Folk Music

The Basics

Ronald D. Cohen

FOLK MUSIC

THE BASICS

- Gives a concise history of folk music in the United States and the British Isles, 1800–2000
- Presents a basic but comprehensive introduction for both students and folk music fans
- Highlights key performers, including Pete Seeger, Woody Guthrie, Bob Dylan, and many more

Folk Music: The Basics offers an introduction to two hundred years of British and American folk music. It is a fresh approach to various aspects of folk music, including collectors and scholars, amateurs as well as professional performers, transatlantic influences, the changing nature of public acceptance, and much more. The two sides of the folk tradition are examined—both as popular and commercial expressions. Throughout, sidebars offer studies of key folk performers, record labels, and related issues to place the general discussion in context. A comprehensive bibliography and discography provide resources for further research.

Folk Music: The Basics serves as an excellent introduction to the players, the music, and the styles that make folk music an enduring and well-loved musical style.

Ronald D. Cohen is Emeritus Professor of History at Indiana University Northwest. He is a well-known authority on folk music, and the author of *Rainbow Quest: The Folk Music Revival and American Society, 1940–1970*, among other works.

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THE BASICS

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CONTENTS

Introduction **vii**

1 Nineteenth Century Background: Great Britain and the United States **1**
Definitions 1
Nineteenth Century in British Isles: Collectors and Songs 4
Nineteenth Century in the United States: Collectors and Songs 8
Other Ethnic Groups 15

2 1900–1930 **19**
Cowboy Songs 26
Country Goes Commercial 29
African-American Influences 32
Blues 34
Folk Becomes More Academic and Popular 38
The Role of the Federal Government 41
Decade Ends 43

3 1930–1950 **47**
Great Britain 47
Folk Music in the United States during the Depression 49

Country Music 57
Folk Music Scholarship and Popularity 64
Alan Lomax and People's Music 66
World War II 75
Postwar Years 79

4 The Fifties 89
Great Britain 89
Skiffle 98
Lomax, MacColl, and Lloyd 100
The United States 103
Folk Song Scholarship 107
Mid-Decade Music 110
Folk Music at Mid-Decade 112
The Kingston Trio 123
Decade Ends 125

5 The Sixties 129
Great Britain 129
Folk Clubs and the Changing Scene 133
Electric Folk 135
Decade's End 136
The United States 137
Traditional Folk 145
Topical Songs 148
Hootenanny 153
Festivals 157
Folk Rock 163
Decade Ends 166

6 Century Ends 169
Great Britain 169
Clubs and Festivals 170
The United States 175
World Music 179
Southern Roots Music Revival 181
The Century Ends 185

Discography 189

Bibliography 193

Index 211

INTRODUCTION

Folk Music: The Basics is designed as an introduction to the history of folk music in Great Britain and the United States, concentrating on the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. I have drawn upon a wide range of sources, with the most helpful and important books listed in the bibliography, including the previously published *Blues: The Basics* by Dick Weissman. I have also added a discography of selected CDs, most of which should be currently available.

The student today has the good fortune to have available much of the recorded folk music of the twentieth century, so that the music is more than an abstraction. Of course, folk music can be variously defined, and I have tried a realistic interpretation in Chapter 1, although my later discussion might not always adhere to my own self-imposed musical limits. I explore these developments in both Great Britain and the United States, and in the process trace the strong historical connections and influences between the two, which I hope is my contribution to the ongoing literature. There has been a similar folk music history in Canada, but

unfortunately space prevents discussing this fascinating topic, which still needs its historian.

Folk music has always been around, but has not always had a large, popular following. Technological breakthroughs in the twentieth century, such as the phonograph, radio, and television, have made it possible to reach a wide audience, promoting the commercial outgrowth of folk music, broadly defined. These developments continue into the twenty-first century, making readily available an amazing variety of folk styles, old and new, including, most recently, world music.

I hope what follows will acquaint the reader with the rich and complex history of the topic, as an introduction to enjoying not only folk music of the past, but also of the present and into the future. I have only covered the tip of the folk music iceberg, and there is much more work to be done, as the current proliferation of scholarly studies demonstrates—check the bibliography for these recent publications. Folk music has had a strong appeal, perhaps even mystical, for traditional rural people and urban dwellers alike for many centuries, even as it has gone through various incarnations and transformations. This book is a partial attempt to describe and understand this historical situation and process.

I want to thank Ed Cray, Millie Rahn, Bob Riesman, David Gregory, and particularly my editor and inspiration at Routledge, Richard Carlin, for their most helpful suggestions, comments, and corrections, which have greatly assisted to make this book as readable and accurate as possible. Any errors or misinterpretations are entirely the fault of the author. I also want to thank all of those who have assisted me in the past, since I have drawn upon many years of researching the history of folk music—check the notes to my earlier study, *Rainbow Quest: The Folk Music Revival and American Society, 1940–1970*. Still, there is much more to do. And last, I again want to acknowledge my partner, Nancy, for her love and support, always needed and welcomed.

1

NINETEENTH CENTURY BACKGROUND

Great Britain and the United States

DEFINITIONS

It might appear simple to understand folk music as a form of popular music in the British Isles and the United States with antique roots and anonymous composers. But in order to understand the scope and transformation of folk music through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, it is necessary to come up with a broader definition. For example, we will have to include in our story not only the development and collection of old songs, with no known composers, but also labor songs of the nineteenth century broadsides, blues, gospel tunes, cowboy songs, singer/songwriters, such as Donovan and Bob Dylan, who emerged in the 1960s, and so much more. We shall attempt to come up with a narrative history that is all inclusive, but also one that will establish some limits on what should be included or excluded. For example, jazz, opera, and, usually, commercially written popular songs will be excluded. In its traditional form, folk music can be said to include the following attributes: (1) its origins can perhaps be located in a particular culture or region; (2) authorship has historically been unknown,

although authors did emerge over the past two centuries; (3) it has traditionally been performed by nonprofessionals, perhaps playing acoustic instruments; (4) its composition has been fairly simple, with perhaps little complexity so that it can be performed and shared communally; and (5) the songs have historically been passed down through oral transmission. This has somewhat changed, particularly if we include the rise of the cheap print media, and, in the twentieth century, the introduction of phonograph records, radio and television shows, films, and concerts. That is, folk music has been the music of the people, broadly construed, although this might seem too simplistic.

Folk music has encompassed various musical styles. One form has been the *ballad*, which is essentially a story song written in a narrative style. Folklorists, those who study cultural traditions, have been particularly interested in discovering and interpreting ballads, which seemed to have given insights into particular older societies. There have been two different kinds of traditional ballads, one coming from a remote past with an anonymous author, and the other coming from published broadsides, printed sheets with words but no music, beginning in the sixteenth century, often with known authors who were commenting on contemporary events and individuals. The former were preserved through oral transmission over a long period of time, and can be associated with *vernacular* (or common) culture, while most of the latter had a short public life and did not necessarily enter into common usage, but some did. In the nineteenth century there also developed the blues ballad among African Americans in the American South, usually based on personal relationships or local events. The other general type of folk song has had no story line, but a series of lyrics that were often catchy, and perhaps included rhyming lyrics. Some might relate to work experiences, personal relationships, life and death, patriotic feelings, or children's games, in a religious or secular

context. Folk songs traditionally have not had a commercial origin, although such songs composed for a popular audience, could have, and often did, eventually enter into a folk consciousness within a few generations. We can also make a distinction between performers whose family roots were in traditional music, and those outsiders who have picked up and carried on traditional songs and styles. Born into an upper-class family, Pete Seeger, for example, has emphasized the distinction, noting that he is not a folk singer, but a singer of folk songs.

In the twentieth century, folk music took on a much wider meaning, and the traditional definitions had to be reconsidered. Traditional ballads, either narrative, blues, or broadside, as well as lyric songs continued, but were joined by nineteenth-century popular songs and then an increasing number of singer/songwriters, gospel songs, and much more that became part of the expanding, flexible understanding of folk music. Instrumental accompaniment also broadened, from acoustic guitar, banjo, fiddle, harmonica, and mandolin, to eventually include electric guitars, brass, and percussion instruments, and just about anything else. Moreover, while music from the British Isles and Africa have appeared to be the basic sources of folk music in the United States, peoples from various European countries and other parts of the world transported their music to the New World, where it has mixed with the dominant styles. An understanding of folk music in both the British Isles and the United States from the nineteenth to the twentieth centuries, therefore, will have to include a flexible, expanding definition that leads to a narrowing of the gaps between folk, popular music, and what is now labeled as world music. This understanding will become clearer as this fascinating story unfolds.

NINETEENTH CENTURY IN BRITISH ISLES: COLLECTORS AND SONGS

Folk song collecting has had a long and rich history in England and Scotland, and by the end of the nineteenth century there existed a large body of published collections. Thomas D'Urfey edited six volumes of *Wit and Mirth* or *Pills to Purge Melancholy* (1719–1720), containing over one thousand verses of ballads and poems, drawn mostly from various published collections, broadsides, books of poetry, and his own compositions. While the majority were not gathered from oral traditions, some could be considered folk songs, while most were initially popular songs. A few years later (1723–1725) *A Collection of Old Ballads* appeared in three volumes, again based mostly on published broadsides and earlier collections. Later in the century Thomas Percy's *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* (1765) helped initiate the ballad revival. Joseph Ritson published *A Select Collection of English Songs in Three Volumes* (1783), also composed mainly of published poems and songs, found in broadsides or manuscript collections, including both words and music. Simultaneously, various collections of ballads appeared in Scotland, including the songs and poems of Robert Burns, for example in George Thomson's *The Scots Musical Museum* (1771). Of perhaps greater importance was Sir Walter Scott's *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* (1802–1803), mostly drawn from manuscript collections. Publishing ballad and folksong collections increased throughout the nineteenth century. Again, most were drawn from published broadside and manuscript collections, although there was a gradual increase in field collecting. William Chappell published a variety of influential collections, particularly *Popular Music of the Olden Time* (1858–1859), a massive two-volume compilation, which included "Greensleeves" and various tunes drawn from Shakespeare's plays, as well as the anonymous "Barbara Allen," which he seems to have drawn from oral tradition. Chronologically arranged, and

including both words and music, beginning with Anglo-Saxon melodies, Chappell's work drew upon an array of manuscript and published collections, as well as scores of broadside and Robin Hood ballads. While he found a few in oral tradition, the vast majority of the selections had not been passed down to the mid-nineteenth century; that is, they were not currently performed. But *Popular Music of the Olden Time* served as a valuable reference work for later scholars. By century's end, there were also a myriad of cheap popular songsters, containing a rich array of tunes, including Scottish vernacular songs such as "Green Grow the Rashes O" and "Annie Laurie," and even a few from the United States, such as Stephen Foster's "The Old Folks at Home."

Ballad and folk song collecting accelerated through the end of the nineteenth century. On the regional level, Davison Ingledew's *The Ballads and Songs of Yorkshire* (1860), John Harland's *Ballads and Songs of Lancashire* (1865), and Thomas Allan's *Tyneside Songs* (1891) added significantly to an awareness of local traditions. They were joined by William Allingham's *The Ballad Book* (1864) bringing together English and Scottish traditional ballads. W. H. Logan and Joseph Ebsworth reprinted numerous ballads and other older songs, including Logan's *A Pedlar's Pack of Ballads and Songs* (1869), and the extensive work of William Chappell. Carl Engel's *The Literature of National Music* (1879) stimulated field collecting of folk songs; Charlotte Burne, for example, discovered numerous contemporary singers in the West Midlands, *Shropshire Folk-Lore* (1883–1886). Sabine Baring-Gould, a parson in Devon, collected and published songs from numerous singers. Other late Victorian field collectors found far fewer sources; Lucy Broadwood, for example, collected from about 35 individuals, while Frank Kidson had even fewer informants. Broadwood, along with J. A. Fuller Maitland, published *English Country Songs, Words and Music* (1893), while Kidson issued *Traditional Tunes:*

A Collection of Ballad Airs, Chiefly Obtained in Yorkshire and the South of Scotland (1891). The Percy Society early in the century, and the Ballad Society by the mid-late Victorian era, assisted in promoting a broader interest in traditional ballads and songs, leading to the founding of the English Folk Song Society in 1898.

By the end of the nineteenth century, therefore, there existed a rich variety of ballad and folk song collections by English and Scottish collectors and publishers, easily accessible for scholars and the general public. Many drew upon earlier chapbooks or garlands (other names for songbooks), as well as broadsides (single sheets that were individually sold by ballad singers or peddlers in the cities or roving about the countryside). There were ballads on crimes and criminals, victories at sea, border raids, and murders most foul. Many dealt with love and sex; there was even a body of bawdy songs, some verging on the obscene, that circulated in oral tradition.

It remained for an American professor, however, to publish what would remain the standard collection of British and Scottish ballads. Francis James Child's prime achievement was his edition of five volumes of *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads* (1882–1898), which established the benchmark for ballad collecting through the following century in both the British Isles and the United States. Born in Boston, Massachusetts, Child (1825–1896) was a professor of medieval studies and English literature at Harvard College who developed a singular interest in British ballads. Researching both published and manuscript sources (he did no fieldwork), he finally published numerous variations of 305 ballads. He focused on what he thought to be ancient ballads of a rather impersonal nature, which can be divided into four categories: magical and marvelous, romantic and tragic, historical and legendary, or humorous; a man of his Victorian times, he refused to publish any with bawdy lyrics, however.

The romantic and tragic, often encompassing love affairs, seem to have been the most popular, particularly in the United States. Child included, among many others, "Mary Hamilton" (173), "Lord Bateman" (53) "Lord Thomas and Fair Annet" (73), and "Bonny Barbara Allan" (84). Child also helped found the American Folklore Society in 1888 (patterned on The Folklore Society, founded in England in 1878) and served as its first president.

Ballads and songs relating to industrial work proliferated through the nineteenth century. Many exhibited anger and resistance to the transformation of the work place. "The Hand-Loom Weavers' Lament" is an attack on the new factory owners and the loss of a market for traditional skills and independence. On the other hand, some broadsides celebrated factory life and factory towns, such as "Oldham Workshops." Musician and folklorist A. L. Lloyd (1967) describes the legitimate "industrial folk song" as "the kind of vernacular songs made by workers themselves directly out of their own experience, expressing their own interests and aspirations, and incidentally passed on among themselves mainly by oral means" (p. 317). He includes "The Poor Cotton Weaver," "Poverty Knock," and "The Coal-Owner and the Pitman's Wife" as examples in this category. There were also numerous professionally written music-hall songs dealing with workers' lives, which, while not initially folk songs, could eventually be considered of a vernacular nature. Joe Wilson's "The Strike" falls into this category, dealing with the work stoppage in 1871 to obtain a nine-hour day in the Tyneside.

Throughout the nineteenth century traditional ballads and folk songs circulated through the British Isles, some passed along through family and community oral traditions, others by way of published books, songsters, and broadsides. In addition, there were a growing number of urban, industrial, and maritime songs that would become part of the folk legacy that stretched through the twentieth century.

Street literature, in the form of broadsides, flourished in urban areas. Ballads and songs had long captured personal feelings, violence, and tragedies, such as "The Golden Vanity" and "The Sheffield Apprentice," but had begun to take on more contemporary stories about common people by the early nineteenth century, often sprinkled with humorous passages. Traditional singers focused on a song's words, while broadside sellers performed for a crowd in order to attract buyers, who were often young people looking for romance or adventure. Communities and trade unions had their own bards, who crafted verse for various occasions.

On the eve of the twentieth century there existed a rich and ever-expanding legacy of ballads and folksongs in the British Isles, performed locally and increasingly collected by scholars and interested antiquarians, who formed the Folk-Song Society in 1898 to promote future collecting and publications.

NINETEENTH CENTURY IN THE UNITED STATES: COLLECTORS AND SONGS

Folk songs and ballads in the United States in the nineteenth century somewhat followed the British style, but there were significant variations because of racial, ethnic, economic, and geographical diversity. By the early nineteenth century there existed a diverse body of folk music throughout the country, heavily influenced by both British and African musical styles, and often with a religious message. In addition, as immigrants from European countries began arriving in large numbers by midcentury they brought their own music and songs, as did those Mexican citizens whose lands in the Southwest had been incorporated into the country, as well as the Native Americans. By century's end there existed a vast array of musical forms and styles, much of which could be (or would later be) classified under the folk music rubric.

British, which included Scottish and Irish, as well as native songs and ballads were common throughout the United States by the mid-nineteenth century. There were also other forms of folk songs, including play party songs, such as "Skip to My Lou" and "Get Along Home, Cindy," which originally were accompanied by singing and hand clapping, but not musical instruments. There were also numerous fiddle tunes, for example "Soldier's Joy" and "Old Joe Clark." Just as in Britain, songs circulated through oral means as well as in published forms—broadsides, songsters, and sheet music. British influences were common. Songs and ballads were transported either wholesale to the New World, or influenced American versions. For example, the melody of "The Cowboy's Lament" (also known as "The Streets of Laredo") originated originally in Ireland as "The Bard of Armagh" (later the nationalist tune "Bold Robert Emmet"), while "Sweet Betsy from Pike" started as "The Ould Orange Flute." Few ballads survived in oral traditions from the eighteenth century, such as "On Springfield Mountain" and "Brave Wolfe," and others in the Child canon.

In the nineteenth century, ballads and folk songs were newly written and often related to various occupations and experiences, such as lumbermen and sailors. These occupations produced what were called shanties, such as "Blow the Man Down," "Reuben Ranzo," "Shenandoah," and "Blow, Boys, Blow," which derived from long months at sea, while "The Jam on Gerry's Rock," "The Lumber Camp Song," and "The Lumberman's Alphabet" came from life in the North woods. Sea shanties were the work songs of sailors on the sailing ships, while in the logging camps, "shanty" referred to the primitive housing conditions; a "shantyboy" was another name for a woodsman or lumberjack. There were two kinds of sailor songs: work songs that paced various group efforts on the sailing ships, and forecastle songs that were sung for entertainment, which could include ribald verses.

Indeed, songs connected to various occupations were common throughout the country. There were numerous railroad songs, such as "Casey Jones," miners songs, cowboy songs, and others connected with work experiences. "Buddy Won't You Roll Down the Line," "The Coal Creek Rebellion," and "Miner's Lifeguard," for example, resulted from various miners' upheavals in the 1890s and later were considered folk songs. Most labor-connected songs at the time, however, related to particular events, such as the eight-hour day movement in Chicago in the 1880s, or the Homestead strike in Pennsylvania and the Pullman Palace Car company strike in the 1890s, and were quickly forgotten. Various farmer and labor organizations, such as the Knights of Labor and the Socialist Labor Party, also generated numerous songs that also did not enter into the broader collective musical memory.

Beginning in the seventeenth century and continuing into the nineteenth, millions of slaves were brought from Africa to the New World. They brought with them traditional musical styles and instruments, including the prototype of the banjo and various drums, and by the Civil War (1860–1865) the music of African Americans, both slave and free, was common. Work songs, including field hollers and urban street cries, and religious tunes or spirituals predominated. William Allen, Charles Ware, and Lucy McKim Garrison published *Slave Songs of the United States* in 1867, a seminal collection that documented African-American songs at a time when there was little interest in publishing collections of European or indigenous white folk songs in the country. Allen began collecting songs while teaching in ex-slave schools in South Carolina in late 1863, while the Civil War still raged, and later taught at Antioch College and the University of Wisconsin. This landmark book included musical scores for the 136 selections, including work songs, spirituals, dance and play songs, ballads, satirical songs, and street cries. Also in 1867 Thomas Wentworth Higginson

GUITAR AND BANJO

Various instruments have been part of folk music performance in both Great Britain and the Unites States, perhaps most important being the guitar and banjo, beginning in the nineteenth century. The six-string guitar was developed in southern Europe in the late eighteenth century and quickly reached the United States. Manufacturing gut-string guitars began in the country in the 1830s, with the C. F. Martin Company leading the way, followed by Epiphone, Harmony, and Gibson. Steel-string instruments, originally from Central America, began to appear in the 1890s, with cheap models soon available in the Montgomery Ward and Sears, Roebuck catalogs. The mass production of guitars led to their use among rural musicians in the South, "where traveling black railroad workers often introduced [the guitar] to white mountaineers," historian Nolan Porterfield has noted. "Combined with the fiddle and banjo, the guitar added rhythmic accompaniment; moreover, its chords provided a solid background for singing, thus encouraging string bands to include songs as well as instrumentals in their repertoires." String bands, anchored by the guitar, were popular by the 1920s, but soon influential personal styles emerged, led by Jimmie Rodgers and Maybelle Carter. Since the 1930s the guitar has become the most important instrument in many aspects of popular music, with both a lead and rhythm function, including country, folk, jazz, and certainly rock. Variations include the Hawaiian and Dobro resonator guitars, which are played with a slide or bottleneck. The electric guitar was invented in the 1930s. Both electric and acoustic guitars have had extensive sales into the twenty-first century.

A stringed instrument was brought to the New World by West African slaves by the eighteenth century, which evolved into the banjo. The number of strings varied, from three to eight, with four the early standard. A short fifth string was added before the Civil War, and this model eventually became more popular among rural musicians. White minstrel performers in blackface adapted the banjo to their widely popular entertainment, and following the Civil War, it had lost much of its association with African Americans. By the end of the

nineteenth century the machine-made banjo, led by the Fairbanks, Cole, and Vega companies, was widely popular, with banjo (as well as mandolin and guitar) clubs springing up throughout the country. The four-string style was developed and used in ragtime and early jazz bands, while the five-string was known more as a folk instrument in the rural South. By the 1920s Uncle Dave Macon was established on the Grand Ole Opry radio show as a flamboyant banjo player, although the instrument was more common in the string bands that proliferated at the time. Following World War II the banjo became less popular in country music, except for its role in shaping bluegrass music through the influence of Earl Scruggs. In urban folk music, however, it gained a prominent role, particularly through the playing of Pete Seeger, whose recordings and banjo instruction book, first self-published in 1948, were highly influential. The banjo assumed a prominent role with the emergence of the folk music revival in the 1950s, which continued through the century.

The guitar and banjo were only two of the instruments that have been used by folk musicians in the United States and Great Britain. Others have been the accordion, dulcimer, fiddle, harmonica, mandolin, mouth bow, washboard, tin whistle, concertina, drums, flute, harp, uilleann pipes, and others. Indeed, anything that can make a sound can be considered a folk instrument.

published a path-breaking article on "Negro Spirituals" in the *Atlantic Monthly*, a popular northern magazine.

Jubilee Songs as Sung by the Fisk Jubilee Singers was published in 1872, establishing another benchmark in promoting black music. The Fisk Jubilee Singers launched their first northern tour in 1871, designed to raise funds for the all-black Fisk University in Nashville, and in the process spread the popularity of African-American spirituals. The tour started slowly, but soon generated considerable attention; the group traveled through the North and Europe for the next seven years to growing acclaim. They were soon joined by the Hampton Singers, from the Hampton Insti-

tute in Virginia, in spreading far and wide authentic black spirituals, but with European-style arrangements, such as "Go Down Moses." Black fiddle and banjo (but not yet guitar) players were common throughout the nineteenth-century South, performing folk tunes from the British Isles with an African inflection, often for white dances. Indeed, white and black musicians influenced each other, a situation that increased through the twentieth century.

White audiences initially had difficulty appreciating black spirituals because they were used to white minstrel songs that appeared to represent authentic African-American musical forms and styles, but were in fact white creations and parodies. Beginning in the 1840s, and continuing through the century and into the next, minstrel shows featured whites in blackface makeup and included songs and dances, jokes, as well as satirical speeches and skits. Composers Dan Emmett and Stephen Foster turned out such compositions as "Dixie," "Camptown Races," "Oh! Susanna," and "My Old Kentucky Home" that soon became popular folk songs. Before the Civil War, minstrel shows were extremely popular in the North, and following the war black performers also put on blackface makeup and created their own minstrel acts. The black composer James Bland wrote for these shows "Oh, Dem Golden Slippers," "In the Evening by the Moonlight," and "Carry Me Back to Old Virginny," that also eventually entered the folk repertoire. Various African American ballads, such as "John Henry," "The Boll Weevil," "Frankie and Albert," and the pre–Civil War minstrel-style "The Blue-Tail Fly" also became mainstays of the folk repertoire and popular songbooks, while somewhat losing their racial designations.

Religious music among southern whites took various forms, including shape-note singing, based on a simplified musical notation that used various shapes, that appeared by 1800. Often using traditional folk melodies, shape-note tunebooks were widespread in religious services through-

out the country; the most popular was *The Sacred Harp* by B. F. White and E. B. King (1844). Following the Civil War white gospel songs emerged, resulting in the publication of Ira Sankey and Philip Bliss, *Gospel Hymns and Sacred Songs* (1875), with numerous subsequent editions. They also often derived from folk styles, and quickly spread in churches around the country. Both shape-note and white gospel tunes later could be considered part of the larger world of folk music.

The Civil War produced a large number of popular songs, many of which eventually entered tradition. Among southern soldiers, "All Quiet Along the Potomac Tonight," "Annie Laurie," "The Girl I Left Behind Me," "Listen to the Mockingbird," "Just Before the Battle Mother," "Maryland, My Maryland," and particularly Dan Emmett's "Dixie" were favorites. While for northern troops Julia Ward Howe's "Battle Hymn of the Republic" (more popular as "John Brown's Body"), "The Battle Cry of Freedom," "When This Cruel War Is Over," "Marching Through Georgia," and "Tramp, Tramp, Tramp" were camp favorites.

Various instruments could be used for musical accompaniment, including the banjo, with the guitar and piano more limited until later. White musicians began to adopt the five-string banjo in the middle of the nineteenth century, which soon became part of the minstrel shows that toured the country. Blacks and whites shared banjo performance into the twentieth century. Europeans brought the violin or fiddle to the New World, where it became established by the late eighteenth century, particularly to accompany dancing. Southern blacks and whites developed a syncopated style that depended on oral transmission and significantly differed from a northern style heavily influenced by Irish musicians and sustained by a print culture. The fiddle-banjo ensemble was also popular in the South. The guitar also migrated from Europe and had developed a musical niche by the early nineteenth century, appearing in concerts and also

in middle-class homes, and often played by young women by century's end. It would not become a central folk music instrument until the twentieth century, however.

OTHER ETHNIC GROUPS

In addition to the ballads and musical styles from the British Isles and Africa that seemed to dominate in the nineteenth century, every ethnic group that entered the country brought with it folk songs and dances. Mexicans, with their rich musical heritage, were forcefully incorporated into the United States through the annexation of Texas and the Southwest before the Civil War. Stringed instruments, particularly guitars and violins, and the accordion often accompanied the singing of romances and corridos, both ballad forms. The former, of Spanish origin, was essentially an epic poem and dealt with a tragic or heroic topic, while the latter, originating in the late nineteenth century, usually recounted local events, with the hero demonstrating bravery in overcoming adversity, or describing work experiences. Corridos continue to the present day. Some of the most famous championed the exploits of the accused criminal Gregorio Cortez, and more recently narcocorridos have highlighted narcotics traffickers.

The Irish, arriving in large numbers in northern cities before the Civil War, carried with them traditional ballads and dance tunes. The romantic ballad, such as "The Emigrant's Farewell," expressed a common longing for the loved ones left behind. "Rich Amerikay" also highlighted the pain of emigration, as did many of the ballads. New World hardships were detailed in "No Irish Need Apply" and "Drill, Ye Tarriers, Drill," both of which entered the folk music mainstream. German immigrants, crowding in northern cities by midcentury, introduced singing societies and also expressed longings for the homeland. Some, however, detailed the virtues of coming to a land of democracy and opportunity, such

as "Hail to Thee, Columbus, Be Praised." Local taverns were a common site for workers to congregate and sing, with most of the songs coming from Germany.

Because of language barriers, German and other immigrant songs rarely entered the musical mainstream, folk or otherwise. This was true for Scandinavians, Poles, and Italians, for example. Eastern European Jews had a rich musical culture, mostly in Yiddish. Many of the songs expressed various complaints and fears concerning working conditions or family disintegration, or contained religious themes. Broadsides and sheet music of locally composed songs were in wide circulation. While the Yiddish language was limited to Jewish communities, numerous mainstream popular and folk musicians emerged from this rich background in the twentieth century.

Ethnic folk singing societies and festivals also served to promote traditional music and dance. Various German communities in Texas established singing societies in the 1850s, which soon formed into a singers' union and a singing festival in 1853. Such festivals continued into the twentieth century, with traditional German folk songs performed alongside American tunes such as "Oh! Susanna" and "Yellow Rose of Texas." Other ethnic groups in Texas borrowed from German music, including the accordion, polka, and schottische.

Southern Louisiana also proved to be a musical melting pot, combining French Canadian (from Acadia, now known as Nova Scotia), English, Spanish, German, Caribbean, and other styles, resulting in what would be called Cajun (a corruption of Acadian) music and dance. Welsh immigrants in Pennsylvania and Ohio brought with them the traditional eisteddfod, stimulated by the founding of the Welsh National Eisteddfod Association in 1880. In the United States these musical events, often choral competitions, reached an early peak at the Chicago World's Columbian Exposition in 1893, but continued throughout the next century.

By century's end a rich body of ballads, folk songs, spirituals, ethnic songs, instrumental numbers, dance and popular tunes, and much else existed throughout the United States, with regional, racial, and nationality variations. Most folk music functioned as family and community entertainment—for socializing, to be used as cautionary tales, or as messages for social control—generally reflecting local values and aspirations. Much of this vibrant musical life would be part of the broad idea of folk music, if not currently then in the future. But as yet there was little academic interest in studying this rich legacy. That would soon change, as folk music garnered a broad audience and even commercial appeal.