Gullah-Geechee collections
at the American Folklife Center, Library of Congress

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Introduction

In 1926, Henry Wiley sang into the microphone of a wax cylinder recorder operated by folklorist Robert Winslow Gordon. At the time Gordon was documenting musical traditions in Coastal Georgia, specifically around the town of Darien. When Gordon became the first head of the Library of Congress' Archive of American Folksong a few years later he donated his collection of 900 wax cylinders as the archive's first recordings. The performance Mr. Wiley gave was of the Gullah standard "Come by Here," which in time became world-famous as "Kum Bah Yah." The placement of this recording in the Library of Congress signaled acknowledgement of Gullah-Geechee as one of the foundational cultures in the American patchwork. Since that time, Library of Congress holdings from this region have increased significantly. This guide provides information about both archival and published materials that will help researchers to better understand this important culture.
Florida

AFC 1940/011: Florida WPA Recordings, 1940

Twenty-two 12-inch discs made in Florida for the Florida WPA Writers' and Music Projects and for the Archive of American Folk Song by Carita Doggett Corse, Robert Cornwall, John Corse, and John Filareton in Glades County, Jacksonville, Kenansville, Mayport, Sebring, and Tarpon Springs, Florida, and at sea off the Georgia coast, March-July 1940. The collection includes one folder of logs and notes. [online presentation]

AFS 3890B-3891A: Two discs containing "Lord, Lord" and "The Johnson Girls" sung by the crew of The Boys (a menhaden fishing boat of Mayport, Florida). Recorded off the coast of Georgia by Robert Cornwall and Robert Cook, July 2, 1940. (8 minutes)

Georgia

AFC 1928/002: Robert Winslow Gordon Cylinder Collection

825 wax cylinders recorded by Robert Winslow Gordon 1922-1928 in California, Georgia, Kentucky, North Carolina, South Carolina, and West Virginia. Represents a cross section of American folksong including blues, spirituals, and ballads, British-American ballads, gospel singing, sea chantsies, recitations, and miscellaneous recordings such as the inauguration of President Coolidge. Singers include Bascom Lamar Lunsford, Nellie Galt, and others.

354 songs on 366 cylinders recorded by Robert Winslow Gordon in Darien, Georgia, and the surrounding areas from February 1926, through 1927


Sound recordings made between 1931-1937 to document American English dialects, mostly from New England and eastern Canada, for a proposed Linguistic Atlas of the United States and Canada. Most informants were elderly New Englanders, and included whalers, fisherman, farmers, and housewives. Among the well-known people who were recorded are Alistair Cooke, Charles H. Grandgent, John A. Lomax, Alan Lomax, Edward Sapir, and B. F. Skinner. Some recordings were made of Gullah dialects found on the Georgia and South Carolina coast and recordings include narratives of former slaves. Several recordings document other languages and regions. The collection includes project correspondence, transcripts, and index cards. [finding aid]


AFC 1973/028: Laura Boulton Collection, part 1: Negro folklore

Collection of field recordings of spirituals, hymns, and gospel music recorded by Walter Garwick between 1935-1937 from African Americans at various locations in Virginia, South Carolina, Georgia, Tennessee, and Alabama. In addition to sacred music, the recordings include Gullah prayers, sermons, tales, Br'er Rabbit stories, and vendors' street cries in South Carolina; spells, remedies, and tales recorded in South Georgia; a dialect play, "The Brown Spider" by Miss
Blanche Nevins, and a folk play, "The Silver Chariot," by Granville Louis, read by the playwright at Talladega, Alabama; and some secular and children’s songs.

AFS 15,687-15,704: Thirteen discs recorded in South Georgia

**AFC 1935/001: Alan Lomax, Zora Neale Hurston, and Mary Elizabeth Barnicle Expedition Collection**

Two hundred twenty-seven 12-inch discs of instrumentals, religious services, songs, and stories recorded in the Bahamas, Florida, and Georgia by Mary Elizabeth Barnicle, Zora Neale Hurston, and Alan Lomax, June-August 1935.

AFS 309-348: Forty discs containing instrumentals, songs, and stories recorded in Frederica, Georgia, June 1935. (5 hours)

**AFC 1977/014: Mary Hippard Collection of Georgia Sea Island Recordings**

African American religious and secular songs, including children’s game songs, sung by Mabel A. Hillery of the Georgia Sea Island Singers, mother of Mary Hippard. These recordings are undated, ca. 1970.

**AFC 2004/004: Alan Lomax Collection**

Collection comprises manuscripts, sound recordings, photographs, film, and videorecordings created and collected by Alan Lomax in his work documenting song, music, dance, and body movement from many cultures. Includes field recordings and photographs Lomax made in the Bahamas, the Caribbean, England, France, Georgia, Haiti, Ireland, Italy, Morocco, Romania, Russia, Scotland, Spain, the United States, and Wales, 1930s-2004; and his research materials on cantometrics and choreometrics.

11 folders of manuscripts, 97 audio recordings, and 202 b/w and color photographs, made during the “Southern Journey,” 1959-1960 field trip, especially during filming of *Colonial Williamsburg* in April 1960 at Williamsburg, VA, and also generally relating to the Georgia Sea Island Singers of St. Simons Island, 1961-1974. [online collection] [online collection]

**AFC 2014/008: Bess Lomax Hawes collection**

Papers and audiovisual materials relating to the career and personal life of folk arts administrator, folklorist, filmmaker, musician, and teacher Bess Lomax Hawes, most from 1960-2001.

Manuscripts and sound recordings relating to Bessie Jones and the Georgia Sea Island Singers of St. Simons Island [finding aid]

**AFC 2009/032: Lou Curtiss collection**

Collection of digital copies of analog recordings of performances and interviews originally on 420 audiotapes from the collection of Lou Curtiss, recording engineer and record store owner, documenting the first nine years of the San Diego Folk Festival, 1967-1975, plus performances at the Sign of the Sun Bookstore, Folk Arts Rare Records, the Heritage Mission Beach, at house concerts, and other California venues. A second series of 57 audiotape recordings largely by Sam Hinton includes master tapes for his radio series on KOGO radio circa 1968, field
recordings by Guy Carawan on Johns Island, South Carolina in 1964-1965; recordings of Pete Seeger 1955 and 1957; Seamus Ennis in concert in 1964; a lecture by A. L. Lloyd in 1964; concert by Doc and Merle Watson, and other performers including Hedy West, Sandy and Caroline Paton, Earl Collins, Alan Mills, and Larry Hanks. A third series includes copies of radio programs from station XERB Rosarita Beach, Baja California, Mexico of country music from 1948-1951 featuring the Delmore Brothers and others.

8 recordings of Bessie Jones of the Georgia Sea Island Singers, 1962-1970, made at the San Diego folk festival

**AFC 1995/006: Seattle Folklore Society Collection**

Fifty-four 7-inch tapes of 33 concerts and two workshops presented and recorded in Seattle, Washington, by the Seattle Folklore Society, 1965-73. Many well-known bluegrass, blues, folk, and gospel artists are represented.

SR2: One tape containing 13 songs sung by the Georgia Sea Island Singers of St. Simons Island, Georgia. Recorded February 28, 1965. (1 hour)

**AFC 1977/024: John Garst Duplication Project**

Collection of sound tape recordings of secular folk music, ballads, and sacred vocal music recorded in the Southern States and collected by John Garst. Includes folk music performed on banjo, dulcimer, and fiddle, unaccompanied songs and ballads, gospel music, and spirituals. Approximately half of this collection is shape-note singing from the Sacred Harp, Social Harp, and other hymnals, recorded from various groups in Alabama, Mississippi, and Georgia, in homes, churches, singing conventions, and recording studios. Many of these recordings were made by R. A. Stewart, a hymn leader. John Garst recorded shape-note singing at the University of Georgia and at Primitive Baptist and other churches in Georgia. There are a few recordings dubbed from television programs; and an interview with Alonzo Hodges. Typescript page in the collection, dated 1966, has various sets of lyrics to the song "Little Joe."

AFS 19,104B2: One tape containing songs sung by the Georgia Sea Island Singers. Recorded in unknown location in Georgia, by John F. Garst, November 11, 1966. (30 minutes)

**AFC 1980/039: 1977 Inaugural folk dance and concert collection**

Eight 10-inch tapes of musical performances by numerous artists including Beau Soleil, Jimmy Driftwood, John Jackson, and Ralph Stanley from folk and ethnic music and dance events celebrating the inauguration of President Jimmy Carter. Recorded at the National Visitors Center and at Union Station in Washington, D.C., January 18 and 21, 1977. Events sponsored by the Smithsonian Institution. The collection includes 1 3/4 linear inches of correspondence, logs, performance releases, programs, and schedules.


**AFC 2000/003: Art Rosenbaum Georgia Folklore Collection**
Two-hundred and thirty-six audiocassettes of ballads, banjo tunes, blues, gospel, shout, oral history interviews, and work songs recorded by Art Rosenbaum in coastal and north Georgia, 1955-1983. The collection includes 1/2 linear inch of a collection summary, correspondence, an inventory of performers and songs, and one computer disk containing a collection guide and inventory files.

GFC 295-315: recorded in the Georgia Sea Islands [finding aid]

**AFC 2001/017: National Book Festival 2001 Storytelling Pavilion**


Performance by Ron and Natalie Daise

**AFC 2002/025: National Book Festival, American Folklife Center Storytelling Pavilion, 2002-10-12**

National Book Festival American Folklife Center Storytelling Pavilion, 2002-10-12

Featuring Roslyn Bresnick-Perry, Cambodian American Heritage, Peter Cook, Georgia Sea Island Singers, Waddie Mitchell, Chuna McIntyre, Antonio Sacre, Tom Weakley, Wild Zappers. One videotape is identified as having footage of First Lady Laura Bush and Mrs. Putin.

Performance by the Georgia Sea Island Singers

**South Carolina**

**AFC 1973/028: Laura Boulton Collection Part 1, Negro Folklore**

Collection of field recordings of spirituals, hymns, and gospel music recorded by Walter Garwick between 1935-1937 from African Americans at various locations in Virginia, South Carolina, Georgia, Tennessee, and Alabama. In addition to sacred music, the recordings include Gullah prayers, sermons, tales, Br'er Rabbit stories, and vendors' street cries in South Carolina; spells, remedies, and tales recorded in South Georgia; a dialect play, "The Brown Spider" by Miss Blanche Nevins, and a folk play, "The Silver Chariot," by Granville Louis, read by the playwright at Talladega, Alabama; and some secular and children's songs.


Collection of disc recordings of spirituals, sermons, and prayers recorded in black churches in Cromwell Alley, Charleston, South Carolina; and on Johns Island, in McClellanville, Collins Creek, and other locations in South Carolina, 1937-1938 by members of the Society for the Preservation of Spirituals. The collection also includes concert performances and home recordings featuring members of the Society for the Preservation of Spirituals recorded on Edisto Island, South Carolina; Asheville and Buncombe County, North Carolina, and other locations, 1938 and 1952-1954. Two discs document hucksters performing traditional street cries in competitions at the Azalea Festival in 1938.

AFS 22,513-22,516; 22,518-22,557: Spirituals, prayers, sermons, and street cries recorded in Charleston, Collins Creek, Cromwell Alley, Edisto Island, and Johns Island, SC, as well as performances of spirituals and street cries by The Society for the Preservation of the Negro Spiritual of Charleston, South Carolina.

**AFC 1984/011: American Dialect Society Collection**

Sound recordings made between 1931-1937 to document American English dialects, mostly from New England and eastern Canada, for a proposed Linguistic Atlas of the United States and Canada. Most informants were elderly New Englanders, and included whalers, fisherman, farmers, and housewives. Among the well-known people who were recorded are Alistair Cooke, Charles H. Grandgent, John A. Lomax, Alan Lomax, Edward Sapir, and B. F. Skinner. Some recordings were made of Gullah dialects found on the Georgia and South Carolina coast and recordings include narratives of former slaves. Several recordings document other languages and regions. The collection includes project correspondence, transcriptions, and index cards.

[finding aid]

AFS 25,650; 25,763-25,764: Three discs containing Diana Brown discussing crops, unfortunately most of the audio is faint and indistinct. Recorded in Edisto Island, South Carolina/Gullah, [July 6, 1932/4.]

AFS 25,651: One disc containing Anne Crosby discussing personal history, children, returning to Edisto Island, and difficulties of life now. Recorded in Edisto Island, South Carolina/Gullah, May 28, 1932.

AFS 25,652: One disc containing Hester Milligan discussing cotton, name and address, fighting, and crabs. Recorded in Edisto Island, South Carolina/Gullah, June 25, 1932.

AFS 25,655: One disc containing Paris Capers discussing personal history, farming, religious experiences, being a deacon, and prayer meetings. Recorded in Frogmore, St. Helena Island, South Carolina/Gullah, June 27, 1932.

AFS 25,656: One disc containing Samuel Polite discussing experiences as a slave before the Civil War and growing corn. Recorded in St. Helena Island, South Carolina/Gullah, June 27, 1932. [audio, part 1] [audio, part 2] [transcript]

AFS 25,657: One disc containing Ann Scott discussing family history, Civil War, experiences as slave and a prayer. Recorded in St. Helena Island, South Carolina/Gullah, by Lorenzo Dow Turner, June 27, 1932. [audio, part 1] [audio, part 2] [transcript]

AFC 25,658B: One disc containing Lucy Capers discussing places lived and a train trip. Recorded in Johns Island, South Carolina/Gullah, May 14, 1934.

AFC 25,659: One disc containing Susan A. Quall discussing various stories and the deaths of her husband and son. Recorded in Johns Island, South Carolina/Gullah, May 16, 1934. [audio, part 1][audio, part 2] [transcript, part 1] [transcript, part 2]

AFC 25,667: One disc containing Sarah Ross discussing a prayer and personal information. Recorded in Wadmalaw Island, South Carolina/Gullah, May 7, 1932.

AFC 25,668: One disc containing Prince Smith discussing going south to work, cotton, and work. Recorded in Wadmalaw Island, South Carolina, May 2, 1932.

AFC 25,669: One disc containing Sackie Sweetwine, unfortunately most of the audio is faint and indistinct. Recorded in Wadmalaw Island, South Carolina/Gullah, May 4, 1932.

**AFC 1935/002: John A. Lomax Southern States Collection, 1933-1937**


AFC 830; 832-834; 868; 877: Six discs containing songs, spirituals, hymns, sermons, and prayers, including a narrative on the storm of 1893 spoken by Mrs. Hagar Brown and others, and a service conducted at the Heaven's Gate Methodist Church. Recorded in Mount Arena on Sandy Island and Murrells Inlet, South Carolina, August 1936.

AFC 903: One disc containing songs and hymns sung by Drew Howard, Lillie Knox, and Minnie Knox. Recorded in Murrells Inlet, South Carolina, January 1937.

**AFC 1937/007: John A. Lomax Southern States Collection, 1937**

One hundred forty-nine 12-inch discs of recordings from Alabama, Kentucky, South Carolina, and Texas, recorded by John A. Lomax and Ruby T. Lomax, June-July 1937.

AFC 1025A2, B1-2; 1026-1039B2; 1040-1047A1: Twenty-three discs containing Hymns, lullabys, spirituals, ballads, and work songs including performances by the Pearson's Funeral Home Choir, work songs and calls, and spirituals by Reverend Aaron Pinnacle. Recorded in Charleston, Columbia, Mullins, and Murrells Inlet, South Carolina, July 1937.

AFC 1047A2-1054; [1304]: Nine discs containing "Plantation Echoes," a play written and directed by Rosa Warren Wilson. Recordings include spirituals, songs, dance tunes, sermons and prayers performed by singers and dancers from Wadmalaw Island. Recorded in Hibernian Hall, Charleston, South Carolina, July 1937. [note: Act I begins on AFS 1048; Act II begins on AFS 1304.]

**AFC 1939/001: John and Ruby Lomax 1939 Southern States Recording Trip**
One hundred forty-seven discs recorded by John A. and Ruby T. Lomax in various southern states between April and June 1939. Genres include ballads, blues, children's songs, cowboy songs, dance music, fiddle tunes, field hollers, lullabies, Mexican corridos, play-party songs, religious dramas, spirituals, work songs. See also AFC 3551-3557. [online presentation]

AFS 2711B; 2719; 2720A2, B; 2721-2727A1, B: Ten tapes containing spirituals, hymns, play-party songs, blues, and calls, including work songs by convicts on a chain gang, and hymns by the congregation of Little Hope School House. Recorded in Anderson County, Clemson, Greenville, and Murrells Inlet, South Carolina, June 1939.

AFC 1939/005: Herbert Halpert 1939 Southern States Recording Expedition

Four hundred and nineteen 12-inch discs of instrumentals, monologs, prayers, sermons, songs, and stories recorded in Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia, by Herbert Halpert, March 15-June 23, 1939, for the Folk Arts Committee of the WPA and the Library of Congress. The collection includes one and one-fourth linear inches of articles, contact sheets, correspondence, descriptions, interviews, lists, photographs, reports, and song texts.

AFS 3147-3152A: Songs, spirituals, street cries, and calls with comments by the singers. Recorded in Edisto Island, South Carolina, June 1939.

AFC 1950/019: A.H. Stoddard Collection of Gullah Recordings


AFC 1957/006: Penn Community Services Religious Songs and Services

Collection of field recordings of Gullah religious songs, spirituals, hymns, and church services recorded by Penn Community Services in Frogmore and other locations on St. Helena Island, South Carolina. Includes a Gullah "house blessing" and 5 songs sung by an unknown congregation. Recorded by Courtney Siceloff, Director, Penn Community Services, on St. Helena Island, South Carolina, 1955-1956. Includes correspondence between Siceloff, Cornelius A. Wood, Jr. (a Trustee of Penn Community Services) and the Library of Congress staff about the project (1952-1957)

AFC 1958/016: Harold Reeves Collection of Gullah Tales

One 7-inch tape of animal tales in the Gullah dialect, told by Harold (Dick) Reeves of Charleston, South Carolina. The collection includes a recording log.

AFC 1959/006: Harold Reeves and Russell Wood collection of Gullah recordings

One 7-inch tape of stories and anecdotes performed in Gullah dialect by Harold S. (Dick) Reeves, raconteur, member of the American Dialect Society and South Carolina Dialect Society and the Society for the Preservation of Spirituals, Charleston, South Carolina.

AFC 1996/066: Henrietta Yurchenko collection from Johns Island, South Carolina
Field recordings (circa 13 hours, 15 minutes) made by ethnomusicologist Henrietta Yurchenco and her City University of New York students of African American church services, spirituals, blues, children's songs and games, and a round-table discussion on current problems, including race relations, by a local minister with other community members.

**AFC 1990/025: Guy B. Johnson St. Helena Island collection**

Collection of field recordings of African American religious songs recorded on St. Helena Island, South Carolina; and a later wire recording of church services (not recorded by Guy B. Johnson). According to preservation tape label, Cylinders 4, 6, 17, and 22 were duplicated at the Library of Congress in 1999. Cylinder recordings form part of a larger collection of papers and audio recordings, the Guy Benton Johnson Papers, Southern Historical Collection, The Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

**AFC 2009/032: Lou Curtiss collection**

Collection of digital copies of analog recordings of performances and interviews originally on 420 audiotapes from the collection of Lou Curtiss, recording engineer and record store owner, documenting the first nine years of the San Diego Folk Festival, 1967-1975, plus performances at other California venues. A second series of 57 audiotape recordings largely by Sam Hinton includes master tapes for his radio series on KOGO radio circa 1968, field recordings by Guy Carawan on Johns Island, South Carolina in 1964-1965; recordings of Pete Seeger 1955 and 1957; Seamus Ennis in concert in 1964; a lecture by A. L. Lloyd in 1964; concert by Doc and Merle Watson, and other performers including Hedy West, Sandy and Caroline Paton, Earl Collins, Alan Mills, and Larry Hanks.

One tape of field recordings by Guy Carawan on Johns Island, South Carolina in 1964-1965

**AFC 2011/059: John Cohen collection**

Collection of manuscripts, sound recordings, graphic images, and moving images created and collected by John Cohen. The materials document Cohen's parallel careers as a musician (member of the New Lost City Ramblers) and writer during the 1960s American folk music revival, and his celebrated work as a documentary photographer and filmmaker, producer, and artist from the 1950s to the present.

Manuscripts, sound recordings, photographs and moving image materials documenting Janie Hunter, John’s Island, South Carolina, for the film “Musical Holdouts” (1976)

**AFC 2011/044 Gullah musical traditions at the Heritage Days Festival on St. Helena Island, South Carolina**

"You can't possibly know where you're going until you understand where you've been": the preservation of Gullah musical traditions at the Heritage Days Festival on St. Helena Island, South Carolina / by Laura Schnitker.