up largely of songs learned from the radio and phonograph records. But these songs were very well received by his audience. Lovell, it seems, occasionally goes the rounds of the bar-rooms singing and playing for what he can pick up.

25B2 — THE WILD AND WOOLY WEST — Merle Lovell. This song he thought was a real old one. At any rate he could not recall any record from which he had learned it. He may, however, have sensed a certain disappointment on our part at the revelation that all of his songs came from records or the radio, for it seemed that from now on his songs were old ones, and he could no longer recall where he had first learned them.

25A — SHORTIE ALLEN. — (First name: Vernon?) Small man, (Hope, Ark...Left in 1934 — back twice for visits) indeterminate age, small, red-lidded eyes almost always half shut,

Library of Congress

upper front teeth capped with a kind of tarnished silver metal. One of the camp characters. Known as a teller of tall tales. "He's told those stories so long, he's come to believe them himself." Sometimes gets mad if people don't believe him, according to the others. This record is a medley of three of the stories he is proudest of. At least the first of these (rattlesnake-whiskey — frog story) we recognized as not being original. (Learned from the radio?!) But Shortie always told them with gusto, and they were thoroughly appreciated by the men around. Shortie apparently 16 Shafter FSA Camp is content to play the clown for the others. Nothing like that about his wife, who at the council meeting went to bat for her unit's washing machine with so much energy and intelligence.

Cotton Davis busy rounding up more talent for us:

25B. THE HIGHWAY HOBO. Sung and played by Noel Westbrook. From Gilboa, Texas. Not from the camp, but from a ranch nearby. Doesn't remember when he first learned this song: has known it a long time. The sound of a passing freight train appears on this record.

26B1 — HILLBILLY GAL. Sung and played by Duke. (Willard is his first name but nobody uses it). From Little Rock, Arkansas. Came here for his health about 4 years ago. Likes it here but would go back. Not from the camp, either: is "chief cook and bottle washer" on a ranch at Wasco. Learned this song after hearing it once at an amateur night at Porterville here.

Finally Cotton Davis himself sang two songs he had been promising us for a long time. As an accompanist he would have no one but Red Harmon. After rehearsing with him for a while he gave us:

26A1 — BOLD JACK DONOHUE. O.C. Davis (Red Harmon, guitar). "This is the first time I ever sung that that I wasn't two-thirds drunk." He learned it in South McAllister(?) and I wasn't in the penitentiary."

Library of Congress

17

Shafter FSA Camp

26B2 — JOHN HOLLY. O.C. Davis (Red Harmon). Cotton is very proud of his memory: he hadn't sung these songs thru for ten years. Is a good showman; extroverted, likes to perform, enjoys applause, takes his singing seriously.

27A — SQUARE DANCE (TUNE: SALLY GOODIN). Caller, Walker King; Fiddle, Willard Brewer; guitar, Red Harmon.

Dance with calls ("Figure 8"). Some of the calls:

Round up 8 and go circle south Everybody wind Rt. left the old left hand Go rt. away around.

Watch you partner watch her close When you meet her go double(dosie?) dos. Once and a half and the other half too...

27B — Original composition "ALL ABOUT THE CAMP" by Mrs. Pond, read by her son L. D. Westfall. Text had appeared in the camp paper. Mrs. Pond didn't want to read it, because it was supposed to be spoken by a man. Got her son to do it, who did not do an especially good job of it. As he read, Mrs. Pond, who apparently knows her compositions by heart moved her lips, saying the words to herself. She gave him instructions about reading it, too: the mosquitoes are supposed to say "cuzzen", with a very buzzing onomatopoeic effect. Got this recording after the council meeting 18 Shafter FSA Camp had adjourned.

27B2 — Shorty Allen with a song he had studied up for us: MADAM I HAVE A VERY FINE FARM.

Library of Congress

In the Davis house. Metal shelter #14, Present: Mr. and Mrs. Davis, Mr. and Mrs. Sullivan, Mrs. Robertson, etc., etc. About a dozen children. Many outside.

28A1, 28A2. Conversation, leading up to:

28A3 — A TRAVELER'S LINE. An original song about the camp sung by Mrs. Mary Sullivan. (From near Warm Springs, Texas; here 3 years). Fluctuations in volume may appear a/c her rocking back and forth in chair. Freight train appears at end of record. Had no title, but after thinking, Mrs. S. wrote out title above.

28B — PRETTY FAIR MAID. Sung by Mrs. Sullivan. Has known it since she was nine. (Noise of tin can outside — dog pulling his chain). Mrs. Robertson said she remembered her mother singing it — “it must be an old one”.

29A1 — A Cowboy Song (no title). Sung by O. C. Davis, Red Harmon playing guitar. Cotton Davis pretends to be very nonchalant about his singing but really was rather vain: insisted on having Red Harmon to play accompaniment, etc. In this song he left out a few words and was very much upset.

29A2 — MY MOTHER-IN-LAW. Sung by Mrs. Sullivan.

Shafter FSA Camp

29B. LITTLE JOE THE WRANGLER. Sung by Mrs. Sullivan. (Dog barking outside.) There is also a song about Little-Joe-the-Wrangler's Lister Nell — about how she goes to the range to find him and finds him dead. Mrs. S. doesn't know it, however.

30A — WEALTHY OLD FARMER. Mrs. Sullivan, Red Harmon playing guitar. The two performers are in two different keys; they were both perfectly aware of what was happening, but didn't know what to do about it; they didn't care to stop in the middle of the recording and start all over again, and so they go grimly thru to the end of the record.

Library of Congress

30B1 — WEALTHY OLD FARMER (concluded). For this part of the song, Mrs. Sullivan and Red are closer to-gether in key.

30B2 — I'M RIDING THE BLINDS TO THE CALL OF THE PINES. Sung by Merle Lovell (with guitar). Goes without pause into

DEEP ELLUM BLUES. Name from a street in Dallas, Texas). (Merle thought we ought to try to get around to Button Willow where there is a county camp. Some good guitars there).

31A1 — Conversation in O.C. Davis' shelter:

...Chitterlin's meat after the grease is rendered out.

...I beg your pardon. That ain't right. Chitterlin' is a hog or beef's entrail.

Shafter FSA Camp

...That's what it is.

This leads into Merle Lovell's songs: DISAPPOINTED IN LOVE-followed by WHEN IT'S CHITTERLIN'-COOKIN' TIME IN CHEATHAM COUNTY:

31A2 — WHEN THE BLOOM IS ON THE SAGE. Merle Lovell.

31A3 — Conversation about place names.

31B1 — SHADY GROVE. Sung by Vernie Westfall; Merle Lovell, guitar.

31B2 — Conversation filling out record. Lovell picking guitar, etc.

8/5/40. Shafter. In Arts and Crafts Shed.

Library of Congress

32A1 — THE LATEST SONG HIT TO THE FARM RELIEF BOARD. An original poem on the relief situation, read by the author, Mr. Nichols. Nichols from Central Oklahoma.... (When did you say you wrote this?) Back in '38....We got a little streak of hard luck, being us all...trying to get this relief, so I heard so much about...all this stuff going on, so I Just sat down and wrote...this out....Would you like to hear it?

Hello, Mr. Relief Man, how's uncle serving You? With all this farm relief gives you lots to do. Such as, how long have you been here, brother? What brings you here today? And the many more questions that's much too numerous for me to say. But we can't help you, bud, for you've been here too long Unless you will sign a statement that you will be sent back home. It seems that you've gotta have you way, either that or bust. But all that line you're handing out is just a song to us. So that's why we say it's the greatest song hit, it's all ago today So if you will hand me my beans and flour, I'll be on my way.

8/5/40Shafter. In Arts and Crafts Shed.

32A2 — OUR MOTHERS. An original poem by Mrs. Flora Robertson. Set to a tune and sung by Mrs. Sullivan. This involved rearranging some of the words, etc. The ladies had apparently worked together on this very hard. (Written in memory of Mrs. R's mother: Mrs. Rebecca Chapman).

32 B — Mrs. Flora Robertson talking about Oklahoma.

33A — Mrs. Robertson — story of the first dust storm. Leading up to her reading of an original poem: I CAME TO OKLAHOMA.

33B — Mrs. Robertson — continuing. Story of Black Kettle's prophecy. Leading up to another original poem: WHY WE GO TO CALIFORNIA.

34A2 — GEORGE COLLINS. Sung by Mrs. Sullivan.

Library of Congress

34A2 — GEORGE COLLINS (concluded).

34A3 — BARBARA ALLEN. Mrs. Sullivan.

34B1 — JESSE JAMES. Sung by Vernie Westfall. Rest of B side blank. (Filled in later, at Visalia, by Jim Holbert:

34B2 — ALONG COME OLD JINNIE ONE FINE SUMMER DAY.

34B3 — LITTLE FAT BOY.

Conversation with the WPA Librarian, Mrs. Mildred Dykeman. Discussed reading habits of the campers. Very popular:

Gone With The Wind Earl Derr Biggers Stratton Porter.

The children (who, by the way, go to school in Shafter) are avid readers. "Read anything they can get ahold of."

Following are some of the titles that were checked out on Fri. eve (8/2/40):

Fiction:

Lincoln, J.C. : Silas Bradford's Boy

Lincoln, J.C. : Dr. Nye of North Ostable

Hobart, A.T. : Oil for the Lamps of China

Grey, Zane : Rainbow Trail

Grey, Zane : Hash Knife Outfit

Fletcher, J.S. : Exterior to the Evidence

Library of Congress

Coolidge, Dane: Not Afraid

Bennett, R.A. : Guns of the Rio Grande

Prouty, Mrs. O.: Conflict

Norris, K.: Little Ships

etc.

etc.

Non-fiction:

Dalton, Emmett When the Daltons Rode

O'Brian, P.J. Life of Will Rogers

Bains, W.N. Saga of Billy the Kid

Phillips, B.A. Agriculture and Farm Life

Rolt, M.F. Baby's Life of Jesus Christ

Jacobs, Joseph English Fairy Tales

Very few books lost. Books “given excellent care for the conditions they have to live under.” Mrs. Dykeman says its hard to care for books in a tent.

On Dec. 6, 1939, When Mrs. D. took over, there were 350 books. Now 750. 50–80 books added / month. One shelf of books (19 volumes) a present from Frances Perkins.

Library of Congress

"It's the people...These are the finest people in the world if they're only given a chance."
So Mrs. D., But we had the feeling that this was meant for publication.

Later in the evening, at the council meeting, Mrs. D. sidled over: "My official title in this library is not librarian but library custodian, so be sure that you get that right."

Mrs. D. did not trust us, however, to get the details right, for she later wrote out a statement herself!

Statement of Mrs. Mildred Dykeman, Librarian, Shafter:

This is a branch of the Kern County Free Library, known as the Shafter Migratory branch.

There have been 7,400 books and about 600 magazines and phamplets (sic) checked out to our readers here in camp since Jan. 1st. 1940.

During the winter months while the camp was full of people and work was scarce the library was a very busy place.

Books on psychology — useful arts — history and different biographies were in great demand as well as all kinds of diction.

The school children made good use of the encyclopedieas and dictionaries and made reports on the different books they read.

This library has about 750 books. Five daily newspapers are furnished by the camp and there are lots of magazines sent to us by people who have become interested in this work.

Library hours are from 2 – 8 p.m. daily except Saturday and Sunday.

Tuesday and Thursday from 1 p.m. to 2 p.m. is story hour for children over 5 years of age, Mrs. Sullivan, Recreation Leader, has charge of this hour.

Library of Congress

8/5/40Shafter.Camp Council Meeting

Preliminary conversations: Mrs. Pond wants use of social hall for another hour on Saturdays, 4:30 – 5:30, for children 10–13.

35A1. Mr. Pond acting chairman. Riedel, secretary.

35A2. called the roll. Minutes of last meeting read.

35B1. Administration of oath of office to two new council members, Mrs. Lovell and Mrs. Robertson.

35B2. Discussion of absent members.

35B3. Mrs. Robertson brings up question of the loom, for which money has presumably been appropriated but which has not yet been bought. Discussion. Committee appointed to see to purchase of loom (Mrs. Robertson, Mrs. Wyckoff, Mrs. X.)

Center Building given to Mrs. Pond for her play group Sat. 4:30 – 5:30.

36A. Discussion of bawdy pictures in camp papers. Motion passed instructing editor to discontinue them (Westfall, editor, votes for motion!)

36B1. Conclusion of pictures discussion.

36B2. Cotton Davis appears with a washing machine gear in his hand. In need of repair. Cotton makes a little speech about it and receives the council's authorization to see to the repair. Cotton addressed the council with one eye on the microphone.

8/5/40Shafter.Camp Council Meeting

Library of Congress

37A1. Discussion of ice-cream peddler on camp grounds. Should he be allowed to sell on camp grounds if camp store sells ice-cream too?

37A2. Dewey Rogers called upon to make a speech — in charge of camp during Mork's absence.

Voting for vice-president. Candidates, Westfall and Mrs. Allen. Secret ballot. Slips of paper distributed by secretary. Vote 8–7 for Westfall. Mr. Pond, very solemnly: “Ladies and Gentlemen of the Council: By your votes you have elected Mr. Westfall to be your vice-president. Give him a hand.”

Report of Finance Committee. Presenting bills.

37A3. Bills for newspaper subscriptions. San Francisco Chronicle and Los Angeles News up for renewal. Two other papers to which the camp subscribes are the Bakersfield Californian and the Kern Herald. (Is there also a fifth?)

37B1, B2. Newspaper situation continued, Mrs. Dykeman speaks in favor of keeping all the papers. L.A. News gives news of southern part of state. S.F. Chronicle for bay regions Other two for local news.

Bill for work-room:

waterpipe in room

10 cans of paint at 10¢

3 rolls of wire to make flowers

50c/ worth of thread

etc.

Library of Congress

8/5/40 Shafter. Camp Council Meeting

37B3. New business. Motion pictures. What should charge be? How to get better pictures? Mrs. Riedel speaks, explaining plans. On first of Nov. camp will fill up again, and then they can start a serial, etc. Should babes-in-arms have to pay? What's a babe-in-arms?

38A1. Motion pictures (Concluded). Mr. Pond.

38A2. Treasurer's report. Read by Mr. Riedel.

38B. Discussion of washing machine. Mrs. Allen.

8/6/40. Visalia

Manager, Mike Bruick, formerly asst. mgr. at Shafter, away on week's vacation. In office;

M. V. Cole, regional director, from San Francisco. Barney Eggink, asst. mgr.

Charley Binney, chief clerk.

Introduced to S. C. Loop, social and recreation leader, here since camp opened. Told us about Connelly, postmaster at Visalia, and his daughter, who often appear at amateur nights, known here as "Literary" evenings.

Margaret Valiant here last year. Loop liked her very much. Bob Hardy still has record she made of Bob Farmer whistling a song.

Loop old-time actor, who gave us at once the story of his career. 18 years of theatrical experience: Billy Bryant Stock Co., the Dawson Comedy company, etc. Took "Leading parts" in Uncle Tom's Cabin. Played Uncle Tom once a week. Played in Builder of Bridges, Ten Nights in a Barroom (played the bartender). Specialized in heavies and character parts.

Library of Congress

Once played the Hippodrome for 18 weeks (together we lamented passing of that theatre). Played some unbelievable number of weeks in Brooklyn. Played in Ben-Hur in Chicago during the Chicago World's Fair.

Visalia

Sciatic rheumatism and acute bronchitis while traveling with show. Also "movies began to sap the life out of the legitimate theatre." Doctor in Indiana (his native state) told him to get out, to go to California. Lived in tent. Fogs, etc., made rheumatism worse.

Agricultural Workers Medical Association referred him to a physician, who wouldn't take his case so long as he lived in a tent. Referred to migratory workers camp. Dewey Russell (? is this right? Dewey Rodgers?) got him into camp, Asked him to organize a literary program. Bob Hardy helped him. Chose one lady from each unit and asked them to collect names of possible performers. They collected 99 names.

First literary program Jan. 24, '39. Since then 81 programs. Once a week. Missed only one night, account of an epidemic of measles. Has had as high as 1800 persons in audience, Disclaims credit for himself. One orchestra developed in the camp — "The Buckaroos" — now in Reno, Nevada (doing radio work?).

Tonight a meeting of all the musicians to try to organize them into several groups which can alternate.

Loop all set up about program for following night: first time new curtain is to be used, \$18 dollars appropriated by council for material, worked up by ladies in craft dept.

Shown around camp by Eggink.

Visalia

Library of Congress

In social hall.

Visited nursery school. During rest period. Children lying on little cots. 68–75 children of pre-school age. Here from 8–5 every day under WPA supervision. Get lunches (kitchen to side of stage).

Picture over stage: painted by a camper, R. Yeargam, for the camp float in the local rodeo. Shows past, present, and future of the migrants. Past: ditch-bank camps; present: govt. camps with metal shelters; future: a question mark but rosy,

Camp:

300 shelters

48 labor homes

6 multiple dwelling units

16–28 cabins in a unit.

Personnel pays \$16 per month for rent.

Visited clinic, sewing room, library, new craft room. Talk about organization of Rochdale store. To office with Eggink to look up charges to be brought before the court in the evening: 3 drunkenness charges (one a second offender, i.e., felony, subject to eviction), one speeding charge.

8/6/40. Visalia. 7:30 p.m.

In library. Court proceedings. About 100 persons present. Speech by Eggink, extremely intelligent, asking privilege of the court for our presence. Speech by Saylor(?). Called for councilmen present. (Note: No women on council at Visalia.) Complicated business

Library of Congress

of putting matter before council. Another speech by Eggink (same business but longer). Reading of our letters of introduction from L of Congress and FSA by clerk of court (Tex Pace). Saylor: Since number of council members present is two short of majority or quorum or something, asked for unanimous vote. Nine votes yes. Therefore O.K. for us to stay.

Administration of oath to new judges by Court Clerk, Tex Pace.

39 A-1, 2, 3, 4, Case of 324 (because of our recording of procedures it was agreed to refer to cases by their cabin numbers instead of by name). Charged with entering dance hall drunk. Wizenen pathetic little man. Pleaded guilty. Vote of court — closed ballot. 6 judges and clerk. Fined 50¢ and 10 hours work.

39A4 (continued). Case of 523. Handsome, sullen young fellow. Charged with drunkenness. Law governing such cases read.

39B1. Clerk (prompted by Eggink); this prisoner is a second offender, has been brought before this court before. Prisoner: not before this court. Eggink: refers to minutes of court (previous trial). Clerk: reads minutes of court Visalia. for previous trial.

Judges vote.

39B2. Clerk has difficulty in reading one vote. Returns slips to judges for another vote. Slips turned in again.

39B3. Found guilty. Fined 50¢ and ten hours work. Eggink points out that a second violation is a felony and conviction of a felony carries with it expulsion from the camp.

Much discussion. What can they do about it now. Bring it up before council?

40A1. Clerk tells 523 to report again for trial next Tuesday, during which time the council will have occasion to consider the case. 523: I object to that. You done passed sentence

Library of Congress

on me. Wave of That's right spreads thru crowd. Speech of Eggink. Sentence stands. Pace promises to look up previous records, etc.

40A1 (continued). Case of 3235. Charge: drunk at dance. Law read.

40B1. One of Judges: Did you ever live in a maggotty camp before? Never did. First time up before this court? Etc..

Not recorded: They never told me. How long have you lived in camp? 3 weeks. Etc.

Visalia.

Vote of judges. Found guilty. Sentence: 10 hours work and 50¢.

40B2. Case of 502. Speeding charge. Law read. Prisoner pleads not guilty. Calling of Marshall W. H. Collins. (Prisoner speaks out of turn, is rebuked).

41A1. Calling of Narshall Miller. Calling of defendent's witnesses.

41A2. Mr. Odell, witness for defense.

41A3. Mr. Howard Marshall(?), witness for the defense.

41A4. Defendant.

Not recorded: Marshall Collins recalled to stand. Would almost swear it was the car.

Found guilty!

Last case did not appear. I.E., he ignored this court, etc. People indignant.

End of court.

Machine to social hall.

Library of Congress

41B2. TALL PAPAYA TREE. Maggie Jean Allen, 10; Johnnie V. Allen, 14(girl): J.D. Allen, guitar.

41B3. EIGHTH OF JANUARY. Tommy Rhoades, guitar; J.D. Allen, fiddle.

8/7/40.

We promise Loop to take part in the Literary progress and draw up a tentative list of records that we might play. We even arrange them very carefully in the order in which we will present them:

PISTOL PETE

SWEET BETSY FROM PIKE

OLD GREY BEARD A-SHAKIN'

COTTON FEVER

BOLD JACK DONAHUE

GOING DOWN THE ROAD

LLOYD STALCUP

SHORTIE ALLEN'S TALL STORIES

NICHOLS POEM ON RELIEF

MY MOTHER IN LAW

Library of Congress

Sit around talking with Saylor and some of other men. Saylor interesting fellow. Was a sailor for 18 years. Has traveled. Saylor: You give me 100 men to work for me 6 weeks a year and I'll be a respectable citizen, too. It's donation of service, that's what it is.

We know what the trouble is, but we don't know what to do about it.

Farmers discriminate against men who live in camp. Saylor and another man were working stacking hay. When the farmer found out they came from the camp, he said he thought he'd get someone else to do the job — yet had liked their work.

Croquet mallets (and other recreational equipment) have a way of disappearing. "A kid misses a shot, he wraps the mallet around the tree over there, and there goes your mallet."

Old man (one arm, hadn't received his relief check yet — held up for some reason), asks Eggink if he can have some wood. Eggink: "It's govt. property and I can't tell you to take it away, but I can't tell you not to take it."

Man going off to lunch: "I gotta go 'n' see about my beans."

Marshalls wear buttons size of a plate: "Community Marshall."

"You look pretty good for the shape you're in." (Prop. at Slim Boy's)

Mrs. C. C. Douglas, whose husband is Prof. of Greek and Church History at some college in Southern California, and who is herself one of the missionary type of ladies who have discovered the Okies, reports the following conversation with a librarian in L.A.:

D: I've been talking all week, etc. I'm looking for a humorous book.

L: What have you been talking about?

Library of Congress

D: Migrants.

L: Migrants?

D: Yes. Do you know what that is?

L: Why, yes. It's a headache, isn't it?

D: I'll say so. It's the biggest headache California ever had.

Titles of three songs we didn't get:

COTTON-EYED JOE

LOST JOHN

CUMBERLAND GAP

(I think J.D. Allen gave us these titles, but didn't remember the songs himself)

8/7/40. Visalia.

Machine set up in print shop.

42A1. THAT AGGRAVATIN' BEAUTY? LULU WALL. Sung by Dalbert and Lillian (husband and wife) Dodson, Dalbert at guitar.

42B. SALLY GOODIN. Square dance. Olon A. Rink, caller: Howard Pace (brother of Tex), fiddle; J.D. Allen, guitar.

42A2. JUST A CLOSER WALE WITH THEE. A gospel song. Sung by Mabel Workman (with guitar) and Junamae Workman (her daughter). Workmans from Missouri.

Library of Congress

43A1. FISHER'S HORNPIPE. Herman Beeman, guitar; Elick Orr (his father-in-law), fiddle. Incorrectly announced on record as FIDDLER'S HORNPIPE.

43A2. THE FATE OF EDWARD HECKMAN, Mrs. Herman Beeman (Mr. Beeman at guitar). She sings the songs from the text in his song-book. (Business of calling for the Beemans — who did not live in the camp — squalid surroundings, pigs practically in the tent, etc., etc.)

43B1. LOVELESS CCC. Sung and played by Tommy Rhoades, following the text in Herman Beeman's song book. Beeman continued too shy to sing the song himself. The song (to the tune of Reckless Love, or Careless Love) was composed by his bunkmate at the Brokenair CCC Camp, in Oklahoma, 1937.

8/7/40. Visalia. "Literary"

44A1. Mrs. Viola Hayes, Home Economics teacher (WPA?)? announcing the regular bi-monthly meeting of home-makers club.

44A2. S.C. Loop. Announcing debut of new curtain.

44A3. Saylor. Announcing open council meetings.

44B1. " Explanation of court set-up.

44B2. " Business of Farmersville. Farmersville, neighboring town, had announced appointment of an extra marshall, required for protection of its citizens a/c presence of migratory camp. This had been made subject of an editorial in Visalia Times-Delta. Saylor Laces into Farmersville.

45A1. Tex Pace. Announcement of results of elections, plea for help on paper.

Library of Congress

45A2. Mr. Marley. A visiting minister (had just returned from the Westside Grammar School at Delano where, under a Mr. John Way, the Friends were running a Work Camp — not clear at all who he was or what this camp he was telling us about was). Talking on co-operation.

45B1. Arkansas Playboys. (Harmonica and guitar. Names of boys?)

THERE'S NOTHING LIKE A SONG THAT WILL CHEER YOU ALL ALONG

Visalia.

OLD JOE CLARK

45B2. Maggie Jean Allen (age 10). J. D. ALLEN, guitar. Title of song?

45B3. Mary and Elsie Gross. RIDING DOWN THE CANYON.

46A1. Tap dance. Ramona Lawrence. Tune: ALEXANDER'S RAG TIME BAND (accompaniment by Howard Pace, fiddle, Elsie Gross, guitar).

46A2. Charleen and Pal Gross. Elsie Gross, guitar. MA? HE'S MAFING EYES AT ME.

46A3. Leo Ferguson (Hawaiian guitar) and J. B. Allen (standard guitar).

46B1. E. H. Connelly, postmaster of Visalia. Reading original poem, "The Grapes of Wrath vs. the Love of God."

46B2. Connelly, singing MY NAME IT IS MICHAEL MCCARTHY.

46B3. Loop thanking Connelly.

47A1. C. E. Summers (with guitar): MAPLE ON THE HILL.

Library of Congress

47A2. " (encore) : "Harp" solo: FREIGHT TRAIN BLUES.

47A3. " " : " " : SOLDIER'S JOY.

Visalia.

47B1. J. D. Allen and Pauline Perkins (his sister). WAY DOWN IN OLD KENTUCKY (J. D. at guitar).

47B2. Encore: WEEPING WILLOW.

48A1. Frankie Fellingner (youngster): I WONDER IF YOU FEEL THE WAY I DO. (J. D. guitar).

48A2. Howard Pace. Dance.

48A3. Jim Holbert. THE GERMAN KAISER. (to tune of Tipperary).

48A4. Wilbur Venable and L. C. Hipp: YOU ARE MY SUNSHINE.

48B1. Duvall Bros. FREIGHT TRAIN BLUES.

End of literary.

After literary, cornered Jim Holbert.

48B2. THE SHERMAN CYCLONE. Jim Holbert, tells story first, then sings. Celebrates a famous storm that swept thru Sherman 47 years ago. "I was within five miles of this storm, you know. It went thru Sherman."

49A1. Jim Holbert, telling about his version of CASEY JONES.

49A2. Jim Holbert, singing his own version of CASEY JONES.

Library of Congress

Last stanza not recorded:

Casey's daughter said before she died She was gonna make a train so the bums couldn't ride
And if they rode they would ride the rods And trust their lives in the hands of God.

Lord, Lord, was a Casey Jones The man at the throttle was-a Casey Jones.

According to Jim this last stanza was composed by himself.

49B1. CHIMCHACK. Jim Holbert.

49B2. THE MILLER'S A-GOIN' FOR TO DIE. Jim Holbert.

34B2. ALONG COME OLD JINNIE ONE FINE SUMMER DAY.

34B3. THE LITTLE FAT BOY. An extra verse not recorded:

On the road Just a day and a half And in that time et a cow and a half

Refrain

(Jim's address: Route 1, box 141, Visalia)

8/8/40. Lunch with the Allens. Menu: pork chops, creamed corn, iced tea, bread, sliced tomatoes, salad, cream pie.

Visalia (cont.) 8/10/40

On Saturday evening, after dinner at the hotel Johnson in Visalia with the Allens, we called at Jim Hulbert's house to meet him for the previously arranged recording. His wife informed us that he had waited until 7:30 and then gone over to the "office" to meet us. We finally found Jim and returned to the house to try and persuade Mrs. Hulbert to go along with us. Mrs. Hulbert, however, had done out a neighbor's washing that day ("we

Library of Congress

always help out when folks are sick, and they do the same for us”), and wasn't up to the trip. She was dripping with perspiration, sitting next to the fan, with a roll-your-own in her mouth. While we were talking with her a woman came in and asked for a piece of cigarette paper for her husband. (“What'll you have, brown or white?”) Mrs. Hulbert a worn-out, rather dumpy woman whose house was not too orderly) Finally we got Jim into the car and apologized for taking him so far away. Drove through town to the tourist cabin, and while Sonkin was setting up the machine, Todd dashed out for a little whiskey. Jim hinted that a sip wouldn't do any harm — and a sip was all he took...“I ain't never been drunk but once in my life — when I was twenty-five. I was twenty-five the 14th day of March. I got drunk the 15th. Me and my Dad got drunk together. Put in the same bed. After I had that drunk, I never wanted no other.” Later, however, Jim informed us that he wasn't a “Christian man”.

Visalia (contd.) 8/10/40

Jim took an easy chair and we put the microphone in front of him. The roller fell out three or four times, and the problem was finally solved by adhesive tape. On the way down Jim had informed us that his wife's favorite song was “The Dope Fiend”...“It's kind of a new song to me — I learned it when I was thirty five”. Our first recording in the cabin then was “The Dope Fiend”. (Record no.) The next song was “The Lazy Boy” (Record no.) a story about the fate of a young man who idled away his time, and thereby lost his bride. Jim obviously approved of the moral. He told us that he had worked at everything — farming, logging, odd jobs of all kinds. When he came to California he decided to do any kind of work that came up. At present he was irrigating for a farm owner down the road. He liked to be his own boss, however, regarding time. Related an experience in getting a job with his latest employer. It seems he went to these people and asked for a job. He told them that he lived in an F.S.A. camp, and that nearly got him in trouble. The Farmer was skeptical of the real desire for work among the people living off the government. However, Jim asked them to try him out for an hour, and if they didn't like his work, he'd quit. From then on he'd been working steady and his boss hadn't even bothered to check up on his

Library of Congress

work. We had talked previously with his employer, and had learned that “Old Jim” was a good steady worker.

Visalia (contd.) 8/10/40

After “studyin” a while Jim thought up his next song—“The Clarksville Jail”. He prefaced it in this fashion: “I’ll tell you a good one — there’s some cussin in it — is that all right?” The recording (Record no.) omits these stanzas:

Old Joe Dobvs the son of a gun He starved these poor prisoners so they can't run.

(refrain) Old Bill Banks, stuck in the street. Hands in his pocket and nothing to eat. (refrain)

Jim thought that the names used in the song were “real names” of people in the Clarksville Jail.

On the next recording we got the complete version of the “Little Fat Boy” which Jim had recorded for us the day before in part. This necessitated a whistling refrain, and Jim showed us the missing tooth which explained his lack of whistling ability. At this point Jim told us a little about his prowess as a singer in the old days. “Folks could hear me a mile and a half away.” He was also a “fool for dances”. Once walked 30 miles to a dance. On that occasion he walked from his home 14 miles above Paris, to a town 16 miles below Paris.

Visalia (contd.) 8/10/40

When he was a boy he used to go to community sings, and people would sing Christian songs till they got tired of them. Then they would call on Jim for some of his, and he'd sing till he got tired. Then they all went home. In re modern dancing Jim didn't think much of it. He had never been to a camp dance, primarily, as he explained, because he didn't like to have a stamp out on his wrist. (This is the practice at the Visalia camp — to distinguish the residents from the outsiders). Songs came easily to Jim. “From the time I was two on up till

Library of Congress

I was 21 years old I would hear a song sung two or three times and I learned it"...I heard a song in Oklahoma about the "Kickin Mule" but I never could learn it. I heard a fellow sing it five or six times, but I could never learn it." This was obviously after he had reached his zenith as a song-learner. Jim al so explained that the measles had put a crimp in has singing. "Before I had the measles you could hear me a mile and a half away".

Jim learned his next recorded song, "The Drunkard Live Life His Own", when he was twelve years old (Record no.). His next one, he said, needed two voices — a good funny one. It was called "The Good Old Husband", and consisted of a wife asking questions, with the husband answering them. Jim finally took both parts and gave it to us (Record no.). The last part of the record was ruined, but by holding the playback they can be heard.

Visalia (contd.) 8/10/40

The Brown Girl (Record no.), a "real old un" came up next, and Jim sang this one with a great deal of feeling, waving his index finger in time to the music. The last stanza was as follows:

The mother she went and dug his grave She dug it both wide and d eep And placed the brown girl in his arms, Fair Ellender at his feet, feet, feet.

Jim, however, had added a few lines of his own, thus:

And that is the end of three true lovers Lord take us home to rest, rest, rest, Lord take us home to rest.

Jim learned this one from his Mother. It is a remarkably pure version, suffering few changes from the text recorded in Childs.

From his brother-in-law, Jim learned "The Silver Dagger" (Record no.) a song which bears some similarity to "Way Down In Old Kentucky" as sung by the Allens.

Library of Congress

“The Lightnin Express” was obviously one of Jim's favorites. This song (Record no.) was a disappointment to us, but it meant a great deal to Jim, “My brother-in-law”, Visalia (contd.) 8/10/40 he said, “by my first wife — he could be 100 miles away and if he heard me sing this song, he'd go right home”. It was impossible to include all of this song on the record, so the last, stanzas were written down. They are as follows:

“And a little girl setting on a seat close by said to put this boy off is a shame and taken a hat and a collection she made and paid this boy's fare on the train. Much obliged to you Misses for your kindness to me. You're welcome, you need never fear And every time the conductor passed there Those words would ring in his ear....

Jim had mentioned several times that his favorite song was a Christian song — “Hold to God's Unchanging Hand”. Strangely enough he had forgotten several stanzas of this one, but he sang parts of it to us — without our recording it.

Jim's final contributions were two “funny” songs which he thought we'd like: “Polly Trudom' (Rec. no.) and “Chewin Gum” Record no.). The first song contained several difficult lines which were deciphered as “and hush your flatterin tongue” and “Stinckney and Taylor'. “Polly Truedom” was the same song we had heard from the little girl Visalia (contd.) 8/10/40 in Arvin, under the title of “Nine Little Devils” without the yodeling refrain.

8/14/40 (Wed.) Return trip to Arvin. Around 3 p.m.

Many people gone, e.g., the Stones to Thornton (Earl Stone to be clerk there). Old man standing around in store rather scornful of all this moving around.

4 multiple-dwelling units going up.

Ross planning to go on vacation Friday. Brunton of Brawley to take his place while he is gone (i.e., Brawley not filled either and no point in going there).

Library of Congress

Talked with Vester Whitworth (he is brother of Mrs. Harrison Ward).

If it would rain and if the government would turn its cotton program loose, I believe a man could make a living (i.e., "back home").

Says he had a 40 acre farm. Did general farming: corn, cattle, etc. Came to California for Mrs. Whitworth's health...Mrs. Whitworth is planning to leave for "home" soon — i.e., to visit her people in Eastern Missouri.

8/14/40

To the Ward home, outside of the camp (about two miles away?). The Wards prefer living here to living in the camp. Don't like to be so close to their neighbors. Also, probably, however, feeling of resentment over failure of Earl Stone to be promoted, which they (we gathered elsewhere) attribute to Fred Ross' doings. Harrison Ward is the Okie Ma Saunders brought up to New York with her on her trip in the spring of '40.

A sorted Wards around. Hard to figure out the family. Zelmer and Conniver (sons); Lucille, Osella (daughters); also present girl friend of the Ward girls, Pauline Sisk. (Thinkthat's right). Young Wards very good looking. Parents look very old but are probably not over 50.

All the young Wards play the guitar, apparently, taught by Mrs. Ward who doesn't, however, play herself. She could tell when the "changes" came, and the youngsters would find the appropriate chords.

In order to break ice, started off with what we had learned was Mrs. Ward's favorite song.

50A — THE SILENT SEA. A gospel song. Sung by all the young people present. Zelmer and Conniver at guitars.

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50B1 — THE DEATH OF DEWEY LEE. Sung by Conniver Ward with guitar. Learned this song in Oklahoma.

50B2. ?Title. Sung by Conniver Ward, with guitar.

On a bright and sunny day One young wife went away...

8/14/40

Troy Cambron

20 years old (birthday June 10, '20). From Purcell, Maclean Co., Oklahoma. Has spent time in Texas and Arizona. Is planning to go back to Texas tomorrow. (When, later in the evening, we were talking to Ross about Cambron and mentioned this, he was much amazed. Cambron had not yet worked off the hours he was supposed to put in in return for his grant check. He had pulled the same trick at another camp: registered for his hours, gotten his check, and then pulled out without putting in his time).

Has been playing guitar for 4 months. Can only play in D. A fellow has just taught him the G chords, and he has been practising them the last day or so.

Two young girls passed. Troy eyed them appreciatively. "It's a good thing I'm married..." Later we identified as his wife a little girl who didn't look more than 14 who came up to his waist and who hardly opened her mouth during all the time that we were together. She listened to him sing with great interest. When she did speak she seemed more refined than Troy.

Troy's parents travel with him, also a younger brother. He introduced us to his mother: "She's part Indian." He told us she knew a song about the 8/14/40 Cherokee Nation, but he couldn't get her to sing it for us. He sang a few songs for us (this in his tent), and we made a date to record in the evening in the library.

Library of Congress

51A. ARTHUR CLYDE. Sung and played by Troy Cambron. (When he sang this for us in his tent in p.m., his mother said he had made some mistakes. Therefore, in preparation for the recording, he wrote out the text at her dictation, and sang from this text. Reading caused him occasional difficulties.) Record speed irregular.

51B1. JOHNSON JINKSON. Troy Cambron with guitar.

51B2. DOPE FIEND. Troy Cambron with guitar. Also part of a monstrosity titled MEET ME TONIGHT IN THE COWSHED (after the cows come home).

52A. WILD BILL JONES. Troy Cambron with guitar. Seemed to have a good time singing this. Not whole song recorded. Goes on:

They caught him, sent him down the line, etc.

Learned from a Gene Autry recording!

52A2. DON'T YOU GRIEVE. Troy Cambron with guitar. Learned from his mother.

52B. ARTHUR CLYDE. Repeated, a little more smoothly.

53A1. HOBO BILL'S LAST RIDE. Troy Cambron. Text from a clipping from a Dallas paper. The Cambron "Ballet-Book" is an old school geography with clippings and papers pasted into it.

53A2. ZEBRA DUN. Troy Cambron with guitar, Learned from a song bag(?). One verse he doesn't know. Only first part recorded.

8/14/40. 10 p.m. Conversation with Ross about Cambron.

Owes hours. Signed up for grant check at Brawley — pulled out without putting in his hours. Has signed up for check here, has put in no hours, will probably try to pull out

Library of Congress

without putting in his work here and try this trick elsewhere. If he does, Ross will blacklist him on all relief rolls.

Troy seemed sorry he got married (has been married 5 months). “Did a damn fool thing the night I got married. Not that I didn't get a good girl. But a single feller can get around better.”

“My mother used to could sing lots of songs”.

Large radio in Cambron tent. Dirty blankets, etc. Carries guitar with him always in the car.

“In the Cherokee Nation” which Troy's mother once knew but which she said she had forgotten, begins:

It was in the Cherokee Nation, that 'awwhere I made my all Fifty gallons of whiskey....

The chorus apparently was:

When you see me comin', just raise your window high, When you see me leavin', just hang your head and cry.

According to the Arvin librarian:

There are three girls living in the camp with their families who are married to Filipinos, who are not allowed in the camp. The husbands live in Arvin, and the girls go down to see their husbands about once a week. There are 200 or 300 Filipinos in Arvin — mostly single men. If married, they marry negroes and whites about equally. Single Filipinos get together in groups of about ten, buy a new car, and travel over California, all ten to one car. Hard workers, have money; get new car every two years.

Librarian (who lives in Arvin) says she never goes out alone after dark.

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Remark of a hitch-hiker:

If it weren't for Texas, Oklahoma, and Arkansas, there wouldn't be much of California, would there?

8/15/40.

In search of Bert and Ruby Rains, who had been described to us as knowing some of the strike songs. Bert's in-laws, Mr. and Mrs. John Philips, live in the camp at Arvin. Finally tracked them down, but they were most reluctant to give us the Rains address. Ross' influence brought skilfully to bear and we were given directions for finding them: Along 200 feet this side of Brundage Lane would be the trailer camp they live in; or we might find Bert at the St. Francis Cafe where he is working.

Found the Valley Auto Court. We found Ruby at home, along with a boy of about ten. Ruby, good looking young woman. Small dog which the boy (Eugene) tied up under the trailer to keep from destroying us. Very neat, pretty trailer.

Ruby shy but friendly. Soon telling us about themselves. Bert at the moment was picketing a drug-store in Arvin.

Ruby from Southern Arkansas. Bert from Corpus Christi, Texas. After her marriage, they went to live in Texas. She didn't like it there: labor is cheap. There are too many Mexicans. If they could organize them....

Likes California better.

Went to a field workers school with her husband at Pomona last year. Learned many songs there. Took courses in Trade Union Problems, Trade Union History, etc.

Library of Congress

Picketed during the cotton strike last year — every day for two months. Knows many “striking songs” — the type of old songs she knows are mostly sentimental ballads.

Finally induced Ruby to sing for us.

53B1. ROLL OUT THE PICKETS. Sung by Ruby Rains with her own guitar accompaniment. Written at Arvin during the cotton strike of '39.

53B2. ASSOCIATED FARMERS HAVE A FARM. Ruby Rains with guitar. This parody was written by Ruby and two other girls.

(Recorded right in the trailer. Noise of a neighbor's radio may appear on these records.)

About this time Bert appeared. Only momentarily taken aback at the sight of two strange young men and a lot of electrical equipment in his trailer. Sent the boy out to buy cokes.

54A1. LET'S JINE UP. Bert and Ruby Rains. Ruby at guitar. Words composed by M.P. VICE to tune of “Beautiful Texas.” This song was composed rather late in the strike, but “was about the most popular song after it was composed.”

54A2. FIGHT FOR UNION RECOGNITION. Bert and Ruby Rains. Ruby at guitar, Tune: “I've Been Working On The Railroad.” One Jack Latham wrote the words.

54B1. COLUMBUS STOCKADE BLUES. Bert and Ruby Rains. Allegedly “an old southern tune.” Bert learned it in Texas and taught it to Ruby.

54B2. DOWN IN THE LITTLE GREEN VALLEY. Bert, Ruby, and Eugene Rains.

Eugene looks like Ruby, Bert is very dark. Eugene presented as a brother of Ruby's, but second name Rains too, Very confusing.

Rains wanted us to stay for dinner. His farewell: “Don't let the reactionaries get you.”

Library of Congress

Before we left, "Of course you're opposed to conscription?" We mumbled something non-committal. Then he suggested that we go to some place in town where a fellow is collecting names to a petition opposing conscription. We explained that we would probably have to sign the same petition when we got home.

Rains family has been in California a year and a half.

8/15/40. Return visit to Shafter.

55A1. Mr. Becker. Down on the Bigelow Farm. Becker is a preacher who has traveled widely. Born in South Dakota, spent five years in Kansas, 23 in Oklahoma, 1 in Texas, 18 in California (including 12 in Long Beach.) First came to California in 1919 and went back (presumably to Oklahoma) for 2 years. Is 46 years old. When we first met him he was reclining in a beach chair which he called his ham-and-eggs chair. Nice-looking, family nice looking too. Mrs. Becker motherly hausfrau type. Family laughed at Mr. Becker's jokes.

55A1. I BOUGHT A GOAT. Sung by Mr. Becker, who said he learned it in the third grade, in 1908.

These recordings were made in the sewing room at Shafter. Mrs. Becker is in charge of the room. Gathering of curious children mostly.

55B1. CRAWDAD SONG. Sung by Mrs. Vernon Allen (wife of Shorty Allen whose tall stories we recorded). Learned it from her brother. When he sang it he used to make the ugliest faces. They used to call him Crawdad. (Mrs. Allen sang this song so well and with such effect that the audience laughed very heartily. This embarrassed her and she didn't finish the song.

8/16/40

Library of Congress

On the following day we recorded in the Arts and Crafts Shed. Here with a smaller audience to hear her, Mrs. Allen sang the remaining verses of the Crawdad Song:

55B2. CRAWDAD SONG.

She even felt sufficiently at ease with us now to sing:

55B3. MAN AND A WOMAN BOUGHT A LITTLE PIG. Mrs. Allen used to sing this to the children.

8/16/40

56A and B: Mr. and Mrs. Becker on life in the government camp.

57A1. Eunice Hicks. I AM A RAMBLING GAMBLER. Mrs. Hicks is from Oklahoma. Noise of a road grader on the record.

57A2. YOUNG EMILY. Sung by Mrs. Sullivan. Learned it from her mother when a child she said it was old when she learned it.

57B1. MY TRUE LOVE'S NAME IS JOHNNY. Sung by Mrs. Sullivan. At the conclusion of this song, as we were listening to the record being played back, Mrs. Sullivan noticed our puzzled expressions over the phrase "to some undemon land." She translated it for us: "To some undemon land. It meant to death." (I.E., Van Deeman's Land plus folk etymology?)

57B2. Vernon Allen. I COURTED A FAIR AND A HAND SOME LADY. (cf. The Silver Dagger). Shortly learned this song as a kid and studied it up for us. Mrs. Sullivan knows the song as the Silver Dagger but with a different tune.

58A. THE HAUNTED FALLS. Sung by Mrs. Sullivan.

Mrs. Sullivan. In California four years this October. Not home during all that time.

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Spent 6 or 8 months just wandering around before they got here (i.e., to the govt. camp).
Got here and stopped.

County camps, according to her impression, although she says she never stayed in one, are pretty tough. "I'd sure hate to have to live in one of them." Not kept clean. For example, the camp at Button Willow, Has heard it's bad. Doesn't think the people "mix up" as well as they do here — not as friendly.

Ran a cafe in Texas for about a year before coming out here. Children not big enough to farm, although the boy helps her some. Before that they rented in Texas. Was making pretty good living: had own cows (4). One year sold 390 hens. Had own lard, beef, etc. One could make a good living renting if you had good land. But the land was "leased to the government" and the Sullivans had to leave the country.

Mrs. Sullivan's father came to Texas from Arkansas at the age of 12. Her mother from Alabama. Parents married in Texas and never out of state since.

"It's a good old state. It'll always be home to me." Wanted to get a job in one of the Texas camps but couldn't. Wants to go home.

(At home many of the people had dulcimers.)

Her children:

Leslie 18 (boy

Lois 16

Modean 14

Marie 11

Library of Congress

Floetta 9

Mr. Sullivan's people (from Oklahoma) are in Modesto. Mr. S. had always wanted to come out to see them. Mrs S. hadn't wanted to leave.

Took out some old photographs to show. Lois. etc.. protested vigorously and were very much embarrassed. Reason: several of the snapshots showed them barefoot!

At home — lots of kinfolks, do lot of visiting. They think of the old songs, someone'll have a guitar, and they'll sing until midnight. Young folks sing 'em too.

Was named after her grandfather. When she was 9 her grandmother gave her a cow. But her father always kept her down to one — sold the calves!

58B. Mrs. Becker. Why I came to California. In the pottery shed at Shafter. Present: Mrs. Robertson, Mrs. Sullivan, Mrs. Allen, the Sullivan girls, Mrs. Treat (nursing baby), assorted children in doorway. Noises of passing freight train.

Note: Mr. Becker's bon mot : "I'm from Maine...The rain part of Oklahoma" — which even his family dutifully laughed at we heard later from others.

As we were leaving, Mrs. Pond said : "Not goodbye but a revoor."

8/16/40. Firebaugh.

Frank T. McSherry, manager. With him, Chet Callander, young graduate of U. of C. who had been working as McS's assistant during summer.

Camp: in addition to metal shelters (here not separated but six to a unit) has six multiple dwellings which will be connected with a 300 acre farm. (Total area of camp, 500 acres).

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Farm will be a tenant farmer affair? Selected tenants. Paid for work. Dairying, grow alfalfa, grind own feed, supply camp needs for milk and outside, too.

All work on the camp has been done by resident labor, in most cases voluntarily in excess of work hours required. Mac expects peak in 3 or 4 weeks when the cotton picking begins. 200 persons now.

People from Oklahoma, Arkansas, Missouri, Texas, Arizona, New Mexico — even Nebraska and Kansas.

Includes one family of colored people. Brought in by one of staff no longer here who wanted to put them between two families he was mad at. Story seems improbable. At any rate, now located in a unit which is at present empty except for them. Clean, industrious.

Clinic — of same construction as clinics elsewhere.

But a prenatal clinic and a well-baby clinic whose facilities are open to the whole community is being set up with the cooperation of state health officers. An attempt to build up good will with community.

Benefit dances by farmers group in the neighborhood are run for the benefit of the camp in the social hall. Outsiders pay, campers free.

Metal shelters: six to a unit: more economical. The individual shelters are larger than those in Arvin and Visalia. Makes it possible to split up a large family into two shelters. Problem of noise from shelter to shelter can, be overcome by grouping according to kin.

Compare with this the story of county health officer visiting the Visalia camp, not on official business, and being ordered off the grounds (federal property), presumably, although McS did not say so, by Bob Hardy.

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Found number of people gathered in social hall in the evening but the musicians who were supposed to play for their dance had not appeared. Leaped into breach and offered to supply entertainment. Played some of our records. Managed by dint of some of our very best coaxing to produce a fiddler and a guitar and recorded:

59A. A square dance. Earl Stout, fiddler, A.L. Mitchell, guitar, West George (recreation leader), caller. This side spoiled.

59B. Square dance.

60A1. THE CONVICT AND THE ROSE. Sung and played by A.L. Mitchell (from Little Rock, Arkansas).

60A2. BAD COMPANION. A.L. Mitchell, (Forgets the song in the middle).

Fire baugh's housing facilities limited. McSherry's offer to put us up at his house. (Dinner with Mac and Chet in town).

8/17/40

Recording Jack Bryant. Jack from Okomogee, Okla. Composed his first song at age of nine. Father used to sing: didn't pick no music but people would come to hear him. This information from Jack's brother (Jack working). Jack also has some original songs, said his brother: one about California and one about Arizona. Jack's family was 5 months on the road (his songs about this). Jim Bryant here 8 months before them, i.e., about a year now. Jack hit it pretty tough, according to his brother. This accurately described in his songs.

Jim Bryant delivered message to Jack about us. And we later drove out to place where he was working (Red Porter's ranch) to talk to him. He promised to come back to the camp shortly to record for us. As we left the ranch we noticed we were being followed by a truck. Slowed down for him: Red Porter himself, suspicious of our racket. Talk. Placated.

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Recording in Jack Bryant's shelter:

60B1...SUNNY CAL. Original song, sung and played by Jack Bryant. When he finished it, a woman sitting in the house said, "It sounds like the Grapes of Wrath." Written about five months ago.

60B2. LONELY I'M SO LONELY. Sung by Jack Bryant. Original?

61A1. ARIZONA. Original song, sung and played by Jack Bryant.

61A2. JACKRABBIT BLUES. Sung and played by Jack Bryant. Not original. Has known it a long time. Last verse added by himself.

61B1. CHAIN GANG. Sung by Mr. and Mrs. Jack Bryant. Not original.

61B2. JOHN HARDY. Sung by Donald Bryant (age 7). One verse omitted by Donald, given to us later by his father:

They followed him through the northern states
They trailed him all the way
Sheriff turned around to his deputies
We're gonna catch John Hardy today.

8/17/40. Saturday night. Westley camp.

Manager not around. Wandered thru the camp followed by dogs barking spiritlessly. Sat around a sort of social room for a while. Two or three boys with musical instruments making sad efforts at gaiety (an electric guitar, etc.). Camp built on a circular plan. Otherwise had nothing to recommend it to one's attention.

8/18/40. Thornton.

Manager Tom Collins.

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81 families. Capacity 100.

A stopping-off place between north and south. Territory around here mostly Oriental labor. Whites making some inroads but probably will never go far. "Stoop"—labor will remain Oriental — e.g., they pay nine cents a box for tomatoes. Okies will work few hours, then quit.

People here slightly different type — breaking away from their "neighbors." Trying to forget their Oklahoma-Ark. background.

Thornton Farm Association — has 30 homes. Manager, Frank Stennett.

One of problems was "getting Holy Ghost out." Tom Collins: "the less education, less recreation, more salvation."

Talked with Stennett. Pleasant young man, at moment engaged in getting dinner for himself and small boy. Batching it during wife's visit somewhere. No meeting of Farm Association scheduled for awhile, no recording possibilities for several weeks (we had wanted to, record a coop-farm meeting).

The farm has 310 tillable acres which will be reduced to 280 or 290. Part-time farm — of the 25 families Thornton. in labor homes, only 18 are members of the Assoc.

62A and B. Tom Higgenbotham. From Oklahoma (although born in Indiana). Conversation about how he got to California. Had 45 acres in cotton as his cash crop. Cut down to 22 under AAA? then still further. At 2 or 3 dollars and acre, got \$160 in benefits. (12 acres would have made about seven bales at around 50 dollars a bale). Ruined.

Farmed 135 acres all together.

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Some of his neighbors smarter than he. When asked how much they had in cotton, they doubled their acreage. Then when cut down, they were back to their original acreage, and so had the original cash crop and the govt. benefits.

Higginbotham talks like Tom Collins.

The recording done in room in the clinic in which all the household goods of the Stones (Gussie Ward and Earl) who had been transferred from Arvin were temporarily deposited. (Or was this to be where they would live). Stone, however, not around.

Collins: hard to get Oklahoma people to work on cooperative farms. Individuals.

8/18/40 Yuba City. Iusi, manager. Camp manager for 16 months.

326 families at peak, or about 1300 persons. At present past-peak. Peaches had been fast and furious. Farmers looking for pickers.

Not much Oriental labor — except Hindus in rice fields. (Marysville Chinatown is oldest Chinatown in US).

Camp moved here in Feb. Old site (in Marysville, just across river) flooded. 98 families moved; almost all govt. property saved. Story of flood: pouring rain, families collected in utility buildings (no shelters then). Iusi ordered truckload of gas — gave out 3 gal. per car. Caravan formed. Govt. car to tow stalled cars. Trucks for families without means of transportation. Led to the new camp (not quite completed) at Uba City.

Families cleared out in 3 hours. (8–11 a.m.) Some lost their tents, but many saved tents and even kindling wood. Last load got out around 3 p.m. Shortly thereafter, whole site under water.

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Iusi very proud of his efficiency and organizing ability in clearing campers out. Showed countless pictures of flood.

Also very proud of "public relations" with the camp. For example, Kirkpatrick, asst. camp manager (now at Winter) wrote series of articles for local paper. Iusi has large clipping book of newspaper articles about the camp, most of them favorable. Local people give clothes to camp, etc. Clothes given to camp are auctioned off.

Iusi formerly at Gridley. Gave us list of names for possible recordings:

Miss Taylor

Buster Hunt

Gar Jones

Bill Hays wife

Wade Robinson

Mrs. Kid

Suggested we get in touch with Dr. Robert A. Brady to be in Dept. of Economics at Columbia.

8/19/40. Yuba City.

Miss Evelyn Jacobs. Home Economics Supervisor. Canning of peaches going on under her direction. Peach crop had been so plentiful, farmers let pickers take a lot for themselves. Camp has its own canning facilities, new building soon to be opened up.

She recommended we look up Mr. and Mrs. A. S. Johnson.

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Johnsons delightful old couple.

Her father from North Carolina (family from England), to Arkansas in 1859. His farm in (Dishay?), in Independence County, seven miles south of Batesville.

Apparently both of fairly well-to-do farming families. "His father never bought but one barrel of flour after they were married."

Book on bed: Seven Pillars of Wisdom!

Showed pictures of wedding party, etc.

Machine set up. Played "Young Emily". Mr. and Mrs. J. recognized song. He: "Say, that's all right."

Played "Arizona." He: "That's the truth...That's pretty good....Well, we've got them beat a little: we've got our featherbed."

Yuba City.

Mrs. J. studied elocution for 3 years. Used to be in lots of plays (like to be with young folks).

64A – 66B. Mr. and Mrs. Johnson.

Sue Jones wouldn't sing for us. Jones family not very attractive and we did not bother to coax. She lent us her ballet book, which contained the following titles.

1. The New London School Disaster.
2. Hang Out the Front Door Key.
3. Put Me in Your Pocket.

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4. Two Hairs on His Chest.
5. Robin Red Breast.
6. Two Orphans.
7. The Baggage Coach Ahead.
8. The Little Rosewood Casket.
9. My Little Buckaroo.
10. There's a cot unused in the Bunkhouse Tonight.
11. The Wreck of Number 9.
12. After the Ball.
13. Brown Eyes.
14. Long (sic) Green Valley.
15. Put My Little Shoes Away.
16. One More Letter.
17. Meet Me in the Moonlight.
18. East Virginia Blues.
19. South of the Border.
20. Oh, Johnny, Oh, Johnny, Oh!

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21. Billy.
22. Boy in Blue.
23. I Only Want a Buddy not a Sweetheart.
24. The Wreck of Old Number Nine.
25. Tumbling Tumbleweeds.
26. The Wabash Cannonball.
27. I'll keep on Loving You.
28. I Saw Your Face in the Moon.
29. I Wonder if You Feel the Way I Do.
30. The Eastbound Train.
31. Circle Being Broken (sic).

8/19/40. Yuba City.

Talked with Wade Robinson. From Arizona. Father ran grocery store there (now runs co-op store in camp and is chairman of council). Bad luck, family decided to go to Idaho, "combine vacation and potato picking." Thence to Oregon and so here. Another year of H.S. to finish. Has done considerable reading. Interested in dramatics. Helps edit camp paper. Being rushed around by the editor of the paper, Mrs. Pearl Hinkle, and so had little time to show us around.

8/19/40. Yuba City.

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Buster Hunt. Trouble finding him. Finally located him busy working on his car. Hardly talked to us: anxious to finish work on car before dark. Finally able to relax.

Here since '36. Follows the fruit. This year bad — too much fruit, not enough boxes, etc.

Listened to some of our recordings:

Troy Cambron — Hobo Bill — left him cold.

Jack Bryant — very enthusiastic. “He's good!... He's using a straight pick...He's playing that in E.”

Had to borrow a guitar. Not a good one. Trouble in tuning. One string rattled: bridge had been broken. Also, had to use a thumb pick; is accustomed to a straight pick.

Recording conditions: batteries; no light; moonlight; tent-platform.

Business about his finding a “chair”.

66A. CHANGE IN THE BUSINESS ALL AROUND. Written by a friend of his. Would rather not give his name.

66B1. PEA-PICKIN' BLUES. Written by Fred Markham. Only remembered part.

66B2. MOONLIGHT AND SKIES. Tune resembles My Little Mohee. “An old one”.

Yuba City.

67A. KITTY WELLS. Sung by Sell Holcomb (from Cherokee Co, Texas). “Seconded” by Buster.

67B. LITTLE BITTY BLUES. Buster Hunt.

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68A. GREEN BACK DOLLAR. Buster Hunt.

68B. NO DEPRESSION IN HEAVEN. Buster Bunt.

Buster gave as his address: Gen'l Delivery, Marysville. A Christmas card sent him at that address was returned: Unclaimed, Unknown.