

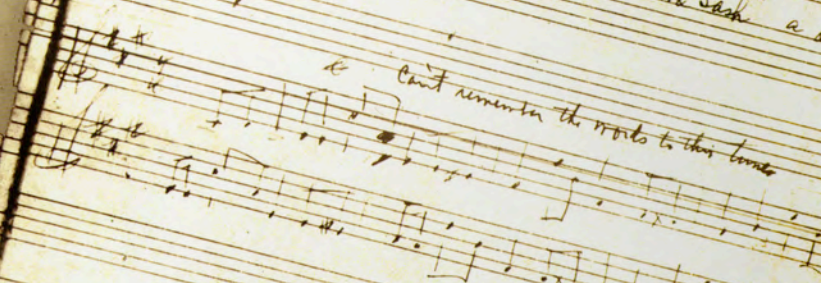
Keep on Drinkin'

Got song idea from Georgia White's singing on phonograph. Was unable to get the original in detail. Arranged words and melody according to own taste. The song is complete anyone

But Cowen - John Carter - Lane near Memphis.
 Buford Clay - Nina St. -
 Erskine Buford -
 Learned to play

"House Sash" a

Can't remember the words to this tune



Ballads

The study of Negro folk lore has ignored. True Dr. Howard. Negro workaday, merely in the



Every Negro community has a local bad-man. These are ballads. However, there are with the events occurred. The

JOHN WORK, III

RECORDING BLACK CULTURE

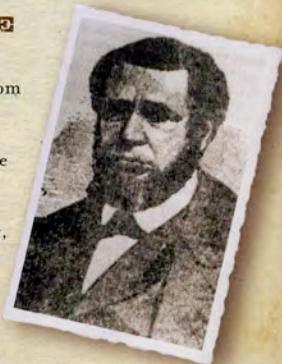
THE WORK FAMILY, NASHVILLE & FISK UNIVERSITY

John Wesley Work III was a third-generation musician from an African-American family in Nashville Tennessee. His grandfather had been born a slave in Kentucky in 1848. After his sale to Colonel Work in Nashville, "Little Johnny" Grey became John Work.

After a short residence in New Orleans where Work was permitted to attend rehearsals of the French opera company, the Colonel and his slave-manservant returned to Nashville just before the outbreak of the Civil War.

Nashville fell to the Union army early in the war and suffered little of the destruction visited on southern cities such as Vicksburg, Richmond, and Atlanta. This comparative calm allowed Nashville to continue a (relatively) benign treatment of African-American residents, free and slave.

Nelson G. Merry, like John Work, had been born a slave in Kentucky (1824). After his master's death in Nashville, Merry was willed to the First Baptist Church. Freed in 1845, Merry



First Colored Baptist Church

John Work II, then a Professor of Latin and History at Fisk, revived the Jubilee Singers. The group again toured, and Work II led a male quartet that recorded for Victor, Edison and Columbia in the first two decades of the 20th Century.

JOHN WESLEY WORK, III

John Wesley Work, III (b.1901) was a Fiskite from kindergarten on. He received a B.A. in History in 1923, but focused on music when he enrolled at the Institute of Musical Art (now part of the Juilliard School) in New York that fall. Work's father died in 1925, his mother in 1927, and Work returned to Nashville to assume a position in Fisk's music department. The young man found himself responsible for six younger siblings on an Instructor's pay. The following year he married Edith McFall, a former classmate at Fisk.

Professor Work continued his studies during summers, and in 1930 he received his M.A. from Columbia University. His thesis was titled "Folk Songs of the American Negro."

In this, as in much of the rest of his musical life, Work followed in his father's footsteps. His father had published (1915) "Folk Song of the American Negro" and his uncle (Frederick J. Work) and father had

was licensed to preach in 1853 and led the First Colored Baptist congregation. Merry hired John Work to train a choir for the church. This choir was said to include three future members of the original Fisk Jubilee Singers.

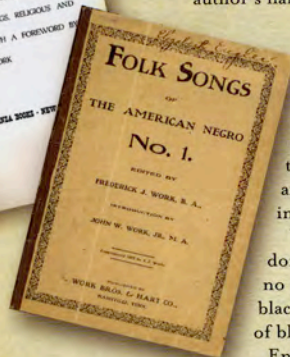
Fisk was chartered in 1866. Financed by the American Missionary Association, Fisk faculty began by teaching freed slaves basic language and occupational skills. Fisk would soon grow to become a normal school (i.e. teachers college) and, ultimately, a university. The story of the school's early association with the Negro spiritual and the Fisk Jubilee Singers is well known and has been told elsewhere.

John Work's sons John II and Frederick enrolled at Fisk. By the 1880s the school no longer supported a touring group of Jubilee singers. But in the last year of the century



John Wesley Work & Edith McFall

AMERICAN NEGRO SONGS
AND SPIRITUALS
A COMPREHENSIVE COLLECTION OF
THE FOLK SONGS, RELIGIOUS AND
SECULAR, WITH A FOREWORD BY
JOHN W. WORK
NASHVILLE, TENN. - 1935



edited two songbooks (1907) "Folk Songs of the American Negro." When John Work III arranged publication of his thesis in 1940, he chose the title "American Negro Songs and Spirituals." The variations of titles and author's names have caused much confusion. Where the father and

uncle had included only religious song under the "folk" rubric, Work III included secular music as well.

This was an important break from the path followed by the earlier generations: Those African-Americans who collected vernacular music had earmarked religious music as the best representation of the race's art. Secular music—work songs, social music, and later the blues—were considered low art or, to some in the black community, sinful.

White collectors of Negro folklore had a certain freedom in publishing secular lyrics and music since they had no personal investment in black cultural progress. But blacks, especially academics, had to consider the perception of black culture by an unsympathetic white society.

Entertainment figures like

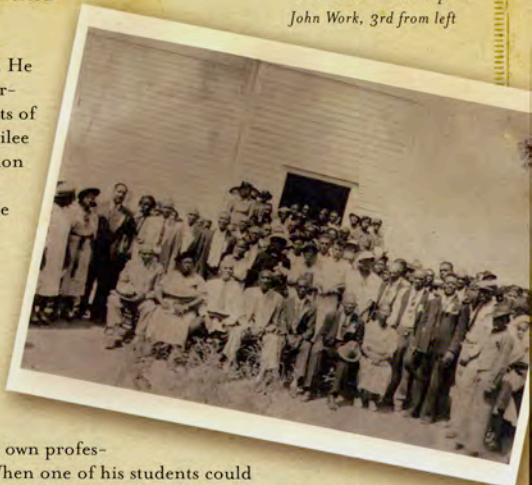
Work was also the only one of the interested few with formal musical training.

Professor Work put his training in European art music to good use at Fisk. He taught composition and theory to undergraduates. He made choral arrangements of spirituals for the student choir (the Jubilee Singers were not given to Work's direction until 1947 after Charles S. Johnson, a friend and admirer of Work, became the first black president of Fisk). Work's interest in composition resulted in award-winning cantatas and suites for piano, some based on folk melodies.

The assistant professor was busy, productive, and financially stretched.

Work was the sole support of an extended family and he bore all his own professional expenses. When one of his students could not afford supplies, Work was known to "help out." He couldn't afford to own an automobile, an obstacle that was to cause no end of trouble when he began serious folksong collecting in the late 1930s.

Alabama Sacred Harp
John Work, 3rd from left



W.C. Handy composed and published blues and ragtime under the aegis of "business," but for African-American scholars like Work to openly endorse black secular song required an uncommon bravery.

The importance of Work's interest in the music of the black vernacular must be appreciated. As Dr. George Herzog, Yale University's premier musicologist, wrote to Work in a letter dated November 19, 1935: [I am] "happy to know that you who have so much more access to the material [i.e. "American Negro folk-song"] and a more intimate acquaintance with the background are interested..." Herzog might have added that

YALE UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTE OF HUMAN RELATIONS
NEW HAVEN - CONNECTICUT
November 19, 1935

DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY

Professor John W. Work
Fisk University
Nashville, Tenn.

Dear Professor Work:

Thank you for your good letter of November 7. I am very glad to know more about your researches and wish you all success in your undertakings. I am especially interested in your saying that you plan, in your present work, to take up the statements of collectors who have questioned the purity of Negro folk-song. That is a question which has interested me all along. Whatever the ultimate origin, African or not, of American Negro folk-song--I personally believe little has survived from Africa, and that most of it grew on American soil--it is a distinct contribution of its own, and not a "copy" of European-American folk-song. It is here, I believe, that men of great scholarship like you and George Pullen Johnson may not see the spirituals in the Journal

BIRTH OF A FIELDWORKER

Like many historically black colleges, Fisk trained an inordinate number of primary and secondary school teachers who served rural communities in southern states. In addition to formal music training for these teachers-to-be, Work emphasized the value of folk song in the curriculum.

The first recording trip made by Work came about from a tip given by one such teacher. As Professor Work wrote in his article "Plantation Meistersinger" in the January, 1941 issue of *The Musical Quarterly*:



Presto Model D Recorder

My interest in this music [sacred harp singing] was aroused in the summer of 1938 by Miss Ruby Ballard, supervisor of Negro Schools in Dale County, Alabama, who was in attendance at Fisk University.

Miss Ballard was attending one of Fisk's summer educator's sessions, a sort of refresher course for rural teachers and administrators in which Work taught music education class (and, incidentally, earned some much-needed additional money).

In any case, Work traveled to Ozark, Alabama, that September to attend the Alabama State Sacred Harp Singing Convention.

By early November, he had made three trips "at my own expense" to Alabama's black belt region to hear the Negro shape-note singers. Fortunately, Work's graduate

assistant, the aptly named Harry Wheeler, owned an automobile. The two traveled economically and in more comfort than Jim Crow railroad coaches allowed.

The weekend after Thanksgiving Work and Wheeler returned to Dothan, Alabama, for a singing. This time Work had a sound recorder with him.

Fisk had purchased a Presto Model D portable disc recorder sometime earlier, most likely for administrative purpose. When Work had reported his trips "at my own expense" to Fisk's Humanities Department, it was to ask for use of a car, movie and sound equipment. As he wrote of the first trip to Ozark:

Twenty minutes of listening gave rise to a distinct regret that I had not brought a recording machine and movie camera. Both were needed to present an accurate story of what I was witnessing.

Work was allowed to use the recording machine.

MAKING RECORDS— NASHVILLE AND ELSEWHERE

The Alabama Sacred Harp recordings came out fairly well. Though institutions like the Library of Congress were providing their fieldworkers with large diameter professional quality discs, the self-financed Professor Work could afford only cheap dime-store blanks of small diameter and limited recording time. Nevertheless, Work felt energized and set about locating interesting musicians in middle Tennessee.

And Work attempted to secure institutional support. A music professor's salary, given the expenses he bore, was inadequate.

I am very happy over your recent letter stating your favor toward the folklore projects in which I have long wanted to engage. I am eager to begin work upon some of these immediately...

These projects fall into two categories. The first would be concerned with visiting nearby communities to record and study unique or interesting folk activities; i.e. camp meetings, Revivals, barn dances, fiddler's meets, etc.....

Handwritten notes on a piece of paper, likely a field notebook or index.

Songs

Records

Frank Brinton - 718 Ouston St.
 Frank Matthews (Bango) - 32 Cleburn St. 6-1355
 Ed Jenkins - 807 1/2 Ouston St.

Nashville Middlebrook
 Bango - Menden

Frank Brinton - 918 Gay St. Leads.
 James Kelly - 987 Gay St. Guide
 Thomas James Conde - 406 Capital Ave. "Bull Field" tent
 Thompson Stokes - 806 Gay St. "V8" washboard

Bessie Bradley - Old Hymns - I heard the voice of Jesus say.
 (Presto blue) b. Long notes
 St. Helena Island - may dance in Egypt fan.
 (Wille) (Fort Pillow) - I feel like my team ain't long. (Annot?)
 Newark St. Bristol - 949 Had my way
 " - 4st on my Travelling shoe
 " - 3f 9 Had my way
 " - John the Revelator
 " - When the moon does down
 Pulaski church (Wille) - I heard the voice of Jesus say.
 " - Amazing Grace
 " - My Captain's Army.
 Convent. Baptist S.C. - My Bones.
 " - Ship of Zion

The second category of projects would be concerned with interviewing creative individuals in the various communities and recording their songs. In our own city there is a Negro banjo player who is most unusual. I doubt if his style of playing and skill could be easily duplicated. His vast repertoire of secular folk songs should be placed in our archives, both on phonographic record and on paper.

There is a famous Negro character in Pulaski, Tenn. who is a sort of newspaper, chronicling the news events of the day in verse and song which he sings to the populace on the public square at frequent intervals.

These are only two of a considerable number of such individuals that I would like to interview and record.....

[Letter to Fisk President Thomas Jones from John Work, August 28, 1941]

Clearly Work found his own backyard fertile ground for vernacular music. By the spring of 1941 he had located and heard or recorded quartets, fiddlers, banjo players, blues and dance guitarists, and church song leaders and their congregations.

Work would borrow a car to take the Presto machine across town to record a quartet at a church or to the town of Pulaski, three counties southwest of Nashville, to record congregational singing.

For longer trips he wrangled the machine and a box of blank discs on and off trains and through the stations. Trips to Fort Valley, Georgia where Professor Work judged a music contest and to South Carolina to visit his in-laws were so encumbered.

But the resulting recordings, a sampling of which are on this CD, Work considered well worth the trouble.

The chief purpose of this program is to present for your enjoyment some of the highly interesting folklore in our immediate community and to establish the thesis that in each of your communities there is an abundance of significant folklore of which you have been generally unaware but which can easily be

discovered usually and made available for the community's appreciation and education. If a title for this program were necessary it would be—"The Beautiful Music All Around You."

In your community you may not have a quartet that can sing like ours. You probably will not have a group of instrumentalists who will play the 19th Century folk dance reels. But you will find some delightful music if you seek it out....

[John Work, Introduction to the Folklore Program at Fisk University's 75th Anniversary celebration, May 2, 1941]

The Anniversary program marked the first public performance at Fisk of such raw folk talent as selected by Professor Work. Fiddler Frank Patterson was teamed with banjoist Nathan Frazier and guitarist Ford Britton to form an ad hoc string band. The Heavenly Gate Quartet, local teen-age harmonists, sang covers of popular gospel songs. Work had initially hoped to bring some of the Shape-Note Singers to Nashville from Alabama; but as with most of Professor Work's folklore efforts, there were no supporting funds.

Fisk did fund a special program by CBS radio network artists the Golden Gate Quartet and concert folk singer Josh White, however. Alan Lomax, who required his own fee, brought them and Howard University scholar Sterling Brown to Nashville. Lomax, representing the Library of Congress, was beginning negotiation with Fisk to undertake a joint field study of Negro folk life in Coahoma County, Mississippi.

[A detailed account of the study can be found in *Lost Delta Found: Rediscovering the Fisk University-Library of Congress Coahoma County Study, 1941-1942*; Vanderbilt University Press; 2005]

Lomax took interest in Work's activity and convinced the Fisk professor to donate forty-three recorded performances to the Library's collection. Most of these donated performances were made at the Fort Valley College (Fort Valley, Georgia) Folk Festival where Work had been a music judge the previous month.

But mixed with those more recent recordings were Work's recordings from 1938: The Alabama Sacred Harp and the Holloway High School Quartet. As examples of Professor Work's earliest recording effort, a performance of each is included in this CD.

In return for his donation, Work was promised technical help in maintaining the Presto machine and provision with the LC's professional-quality blank discs.

Introduction
Last Tuesday night I was given the privilege
to listen to Allen Jones and Sterling Brown, who were
the Golden Gate Quartet and feature White unrolls a program
of Negro folk songs that surely must be regarded as one of
the most beautiful events in Nashville.
I've listened to interesting examples of music from
the Negro life. I've heard spirituals from the church,
I've heard blues from the street places, songs from the
prison camps and from railroad gangs. Also, rags, songs,
ballads and spirituals. They are continually fascinating
and marvelously easy.
So comprehensive was that concert and
listen that this program can hardly be more than an
echo of it. I trust you will listen to this afternoon, well
of recently, reminiscent of what you have listened to in the past.
The chief purpose of this program is to
present for your enjoyment some of the
highly interesting folk life in our immediate
community and to establish the thesis that
in each of your communities there is an abundance
of significant folklore of which you have been generally
unaware but which can easily be

THE RECORDINGS



Detail of Presto Recording

The fourteen recordings included in this CD represent the variety of African-American folksong of particular interest to Professor Work. They also, for the most part, are recordings he kept in his personal library. Five were donated to the archive at the Library of Congress. Work's interview with Muddy Waters was also archived there as part of the Coahoma County Study. Most of the music presented here has remained unheard by the public for over sixty years.

We have taken great care in the audio restoration of these sound recordings; balancing elimination of extraneous noise with retaining "life" in the performances.

Most of Professor Work's personal discs are 10" aluminum-based Presto, Silvertone, Audiodisc, and Soundcraft brands.

Over the years the discs have lived in a variety of environments, none archival until their deposit at The Center for Popular Music, Middle Tennessee State University. Several discs show signs of excessive play; perhaps Professor Work used them as examples in his music classes.

Work observed that from time to time certain types of song faded from prominence in their native culture. Unlike others who strained to save those disappearing forms—the Lomaxes are a good example—Work seemed content to note the transformative process that then appeared. Work knew that each form of music served a specific function in its culture. A particular form might fade but would be replaced by something more agreeable to current cultural taste. Professor Work noted just such changes in religious folksong:

The fading out of the spirituals from an active place in the folk-church, deplorable as it might be to the rest of the country, is simply explained. They are being displaced by types of songs which perform their functions more satisfactorily and more easily. The old "long-meter" hymns appeal more to the Primitive Baptists than do the spirituals because the highly rhythmic character of the latter had become offensive to them. With the introduction of the piano and the organ into the other churches, the performance of more conventional hymns and gospel songs became easier.

[John Work; *Untitled Manuscript* c.1942; in *Lost Delta Found*; Vanderbilt University Press, 2005; pg. 58]

SOCIAL SONGS

One type of "faded" Negro music Work remained eager to document was dance music provided by the string band, and one with a banjo in particular. He had been searching for a black banjoist since the beginnings of his collecting efforts. At Fisk's 1938 Robinson Music Lecture Work said:

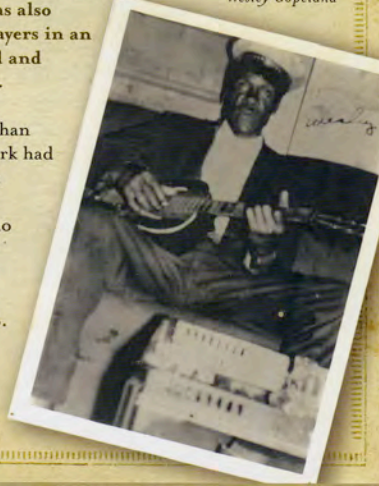
This music ["instrumental music of the Negro folk"] was produced by small groups—from one player with a guitar, mandolin, piano and other less orthodox instruments. You will notice that I did not mention banjos. In many of Dunbar's poems he mentions the banjo player. Stephen Foster mentions the banjo in his songs. Traditionally the banjo is considered a Negro instrument. But outside of the recognized jazz band, I personally have never seen a Negro banjo player. They undoubtedly do exist and these old songs and poems seem to indicate they were quite popular many years ago. But at least now in this vicinity and in the other communities I have visited the banjo player is rare. Two years ago in the Montgomery [Alabama] newspapers there was quite a controversy engaged in relative to this very point. The controversy did establish the fact that even in that vicinity the Negro banjo player was rare, but it was also brought out that there had been some outstanding players in an earlier era. One or two very old men were interviewed and some of the songs they accompanied were reproduced.

But by May 1941, Work had "discovered" banjoist Nathan "Ned" Frazier, a Nashville laborer and street singer. Work had also been introduced to Frank Patterson, a fiddler from Rutherford County just south of Nashville.

According to musician Wesley Copeland (b. 1903) who knew both men and grew up on the farm next to the Pattersons near the Antioch community:

But that violin player, he come from Murfreesboro. His name was Frank Patterson. He used to play with my father. He played a violin, my dad [Polk Copeland] played the banjo. I played the guitar...I was about 15-16 years old. We was playing break-

Wesley Copeland





downs....something like a round dance. People'd come and get us from everywhere. Nathan Frazier? God, yeah, I knew him. I've played with him. He had an act. He loved a banjo. He don't play nothin' but a banjo. When I knew him I believe he worked for Walker Coal company down here in South Nashville. I know every time I seen him he had that banjo....Ned acted like a monkey all the time. Played anywhere...on the street, anywhere you stop him.

[unpublished interview conducted by Bruce Nemerov and Charles Wolfe; April 13, 1988]

Patterson, in fact, was well known in the African-American community in Murfreesboro. He worked variously at farming and for businesses on the town

square, including a number of years as a barber's assistant. Through at least the 1950s the black community had regular Friday night street dances a block off the Square on a part of Vine Street known as "Mink Slide."

Patterson was most often the fiddler.

Wesley Copeland was doubtful that Patterson and Frazier had regularly played together. Echoing Work's introduction in 1941, Copeland said of Frazier: "Nah, he never played with nobody. Couldn't nobody keep up with him."

Last night Nathan Frazier was complaining that guitar players were so soft that he could not find guitar players who could keep up with him. He usually wears them all down and so ends up playing by himself.

Mr. Patterson's repertory is so large, he plays so many songs in such rapid succession with such speed that he usually wears down two, three or more guitar players at a sitting.

Imagine poor Ford Britton's unlucky plight being asked to play between such guitar exhausters as Frank Patterson and Nathan Frazier. At this time the group will play four songs of their own choice, each of which is of 19th century vintage and might be ante bellum songs. I am hoping Mr. Frazier will sing.

[John Work, Introduction to Folklore Program; Fisk's 75th Anniversary, May 2, 1941]

So it seems likely that Professor Work teamed Frazier and Patterson (and poor Ford Britton) for demonstration purposes at the Anniversary celebration. It was most likely the next month when Work brought Frazier and Patterson to the Fisk Music Annex to record as a duo.

"Poor Black Sheep" is a true duet; sounding like a tune both musicians knew well. Patterson and Frazier, while both stating the melody, tend to play off each other...push each other. This might be the joy of two musicians discovering in each other an agreeable consonance.

"Texas Traveler" is clearly more Frazier's tune. Patterson's fiddle hangs back, waiting for Frazier's lead. Professor Work seems to have placed the microphone to favor Frazier's voice and banjo.

Work recorded fourteen selections by Frazier and Patterson, many more than he collected from any other subjects. It's clear Work valued this music highly. Alan Lomax took three of Work's discs containing 13 tunes to the Library of Congress in the summer of 1942. The fourteenth title "Giles County" has never been found.



Fisk Music Building

which Mr. Frank Patterson will play will belong to a harmonica mold known by Mr. Ford Britton the guitar player. Many songs may fit one harmonica mold or formula. Mr. Patterson's repertory is so large, rapid succession of songs in such that he usually down with such speed now guitar players a sitting. Last night, Nathan Frazier was complaining that guitar players were soft - that he could not find guitar players who could keep up with him. He usually wears them all down and so ends playing by himself. I was.

THE QUARTETS

John Work had a familial, and professional, interest in harmony singing and Middle Tennessee supported quartet singing of all kinds: front porch amateurs; school groups; church-affiliated groups; virtual professionals who broadcast on local radio and made appearances in nearby communities.

The "barber shop" or "corner" quartet is quite as distinct a folk organization as the string band. It is composed generally of members with high musical sensitiveness, with keen aptitude for chord structure. It is stimulating to hear these men sing numbers of songs free of discords, using, frequently, chromatic harmonies in which they show keen delight.

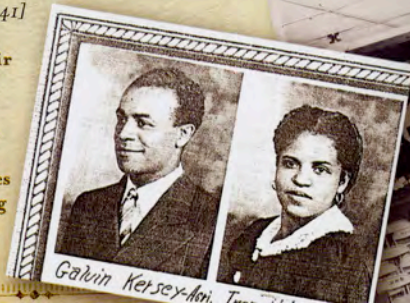
[John Work, *American Negro Songs and Spirituals*; 1940; Bonanza Books; pg.46]

The quartet does not have the long tradition in folk music as the instrumental combinations. But while much more recent, it is just as genuine in its folk-ness. It is interesting to observe the evolution of the styles of performance by folk quartets. Their first emphasis was on harmony. They loved chromatic chords. You all remember the barber shop chords and "snakes" of the earlier part of the century. Next came the exploitation of the narrative type of spiritual with its parlando style. This style featured a long rehearsal of the events in a biblical hero's life. You all remember the song "My Soul Is a Witness." The present day quartet has absorbed the present day emphasis on rhythm and has fused it with the narrative style of spiritual. The performance of the Golden Gate Quartet was the epitome of such style.

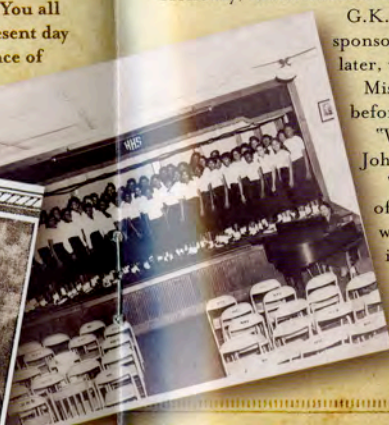
[John Work, *Introduction to the Folklore Program*; Fisk's 75th Anniversary, May 2, 1941]

...the voices are labeled in order of their range: "tenor," "lead," "bass" (baritone) and "bass."

In the folk quartet the "lead" dominates. The other three singers are entirely subservient to him. It is the "lead" who supplies the dazzling verses to the spirituals they sing or adds an inimitable counterpoint to the rhythmic refrain.



Galvin Kersey and Inez Henderson



G.K. Kersey & Inez Henderson
Inez Henderson (at piano) in the
Holloway High School auditorium

This quartet invests in the spiritual a complexity of both text and rhythm, which would imply insuperable singing difficulties on a congregation. For this reason these spirituals are generally limited to performances by quartet.

[John Work, *Untitled Manuscript*, c. 1942; in *Lost Delta Found*; Vanderbilt University Press, 2005; pg. 77]

The quartet selections included here reflect the variety in musical and social settings of small-group singing.

The Holloway High School Quartet was formed and trained to enter an annual competition sponsored by the New Farmers of America. The NFA was an African-American equivalent to the Future Farmers of America, an organization that permitted no black members at the time.

New Farmers Richard Gregory (bass), Zema Richardson (first tenor), Anthony Winrow (baritone), and Warren Johnson (second tenor) were freshmen and sophomores at Holloway, Murfreesboro's black secondary school.

G.K. Kersey, Holloway's agriculture teacher, sponsored the extracurricular club. His girlfriend (and later, wife) was Inez Henderson, the school music teacher.

Miss Henderson picked the four and trained them for months before Mr. Kersey entered them in the NFA quartet contest.

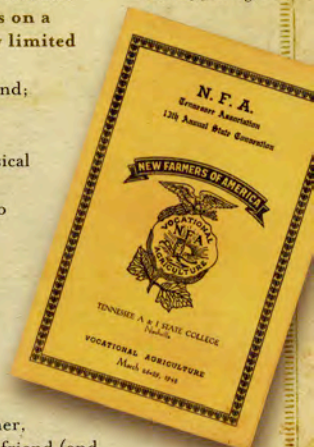
"We were just friends. We just sang together in music class," said Johnson when interviewed in 1990.

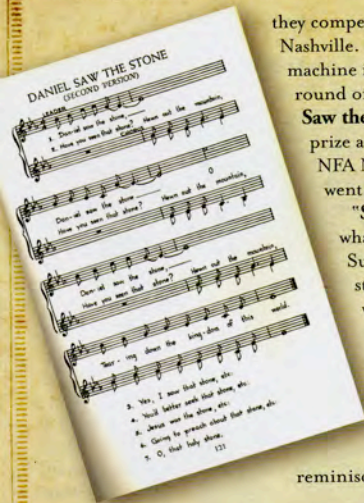
"When we become the quartet we had a specific session with the four of us and Miss Henderson. We'd do things right. We'd do things wrong. What we did wrong we did again. She'd say, 'you're going to do it until you do it right.' We'd do the same things one hundred times."

Had Inez Henderson attended Fisk's summer educator's sessions?

The Holloway teens won the district competition and advanced to the state finals. From March 24th to the 27th,

NFA 1942 Program





they competed at Tennessee Agricultural & Industrial College in Nashville. Professor Work was one of the judges. Trusty recording machine in tow, Work recorded the teenage quartet during the final round of the state championship. This performance of "**Daniel Saw the Stone**" is from that competition. They were awarded first prize and went on to Pine Bluff, Arkansas that August to win the NFA National Quartet Competition. After high school, the four went their separate ways.

"**Shine On Me**," by an unnamed quartet is an example of what Work called the "barbershop style" of quartet singing. Sung *rubato* and with exaggerated enunciation, this is in striking contrast to the Holloway's "**Daniel**." This quartet was probably one of the other competitors at the NFA state contest in 1938.

The female voices that dominate the group on the recording of "**I Am His, He Is Mine**" are untrained and demonstrate a vigor and abandon absent from the quartets. The muscular piano accompaniment is reminiscent of a trend in Nashville churches in the late 1930s.

Consternation reigned among the faithful when the famous Primitive Baptist Church in Nashville, shepherded by the Reverend Zema Hill, organized a choir, adorned it in robes, and added to it a "rhythmic piano." This change took place about twelve years ago...

The success of the experiment was much greater than Reverend Hill had anticipated. Other Primitive Baptist Churches in Nashville took immediate notice of the strong appeal which these accompanied songs had for the young people, and most of these churches have since organized choirs and introduced the rhythmic piano.

[John Work, paper delivered at Fisk Festival of Music and Art; April 30, 1948]

Two minutes into the performance of "**I Am His**" Professor Work stopped the recording machine, saving two minutes of the disc for a later part of the service when an older congregant begins to testify and other members begin moaning and intoning words of encouragement. It's unfortunate that Work was forced by necessity to so ration his recording time.

Professor Work's interest in music as a part of religious worship led him to Nashville's "Black Bottom" district south of Broad Street and the Fairfield Baptist Church in 1941.

Each October the Reverend J.R. Statton, the church's pastor, gave the folk sermon "Dry Bones in the Valley" an exegesis based in the Book of Ezekiel; chapter 37. As a coda to the sermon, the church-based quartet, The Fairfield Four, sang "Don't You Let Nobody Turn You 'Round." The lead, by first tenor Sam McCrary, was a showpiece of vocal control.

Professor Work recorded the entire sermon and song on five blank discs loaned by the Library of Congress and when Alan Lomax came through Nashville the following August, the discs went back to Washington with him.

However Work also recorded the group singing "**Walk Around in Dry Bones**" for his personal collection. Whether the recording presented here was made at that same service, a year earlier, or at another church entirely, isn't known. But as one can hear, it definitely was made at church.

The performance is of a dynamic group that includes the Carrethers brothers, Rufus (bass) and Harold (baritone), and tenors John Battle and George Gracy in addition to McCrary.

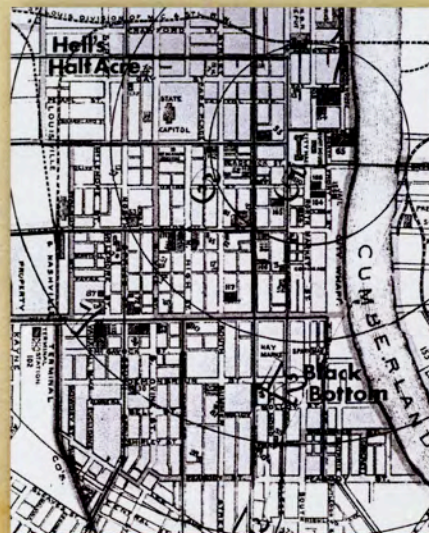
By the end of 1942, the Fairfield Four would be singing on network radio.

Professor Work also took a personal interest in some young friends who sang quartet during this time.

William Leftwich (bass), Leroy Smith (baritone), Woodrow Campbell (tenor), and Charles Wilson (lead) were fourteen years old when they began singing in churches around Nashville.

"Well, we was singing one Sunday evening at a church and a fella by the name of William Gilchrist heard the group sing.

Map of Black Bottom



And he was a barber. John Work went to his barbershop [at 1405 18th Ave. North, just down the street from Fisk] to get a haircut, and he was telling John Work about our group...at that time we were known as the Heavenly Gate Quartet.

We went and made an appointment and we went to see John Work one Sunday afternoon and he listened to us sing. Then we made an agreement that he supervise us and train us."

[Interview with William Leftwich; conducted by Bruce Nemerov, May 16, 1988]

The singers in a quartet are generally assembled by friendship and leisure. We will listen now to a group of friends in a quartet who sing pure Negro folk music. They will sing three spirituals for us.

At the quartet contest the other night...one of the quartets used the marching spiritual. The marching performance could easily be the vogue in a few years.

[John Work, Introduction to Folklore Program; Fisk 75th Anniversary; May 2, 1941]

"We sang on that program [the Fisk anniversary]. There was two groups sang; the Golden Gate Quartet and us. [And the marching spiritual?]...Well, that was us. We had a contest at a church and John Work was there. We was sitting in our seats and we marched up to the stage singing and then we sung up there and then we marched back...and ended the song. That's what he was

WHO? WHEN? WHERE?

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OF MURFREESBORO, TENNESSEE
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The South's Famous Fairfield Four
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The Fairfield Four

referring to. He was trying to get us to get arrangements of our own. You can make professional on that."

[William Leftwich interview]

At the Fisk anniversary (and for a recording session at the Work home) the Heavenly Gate Quartet sang "John the Revelator," "Got On My Travelin' Shoes," and "If I Had My Way." The last is included in this set.

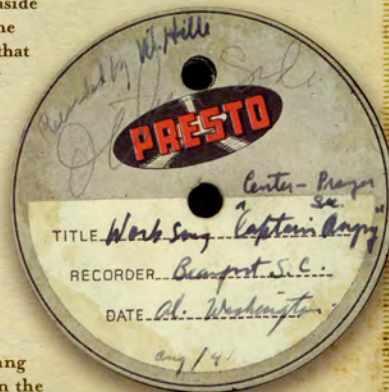
WORK SONG

"My Captain's Angry" is sung by Al Washington, a former convict living in Beaufort, South Carolina. John Work and his wife Edith visited her family in South Carolina at least once a year and on one of these trips, in August of 1941, Work took "the machine" along and made this recording.

Negro laborers usually sang while working, but aside from the pleasure they received from this activity the singing had at times a definite function for them—that of coordinating their efforts. In ordinary labor any song would suffice, and for the most part they sang spirituals; but for certain types of work where rhythmic group action made the work easier a special type of song became necessary.

In ordinary labor the whole group might sing, but in the special kinds only the leader sang. The leader was not chosen haphazardly, but was a specialist. He had to know the work thoroughly, had to know rhythm, and he had to coordinate these effectively by selecting the appropriate song. He made the work easier and through his choice of subjects entertained his gang at the same time. He was an important person in the work organization.

[John Work, American Negro Songs and Spirituals, 1940; Bonanza Books; pg.38]



Detail of Presto Recording

Professor Work somehow became acquainted with Gray—perhaps another of his summer educator's session students made the introduction?—and recorded the Elder and the prayer society at the small brick church.

Martin Luther is supposed to have said four hundred years ago "The devil has no business with all the good tunes." Elder Gray, one of the patriarchs of the Holiness Church just a few years ago repeated these same words with a minor variation: "The devil should not be allowed to keep all this good rhythm." And he has not. He is in danger of losing it to the...Holiness Church.

[John Work, paper delivered at Fisk Festival of Music and Art; April 30, 1948]

On this recording, most likely made in 1940-41, Gray turns the well-known hymn into an improvised call. The congregation's fixed response in the mixolydian mode results in an archaic sound. After the song ends, the church begins moaning and praying. No wonder Professor Work was drawn to Gray and his Pulaski congregation.

BLUES

By the time John Work started collecting folk music in the 1930s, the blues was an established commercial form. Work did note the apparent simplicity of the blues; as he put it: "The music is easily apprehended." But nonetheless, he took interest in two aspects of the genre overlooked by most scholars: lyric form and accompaniment. He was certainly the first trained musician to be so interested.

We have in the form of the blues an unexpected phrase balance. As distinguished from orthodox forms which balance phrase by phrase, designated by the terms antecedent phrase and consequent phrase, the blues has two antecedent phrases balanced by one consequent phrase.

This word structure is simple enough but the music is infinitely more complex. There are still three lines but they are each different and have a preconceived harmonic basis. This is supplied by an accompaniment which is usually highly embellished and highly rhythmic. In no manner

must this accompaniment be considered subordinate to the singer. It is just as important. Together they form an integral whole. ...the accompaniment resolves itself into improvisation which in the hands of the better instrumentalists becomes a demonstration of genuine skill and imagination.

[John Work; Robinson Music Lecture, Fisk University; 1938]

Professor Work didn't include any blues musicians on the Fisk 75th Anniversary program and he didn't use many of his precious blank discs on blues singers, though George Gibson and Earl Woodard from Nashville's Black Bottom district did record some blues that Work used in a statistical analysis of the blue note's frequency of occurrence (as published in *American Negro Songs and Spirituals*).

Otherwise Work was more interested in other social and religious types of Negro music.

A notable exception is heard here for the first time on compact disc. "Ain't Gonna Drink No Mo'" is a blues

Professor Work captured on one side of a ten-inch Silvertone brand disc.

These cheap blanks could be purchased at Sears-Roebuck department stores. This particular disc has suffered from repeated playback with poor equipment to the point that the first dozen grooves are damaged.

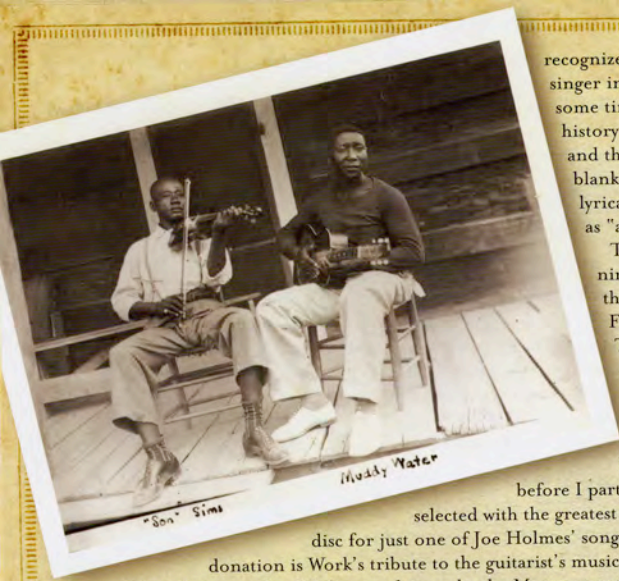
Professor Work was carrying a handful of these blank discs with the Presto machine on a trip to Fort Valley, Georgia where he was to judge a folk music contest in the spring of 1941.

Work's Nashville train let him off in Macon, Georgia where he'd change for Fort Valley. While waiting at Macon's Terminal Station, he heard singing coming from down the platform. He immediately



Handwritten notes on a piece of paper:
 7 Sunday, Feb 11
 Joe Holmes - 21 years. Born in Dayton, Ohio
 Played for several years lead guitar on a variety band (2 guitars, mandolin, bass & tuba). His father had graphophone horn attached to guitar. He played 2nd guitar.
 He was in West Palm Beach brought him down to play with me and mother, advised when he was boy.
 Played like before guitar. Learned that in Santa Fe, N.M. He played with him.
 He played in with weakband played on a horn. He joined in with playing the tuba. They liked it so much they asked him to continue to play progressively with them. After a while he learned the guitar played was his father believe it at first.
 This had 1 1/2 contact with Louis Hagen came to Macon Ga.
 Played 6 records at Pine Air club in Macon on the street in New York.

Notes on Joe Holmes
 Terminal Station, Macon, GA



recognized a superior guitarist and singer in Joe Holmes. Work spent some time getting Holmes' musical history written in his notebook and then engraved one of the blank discs with an original, lyrical blues Work described as "a complete composition."

That weekend Work used only nine discs to record thirty-two selections at the Fort Valley Folk Festival. These were eventually donated to the Library of Congress. As Work wrote to the Library's Alan Lomax about the recordings Lomax was soliciting: "...

before I part with recordings which I have selected with the greatest care." So using the tenth

disc for just one of Joe Holmes' songs and withholding it from donation is Work's tribute to the guitarist's musicianship.

It's unfortunate he didn't record more by the Macon street singer. Maybe Work's train came along too soon.

A second blues-related item is included here. When Fisk University and the Library of Congress collaborated on the Coahoma County study in 1941, one of the first subjects interviewed and recorded was McKinley Morganfield. John Work conducted one of the interviews of the musician better known as Muddy Waters. Issued several times over the years, the recording now has been remastered to better reveal the voice of Son Sims, Waters' fiddle-playing partner in a popular delta string band, and an off-mic John Work talking with Waters.

Work, in keeping with his interest in blues accompaniment and lyric form, asks a few questions about Waters' compositional technique. Unfortunately the interview is very short, probably at the preference of Alan Lomax who was operating the recording machine and allocating use of blank discs.

SACRED HARP SINGING

John Work's first known field trip was to southeast Alabama, the "black belt" country, to attend the conventions of African-Americans singing shape-note hymnody.

He made several trips; so intriguing was the music he found there. And on a trip to Dothan, Alabama, he brought the recording machine. "Great God Attend" was recorded on November 28, 1938.

Work wrote a lengthy article for *The Musical Quarterly* based on his Alabama fieldwork. Of a trip to Ozark at the end of September he wrote:

The music was sung from W.M. Cooper's revised "Sacred Harp," a bulky shape-note book published in Dothan, Alabama.

The pitch for the various parts was given by the tuner, an elderly, very authoritative man possessed of the envied faculty of absolute pitch... No instrument of any kind was present. The pitch given, the leader began the song, which was taken up immediately by the entire body. It was sung through first in the fa sol la mi syllables, then with the words.

The accuracy with which the singers read their parts was little short of phenomenal.

The classical aversion to consecutive fifths and octaves is entirely absent. Much of the strange flavor of the music is due to the effect of the many consecutives. The many bare fifths make the music decidedly austere...

Apparently there was no consciousness of tone-quality whatever. The only tonal aim seemed to be volume. The tone was thus generally shrill,

