

The Okefenokee Traditional Music Survey

South Georgia Folklife Project, Valdosta State University
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Project Summary

The project documented a distinctive folk region by updating the pioneering work (1912-1951) of naturalist and amateur folklore collector, Francis Harper. The region to be surveyed includes seven counties of southeast Georgia and north Florida located in and around the Okefenokee Swamp. Many traditions Harper recorded still exist in some form, including Primitive Baptist hymnody, hollering, fiddle, banjo and sacred harp. The survey will expand the scope of Harper's work, however, by examining both the predominantly Scotch-Irish "Cracker" communities of interest to Harper and African Americans who also have lived in the vicinity since the Civil War. Copies of project documentation will be housed in special collections at Valdosta State University and another collection located closer to the Okefenokee region. The background field survey is Phase 1 of a planned multi-phase cultural conservation strategy which will result in greater public recognition of this important heritage through 1) documentation and archival preservation; 2) a permanent and traveling exhibit of Okefenokee musical heritage; and 3) a documentary CD examining the Harper legacy.

Laurie Sommers Fieldwork material:

- 37 DAT tapes
- 9 analog tapes
- 2 LPs
- 3 CDs
- 2 commercial analog tapes
- 12 rolls BW
- rolls color slides
- 1 roll color prints
- field notes
- books and pamphlets
- misc. clippings and vertical file materials

Historic Field Collections:

- 19 sides of DARE tapes of the Okefenokee
- Photocopies of Francis Harper articles and field materials
- Copies of selected Harper photos in 4 x 5 negs, copy negs, and digital formats
- Copy of Harper movie footage
- (note: Copy of Harper field recordings acquired prior to grant period)

A. Implementation and Results

1. Progress toward project goals is listed below:

- a. **expanding the scope of Harper's work by researching and identifying African American traditions.** After several meetings and establishing a written set of guidelines for collaboration, I developed a list of contacts from the Black Heritage Committee at the Okefenokee Heritage Center in Waycross. These contacts include choirs and prayer devotions in historic black churches; gospel quartets; a black church founded in Waycross (First Born Church of the Living God, 1913) which was not explored further due to discord and lawsuits in the congregation at present; and oral sources for an active club scene during the 1930s and 40s which deserves documentation. Background work through the Black Heritage Committee's exhibit and curriculum guide revealed that southeast Georgia had among the smallest African American populations in the state before and after the Civil War. African American population in the region increased in the late 1800s with the arrival of woods workers, farmers, and railroad workers. The area previously had rich traditions of tally chanting among turpentine workers, and work songs among gandy dancers. The famous actor Ossie Davis, born in Cogdell and raised in Waycross, described in an informal conversation on Feb. 13, 2000 (not recorded) how his father was a crew leader for track layers and sang many work songs; Davis said he still remembered some of them. There is still a huge rail yard in Waycross. No doubt persons people who remember railroad work songs are present in the area; however, the survey focused for the most part on living traditions and their roots rather than oral histories of previous traditions. During the twentieth century there were black CCC crews working in the Okefenokee_(currently being documented by C. T. Trowell, retired from South Georgia College, Douglas, Georgia), as well as black turpentine crews documented in a few photos by Francis Harper. Harper's notes and correspondence with colleagues also point to the African/African American origins of the yodel or holler of the Okefenokee, although black informants in the region were not documented by Harper. There are also oral accounts of blues and juke joints, some associated with labor camps. I did not find any good leads for present-day blues or secular music in general, although certainly such music may yet be located. Several informants contacted during the survey indicated most blues locales (juke joints) had been shut down. Documentation of these historic traditions would be an important follow-up project, since there is little documentation on African American expressive culture in this area. The sacred music tradition seems to be the richest source for African American music currently and this survey barely scratched the surface.

The survey focused on the area northeast of the Okefenokee (Waycross in particular). Key events/individuals documented include:

The Festival of Colors (Waycross), 4-24-99. The festival included a few solo spirituals sung by Mr. Willie Character, a retired music educator originally from Rome, Georgia and president of the Black Heritage Committee. The featured performers were the McIntosh County Shouters from Eulonia, GA on the coast who were presented as "historical folklore."

The Albert McKinney Memorial concert at Macedonia Missionary Baptist Church, 8-22-99. This was the only recording made in one of Waycross' historic black congregations. The evening included traditional African American gospel small choir performances, solos, and a lip-sync praise team performance by church youth.

The Taylor Brothers and the New Taylor Singers (Blackshear/Patterson), (interviewed 9-12-99), two generations of turpentiners and family gospel groups, were documented through an initial interview and collection of tapes and CDs. A live recording of the New Taylor Singers was made at the Florida Folk Festival on May 28., 2000 after the grant period had ended.

b. expanding the scope of Harper's work by researching and identifying American Indian traditions.

The American Indian presence in the vicinity deserves further study. C. T. Trowell's work, "Indians in the Okefenokee: Their History and Prehistory" (Okefenokee Wildlife League, Special Publication No. 2, 1989) states that there has been no Creek or Seminole presence in the area since 1850. Two contacts I made during the survey, however, suggest that persons of Indian ancestry (primarily Creek and Cherokee) were living in the region in the twentieth century and keeping a very low profile. Many persons who wished to be inconspicuous have found their way to the Okefenokee throughout its history, and legends and stories still are told about Civil War deserters and escaped slaves, for example. Indian peoples from various tribes were among them. Certainly, it is widely acknowledged that certain pioneer families in the Okefenokee have "Indian blood."

In the fall 1990 powwow program of the Cherokee Tribe of Georgia (see below), the following historical overview of American Indians in Georgia appears: "During the time of the southeastern tribal removals (1830's), some of the people ran away and hid to avoid leaving their beloved country. Most people are aware of the Cherokees who hid out in the Great Smoky Mountains and became known as the Eastern band of Cherokees. Few know that a number of runaway people from different tribes ran south to a place called Fort Moniac on the St. Mary's River 12 miles from St. George, Georgia. There they would be met by Seminole people who would guide them further down into Florida and safety. Some of these people chose to stay in the Fort Moniac area and their descendants still live here today. We are inter-tribal because our people are mixed bloods. Our ancestors have intermarried with Creek, Cherokee, Chowenock, Miccosukee, Seminole, Yucchi, Yamassee and people of other tribes. And of course there was intermarriage with people of early immigrant populations. Because it was illegal and dangerous to be Native American in Georgia from the time of the Removals, many people lost their heritage. Communities and people were dispersed and social customs concealed. That attitude continued up till recent times. Some of our members grew up in families with some traditions passed down more or less intact. Just about all of us grew up in families where our Native American blood was a closely held secret. As a result of this successful concealment we often hear statements made by government officials, by educators, and by the media and by the general public that, 'There are no Indians in Georgia'. "

One individual whose family background would be of interest is Vernie "Desert Flower" Martin. Martin was not interviewed, her husband, Gilles Martin, Chief of the Cherokee Tribe of Georgia

(and himself not from the area) spoke about Vernie "Desert Flower" Martin in an interview for this project. Vernie Martin was born in Baker County, Florida on the south side of the swamp. Her mother was a full-blooded Creek, raised in a Cherokee family in McClenny, Florida. Her father, raised on the edge of the Okefenokee, came from a North Carolina Cherokee background. Vernie's father, a bee keeper, helped build Primitive Baptist churches in the Okefenokee vicinity and Indian people joined those churches. Chief Martin also stated that Indian people chose not to appear in large groups in front of whites due to fear of discrimination and reprisals. Bobby Johns, Florida Heritage Award winner and Chief of the Perdido Bay Tribe of the Southeastern Lower Muscogee Creek, now living in Pensacola, corroborated this view. Johns mentioned in a conversation at the Florida Folk Festival that he was raised in the Okefenokee and worked logging and turpentine. The family pretty much kept to itself due to discrimination; Johns' and Martin's personal experience narratives deserve follow-up. Again, however, the survey fieldwork focused primarily on living traditions. (**Note: See Sounds of South Georgia Radio Archive for a program on Bobby Johns and his boyhood memories of South Georgia.)

I did document the Cherokee Tribe of Georgia and its powwow at St. George in September 1999. The powwow dates to 1982. I also interviewed Chief Giles "Tall Oak" Martin, who is Canadian born of Iroquois and Swiss background but married a Vernie Lauramore (mentioned above), a local woman. The Cherokee Tribe of Georgia is a state, not federal, recognized tribe which began in 1980 and received state recognition in 1993. The tribe is a "descent community" which seeks, among other goals, to "recreate in St. George, Georgia, a traditional Indian community," "preserve for ourselves and all our descendants of indigenous peoples a sense of heritage and culture of our ancestors, and at the same time help the general public understand and appreciate the traditions and values of Native American peoples." It holds a bi-annual powwow, a First and Last Celebration (New Year's), and a Green Corn ceremony in June. The powwow's host drum for four years running, the Redbird Jr. Singers, is made up mostly of non-native former Boy Scouts from south Florida and their wives. They play southern style Plains music, learned from recordings, observation, and from their mentor and elder, Sid Dingman, an adopted Sac and Fox of the Redbird Senior Singers (Ohio), now of Stewart, Florida. There are no Cherokee drums in the Okefenokee vicinity. (A Cherokee descent group in Valdosta, Georgia, has started a drum but they do not associate with the Cherokee Tribe of Georgia.) One member of the Wapiti, a six-member drum from the Atmore, Alabama Muscogee Creek, also was present. This group plays northern-style Plains dance music, and beginning in March, 1999, led a Creek stomp dance with turtle shell rattles at the Cherokee Tribe of Georgia powwow, as opposed to intertribal powwow dances. The powwow vendors included several revivalist flute makers from Florida. Overall, the powwow was characterized by a general pan-Indian Native American spirituality and seemed to be dominated by persons who had recently discovered American Indian roots. (**Note: Student projects by Abel, Maddox, and Caldwell in the South Georgia Folklife Collection focused on this powwow in 2004.)

Field recordings:

Cherokee of Georgia Tribal Council Fall PowWow, St. George, GA, Oct. 1, 1999.

c. updating Harper's work among the Scotch Irish community by continuing work with sacred traditions and identifying key secular traditions. Fieldwork in this area progressed more rapidly, since I already had a good network of contacts prior to the start of the grant period. Because post-survey plans include an exhibition on sacred harp, more oral history of this tradition was collected than with other traditions documented in the survey.

2. The Francis Harper Collection

During the survey, consultant Ann Tweedy and I reviewed the Francis Harper materials from the first half of the twentieth century for unpublished information on Okefenokee folklife and music. Tweedy visited the U. of Kansas, Lawrence where the Spencer Research Library is the official repository for Harper's papers. Tweedy's summary of the UK collection is included in the Appendix. As outlined by Tweedy in her summary report, the UK collection has a greater assortment of correspondence, but it is not catalogued at the present time.

The UK search did lead to the Dictionary of American Regional English recordings of the Okefenokee from the late 1960s (Frederic Cassidy, University of Wisconsin) of which I previously was unaware. Although recorded for dialect, the tapes do contain important contextual and oral history material with a variety of informants. Correspondence with Joan H. Hall, Associate Editor, DARE, was very helpful (6125 Helen C. White Hall, 600 N. Park St., Madison, WI 53706, jdhall@facstaff.wisc.edu). For information on the dictionary, see <http://polyglot.lss.wisc.edu/dare/dare.html>.

I looked at the other major Harper collection: materials entrusted by the Harper family to Delma Presley at Georgia Southern University, Statesboro. This collection is now in the process of transfer to the Special Collections at Georgia Southern. Much material is duplicated between the two collections, especially copies of Harper's draft manuscripts. Georgia Southern is the best source of the two Harper collection sites for folklore and music. Georgia Southern has Harper's original 38 field notebooks, photos, a copy of the sound recordings from the summer of 1944 (the originals are at the Archive of Folk Culture, Library of Congress), a short film (now transferred to video) without sound which shows scenes of square dancing and fiddling among other things, correspondence, notes and manuscript drafts. There is a great deal here of interest in terms of folklore in general and music in particular which is not published in *Okefenokee Album*, Francis Harper and Delma E. Presley, authors (Athens and London: University of Georgia Press, 1981). Harper notated numerous ballad and song texts and provides biographical information on various musicians.

Near the end of the survey, I realized that one obvious avenue for follow-up research is to check with the heirs of Harper's informants to see what musical traditions have been passed on. I had already done so with some members of the Chesser family still living who were recorded by Harper: Roxie Chesser Renshaw Crawford is in her early 90s and living in St. George. Bernice Roddenberry, her niece and daughter to Harry Chesser (the latter recorded by Harper), lives outside Folkston. There do not appear to be any obvious heirs to fiddlers Hamp Mizell, Doc Dorminy, and Jack Mizell in terms of actual fiddle players, but more work is needed in this area to verify this and to determine other types of musicians and repertoires.

One specific outcome of the Harper research is that I have been able to tell family members about items in the collection of which they were previously unaware.

Below, I summarize the major sacred and secular music traditions of the European American predominantly Celtic ancestry population in the Okefenokee vicinity, based on what I know to date:

a) Sacred Traditions

I continued to emphasize the sacred harp traditions (following up on my work prior to the start of the grant period), since these are unique and under-documented variants of the larger sacred harp tradition in the Southeast. Documentation continued of the regular sings and winter-time singing schools held at the Hoboken Elementary School and led by David and Clarke Lee, both fifth generation sacred harp singers in South Georgia. Of particular note was a recording made November 19, 2000 at the home of Johnny and Delorese Lee in Hoboken (David's parents) of a sing using the self-published "Pilgrim's Harp" (known as the "Brown Book"), compiled by David Lee, Clarke Lee, and David's cousin Phillip Reeves. This compilation was created for personal use only and contains various tunes that the Lee family has sung over the years but which were not in the printed books used by or known to the family. The authors transcribed tunes that were not in any songbook known to them at the time of publication. Indeed, David Lee states that 90% of Lee family singing occurred orally, and core singers know many tunes by heart. He quipped at the Valdosta Tunes and Traditions Concert, Feb. 4, 2000, "We're just using these books so we don't mess up in front of y'all." At the November sing mentioned above, David called various members of the Lee family together to sing in the old slower more ornamented style they grew up with. This style is no longer used in the monthly community sings at Hoboken. David Lee prepared documentation on his family singing tradition and "Hoboken style" for a Library of Congress Local Legacies project; an edited version of the "Pilgrim's Harp" recording was included with these materials. I also began to document sub-variants of the local style, especially splinter groups of the Lee family and oral histories of other family traditions. Singing schools, documented during the survey, still are held at the Hoboken School preceding the monthly sing on the Saturday before the Third Sunday. These sessions teach rudiments of singing by imitation and example: the notes and shapes, rhythm, and walking time (the latter a unique feature of the Hoboken style of singing). The highlight of the singing year is the newly re-instituted All-Day sing which occurs in March. This event is actually a weekend affair, with formal and informal sings in private homes on Friday and Saturday evenings, and Sunday late morning through afternoon. The All-Day sing itself occurs at the Hoboken School from 9 to 3, with a dinner on the grounds at the noon break. As many as 300 singers from Georgia and around the country now attend the sing, reflecting the remarkable entry of Southeast Georgia onto the national sacred harp radar since 1994, when the Hoboken singers first realized that other folks besides their own small group still sang sacred harp (see Appendix for article on the Hoboken sacred harp and David Lee's Local Legacies summary report.)

Harper did not record the Lee family singing; however, he did record four siblings of the Chesser family of Chesser's Island (Harry, Tom, Kate, and Roxie, dubbed "the Chesser quartet") singing

sacred harp in the summer of 1944. The surviving member of this group, Roxie Chesser Renshaw Crawford, is still living in St. George, Georgia, in the bend of the St. Mary's River. At the annual Chesser Reunion (currently held at Trader's Hill outside Folkston), the program begins with remarks by Mrs. Crawford, as the elder of the family, and the singing of "Amazing Grace" in sacred harp style. Mrs. Crawford is assisted, among others, by her son Donald Renshaw, her niece Bernice Chesser Roddenberry, and Roddenberry's daughters. Three Roddenberry daughters (LaTrelle MacDowell, Doris Floyd, and Betty Owens) frequently perform as a gospel trio at the Philadelphia Freewill Baptist Church outside Folkston, hence the harmony and singing style of the Chesser sacred harp singing now is more influenced by the gospel trio sound. The family's historic church roots, however, are at Sardis Primitive Baptist Church where singing styles are slow, ornamented and a cappella. The Roddenberry daughters plus Donald Renshaw formed the core for informal gospel singing at the Chesser Reunion. Mrs. Roddenberry and her seven daughters also sing out of the four-note book at the annual October Chesser Reunion, held at the Chesser Homestead in the Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge outside Folkston, and at an elderhostel held at the Stephen Foster State Park in Fargo. Some of the Chesser family now periodically attend monthly sings at the Hoboken School, led by David and Clarke Lee. At the All-Day Sing in March 2000, Roxie Crawford was introduced as the eldest sacred harp singer present.

Gospel sings growing out of Methodist, Baptist, and independent church traditions increasingly have supplanted sacred harp throughout South Georgia. Revivals, tent meetings, and all-night sings are still frequent occurrences. One of the largest and oldest "all-night" gospel sings occurs in the Waycross Stadium. This is Southern "white" gospel with programming recently taken over by Bill Bailey of Bill Bailey Concert Promotions, an Oneco, Florida-based minister and promoter of major Southern Gospel groups around the country (www.billbailey.org). Bailey is with FCC Ministries, an organization which promotes southern gospel concert events in the Southeast. FCC Ministries hooked up with the Shriners in 1996 to book and promote the Waycross Shrine sing. Headliners are not local but rather are professional touring soloists, groups, and quartets booked by Bailey. The audience is primarily from north Florida and south Georgia and is widely promoted by local Christian radio stations and book stores. The draws from 4-5000 people annually according to Bailey, but I don't think the 1999 crowd was that large. For the 1999 Shrine Sing, headliners were professional southern gospel entertainers the Kingsmen, Gold City, the Perrys, Kirk Talley, Tony Gore and Majesty, and the Greenes. The area in the stadium walkway was full of booths for the headliner groups selling videos, t-shirts, posters, CDs, and other promotional material. All of this is hooked into Singing News Magazine: the Printed Voice of Gospel Music, which was prominently for sale as well.

I recorded the afternoon talent show, the only venue for local performers and nonprofessional singers from throughout the region, including South Georgia. Of the 37 entrants, most were from Georgia, but not necessarily from south Georgia. Contest judges based their decision on contestants dress, pitch, communication and overall quality. The winner received a \$500 cash prize and a singing spot on the evening concert. The winner was Stellar Wind, from Rincon, Georgia. The field recording of the talent contest gave a good overview of the types of styles prevalent in the area: these generally reflect broader Southern Gospel styles rather than any distinctive local tradition or variant of these styles (as is the case with sacred harp, for example).

I also recorded the hymn singing of the Bennettite subset of the Alabama Association of Primitive Baptists at New Hope Church in Hickox. (I previously have documented the more conservative Crawfordite subset which is reluctant to be recorded. During the grant period I did visit another Crawfordite church, High Bluff, located in Hoboken, but did not record or photograph.) Primitive Baptist hymnody exists in a symbiotic relationship with local sacred harp, sharing tunes, tempos, ornamentation, and in some cases text. The two branches of the Alabama both sing a cappella out of *Primitive Hymns* by Benjamin Lloyd; however, the Crawfordite churches tend to have more multi-part singing since the members of these churches tend to have remained more active with sacred harp singing. The recent book on *Benjamin Lloyd's Hymn Book* edited by Joyce Cauthen (see bibliography) includes examples of the Lee family singing out of the Lloyd Hymnal.

b) Secular Traditions:

Secular music traditions still deserve considerable fieldwork attention. Survey work to date confirmed my earlier assumptions that the old-time frolics and square dances have been supplanted by bluegrass, country and pop forms. The survey generated leads to various pickers but not many formal groups. There still may be square dances in the Okefenokee, but I have yet to find them, and certain long-time Swamper families, such as the Roddenberrys, were not able to provide leads. Of particular interest, however, is the retention of the yodel or "holler" documented by Harper, and certain traditional ballads, especially by Bernice Roddenberry's children and family.

Bluegrass parks are located at Trader's Hill (Folkston) and Twin Oaks Music Park (Hoboken). I did not document the former. The latter holds a twice yearly Bluegrass Convention (May and September) on the grounds of the (Ira) Whitmer Crews farm. Crews and his family have developed the park to house the convention and to accommodate large RV clubs during the rest of the year. I attended the 26th annual bluegrass convention in September 1999 (ironically held the same weekend as and just a few miles down the road from the High Bluff Primitive Baptist Church annual meeting. The Crawfordite subset of Primitive Baptists, of which High Bluff is a member, do not believe in secular music or instruments). The house band for the convention and the park is the Flat Top Travelers, composed of Crews on lead vocals and rhythm guitar, his daughter Sharon Crews Crawford on banjo, Hubert Cox on fiddle, Sheila Stewart on bass, Mary Lee Prevatt on vocals, and her son Roger on harmonica (an interesting and unusual instrument for a bluegrass band). The Flat Top Travelers have changed personnel over the years and appear to be one of the longer standing bluegrass groups in the area. Two of their early LPs were donated to VSU as part of the survey. The three-day festival features bluegrass and bluegrass gospel groups from around the region and in some cases across the country, an arts and crafts show, a food concession, informal picking and camping, and a Wednesday open-mike night for local bands and guests. The sound engineer for the event, Madison Gibson of Waycross, is a descendent of a famous Primitive Baptist elder at Sardis Church, W.O. Gibson, and is himself a bluegrass musician with an out-of-town South Georgia band.

Obediah's Okefenok, a historic Okefenokee farmstead, also features bluegrass on special weekends in an attempt to boost attendance. On July 3, 1999 I recorded The Silver Creek Band from Waycross (together five years) who were inspired to get their start by the Flat Top

Travelers and their bluegrass convention. The other featured band, Marshgrass, was from coastal Georgia at Brunswick. The band leader for Silver Creek, guitarist and lead vocalist Billy Shadron, comes from a family background of country guitar pickers, fiddle, and banjo. Still to be documented are musicians such as Patrick and Mark Thrift of Folkston who play banjo and fiddle.

Fieldwork for the Harper follow-up is listed below (all events were recorded unless otherwise noted):

Singing School, Hoboken, Feb. 20, 1999

Hoboken All-Day Sing, March 19, 20, 21, 1999

Interview with Jerome Lee, Woodrow and Mary Wainright, and Lucy McIntosh about sacred harp and Primitive Baptist hymnody, Hickox, GA March 31, 1999

Service at New Hope Primitive Baptist Church, Hickox, GA June 20, 1999

Bluegrass event at Obediah's Okefenok, Waycross, July 3, 1999

43rd annual Shriner All-Day gospel sing talent contest, Waycross, June 10, 1999

Hoboken Sing, May 15, 1999

Interview with Georgia Butts on reminiscences of music traditions, Waycross, May 15, 1999

Interview with Whit "Ira" Crews and Sharon Crawford on the Flat Top Travelers and the Twin Oaks Music Park, Hoboken, GA 6-19-99

Interview with David Lee, Hoboken, June 19, 1999

Hoboken Sing, June 19, 1999

High Bluff Primitive Baptist Church, Hoboken, 7-11-99 (field notes only)

Research trip to Statesboro, Georgia Southern University, Francis Harper Collection, August, 1999

Research trips by Ann Tweedy to University of Kansas (Lawrence) on Harper collection (summer 1999)

Interview and photo ID of Harper photographs with Roxie Crawford and Nina Dikes, St. George, GA, Sept., 2, 1999

Flat Top Travelers host Twenty-Fourth Annual Bluegrass Music Convention and Gospel Sing (including fiddlers' demonstration), Twin Oaks Park, Hoboken, Sept. 10-12, 1999

Sacred Harp sing (held on weekend of High Bluff Primitive Baptist Church annual meeting) at home of Billy and Barbara Lee, Waycross, Sept. 11, 1999

Billy's Island Reunion, Stephen Foster State Park, Fargo, GA, Oct. 2, 1999 (photographs only)

Chesser Reunion, Trader's Hill, Folkston, GA, Oct. 16, 1999

Lee Family Sing (recorded for Local Legacies Project, home of Johnny and Delorese Lee, Hoboken November 19, 1999

Hoboken Sacred Harp Sing, November 20, 1999

Interview with Johnny and Delorese Lee on sacred harp and other traditions, Hoboken, November 19, 1999

Tunes and Traditions Concert, Valdosta, Feb. 4, 2000 (included Hoboken sacred harp)

Singing School and Sacred Harp Sing, Hoboken, GA Feb. 19, 2000

c) locating documentation in accessible local and regional depositories. This material is now part of the South Georgia Folklife Collection, VSU Archives and Special Collections, Odum Library.

d) expanding contacts with key musicians and cultural workers to further technical assistance and community support functions of the new South Georgia Folklife Project. The chief accomplishment in the area of technical assistance has been assisting sacred harp song leader and singing school teacher David Lee with establishing Hoboken Sacred Harp as a Local Legacies Project. Documentation for this grant and the Local Legacies project thus complement one another. As a follow-up to the grant survey, Lee and I, along with Okefenokee Heritage Center exhibit committee member Cathy Larkins, have collaborated on a small photo/text/audio exhibit on Hoboken sacred harp which will travel and be housed at the Okefenokee Heritage Center. (see Sacred Harp exhibit link on the South Georgia Folklife Collection website.) I also have made numerous contacts during the survey which are proving invaluable in my work with the South Georgia Folklife Project to document, interpret, present, and support the folklife practitioners of South Georgia.

e) identifying the goals and needs of traditional musicians, especially as they concern the future use of the collected materials and developing a viable plan for the second or public programming phase of the project.

Please see d) above.

3. Were original expectations for achieving project outcomes realistic? This project benefited greatly from contacts established prior to the grant period. The chief challenge, as always, has

been scheduling fieldwork in-between other demands of first two years of my NEA Folk and Traditional Arts Infrastructure Initiative grant for the South Georgia Folklife Project. I generated far more leads than I was able to follow up. The initial plan to survey all seven target counties (Echols, Clinch, Ware, Brantley, Charlton (Georgia), and Nassau and Baker (Florida)) was overly ambitious. The survey did generate leads in most of the counties surrounding the Okefenokee, but fieldwork concentrated in Ware, Brantley, and Charlton Counties (Georgia). Folklorist Jon Kay (White Springs, Florida) was contracted to do one day of reconnaissance survey in Baker County, Florida which identified sources of oral history for older forms of music and a few current country and gospel musicians. Kay also has interviewed Nancy Morgan of White Springs, a Florida Heritage awardee and fixture of the Florida Folk Festival, whose father grew up in the "Pocket" outside Fargo in the Okefenokee. Mrs. Morgan knows a number of traditional ballads. I previously had done fieldwork on sacred harp and Primitive Baptist hymnody in Nassau County. Kay's planned survey of the Suwannee River Valley may generate further useful leads relevant to the Florida side of the Okefenokee, particularly in Columbia and Hamilton Counties which are to the southwest of the swamp.

4. Have there been any unanticipated outcomes? The chief unanticipated outcome has been identification of events and informants on Cherokee and Creek traditions which deserve follow-up, especially in terms of oral history and cross-cultural interaction in the region. Another unanticipated outcome was the depth and richness of the Harper collection, which has led to other sources, among them the DARE tapes of the Okefenokee (Dictionary of American Regional English), which were ordered from the project headquarters at the University of Wisconsin (Madison) and copied as part of the Okefenokee Traditional Music Survey (see description above).

This music survey also has underscored the need to expand the study of this fascinating folk region to include other forms of folklore, past and present, and to focus on personal experience narratives and oral history. Some of this work is already underway, and several Swamper descendants have written and published family stories (cf. Morgan, Velie, Thrift in bibliography below). Harper's work, thus, needs to be followed up in areas other than music. Some of this work has been undertaken in part (for example, Cothran's studies of fishing guide and raconteur Lem Griffis (1979, 1991) and Jon Kay's recently completed audio tape of Folkston raconteur Zelton Connor, the latter available at the Stephen Foster State Park (White Springs, FL) gift shop, but a comprehensive follow-up to *Okefinokee Album* is yet to be written and researched.

Of particular interest and importance is the need to focus on local knowledge and folk ecology, especially in light of current environmental issues with the Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge. Reading Francis Harper's field journals and articles, it became clear that much of his work with local fauna was based on the Swampers' deep traditional knowledge of the environment in which they lived. His guides and sources were local hunters and fishermen who described species and habitat, kept records of sightings of species of interest to Harper, guided him around the swamp, and so on. In my own informal conversations with lifelong residents, many of whom have grown up in the swamp itself, it became clear that important local knowledge still exists and is underutilized by (if not often at odds with) park and wildlife refuge managers and scientists. Whether or not this gap can be bridged in helpful ways remains to be seen.

5. The planned strategies for each objective were appropriate, although as stated previously, the scope of the project for one fieldworker, given the time allotted, was overly ambitious.

6. The project deadline was extended, but the survey continued as planned.

7. No new activities were added.

B. Context

1. Describe the factors that either helped or impeded the effective implementation of your organization's project. The single fieldworker model, aided by consultants, was effective up to a point, but inadequate for the scope and time allotted as stated previously. Much important work was accomplished; ideally, however, a team approach would allow for more effective and comprehensive field research. Fieldwork will continue after the grant period is completed, since this region is central to the work of the South Georgia Folklife Project and so many leads and contacts were generated.

Distance from the fieldwork area (at least two hours to the far southeast corner of the Okefenokee) affected the frequency and amount of fieldwork there, but I still feel that this was an extremely useful survey. To overcome distance, the travel budget allowed for overnight stays in order to minimize travel back and forth from Valdosta to the field site and to make field trips more time efficient.

2. What has your organization done to overcome any impediments? I obtained some fieldwork assistance from David Lee through his Local Legacies project on Hoboken sacred harp, and from Jon Kay with his one-day survey of Baker County. Kay was asked to do more work on the south side of the Okefenokee, but was unable to commit additional time. Chris Trowell has been extremely generous in sharing his recent research and extensive bibliographic knowledge.

C. Project Director's Analysis

1. What do you think are the most important outcomes, impacts and lessons learned from this project?

Increased network of contacts and collegial relationships throughout the service area of the South Georgia Folklife Project. These contacts will enable the project to better support the work of traditional artists and provide appropriate technical assistance to artists and communities in the region.

Partnership with the Black Heritage Committee of the Okefenokee Heritage Center

The Hoboken Sacred Harp Local Legacies Project

A new body of field data from an important and under-researched folk region

Groundwork laid for follow-up cultural conservation activities such as the Okefenokee participants at the 2000 Florida Folk Festival; the Let Us Sing sacred harp exhibition; and soundtrack consultation for the visitor center orientation film for the Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge (the latter not incorporated in the final product)

Increased access to and awareness by descendants of material in the Harper collection

Perhaps the most telling lesson learned in this survey has been to underscore the continuing importance of surveys such as this and their adequate access and preservation. The Harper collection, for example, is a tremendous resource and I have been touched by the reaction of family members as word spreads about my familiarity with the collection and its contents. I have been able to put various family members in contact with tapes, documentation, and photographs of their family members. I trust that this survey will have a similar impact. Public folklorists play a crucial role in heritage conservation, but we are often so busy producing programs and products that we lack sufficient time for fieldwork. I am grateful to the Lila Wallace Reader's Digest Community Folklife Program for funding a survey such as this.

2. How, if at all, has this project changed the way in which your organization or others address these issues?

N/A

3. Has your organization experienced a growth in audience or constituency as a result of this project? What has our organization learned from the project about how to build audiences or better serve communities?

Certainly this project has greatly increased my network of contacts and hence my constituents and potential audience. The media could have been used much more effectively, and I need to work to build personal contacts with reporters working in the Okefenokee region. Visibility in the region, personal contacts, careful understanding of local cultural politics, and listening to local musicians are good ways to serve communities with effective technical assistance and programming.

D. Dissemination/Communication

1. Information gleaned during the survey has been disseminated to others in the field of folk culture activities in the following ways: 1) a Local Legacies Project on Hoboken sacred harp which will be available via the Internet and the Library of Congress archives for the project; 2) two conference presentations on sacred harp at the American Folklore Society annual meeting (October 1999) and the Society for American Music (March 2000) (now published in

the Society for American Music Bulletin); 3) presentations and a program book article on Okefenokee folklore at the 2000 Florida Folk Festival (May 26-28). In addition, information about the Francis Harper collection has been made available to interested family members whose ancestors were documented by Harper in ways previously unknown to them, and to a film crew working with the Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge on a new interpretive plan for the Visitors Center. Corrected photo IDs for Francis Harper's photographs have been made available to Dr. Del Presley at Georgia Southern for incorporation into the Harper collection.

2. Future plans for disseminating information about the project will include a planned web site for the South Georgia Folklife Project. Future radio programs also are planned. For more information, please see B. (1) below.

- a. a. Future planned activities resulting from this project include 1) an Okefenokee component at the 2000 Florida Folk Festival (took place May 26-28) with three performing groups identified during the survey and an interpretive program article; a radio piece on sacred harp for Florida Public Radio produced Bill Dudley for the Florida Humanities Council; a radio piece on sacred harp for PRI's Pulse of the Planet; "Let Us Sing: Southeast Georgia Sacred Harp" exhibit funded by the Georgia Folklife Program to open in March, 2001.
- b. b. Funding for future project-related activities include continuation of the South Georgia Folklife Project (currently funded through 2002 by VSU and the NEA Folk and Traditional Arts Infrastructure Initiative) and specific project grants, such as the Georgia Folklife Program and others. During the next two years I will be working to try to establish firm ongoing funding for the folklife project at VSU.
- c. c. This project could easily be replicated elsewhere. Indeed, this is the basis for all good public programming: a solid base in field research followed by interpretive programs which disseminate findings while assisting artists and implementing local, culturally appropriate cultural conservation strategies.

E. Appendices:

Press clippings

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