

*Dock Boggs in Concert
Recorded Live at Appalachian State University
November 11, 1966*

Following is a transcript of the spoken part of the concert. Speaking are Dock Boggs, his guitarist, Kate, and Dr. Cratis Dearl Williams, founding Dean of the ASU Graduate School, Now the Cratis Williams Graduate School, who arranged the concert. The major editorial license I took in transcribing Dock Boggs narrative was in deleting a number of "and, ah" constructions he used to open sentences. The remaining ones are there for the purpose of texture. Note: At one point Dock talks about being nervous, unusual for him he tells us. However, the room was small, the lighting allowing for easy eye to eye contact between audience and performer. There are several references to Doc Watson who, with his son Merle, was in the audience. In listening to the recording it will be obvious that there a many inaudible exchanges between Dock and Kate. Perhaps with better audio equipment they can be brought up, along with several inaudible portions of Cratis Williams' remarks. Note also the tunings. Dock Boggs had many different tunings and they are clear on this recording.

Cratis, who is considered the father of Appalachian studies, arranged for the taping of the concert and three copies of the tape were made. Cratis kept one copy and gave one copy each to me and to Glenn Pat Patrick. Both Pat and I were teaching English at Lees-McRae College in Banner Elk, NC. Some years ago my copy was lost. Sometime around 2001 I contacted the Center for Appalachian at Appalachian State University asking if they had tapes of the concert. After much searching, including contacting Cratis' survivors, people there informed me that they were unable to find any copies. Pat Patrick died in 1967 and I feared any record of the concert was lost. In 2002, visiting Pat's widow, Edie, in Johnson City, Tennessee, we discussed the possibility of the third tape. Several months later Edie mailed me a box of Pat's tapes. Among them was the Dock Boggs concert and several of Pat during his youth in Lubbock, Texas when he played and sang with Jimmie Dale Gilmore in a group they called "The New Fruit Jar Drinkers."

*Wilson Roberts
15 Chestnut Hill
Greenfield, MA 01301
wilsonroberts@hotmail.com
Professor Emeritus, Folklore and English
Greenfield Community College*

*Dock Boggs in Concert
Recorded Live at Appalachian State University
November 11, 1977*

CD Volume One / 50:51 minutes

Boggs: Thank you. Thank you. Thank you very much. It's a pleasure for me to have the opportunity and honor of coming over to this college and get to play here. Since I've started playing music in the last three and a half, four years, why I've visited eighteen to twenty different colleges besides the festivals and [?] I went to.

I didn't know whether I'd start playing, but I decided for old time's sake I'd get my old banjo back. I bought it in 1928, so when I went back to get it, I'd let a fellow keep it for me that was a single man, and when I went back to get it he was a grandfather. His wife's a teacher too. She teaches school at Hayman, Kentucky. Been teaching for the last thirty years, or longer. We don't, I don't conduct my programs I put on like a lot of people do. We just mix 'em up. Play. And my way of playing, I've got my own style of playing music and I have to tune sometimes, change tuning of my banjo, in order to play it in the old traditional time style.

So, this piece I'm fixing to play you is a piece I tried out on when I got my first opportunity to make phonograph records in Nineteen and Twenty-seven. In Norton, Virginia, I was working on the coal machines at [?] Virginia. I started to play this piece and they stopped me---I played about a verse of it---there's three of them, papers on their knees, and they took down the number of the piece and they marked "good" on the end of it. I started to play "Country Blues," and I'll tell you, I played about a couple of lines of that and they marked "Good" on the end of that, and the next thing was a contract.

I was on my way to New York to make phonograph records in about three weeks. It surprised me because I was working in the mines. After that my wife she didn't care too much for me making music. In order to keep her, keep the family together---I didn't have nobody but her---I quit play music for twenty-five or twenty-six years. After I retired I said, just for sentimental reasons, I'm going back and get my old banjo. When I went back and got it, it cost me a hundred and ten dollars to have it fixed up, but it's in good shape now and I've played and made several hundred dollars with it since.

And I'm going to play you "Down South Blues."

PLAYS "DOWN SOUTH BLUES"

Thank you. Thank you very much. I don't know what it is. I'm kind of nervous tonight. I've played to some audiences much larger than this and I wasn't nervous as I am tonight. But probably that'll leave me in a few minutes.

Next number is an old song that I've had for years, I've heard sung at some of the festivals I've been at. I don't know who the song belongs to, but I've had the song for the last forty-five, fifty years, or longer, and it's "Peggy Walker. Tom [Clarence] Ashley, he sings it, I think. I don't know, but [Doc] Watson would know, I guess.

PLAYS "PEGGY WALKER"

[Clears throat] Thank you. Thank you. I'm going to play you the next number. I used to have one of Calvin Parridge's [sp?] family, Charles Parridge, his son, played the guitar with me for a year or two. Also, I played with the Boatwright family and played some with the Parridge family. Charlie stayed with me quite a bit. When he left me, he joined the army in the Second World War and he got killed over on Corrigador Island. This is a song I learned from Charlie. He used to play the banjo and fiddle and guitar, all. He played [many?] instruments.

PLAYS "PAPA, BUILD ME A BOAT"

I'm going to play you a piece I've been aplaying a long time. Many of you that's older in here will recognize the tune of it, I guess, but there's a couple of girls up in Baltimore, they made 'em four verses and put to it, put in the same tune as this. I always play it straight on the banjo, so I was aplaying up at the Second Fret---played there a week once---and one of the ushers there wrote down the four verses for me on the back of a piece of paper and gave it to me. I don't know if I can sing it the way they wrote it down the same.

PLAYS "BLACK BOTTOM BLUES"

Call that "Black Bottom Blues."

I'm going to tune my banjo down to the key of C---I mean D---and play the second piece I started to play for those fellows from New York when I got my contract to record. "Country Blues." Course, I'll sing a little more that I put on record. [TUNES}

PLAYS "COUNTRY BLUES"

Thank you. I picked some poetry out of the United Mine Workers Magazine, from a girl up in Shirley Hill in Ragton, Utah. She composed this poetry. She wrote me in a letter that she's been composing poetry ever since she was eleven years old. She's through high school now and married, but I wrote her a letter and asked her for permission to use this and put it on a phonograph record. And me being a miner, I'll play it for you and play it for you alone on the banjo. And then we'll hear my friend play a few pieces and sing.

PLAYS "THE MINER'S CHILD"

Dock Boggs: You can tell them what you're going to play.

Kate: I'd like to sing for you one of the old, old numbers that I've been trying to learn to sing, "The Wagoner's Lad."

PLAYS "THE WAGONER'S LAD"

Dock Boggs: Thank you.

Kate: I'm going to try to sing the Indian song, "The Little Mackinee" Most everybody likes it where I sing, and it's kind of a novelty number.

Dock Boggs: You play that one by yourself.

PLAYS "THE LITTLE MACKINEE"

Kate: Thank you, thank you, thank you.

Dock Boggs: I'm going to play a, if I can get it right, a little of---I get it right part of the time--- "The Sugar Blues." It was accompanied when it was recorded back about forty-five years ago, forty-eight, with a piano, and I arranged it to where I could play it on a banjo, and I also arranged "Mistreated Mama Blues" so I can play 'em on a banjo, and it was sung by a colored girl up in New York, Sarah Martin, or someone of that name. I'm going to sing you a little bit of "The Sugar Blues."

PLAYS "SUGAR BLUES"

I'm going to play you a little song. There's a couple, three verses. The first of it is I haven't got, but been aplaying it for several years.

PLAYS "OMIE WISE"

Kate: I'm going to try to sing one of the old, old hymns for you, two or three verses maybe, "My Loved Ones Are Waiting for Me."

PLAYS "MY LOVED ONES ARE WAITING FOR ME"

Dock Boggs: I'm going to try to play you a little bit of "In the Bright Sunny South."

PLAYS "IN THE BRIGHT SUNNY SOUTH"

Thank you.

PLAYS "I TRULY UNDERSTAND"

Thank you. Me and my friend, Kate, here, this is the second time we've tried to play together. Each one of us learned to play, what little we can play, alone. We never play with anybody else too much.

I have had some fellows with me and generally they played my way whenever we was playing together, and so I didn't have much to worry about. I'm going to play you a little "Mistreated Mama Blues."

They tell me they got some albums in the record store here, or here at the school somewhere. I brought a few of my albums with me tonight, and I've got four of one kind and six of another and one of another. I went over to the Bristol Hotel the other night and played to about fifty, sixty in the audience. I sold five of my albums. If there's anyone who'd like any of these songs---I hope you will like any, one or two of them.

So, I'm going to play you a little of "Mistreated Mama Blues.:

PLAYS "MISTREATED MAMA BLUES."

[This piece is a fragment. The first side of the reel ran out. The second side picks up in the middle of "Turkey in the Straw."

*Dock Boggs in Concert
Recorded Live at Appalachian State University
November 11, 1977*

CD Volume Two / 50:52 minutes

PLAYS "TURKEY IN THE STRAW"

Dock Boggs:

Thank you. Thank you. Ah, about half of the songs I know I learned from my brother-in-law, Lee Hunsucker, and the notes in the albums tell about how I learned the songs. He made a preacher years before he died. He preached about twenty-six years. I had to go back to him a time or two and get him to kindly straighten me out on some of the songs I'd forget, and this here "Drunkard's Lone Child" I learned from him, and I learned "Oh Death" from him. I learned "Prodigal Son" from him and I played that "Oh Death" in many places, and "Drunkard's Lone Child," but tonight I think I might play "Oh Death" before I quit, if you folks seem to want it, or care for it. [*At this point there was applause, but he never did sing "Oh Death," or the tape ran out before he did. I do not remember. (WR)]*

PLAYS "DRUNKARD'S LONE CHILD"

I'm going to give you a little bit of a feud song. It's sort of like the Hatfields and McCoys, but it's "The Rowan County Crew." I don't say I'll sing it all 'cause I've got some dust on my lungs and it just takes six minutes and twelve seconds to sing this song. I put it on one of my albums.

Dr. Williams there, he knows something about that feud, where it happened and all. It's Tollivers and Martins.

PLAYS "ROWAN COUNTY CREW"

That's the end of that one. Thank you. I can tell you a little more about that song. Sometimes I can sing it plumb through and other times I've got several songs and it's awful hard to sing all the way through 'cause it's got so many verses in it.

But Martin was taken off the train by two men and he was murdered and his wife was on the train with him. That feud lasted for several years, sort of like the Hatfields and McCoys and the Turners and the Polles in Kentucky.

Now, how long we been playing?

Cratis Williams: Now since Dock has just told you about the Rowan County feud, I'll make some comments in the time he takes to get his breath and a drink of water. Dock has silicosis he developed in forty years of working the mines...[inaudible]...The Rowan County feud...[inaudible]...This has special interest to me, the violence, it is a kind of violence, I suppose, because my great-grandfather killed Cray Tolliver's father and later on one of these Tollivers came and murdered my grandfather's brother. So I guess I have some connection to this.

[Laughter]

Dock has sung several songs that are especially representative of the Kentucky Mountain way of singing, of great energy, strain in the throat and high pitched, breaking out into a fade out of one sort or another, with almost luxurious lapping of the vowels as they're carried out to inordinate length.

Now the North Carolina ballad singers, however, are more relaxed and the tunes move along more gently. The singing in the North Carolina tradition is easier, and those who have tried to compare the songs of Virginia, North Carolina, Kentucky and West Virginia have noticed particularly the attempt to put energy into it that's found in the Cumberland Mountains, particularly the coal-bearing Cumberland Mountains, and thought that part of this is the hard psychology that the mountaineers developed in their friction with the forces of the outside world, when they brought in the railroads which furthered the exploitation of the coal resources and the timber resources.

This feud that Dock was singing about came to a head in Eighteen Eighty-four, and this was in the midst---or was it in Eighty-five?---Eighty-four or Eighty-five---this was in the midst of the hardest decade in the mountaineer's life, because it was at this time he began to meet the outriders of the civilization, and they came into conflict with his long-time rural traditions and...[inaudible]...some of the songs Dock has sung have picked up on the strain on the mountaineers' lives at that Time.

Well, I told Dock especially that I'd like him to sing for you my favorite, when I used to hear it on a record about the age of some of you younger people, "I Ain't Got No Honey Baby, or Sugar Baby, Now."

Dock Boggs: Dr. Williams, if it's all right, I believe while I'm in the key of C...

Cratis Williams: I don't mean you have to play that one next, I...

Dock Boggs: Well, I want to play you, ah, anyone here take the *Knoxville News-Sentinel* paper on October the Thirtieth? It had a whole page in there concerning the Coal Creek troubles they had whenever they tore down the stockade and people walked out of Kentucky with a boot and shoe on and riding mules and different ways. They were over two thousand men come on down around Coal Creek---it's called something else now---the paper explains it. And I brought one page of it down for Dr. Williams to read.

And this song was, it originated from that there war that when they brought in the convicts to try to mine the coal and take the jobs away from the men that had families there and so on. Why really, the...soldiers, five hundred, come in there and the law didn't do anything, didn't try to do anything, and they burned down three stockades and one was built under a railroad trestle and they tore it down. They didn't want to burn the bridge. Back in that time, its been about seventy-five years ago, Buchanan was the governor, and he tried in different ways to get it quelled down and stopped. But finally the men, they got the prison labor out and they've done away, I think, with the Petrose [?] Prison Mine in Tennessee now. I don't think it's running anymore.

This "Coal Creek March" originated from down there, about that trouble they had. I've got a brother-in-law from Tennessee, and he gave me a little information on that and when I got that paper that had that whole page, the *Knoxville News-Sentinel*, October the Thirtieth---it's in the Sunday paper---and it explains all about it. There was some people down there for years researching on that to know exactly how it was.

I play that "Coal Creek March" playing some bugle calls first, to start off with, then Kate comes in on it whenever it goes.

PLAYS "COAL CREEK MARCH"

Thank you. I'm going to play "The Mixed Blues." It's another one that I made most of this song up myself.

PLAYS "THE MIXED BLUES"

Why don't you play one?

Kate: I went back to try to get an old love song, and the name of it is "One Little Word."

PLAYS "ONE LITTLE WORD"

Dock Boggs: Thank you. I'm going to play you my version of what I learned from a fellow by the name of Jim Brackins, about forty-five years ago, of "The Wabash Cannonball." But Roy Acuff has got much more, he got his song, he got more of the song, but it's the same tune anyway. So I'll sing you what I know of it.

PLAYS "THE WABASH CANNONBALL"

Me and my partner, we've got out of key somehow or another. Seems like we can't get our instruments---we didn't have no trouble at all in Bristol.

Cratis Williams: And Merle.

Dock Boggs: I'd like to thank Doc right here to his face for putting one of my songs on one of his albums. I got a little royalty check just a few days ago. They must be aselling pretty good.

This here piece, I can't play much of a knockdown, but I'll play a little bit of it. Some say "Shout Little Lulu," "Hook and Line," and I've heard it called "Hook and [*Sinker?*]"

PLAYS "HOOK AND LINE"

[He stops abruptly, clearly winded.]

I don't know. It's the only piece I try to play. I want to play for you, you can name it "Spanish Fandango" and a song sort of like that, and I really don't know the name of it. And I got the tune of it out of one of them little twist up boxes...and they had a tune...and I'm going to tune the banjo down and play. I never did have no name for it.

PLAYS "SPANISH FANDANGO"

I'm going to give you a verse or two of the old time way that "Reuben's Train" was played years ago.

PLAYS "REUBEN'S TRAIN"

I want to tune my banjo down here and play you a little bit of "Cuba." It's a piece that I don't hear nobody play no more. My brother used to play this.

PLAYS "CUBA"

END OF TAPE

I'm going to play you a little bit of "Will Sweethearts Know Each Other There?" I don't know whether you all have heard this or not. I recorded in back in Nineteen Thirty-one, or Thirty-two.

PLAYS "WILL SWEETHEARTS KNOW EACH OTHER THERE?"

Cratis Williams: You've play about an hour and a half. [*Most of the rest of this comment is inaudible, but he requests "Sugar Baby" again.*]

Dock Boggs: "Got No Sugar Baby Now." [*He chuckles*] You know, I didn't give up as much as King George did. He give up the throne 'cause he loved that Wallis Simpson. I give up a little of that music I was playing.

There's a little joke I like to tell. I shouldn't maybe tell it on account of, you know, my parents or my family's pretty much near all gone. There used to be quite a bunch of us, but I just have two sisters living and myself now, and I'm the youngest one and I'll be Sixty-nine the Seventh of February. The others, one's about dead now with a stroke.

Sometimes I tell about, want to talk about, when I was born. Of course, I was born about as young as any of you all. And they was, you know, they was three of us. Triplets. This was a long time ago. Paw com around and looked us over and looked down and said, "Maw, pick out the one you want to keep. I'll take the other two off and drowned them." I'm lucky to be here. I never will forget, I was there, the day they hung him.

I'm going to play the "Sugar Baby" now.

PLAYS "I AIN'T GOT NO SUGAR BABY NOW"

You know, you heard me explain, at first, I didn't want to learn to play the banjo like my oldest brother did. Didn't care much about it. But I used to have a lot of banjos---this banjo weighs about twenty-five pounds. I'm an old man now, and if I get to juggling that, or pitching it out there and picking it, or pitching it up over my head and catching it, like I used to do. I used to have three in my band, all men, and we had a pretty good band at that time.

I'm going to play you a little of an old feature called "Hook and Line." Doc Watson, sitting right over here, I'm kind of ashamed to play for him. He's about the best that ever I heard on them knockdowns. He put one on record, I've got it up home, and he plays the instrumental and it's real good.

Cratis Williams: Doc Watson. [*He says more, although the words are unclear.*]

Dock Boggs: Yes sir