

[Letter from Carita Doggett Corse to Harold Spivacke, August 28, 1939]

Works Progress Administration of Florida 49 WEST DUVAL STREET JACKSONVILLE

Roy Schroder State Administrator

August 28, 1939

Mr. Harold Spivacke Director, Music Division Library of Congress Washington, D. C.

Dear Sir:

I received a report today—written yesterday by Bob Cook—on the work of the Florida recording expedition. The two packages of records sent by Presto arrived in Tampa on Saturday, August 26. For your information, here is a complete itinerary of the expedition:

August 19–20: Cross City (songs of Negro turpentine workers and Negro folklore and folk songs).

August 21–24: Tampa (Spanish-American, Cuban-American, and Italian-American songs).

August 25: Tarpon Springs (Greek folk songs).

August 26–27: Tampa (Cuban-Negro songs).

August 28–29: Sebring (Florida cracker folk songs and folklore).

August 30: return to Jacksonville.

Mr. Alton Morris, editor of the “Southern Folklore Journal”, assisted Mr. Cook and Mr. Kennedy in the recordings they made Friday night at Tarpon Springs. Mr. Cook states that

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Mr. Morris expressed pleasure at the quality and scope of the recordings they had made during the week. He also states that during the course of each recording he photographs the singer or musician, the instrument played, and the fingering of each instrument.

With Mr. Kennedy serving as interlocutor, there has been recorded on each disc the singer's name, age, occupation, the name and history of the song, and when and where the singer first heard the song. Would you suggest that they obtain more information on the backgrounds of the song and singer, or is the above data sufficient? Mr. Cook reports that, in most cases for reasons of economy he has utilized a poor recording area on the disc—beginning about one-half inch from the outside edge of the center marker—for recording the background material. He states that this area “plays back” rather poorly, but that it can be understood. If the background material is recorded in a distorted tone, does that lessen the value of the song? If so, I shall instruct Mr. Cook to refrain from using the poor recording area on each disc.

Please be assured that as soon as the expedition returns to Jacksonville, I shall send you a detailed report and forward all the discs.

Sincerely yours, Carita Doggett Corse
Carita Doggett Corse State Director, Federal
Writers Project