

NEVIS AND ST. KITTS —  
CHRISTMAS SPORTS, TEA MEETING, AND THE MOONLIGHT NIGHT

***Nevis and St. Kitts***

Pure excitement and love of life imbue these recordings of grandiloquent speech-makers, cross-dressing gossipers, and chanty-singing fishermen from Nevis and St. Kitts. Fife-and-drum groups, string bands, and effusive toastmasters offer engaging and often comical examples of these islands' holiday sporting tradition.

***Caribbean Voyage***

Released for the first time, Alan Lomax's legendary 1962 recordings of the rich and many-stranded musical traditions of the Lesser Antilles and Eastern Caribbean: sea chanteys, work songs, pass-play and story songs, East Indian *chaupai*, steel-band music, and more, reflecting the Central and West African, French, English, Celtic, Spanish, and East Indian contributions to Caribbean culture.

***The Alan Lomax Collection***

The Alan Lomax Collection anthologizes the American, European, and Caribbean field recordings, world music compilations, and ballad operas of writer, folklorist, and ethnomusicologist Alan Lomax.

**Recorded by Alan Lomax in collaboration with Roger Abrahams, Ph.D., assisted by Antoinette Marchand. Series Editor: Kenneth Bilby, Ph.D.**

Remastered to 24-bit digital from the original field recordings. Contains previously unreleased recordings.

1. QUADRILLE (5:12)
2. QUADRILLE (1:17)
3. GOOD MORNING (2:14)
4. DO, MY JOLLY BOY (1:39)
5. BEAR AWAY, YANKEE, BEAR AWAY, BOY (2:08)
6. FEENY BROWN (1:09)
7. BLOW BOY BLOW (1:37)
8. SEE ME NANNY-O (1:25)
9. OLD SAILORS NEVER DIE (3:22)
10. BYE, LOLA, TILL MORNING (4:15)
11. QUADRILLE (2:16)
12. QUADRILLE (2:15)
13. ONE, TWO, THREE (1:27)
14. AUNTY NANNY THREAD THE NEEDLE / LOOSE ME, JOHNNY, LOOSE ME (4:20)
15. THE TRAGEDY AT BRIMSTONE HILL (2:15)
16. NEVIS WITHOUT A PAYDAY (2:53)
17. MASQUERADE WALKING PIECE (3:41)
18. MR. DOG, HE CAME TO TOWN (1:10)

19. **WILLIE BOY** (2:20)
20. **BABY, ROCK AWAY** (1:20)
21. **POOR JOSIAH** (2:43)
22. **YANKEE JOHN, STORMALONG** (1:00)
23. **CAESAR BOY, CAESAR** (2:00)
24. **LONG TIME AGO** (1:10)
25. **BULL DOG GOIN' BITE ME** (1:33)
26. **HAPPY CHRISTMAS TO YOU** (2:10)
27. **SPEECH / STREETS OF LAREDO** (0:58)
28. **CHRISTMAS SONG (Instrumental)** (2:10)
29. **MR. HIGHBACK (Tea Meeting Speeches and Tunes)** (7:54)
30. **RAG TIME (Instrumental)** (3:30)
31. **BULL DOG GOIN' BITE ME** (4:12)

**RECOLLECTIONS OF COLLECTING WITH ALAN LOMAX IN NEVIS AND ST. KITTS — *Roger Abrahams, Hum Rosen Professor Emeritus of Folklore and Folklife, University of Pennsylvania***

This recording represents the combined efforts of Alan Lomax and me as we coursed the island of Nevis one week in June 1962. My family and I were carrying out fieldwork on that small (five miles by eight miles) island while it was undergoing a great deal of political and economic change. Alan, by then a confirmed friend and sometime mentor, was carrying out the whirlwind project of recording the musical traditions of the many small islands in the Caribbean archipelago.

We bumped into Alan and his wife and assistant Antoinette Marchand on a hot day in Basseterre, St. Kitts. Before we left the United States, he and I had discussed the possibility of a visit, but the timing of the visit was not certain, nor was the kind of collecting we would do in common. This was to turn into a rare, intense, and sometimes excruciating experience for us. But that is the nature of fieldwork, in which all involved are perched at the edge of their own cultural experiences.

Listening to these recordings after forty years has conjured up remembrances of Alan Lomax's visit and the ways in which our lives intersected then. I came into folklore through the Folksong Revival, and no one was more important in that movement than Alan. Through his great work with his father, John Avery Lomax, Alan had placed folk song at the center of national interest during the Great Depression and World War II. And even with his exile to England during the gray 1950s and the broadening of his interests to include the folk music of Europe and the world, his shadow still loomed over the American folk music scene. In the mid 1950s, when so many (so we called ourselves) "folkniks" of my generation took to the road in search of songs, we went in the knowledge that we were following in the footsteps of the Lomaxes. Still a small enough coterie, at least in the environs of Greenwich Village, we all jostled and sang together on Sundays at the Circle in the Square of Washington Square and talked, talked, talked the rest of the week at the Folklore Center on Bleeker Street where Izzy Young served as Master of the Revels. Even

when he was not there, Alan Lomax's presence was felt in these discussions.

Alan and I came to know each other in the early days of the Folk Revival. Serving as both model and demonic figure, Alan, as his father John before him, had written of the sweep of American traditional songs in such a grand manner and with such scope that they could claim discovery rights to most of the important styles of traditional song and instrumental music. Alan wrote with a literary sonority that no one else approached. He also produced some of the most important and enduring phonograph recordings and radio presentations of the time. Whether we wanted it that way or not, wherever we collected we ran into people who, when we explained what we were doing, commented, "Oh, you mean like Mr. Lomax."

The very idea of folk song field collecting, then, brought to mind the Lomax legend. But Alan was also a palpable presence in those Village days — in informal discussions, in books and recordings, and, as we entered the 60s, in encounters front stage and backstage at the folk festivals that were springing up around North America. In such a setting, at Idyllwild, California, I taught with his sister, the equally brilliant Bess Lomax Hawes, and it was she who explained and intervened whenever Alan and I found ourselves in tense interactions. Over the years, the much more calm and collected Bess took it on herself to bring Alan and me together under a variety of conditions. And it was Bess that told me of the grant from the Rockefeller Foundation that would carry Alan throughout the Eastern Caribbean in the summer of 1962. Since I was teaching at the University of Texas and he was in New York, we carried out our next round of discussions through telephone calls and letters. I had already done preliminary fieldwork on Nevis in 1961, and Alan was anxious to be instructed on what might be found in that part of the Caribbean. I invited him to visit us that summer at Morningstar, Fig Tree Parish, and he asked me to be involved in his recordings there.

Many of the most propulsive styles of song and dance from the Caribbean had experienced international popularity at one time or another since the beginning of the nineteenth century. The habanera, calypso, conga, and beguine, to name just a few, had become staple forms in Western popular music. But Alan recognized that the equally rich traditions of the smaller islands had been ignored, creating an imbalance of cultural capital for their people that needed to be addressed if some sort of equitable treatment was to be achieved in the emerging trans-Caribbean system of cultural exchange. Then, as today, Alan was outraged by the degree of homogenization imposed on the world through the power of those in control of the music industry. This tour was a part of his movement toward the concept of the Global Jukebox. To talk with him about these ideas was always a thrill, but a threat as well, as his passions run so deep, and are so fully connected with his strong willfulness and his desire for an acknowledgment of the rectitude of his judgments. If he has been more interested in human diversity, as expressed in the variety of music and dance forms, he has not been as concerned with the less creative endeavors in the lives of the performers and their audiences. In this, he aligns himself with cultural conservationists of many stripes.

Because we had lost touch over the intervening months, there was perhaps more confusion than excitement when we accidentally found each other in St. Kitts, a situation made all the more difficult because of the oppressive heat of the streets of Basseterre. Quickly we made

arrangements for him and for Toni, who would be arriving in a few days with all their elaborate equipment. Spencer Howell, the Welfare Officer of Nevis, agreed to squire the Lomax entourage; Spencer, our next-door neighbor and friend, had arranged for the recording sites in Gingerland and St. George parishes on the farthest reaches of this tight little island. He had let the word go forth that Mr. Lomax was coming to the island to record musical talent for which he would pay a day's wage. Such largesse was welcome. Nevis had long had a depressed economy since the playing out of the land in the late nineteenth century and the exodus of most of the British plantation owners in the wake of the collapse of the sugar and the cotton industries. Day wages at that time were \$7 BWI (\$3.50 American) for the men, \$5 for the women. There was a water shortage. Lines at the water sources stood around the clock, with women, young and old, standing and waiting. Tempers were more than a little short. Long-simmering family and community disputes erupted.

Anything sold from off-island, including fish, created a queue. As in much of the undeveloped world, simply standing in line took up a good deal of one's days. By the time the recording equipment was set up, lines of would-be performers had formed. For them the wait was a matter of hours. Not everyone's singing or playing was to Alan's liking. He would stop each performer or group after 20 or 25 seconds, then give his verdict as to whether they should be recorded. All would be paid, but only a select number would be recorded. As this recording attests, when he found something he liked, he encouraged the group or the individual to record many pieces.

When the recording actually took place, the performers felt the same kind of need to do their best as they would on other performance occasions in which they had an investment of time, energy, and ego. Their primary criterion for what was performed was based on their indigenous display events, such as *Christmas Sports*, *Tea Meeting*, and the *Moonlight Night* gatherings in which games were played, joking carried on, cards played, *Anansi Stories* told.

The recording sessions were held at prearranged sites, sometimes at crossroads and rum shops, sometimes in a dancehall under cover of a roof. Recognizing that there would be noise problems from passing traffic and from the usually gregarious audience, constant efforts had to be made to keep out anyone but the performers from the recording area. The taping done at Chickenstone, Gingerland Parish, which provided much of the social music on this record, was done at night in a dancehall. Electric service was far from constant, especially at night, so that the dance-hall setting was the best one could hope for in the constancy of the current. The power surges and the blackouts that were part of these islands' way of life had to be taken into consideration, and the equipment had to be rigged both to the electric source and to back-up batteries. Here, too, the crowds could be held in check, though the building had open windows at which onlookers gathered and chattered.

No single factor could conflict more directly with *Nevisian* or *Kittitian* norms of performance than the need for quiet. Most musicians and actors were accustomed to contending for the crowd's attention. This dimension had to be controlled in order to make clear recordings. This quiet flew in the face of those performing comic dialogues such as those on tracks 36 and 37. Many Caribbean display forms are built on the principle of expressive confrontation, a *war* between competing masquerade groups and their *champion*

performers. This bellicose interactional style is better known in Trinidadian *picong* and calypso tent competitions. Not only are performances launched in a competitive manner, but they call for the very kinds of voice-overlap most difficult to record and transcribe. Such face-offs were most fully elaborated in the Christmas Sports and the Tea Meeting songs and speeches.

The yoking of performance and contention brought special problems during the recording of the sea shanties (tracks 4–8 and 22–25). These songs were commonly sung on the beach or in the boats and were not directed at any audience but the *fisheners* who used them to coordinate certain tasks. The recording session was held in a rum shop in Newcastle, the second most populous village on the island. The singers were not accustomed to singing together, and many of the songs were being recalled from the lives of the fishermen of the past. The audience assembled outside of the rum shop could hear what was being sung, and had to be asked repeatedly to be quiet. This was especially difficult during the recording of “See Me Nanny-O” (track 8) and “Feeny Brown — Spend my Money on the Whores on Shore” (track 6). The women and especially the very outspoken market higglers and potters of the area were deeply amused that anyone would want to hear men hold forth on this subject. There was a good deal of jocular *busing* (abusing) and *vexation* created by the onlookers. But when the singers tried to sing “Castle Girls Have Dirty Bloomers,” a riot broke out and recording had to stop.

The sea shanties were the only pieces that were performed primarily from the singers’ memories of past practices. Except for those used for the launching and beaching of the boats, none of the songs came from ongoing fishing operations. As you will hear in the words of the shanty “Caesar Boy” (track 23), the beaching and launching process was often carried out with the help of a kettle drummer (snare drummer) and even an entire fife band.

Coordinated lifting of any sort, such as house moving, called for this *shanty* singing (the term *shanty* is used throughout the region by the singers themselves). Even more ubiquitous was the use of the intoned rhyme: “*De Ram, de ewe, de weather, / We all pull together,*” along with the song, “Do, My Jolly Boys” (track 4).

The songs were dredged up by singers who had sung them 20 or 30 years before when there had been a good market for their fish and cooperative fishing activities had emerged from this otherwise fiercely independent and even secretive fraternity. Most sea shanties previously collected have come from those who followed the trans-oceanic whaling trade. Here they came from another maritime activity — drop-line and trap harvesting. In the main, these are versions of some of the more commonly reported shanty repertoire. Little attempt was made in those days to collect with “natural” contextual factors taken into consideration. By contrast, the sessions carried out on St. Kitts were done under less controlled conditions, so more of the boisterous qualities of actual performance conditions made it onto tape. The differences can be heard in the comparison of the performances of the Nevis (tracks 2, 10, 16, 27, and 29) and the St. Kitts (track 30) Big Drum groups. The Lomaxes, father and son, had developed this technique of field recording as early as their work for the Library of Congress in the 1930s. It remains the standard way of collecting folksongs in the field, often with the encouragement of the traditional singers themselves,

who often want a “clean” recording such as one hears on the radio or television.

Initially, while the Lomax entourage in the West Indies made their modus operandi evident, the performances drew those who usually entered in as commentators, especially those who were counted among the most witty. In eliminating those voices, a good part of the ambience of performance was lost in the service of clarity. Here, the impact of the authorial voice of the collector came together with directional microphones to record performances that would be understandable to auditors outside the community. This reflected the experience of Alan's many years in the field, producing performances on the model of the commercial phonograph recording or the radio show. He was the great pioneer in these fields of public presentation, as well as a veteran of the folk festival circuit.

Having said this, carrying out recording sessions under such controlled conditions made me feel slightly compromised, as I thought these situational factors were important to record as well. This was more than a little self-righteous on my part. I'm sure that to an extent, I had developed that strange sense of ownership that comes over folklorist-collectors as they discover performers and are able to situate them within local life. I felt as if I should explain this to Alan, even through intervening and interviewing the performers during the recording, allowing the performers themselves to explain. I had been recording in homes and rum shops throughout the island, attempting to uncover the performance occasions and the local performers and their repertoire.

The differences between Alan's technique of eliciting performances and mine also were unsettling in other ways: the issue of payment being a major example. I was used to bringing with me the kinds of provisions that Nevisians liked but often could not afford: sardines and other canned goods, refined sugar and flour. After the Lomaxes left, however, field work became that much more difficult; each session had to involve a discussion of why I was not able to pay cash. Eventually, the problem dissolved as I recorded more during the performance events themselves and could enter into the proceedings with contributions dictated by the event and the season.

I had come to Nevis to carry out long-term research on local traditions, to work toward making an inventory of the expressive traditions on the island: songs, games, speeches, riddles, jokes, various kinds of marching drills, contrived and ritualized arguments, sermons and speeches. I had a particular task: to compare the traditions in this region of Afro-America with those I had experienced in the urban neighborhood in Philadelphia that I had called Camingerly (reported upon in *Deep Down in the Jungle*, the book that was soon to be published.) Because the street-level performances in Philadelphia lived within the lively environment of contesting voices, I was especially interested in just how such joking, especially personal rhyming, were manifested in this wholly different West Indian environment. Not only was there a tradition of name-calling in rhyme, in parallel with the “dozens,” the signifying that I had found in Philadelphia. Under the name *Nyega Business*, this rhyming entered almost every performance occasion. Most of this dimension of performances is lost when the directional microphone is put in front of performers and quiet is called for.

In performances collected from my neighbors in South Philadelphia in the late 50s, I had the disquieting experience of not being able to figure out what I had found. The rhyming and singing recorded in Camingerly were *sui generis* as far as previous folklore and anthropological studies were concerned. I had written and called everyone I had heard about who had been working in Black American communities, sending on texts of the toasts and the intense, combative rhyming of the “dozens” to the scholars to whom Richard Dorson and Melville Herskovits had directed me through correspondence. I had known Alan Lomax during this period and even before, when I was living in Greenwich Village in the period 1956-58 at the beginning of the folksong revival. As my work in South Philadelphia proceeded, all of my advisors agreed that I needed to carry out further work in Afro-American communities, but ones as far away from the city as possible, as a way of experiencing in person the deep carry-overs that both Herskovits and Lomax had found working in a number of Black communities in the New and Old Worlds.

My parents had recently begun their second life on Nevis, so the choice of this island as a field site seemed obvious. What a surprise, then, when we discovered that these particular islands, ones that had been the Mother Colonies in the British realm, were suffused with traditional forms stemming from the British repertoire. I recognized them from my previous experience in collecting in the Southern Appalachians and East Texas, and from books I had read as part of my graduate education. Riddling, using proverbs (locally called *twangs*), joking routines, sentimental songs, shanties, and ballads, folk plays, and elaborate recitations and oratorical demonstrations — these were the performances that we discovered through working within the village settings.

Alan, having already launched the Cantometrics project, knew exactly what the similarities and continuities were, for he had begun charting them in music and dance. So when he and Toni arrived on Nevis, I was ready for the short course on style — or at least as ready as anyone might be without having previously collected with the duo we afterward referred to as the “Lomax Hurricane.”

Looking now at the logs kept by Toni, as well as my fieldnotes, those days and nights come alive. If memory serves, we were keeping 16-hour days, and the performers and the local authorities were following us around the island. I remember Alan taking catnaps while sitting in a chair as others were setting up. I also remember his kindness in taking the time in his day of rest to read the first draft of *Deep Down in the Jungle* which I had just finished, and his useful commentary in a number of places.

### **Nevis, St. Kitts, and Anguilla**

At that time, Nevis, St. Kitts, and Anguilla were still in a confederation, which was convenient only to the British authorities. While Nevis and St. Kitts are contiguous, mountainous islands (as are Montserrat and the pair of small Dutch islands, Saba and Stacia — St. Eustacius), Anguilla is distant, a coral island with a very different social and cultural configuration. By the end of the decade the direct political relationship with the United Kingdom had begun to be severed. In 1962, all three islands still had Queen's representatives in place, an ambassador in St. Kitts and a warden at the Government Houses in Nevis and Anguilla. Later, at the point of devolution, Anguilla unilaterally declared

independence and got away with it, much to the delight of the news media in New York and London.

Nevis and St. Kitts lie in a strange, antagonistic symbiosis. Nevis had been the great resort island in the eighteenth century. A spa, still standing today, had been built at large *soufriere* close to the bustling port of Charlestown. But the foods produced on the island had never been sufficient to feed its inhabitants. When the leeching of the land caused its cash crop to be unprofitable, a good part of its population moved to other sugar and indigo areas. St. Kitts on the other hand, had much better quality soil and was able to maintain its status as a sugar island well through the 1960s. The seat of the government is in Basseterre, and until recently, most of the development moneys went into the Kittitian infrastructure. Nevis had become the poor relative, known for the bad humor of its residents with each other and with Kittitians. Yet, there was — and is — a good deal of visiting between these islands at odds, and most families have members living on both. Most important for the present purpose, they share performance traditions, and many of the most accomplished players travel back and forth between the islands. This is especially evident during times of celebration. The major holiday on both islands is Old Christmas. Throughout its 12 days, carousing groups go from yard to yard throughout the two islands, coming together in a parade on Boxing Day on Charleston and on New Year's Day in Basseterre.

### **Christmas Entertainments and Tea Meetings**

Nevis and St. Kitts, along with Barbados and Antigua, are both among the British Mother Colonies settled in the 1620s and early 1630s. The occasions for performance were based on the time-folds of the cultivators of sugar, on moonlight nights, at the periodic markets, and in the celebrations that had begun as slave holidays. Old Christmas, especially, was regarded by the slaves as their entitled time for merriment. *Cropover* was the time when the sugaring was in the boiling houses and had been rendered into mogasse, or molasses, in the stages of refinement that could be used in the production of *strong* (rum). In fact, the local product was called *mountain dew*, which was still being produced on the island. The fires in the stills high on Mt. Nevis were often pointed out by one or another friend who knew I was interested in the subject. Mountain dew also had the name *Hammond Report*, a reference to a British parliamentary study of the West Indian situation which was badly received locally and came to be jokingly associated with anything negative.

Christmas was then as now the most important time for local entertainments. Much of the music represented here is to be found in connection with some sort of roving groups who go from yard to yard, rum shop to rum shop, getting tribute notice from the in-dwellers. At the end of many performances, the hat is passed:

*Hark, the sound, the cock is crowing*  
*Hark, the sound, the cock is crowing.*  
*It is time for us to go.*  
*Oh, it is time for us to go.*

*We beg you a penny to buy our Christmas Bread*  
*We beg you a penny to buy our Christmas Bread*



*It is time for us to go.*  
*Oh, it is time for us to go.*

Many of the Christmas entertainments preserved very archaic British countryside amusements. The one that most surprised us was the St. George and Turk play, well-known throughout Great Britain in the nineteenth century, but not widely found in the New World. Called Mummies, it was still played on both St. Kitts and Nevis in the 1960s, in groups that played a number of other grandiloquent pieces: David and Goliath (taken from the biblical account, with some versions stemming from the homiletic play of that name by the evangelizing writer Hannah More); *Giant Dispear* (Despair), taken from *Pilgrim's Progress*, and *Shakespeare Lesson*, which included excerpts from *Richard III* and *Julius Caesar*. But these Christmas Sports also included a number of slapstick pieces carried out in the broadest *old talk* (patois) done *in* costume, including the dancing *Masquerade*, the music of which is included here (tracks 1 and 2).

Broad comedic, often cross-dressing shows were taken yard to yard, such as the *Mr. Highback* (also called *Mr. Bus'-'e - Back*) found on this CD (track 29). (The titles refer to the title character who is portrayed as a hump-back.) These comedies, usually grouped under the term *Nyegar Business*, claim to report gossip concerning local happenings; in the case of *Mr. Highback* here (as well as the *Bull Play*), the yarn at the center of the enactment is clearly related to the British traditions of The Old Tup and various British Jigs, developed as entr'acts performed on stage since the late sixteenth century.

Groups who relied on more recent events and who performed during Christmas were bands or drills dressed as nurses and sailor boys who performed the marching routines so common in British and American parades in the early twentieth century. More comic and more broadly played were Cowboys and Indians, represented here with the cowboy's introductory speeches (track 27). These groups were extraordinarily interesting as they drew on cowboy movies of the 1930s and 40s, still playing regularly in the one movie house on the island. The speeches also were confected from the Street and Smith cowboy pulp novels of that period. Central to these performances is the idea that the two groups, the Cowboys and the Indians, will have a battle. The speeches of the Indian chiefs make clear that the battle is regarded as one between whites and people of color.

In addition, a number of groups sang very old part-songs while *serenaring* (caroling) during the Christmas season. The one community that had maintained this tradition were from Fountain Village, high on Mt. Nevis, and they did not get word of the Lomax recording session, so this tradition is represented here only by one song, "Happy Christmas to You" (performed by a string band on track 26).

With each of these Christmas Sports, one kind of musical band accompanies the group as it carouses from one yard or rum shop to the next. The music can be heard long before the group actually appears, thus alerting the next village that an entertainment is in the offing. Many of those not actually performing follow the groups from yard to yard, singing and shouting along the way, and dancing occurs during the performances. Each of the performing groups develops its routines in small bursts, encouraging the involvement of the

on-lookers. It is perfectly permissible, in fact, for the crowd to stop and join the performance by breaking into song or dance. The pieced-together style of these performances may best be heard in the comic speeches given by Kittitian rhymesters from Irishtown (track 30). Each of these speeches would have been composed for the season, most often by those who were performing. They commonly refer to local events and figures, often even those present among the onlookers, who were the butts of the rhymed joking. The aim of the carousers is to make a good Christmas, not to produce some lasting artistic effect, though the performers do take the events seriously in rehearsals, and each group has a captain who teaches the other players their lessons. Because these lessons had to be learned by young players, the captain wrote them out, a practice that made it considerably easier for the collector; each captain I encountered was quite willing to write out the whole play for me in the form of the accumulated lessons he needed to teach the young performers.

The musical ensembles that accompany these groups may choose what they will lead. ("One, Two, Three," "Young and Old," and "Peas and Rice," and the various Quadrilles and Walking Music from St. Kitts and from Gingerland Parish, Nevis [tracks 1, 2, 11, 12, and 16.]) A good deal of negotiation takes place in autumn, and the choices made are not only on the basis of being neighbors to the other performers, but rather on how profitable a Christmas a group promises to make. The very best are also used whenever a Tea Meeting is held (very rare in recent years), during the mango season or around Emancipation Day (August Monday).

According to reports by older Nevisians and Kittitians, the Tea Meeting developed in the nineteenth century as a way for the churches to raise money. This accords well with the history of the event reported from other Anglophonic islands from Providencia and the islands off the Belize coast to Jamaica. There it was an event used by the evangelizing Methodists to raise money and provide local performers with a venue for their talents. A cross between a variety show, a religious service, and a Midsummer's anointing of a Queen and a King, Tea Meetings were held regularly before the advent of either artificial illumination or alternative entertainment forms from outside. They are very difficult to produce because they require a day appointed, a hall rented, musicians employed, tickets printed, refreshments provided, and chairmen hired who will act both as orators and as Masters of Ceremony.

Drawing on the same repertoire of tunes as at Christmas, two or more of the Big Drum groups (consisting of bamboo fife, and trap and bass drums, both played with sticks in the European manner) will assemble at a given point about a mile from the hall in which the Tea Meeting will be held, at the home of the King or the Queen elected for the night. Again, it is the piercing sound of the approaching fife and drum that alerts the populace that this event is about to take place. Note that the phrasing on these tunes takes into account the fact that the group is marching, often uphill and jostling with the crowd, and the fife player needs to breathe more than he would were he standing still.

Just as Christmas has provided the occasion for the learning and repeated performances of archaic British countryside amusements, so too has the Tea Meeting provided the occasion for the older songs, ballads, jigs, and many of the popular musics of the Atlantic World of

the last century and more. Most of the older songs that Lomax recorded come from routines developed for Tea Meeting. (See "Mr. Dog, He Came to Town" [track 18], "Dance de Boatman Dance," "When I Was a Young Girl and Single," and "Willie Boy" [track 19]). In addition, there were various acts, called drills, for which the singing-dance games of childhood or the lullabies learned a generation ago would be resuscitated. (See "Baby Rock Away" [track 20], "Ring Diamond," "Walking up the Green Grass," and "Wild Willy Wallflower.")

Many of the most popular Tea Meeting songs had been learned from Charles Walters, a blind man who, until his death on June 19th, 1959, had made his living singing on holidays, on market days, and at Tea Meetings. Performing with another blind singer, Charles Webbe, on Christmas and at Tea Meetings, they made up "The Gingerland Gems," one of the most highly regarded Big Drum groups. Webbe played fife on such occasions, and Walters played a tenor banjo. Not only would they receive recompense for performances, but Walters would sell copies of his songs that he produced at the local printery. His songs reported on cataclysmic events occurring on the islands (see "The Tragedy at Brimstone Hill" [track 15], performed here by a singer named Santoy), or the problems in common shared by the working folk (see "Nevis without a Payday" [track 16], also performed by Santoy).

Walters' best known song was a characteristic West Indian complaint bewailing the plight of men in the face of women's wiles. He sang of the island pharmacopoeia and took special note of those bushes that induce spontaneous abortion; he lauded the introduction of breadfruit into the slaves' diet, even while deriding the government for not attending to the nutrition of the workers; he directed songs at the police who were caught encouraging the production and distribution of illicit rum; and he seems to have sung some of the ancient ballads of Great Britain, such as "Barbara Allen" and "Our Goodman (Five Nights Drunk)." The songs by which he was remembered, some still eulogized in 1962, were often performed in the Tea Meeting setting.

### **The Tea Meeting Ceremony**

Tea Meeting performances are introduced by a chairman and a vice-chairman performing in stentorian tones, wetting their whistle every once in awhile to dramatize their strength of voice. The two make welcoming speeches and serve as masters of ceremony, introducing other orators, singing drills, or comic routines. The major "performances" of the evening are those between the chairman and vice-chairman, and between them and the speakers from the floor, to see who can best quote the Bible or some other literary resource. The "cool" of these men of words is constantly tested by hecklers in the audience. All of these performances are regarded as exhibiting the highest abilities of the community. They may be comic and occasionally even obscene, but they must use the Kittitian or Nevisian approximation of British performance codes, techniques, and patterns. Consequently, the songs gravitate toward the sentimental; indeed, most of them are called "sentimental songs." The speeches, whether performed by one of the chairmen or a person from the floor, must be in the proper ornate and eloquent style. Although these performances and the code in which they are couched are derived from British sources, it would be a mistake to see them as European. Rather, there exists an undeclared war between the performers and the

audience, between forces of decorum and those of rudeness and noise. Furthermore, the outcome is forever in doubt. The outsider may feel that rudeness is usually the winner, for the hall is usually full of uncontrolled sound. In Nevis the Tea Meeting is held not for the performances per se but for the confrontation between the crowd and the performers.

In this battle, the King and Queen, those who perform in the very middle of the ceremony, provide the median and the norm of sanity for the occasion. They speak as a king and a queen ought, in the most elevated diction and in proper discursive style. Their speeches, however, are satirical, focusing on the ills of the island, the government's lack of responsiveness to the people's needs, and the whole idea of royalty itself. Significantly, they are the one group of performers who have little trouble commanding the attention of the crowd.

The rest of the evening is a constant battle between the denizens of decorum, represented most fully by the chairmen, and those of chaos, represented by the hecklers. Each attempts to get the attention of the crowd. Repeated calls are made for achieving decorum by the chairmen:

*Decorum! Ladies and gentlemen, we must remember the alphabet and what it teaches. The alphabet of the English language has only twenty-six letters, and there may be times when you have to take plenty of those letters; but tonight we take just six. These six are A, B, C, D, J and P. Ladies and gentlemen, there's attention, that's A. A is for Adam, the first one that God made; that's why A upside down stands for attention. B is for Bethlehem, where Christ was born. So the upside down B stands for Behavior. Ladies and gentlemen, there's more; there's C. C is for Cain, who killed his brother Abel. C upside down, C stands for Conduct. D is for poor old fatherless Daniel who was cast in the lion's den. Turn that upside down, D stands for Decorum. etc., etc. Okay. J. J is for Jesus and Jehovah. Turn it upside down, J stands for Justice. It is precious for all that brings us all to P. P is for Pharoah, the enemy of the Israelites. Turn the letter P upside down, P stands for Peace. Now ladies and gentlemen, Christian friends and men and brethren, you know that Christ himself was lost. And when leaving this earth he said, "My peace I give to you. Peace I left with you." Peace eternal, forever, Amen.*

The pattern of performance, then, is one in which dramatic oppositions arise in a number of forms, all of which are in contention simultaneously, and all of which everyone heartily enjoys. But these oppositions are not uncontrolled, for as is true of Afro-American performances generally, opposites are viewed playfully. Winners and losers are beside the point, except as the competition adds to the hilarity of the occasion.

### **Children's Songs**

The children's song games that the Lomaxes found being played in the schoolyard in St. James Windward School (near Potworks) represent the most lively tradition of all those encountered in the 1960s. Because those included here came from the side of the island that had not yet been electrified, they seem to represent some of the oldest known on the island. They were not only played in the school yards, but on moonlight nights. Some of them were probably introduced by teachers from other islands, including the "One, Two, Three"

counting song (track 13) sung to an unforgettable melody. It is one of many clapping game-songs in the Nevisian and Kittitian repertoire.

The others included here share the same general organization of Afro-American ring-songs: one or two people are pushed to the center, called upon to do some steps, then choose the next players. Alan Lomax, his sister Bess Lomax Hawes, and the Trinibagonian scholar J. D. Elder published these elegant pieces in *Brown Girl in the Ring* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1997).

The slower-tempoed “Jane and Louisa” portrays something of a courtship scene. Its melody is difficult to get out of the mind. Erna Brodber, the fine Jamaican writer, titled her book *Jane and Louisa Will Soon Come Home* for the game as she learned it as a child. It is a translation of a common French Caribbean song-game, introduced into the repertoire by teachers in the 1920s or 1930s. It and “Black [Brown] Girl in the Ring” and “Ring Diamond” are found throughout the Anglophonic West Indies. The version of “Thread the Needle” (track 14) involves the old English game of that name, but it has a tune that I have encountered only on Nevis and St. Kitts. “Little Sally Walker” is, of course, one of the most common singing games in the English tradition, and is widely found in the United States as a jump-rope rhyme.

### **Instrumental Music**

At the time of these recordings, the number of musicians on the islands had been severely diminished, or so we were told again and again. Yet, these performances indicate that those left were brilliant if not inventive. The musical worlds there, however, didn't call for invention; musicians existed primarily as accompanists for the players at Christmas or Tea Meetings. During these times, they were in great demand, but during the rest of the year they had little opportunity to practice, much less play in ensembles. While visiting the musicians in their home communities, when asked if they would be willing to play out of season, their only resistance was that the instruments had to be retrieved from wherever they were kept when not in use and that they would have to be fixed up because each year they had to be re-tuned, and in many cases, new sheepskins found, scraped and installed on the head of the drums.

This situation called for repeated visits to the local rum shop to find out whether the instruments were ready. Toward the end, I simply waited for the appropriate season and tried to find out when and where the rehearsals of the sporty groups were going to be held. Under these circumstances, there was discomfort among all of the players, musicians, and actors if I tried to record just the music. Even the musicians from the scratch bands who were accustomed to playing for local dances found it awkward to play without the movements for which they provided accompaniment.

These organizations had no names for the groups, and the personnel differed from one year to the next as so many were finding work off-island, leaving for years at a time. Indeed, I have been told by field collectors who have worked in the British and American Virgin Islands that many of their musicians had emigrated from Nevis and St. Kitts. This point has also been made by players who have had memoirs published in both the local capitals and in

Charlotte Amalie. While I have heard none of the performances from elsewhere, the texts of the plays and speeches are extraordinarily close to those from Nevis and St. Kitts.

The instrumental music represented here is basically a local elaboration of the fife and drum marching groups found throughout the Anglophonic Caribbean and the American South. Strongly tied to the pace of the dancing or the declamations, the listener will observe the rigidity of the pulse system articulated by the rhythm instruments: the snare and bass drums in the Bum Drum groups, and the *baha* and rhythm guitars and banjos in the scratch bands. In both, the melodic structure is strongly contained by the limited range of the fife — widely known tunes like “My Bonnie Lies Over the Ocean” are accommodated to the pitch-range of the instrument.

These locally made wind instruments have only two registers and also are limited in tonalities by the eight finger stops and the thumb stop on the lower half of the cane flutes. (Merritt Boddie, featured on many of the selections, showed me how he made the flutes, using a heated piece of metal to hollow the 18" length of bamboo, and to burn the holes, which he measured only by eye and hand memory.) To be sure, some bent and slurred notes are discernible, produced by covering only a portion of one or another of the finger holes and then moving the finger-pad over the entire hole. The breathing patterns of the musicians on the move also strongly affect the tonal production of the melodies. The short bursts of grace notes introduced between renditions of the melody are occasioned by the need of the fifiers to take breaths while walking, often uphill. The spitting sensation of the initial attack in the melody is achieved by holding the tongue against the lips just prior to release of the tone. The strophic phrasing asserts that the melodies are simple and quite squared off compositionally.

### **Influence of Tourism**

Some final notes: with the growth of banking and tourism on these islands, the scratch bands (as the kinds of string bands heard here are known) have gotten regular work for dances and other festive occasions at the guest houses and hotels on both islands. This has stabilized the personnel of these bands and given them a good deal of regular work.

In 1962, when there was so much fieldwork being carried out on Nevis and St. Kitts, the Charlestown Chamber of Commerce wondered what was so interesting about this old talk stuff to outsiders. They asked me to give a speech on the uniqueness of their local traditions, which was followed up by another talk by the cultural anthropologist Richard Frucht, who was engaged in a study of the natural and cultural ecology of Nevis. The Chamber saw in the Old Christmas a way to celebrate local talent, and it sponsored a contest for *Ol' Mas sports*, carried out on Boxing Day on the Charlestown cricket field. The short-term success of this sponsorship was such that it became an advertisement for Nevisian culture, receiving mention in the many articles in American and British magazines that brought these islands to greater notice. As the political situation between Nevis and St. Kitts became more heated and partisan, the Christmas sports were used in a partisan fashion, especially in the face of the majority. The possibilities for political resistance proved to be infectious. The party of opposition on St. Kitts seized on the idea because of its populist possibilities and imitated the competition in its annual festivity on New Year's Day in Basseterre. Within two or three

years, the performers no longer wanted to compete, nor even to perform in the countryside, because they had been co-opted in this manner, even though the prizes offered were relatively substantial.

This saga of cultural intervention has served as a cautionary tale for me over the years in which local pride festivals have been staged throughout the world. A few of the Christmas Sports have been maintained as part of the summer celebration, Carifesta. Most of them, however, seem to have disappeared. Nevertheless, when we collected these performances in the 1960s, everyone on the island had declared them a thing of the past, but we witnessed their resuscitation from Christmas to Christmas. All that it takes to keep them alive is one captain who is willing to put together an old-time group, rehearse its members, and use the performance as part of the Christmas festivities. Moreover, as noted, some of these captains have emigrated to St. Thomas and St. Croix, and have taught them to young people, where these traditions have flourished a great deal more energetically in those places than in the home islands. — *Laverock, Pennsylvania, 2001*

## SONG NOTES

### 1. QUADRILLE

Played by Merritt Boddie, flute; Samuel Hanley, guitar; Kelvin Liburd, guitar; James Grant, guitar; Joe Liburd, cuatro; Alfred Williams, mandolin; Edmond Henderson, gourd; Hubert Sanders, *baha* (boom pipe); Anderson Duporte, banjo. Recorded on July 9, 1962, in Gingerland, Nevis.

### 2. QUADRILLE

Played by Daniel Hobson, fife; David Freeman, second fife; Ernest Archibald, kettle drum; Alfredo Morton, bass drum. Recorded on July 11, 1962, in Gingerland, Nevis.

### 3. GOOD MORNING

Sung by an unidentified chorus; with George Sweeney, guitar; Alvin Prentice, guitar; Joseph Reid, *baha* (boom pipe); and Selwyn Wathey, spoon. Recorded on July 2, 1962, in Irishtown, St. Kitts.

*Morning, morning*

*How you do this morning?*

*Give me me guavaberry.*

*You know it's Christmas morning.*

*What you going to do with me this morning?*

*This is Christmas morning.*

*Good morning, morning, morning, etc.*

### 4. DO, MY JOLLY BOY

Sung by Walter Roberts (shantyman); Roy Gumbs, Reginald Syder, Franklin Skeete, Reuben Morris. Recorded on July 10, 1962, in Newcastle, Nevis.

*When you're going to shub [push],*

*You mus' either shub [push] or leave her,  
Do, my jolly boy',  
Oh yo.  
Long and strong, me jolly men.*

*Oh yo.*

*From Halifax to Dover is ninety miles and over,  
Do my jolly boy',  
Oh, ho,  
Bullies, are you de',  
Oh, yo.  
We can do them, jolly boy',  
Oh, yo.*

*Wheela, wheela, jolly boy',  
Oh, yo. (Etc., ad lib.)*

### **5. BEAR AWAY, YANKEE, BEAR AWAY, BOY**

Sung by Walter Roberts (shantyman); with Roy Gumbs, Reginald Syder, Franklin Skeete, and Reuben Morris. Recorded on July 10, 1962, in Newcastle, Nevis.

John Gould, mentioned in this song, is supposed by the men to have been a shipowner who lost his cargo. (See Abrahams, *Deep the Water*, pages 53–55.)

*Oh, what me going tell John Gould today?  
Bear away, Yankee, bear away, boy.*

*Deep de water, shallow a shore,  
Bear away, Yankee, bear away, boy.*

*Oh, bear away to Noble Bay,  
Bear away, Yankee, bear away, boy.  
Oh, bear away to Noble Bay,  
Bear away, Yankee, bear away, boy.*

*Oh, what me going tell John Gould today?  
Bear away, Yankee, bear away, boy.  
Oh, what me going tell John Gould today?  
Bear away, Yankee, bear away, boy. (Etc., ad lib.)*

### **6. FEENY BROWN**

Sung by Reginald Syder (shantyman); with Walter Roberts, Roy Gumbs, Franklin Skeete, and Reuben Morris. Recorded on July 10, 1962, in Newcastle, Nevis.

In line with the Anglo-American sea song tradition, Nevisians sang many songs about their



women on shore — both their sweethearts and their whores. As usual, Judy, Susanna, and Liza are the heroines, but Sally Brown is found here as Feeny, perhaps her original name, since she was from Bermuda according to most accounts. (See Abrahams, *Deep the Water*, pages 57–61.)

*Feeny Brown is the belle of Bermuda,  
Ay yo, Feeny.  
Feeny Brown is the belle of Bermuda,  
Spend my money on the girls ashore.*

*Give her a dollar and she hol' for anodder,  
Ay yo, Feeny.  
Give her a dollar and she hol' for anodder,  
Spend my money on the girls ashore.*

*Feeny Brown is the belle of Bermuda,  
Ay yo, Feeny.  
Oh, give her a dollar and she hol' for anodder,  
Spend my money on the girls ashore.*

*Feeny Brown is the belle of Bermuda,  
Ay yo, Feeny.  
Oh, give her a dollar and she hol' for anodder,  
Spend my money on the girls ashore.*

*Feeny Brown is the belle of Bermuda,  
Ay yo, Feeny.  
Feeny Brown, and a worthless Feeny,  
Spend my money on the girls ashore.*

## **7. BLOW BOY BLOW**

Sung by Walter Roberts (shantyman); with Roy Gumbs, Reginald Syder, Franklin Skeete, and Reuben Morris. Recorded on July 10, 1962, in Newcastle, Nevis.

The ridiculous food mentioned in this shanty occurs in comic routines, jokes, and tales throughout the West Indies, and always elicits great laughter from the audience. (See Abrahams, *Deep the Water*, pages 55–57.)

*Captain, captain, what for me dinner?  
Blow, boy, blow.  
Salt fish color and white lice liver,  
Blow, my bully boy, blow.*

*Come blow today, come blow tomorrow,  
Blow, boy, blow.*

*Oh, you blow, you blow, you blow, you blow,  
Blow, my bully boy blow.*

*O Captain, captain, what for me dinner?  
Blow, boy, blow.  
Salt fish liver and white lice color,  
Blow, my bully boy, blow.*

*Come blow today, come blow tomorrow,  
Blow, boy, blow.  
You blow away, I long to hear you,  
Blow my bully boy blow. (x2)*

*Oh, captain, captain, what for my dinner?  
Blow, boy, blow.  
A tin-fish head and a white lice liver,  
Blow, my bully boy, blow. (Etc., ad lib.)*

#### **8. SEE ME NANNY-O**

Sung by Reginald Syder (shantyman); with Walter Roberts, Roy Gumbs, Franklin Skeete, and Reuben Morris. Recorded on July 10, 1962, in Newcastle, Nevis.

*Women belly full of hair,  
See me Nanny-o,  
Women belly full of hair,  
See me Nanny-o,  
Women belly full of hair,  
See me Nanny-o,  
Hurrah for de golden.  
See me Nanny-o.*

*I see it when I went there,  
See me Nanny-o,  
I saw it when I been there,  
See me Nanny-o,  
I saw it when I been there,  
See me Nanny-o,  
Hurrah for de golden.  
See me Nanny-o.*

*If you want to see a monkey trick,  
See me Nanny-o,  
Oh, bust a pepper 'pon e prick,  
See me Nanny-o,  
If you want to see a monkey trick,  
See me Nanny-o,*

*Hurrah for de golden,  
See me Nanny-o.*

*It's beautiful to be there,*

*See me Nanny-o,  
Oh, beautiful to be there,  
See me Nanny-o,  
Oh, women belly full of hair,  
See me Nanny-o,  
Hurrah for de golden.  
See me Nanny-o. (Etc., ad lib.)*

### **9. OLD SAILORS NEVER DIE (Instrumental)**

Played by Merritt Boddie, flute; Samuel Hanley, guitar; Kelvin Liburd, guitar; James Grant, guitar; Joe Liburd, *cuatro*; Alfred Williams, mandolin; Edmond Henderson, gourd; Hubert Sanders, *baha* (boom pipe); Anderson Duporte, banjo. Recorded on July 9, 1962, in Gingerland, Nevis.

### **10. BYE, LOLA, TILL MORNING (Instrumental)**

Played by Daniel Hobson, fife; David Freeman, second fife; Ernest Archibald, kettle drum; Alfredo Morton, bass drum. Recorded on July 11, 1962, in Gingerland, Nevis.

### **11. QUADRILLE**

Played by Merritt Boddie, flute; Samuel Hanley, guitar; Kelvin Liburd, guitar; James Grant, guitar; Joe Liburd, *cuatro*; Alfred Williams, mandolin; Edmond Henderson, gourd; Hubert Sanders, *baha* (boom pipe); Anderson Duporte, banjo. Recorded on July 9, 1962, in Gingerland, Nevis.

### **12. QUADRILLE**

Played by Merritt Boddie, flute; Samuel Hanley, guitar; Kelvin Liburd, guitar; James Grant, guitar; Joe Liburd, *cuatro*; Alfred Williams, mandolin; Edmond Henderson, gourd; Hubert Sanders, *baha* (boom pipe); and Anderson Duporte, banjo. Recorded on July 9, 1962, in Gingerland, Nevis.

### **13. ONE, TWO, THREE**

Performed by a group of schoolchildren led by Anita Wilkens. Recorded on July 10, 1962, in Brick Kiln Village, Nevis.

*One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven, twelve, thirteen, fourteen,  
fifteen, sixteen, seventeen, eighteen, nineteen, twenty.*

*One and twenty, two and twenty, three and four and five and six and twenty.  
Twenty seven, twenty eight, twenty nine.*

*Thirty, one and thirty, two and thirty, three and four and five and six and thirty.*

*Thirty seven, thirty eight, thirty nine.*

*Forty, one and forty, two and forty, three and four and five and six and forty.  
Forty seven, forty eight, forty nine.*

*Fifty, one and fifty, two and fifty, three and four and five and six and fifty.  
Fifty seven, fifty eight, fifty nine.*

*Sixty, one and sixty, two and sixty, three and four and five and six and sixty.  
Sixty seven, sixty eight, sixty nine.*

*Seventy, one and seventy, two and seventy, three and four and five and six and seventy.  
Seventy seven, seventy eight, seventy nine.*

*Eighty, one and eighty, two and eighty, three and four and five and six and eighty.  
Eight seven, eighty eight, eighty nine.*

*Ninety, one and ninety, two and ninety, three and four and five and six and ninety.  
Ninety seven, ninety eight, ninety nine.*

*A hundred!*

**14. AUNTY NANNY THREAD THE NEEDLE / LOOSE ME, JOHNNY, LOOSE ME**  
Sung by a group of schoolchildren led by Anita Wilkens. Recorded on July 10, 1962, in  
Brick Kiln Village, Nevis.

*Aunty Nanny thread the needle,  
Thread, thread, thread the needle.*

*Loose me, Johnny, loose me,  
Loose me, Johnny, loose me,*

*Loose me, Johnny, loose me,  
Let me go where me mama send me.*

**15. THE TRAGEDY AT BRIMSTONE HILL**

Sung by Santoy; with band. Recorded on July 11, 1962, in Gingerland, Nevis.

Although the singer here claims to have “made” this “calypso” about a disaster that occurred on Nevis in 1950, the song was actually composed by another well-known Nevisian singer, Charles Walters.

*Come and hear de tragedy,  
Which took place on Brimstone Hill.  
Come and hear de tragedy,  
Which took place on Brimstone Hill.*

*One Easter Monday they went down there,  
Thinking they would roll back all day.  
But many were disappointed still,  
Down there 'pon Brimstone Hill.*

*De sun was shining gay,  
On Brimstone Hill that day.  
De sun was shining gay,  
On Brimstone Hill that day.*

*But later down 'pon de afternoon,  
Rain came pouring down from de moon.  
A little hole, see dem rushing in,  
For shelter on de hill.*

*Soon as de rain was o'er,  
They rushed to roll back more.  
Soon as de rain was o'er,  
They all rushed to roll back more.*

*Then very soon there was an outcry.  
Look, some squeeze up here till they die.  
So de whole place was in bawling till,  
They bawl down Brimstone Hill.*

*Keep away from Brimstone Hill,  
Where de folks did roll back till.  
Keep away from Brimstone Hill,  
Where de folks did roll back till.*

*With de brave Invaders playing well,  
They danced and roll back into hell.  
Leaving sorrow and grief behind them,  
Up there 'pon Brimstone Hill.*

*All who can't understand,  
Don't trouble de steelband.  
All who can't understand,  
Don't trouble de steelband.*

*For whenever they get 'pon de road,  
At any rate they will draw de crowd.  
And if you think that roll-back don't kill,  
Look back 'pon Brimstone Hill.*

*Never mind, show me how you roll back,  
And roll back, let me see you.  
Wai! You haven't got a tall [?] back,  
So roll back, let me see you.*

*This is de way me roll back,  
I go roll back deh [there], you see me.  
Come and get you roll back,  
So de roll-back done.*

## **16. NEVIS WITHOUT A PAYDAY**

Sung by Santoy, with band. Recorded on July 11, 1962, in Gingerland, Nevis.

Like the previous song, this was composed by Charles Walters (despite Santoy's claim in his spoken introduction to have made up the song himself).

*There's something I can't understand,  
About our fine, little land,  
With her landscape looking so gay,  
And her people longing all day,  
Their poor hearts filled with discontent,  
All day they will lament,  
Where'er you go, you'll hear them say,  
There is no payday.*

*Where'er you go, they say,  
Nevis has no payday.  
Where'er you go, they say,*

*There is no payday.*

*Oh, it aches my very head,  
To speak of their discontent.  
And it worries me a lot, too,  
That they have nothing to do,  
But to toil all day in the land,  
To make their cotton crops stand,  
When this is done, they're on their bum,  
For there's no payday.*

*Where'er you go, they say,  
Nevis has no payday.  
Where'er you go, they say,  
There is no payday.*

*Take a walk up to Gingerland,*

*Where you can more understand,  
The state they live in up there,  
All in and after, me dear,*

*For they have nothing to do,  
But to work an acre or two,  
When it is dry, all their crops die,  
And there's no payday.*

*Where'er you go, they say,  
Nevis has no payday.  
Where'er you go, they say,  
There is no payday.*

*A good friend had come to our land,  
To make work, I understand,  
Something that he would call a scheme,  
But it yet looks much like a dream,  
Up to now nothing has been done,  
And folks are still on their bum,  
But this I'll say, Nevisians must pray,  
To get our payday.*

*For where'er you go, they say,*

*Nevis has no payday.  
Where'er you go, they say,  
There is no payday.*

### **17. MASQUERADE WALKING PIECE**

Played by Daniel Hobson, fife; David Freeman, second fife; Ernest Archibald, kettle drum; and Alfredo Morton, bass drum. Recorded on July 11, 1962, in Gingerland, Nevis.

### **18. MR. DOG, HE CAME TO TOWN**

Sung by Rosaly Jeffers, Jane Brandy, Ida Jeffers, Martha Nias, and Lina Jeffers. Recorded on July 10, 1962, in Brick Kiln Village, Nevis.

*Mr. Dog, he went to town,  
Mm-hm, mm-hm.  
Mr. Dog, he went to town,  
He went to buy a wedding gown,  
Mm-hm, mm-hm.*

**[complete lyrics unavailable]**

### **19. WILLIE BOY**

Sung by Rosaly Jeffers, Jane Brandy, Ida Jeffers, Martha Nias, and Lina Jeffers. Recorded on July 10, 1962, in Brick Kiln Village, Nevis.

*Where are you gone, Willie Boy?  
Where are you gone, my charming Willie?  
I am bound to look at girl that would comfort of my life,  
I'm a young girl, I cannot leave my mama.*

*Can you wash me a shirt, Willie Boy?  
Can you wash me a shirt, my charming Willie?  
Can you wash me a shirt with a bosom full of dirt?  
I'm a young girl, I cannot leave my mama.*

*How old you be, Willie Boy?  
How old you be, my charming Willie?  
I am six and seven, a hundred and eleven.  
I'm a young girl, I cannot leave my mama.*

*Can you bake me a pie, Willie Boy?  
Can you bake me a pie, my charming Willie?  
I can bake you a pie... **[they forget the line]**  
I'm a young girl, I cannot leave my mama.*

*Where are you gone, Willie Boy?  
Where are you gone, my charming Willie?  
I am gone to look at wife for the comfort of my life,  
I'm a young girl, I cannot leave my mama.*

## **20. BABY, ROCK AWAY**

Sung by Rosaly Jeffers, Jane Brandy, Ida Jeffers, Martha Nias, and Lina Jeffers. Recorded on July 10, 1962, in Brick Kiln Village, Nevis.

*Baby rock away, baby rock away,  
Rock-a my baby to sleep.  
Baby rock away, baby rock away,  
Rock-a my baby to sleep.*

*I donna want someone to leave me poor wife,  
children and baby at night/home.  
I donna want someone to leave me poor wife,  
children and baby at night/home.*

*I must be quite contented to make up my mind,  
To rock-a my baby to sleep,  
I must be contented to make up my mind,  
To rock-a my baby to sleep.*



*Baby rock away, baby rock away,  
Rock-a my baby to sleep.  
Baby, rock away, baby rock away,  
Rock-a my baby to sleep.*

## **21. POOR JOSIAH**

Sung by Santoy; with band. Recorded on July 11, 1962, in Gingerland, Nevis.

*Yes, that was murder in Higman's area.  
Yes, they killed poor Josiah in that area.  
They took him like a billy-goat, and they hold him and cut he throat,  
Yes sir, and the thing that makes it hard, they can't find de murderer.*

*So we sing:  
They can't find de murderer,  
They can't find de murderer,  
They can't find de murderer,  
And no one to account for Josiah.*

*Well, police were out searching that criminal to find,  
But he seemed to be hiding in some distant part.  
Not one soul to give account of de death of poor Josiah,  
And though the policemen were working hard, they can't find de murderer.*

*They can't find de murderer,  
They can't find de murderer,  
They can't find de murderer,  
And no one to account for Josiah.*

*And everybody were waiting to see this criminal.  
And they said if they hold him, that would be bacchanal.  
For all about you can hear de shout, how they cut poor Josiah throat,  
And they held his son, but his case was null, they can't find de murderer.*

*They can't find de murderer,  
They can't find de murderer,  
They can't find de murderer,  
And no one to account for Josiah.*

*But hear what I say:  
If I was a detective, I would try to do a good job,  
From old experience of Scotland Yard, I would certainly call,  
Not like these who seem only skilled in detecting de [Hammond?] stills,  
But dealing with de death of Josiah, they can't find de murderer.*

*So we sing:  
They can't find de murderer,  
They can't find de murderer,  
They can't find de murderer,  
And no one to account for Josiah.*

*Play de guitar, man!*

**(Repeat chorus, previous verse, and chorus again)**

## **22. YANKEE JOHN, STORMALONG**

Sung by Walter Roberts (shantyman); with Roy Gumbs, Reginald Syder, Franklin Skeete, and Reuben Morris. Recorded on July 10, 1962, in Newcastle, Nevis.

This is among the most common songs in the deep-sea tradition. (See Abrahams, *Deep the Water*, pages 61–83.)

*Stormalong, and le' she go long,  
Yankee John, Stormalong.  
Storm de ocean, night and day,  
Yankee John, Stormalong.  
Storm, and a stormalong,  
Yankee John, Stormalong.  
For all de night and on we go.  
Yankee John, Stormalong.  
Storm de ocean, night and day.  
Yankee John, Stormalong.  
Stormalong an' le's she go long,  
Yankee John, Stormalong.  
Oh, to me Liza Lee,  
Yankee John, Stormalong.  
Stormalong and le' she go long,  
Yankee John, Stormalong.  
Storm de ocean, night and day,  
Yankee John, Stormalong.  
Storm, oh we Stormalong,  
Yankee John, Stormalong. **(Etc., ad lib.)***

## **23. CAESAR BOY, CAESAR**

Sung by Walter Roberts (shantyman); with Roy Gumbs, Reginald Syder, Franklin Skeete, and Reuben Morris. Recorded on July 10, 1962, in Newcastle, Nevis.

This is the most common of the shanties used to haul boats out of the water on Nevis. Until recently this job was done by getting all the men down on the beach to help by providing them with plenty of rum; the owner also hired a drummer (usually a Big Drum ensemble), which is bamboo fife, trap, and bass drums, both played with sticks in the European manner)

to come to the beach and play as an encouragement to the workers. This shanty is directed at the drummer and makes fun of him. (See Abrahams, *Deep the Water*, pages 41–43.)

*Caesar, drummer, want paper drum,  
Caesar boy, Caesar,  
Oh, you look 'pon Caesar, you no look on me,  
Caesar boy, Caesar.*

*Oh, Caesar, drummer, want paper drum.  
Caesar boy, Caesar.  
Oh, you look 'pon Caesar, you no look on me,  
Caesar boy, Caesar.*

*Oh, Caesar, drummer want kettle drum,  
Caesar boy, Caesar.  
Oh, Caesar, drummer want kettle drum,  
Caesar boy, Caesar.*

*Oh, Caesar, drummer go boom, boom, boom,  
Caesar boy, Caesar.  
Oh, Caesar drummer go boom, boom, boom,  
Caesar boy, Caesar. (Etc., ad lib.)*

#### **24. LONG TIME AGO**

Sung by Reginald Syder (shantyman); with Walter Roberts, Roy Gumbs, Franklin Skeete, and Reuben Morris. Recorded on July 10, 1962, in Newcastle, Nevis.

*A long time I never know you, bully,  
Way hey, hey, bully boy.  
A long, long time I never know you,  
Oh, long time ago.*

*Oh, you give me de girl and you take 'e again, bully,  
Way, hey, hey, bully boy.  
Oh, long, long time in de hol' below,  
Oh, long time ago.*

*Oh, long, long time I never know you, bully,  
Way hey, hey, bully boy.  
Oh, long, long time in de hol' below,  
Long time ago. (Etc., ad lib.)*

#### **25. BULL DOG GOIN' BITE ME**

Sung by Reginald Syder (shantyman); with Walter Roberts, Roy Gumbs, Franklin Skeete, and Reuben Morris. Recorded on July 10, 1962, in Newcastle, Nevis.

*Auntie Nanny, come hold bull dog,  
Bull dog goin' bite me.  
Hold de dog, biting, a hold me dog,  
Bull dog goin' bite me.  
Auntie Nanny, come hold you' dog,  
Bull dog goin' bite me.  
Auntie Nanny, go look-a you' dog,  
Bull dog goin' bite me.  
Auntie Nanny, come tie you dog,  
Bull dog goin' bite me.  
Oh, what a big bull dog,  
Bull dog goin' bite me. (Etc., ad lib.)*

## **26. HAPPY CHRISTMAS TO YOU (Instrumental)**

Played by Merritt Boddie, flute; Samuel Hanley, guitar; Kelvin Liburd, guitar; James Grant, guitar; Joe Liburd, *cuatro*; Alfred Williams, mandolin; Edmond Henderson, gourd; Hubert Sanders, *baha* (boom pipe); and Anderson Duporte, banjo. Recorded on July 9, 1962, in Gingerland, Nevis.

## **27. SPEECH / STREETS OF LAREDO**

Spoken and sung by Samuel Hanley, speechmaker; with Daniel Hobson, fife; David Freeman, second fife; Ernest Archibald, kettle drum; and Alfredo Morton, bass drum. Recorded on July 11, 1962, in Gingerland, Nevis.

**Spoken:** *Hello, my name is Esperando de Mio. I am chief in charge of the Flying Alvaquero. Let me tell you all something. [unintelligible] Let me tell you all something. Never, you all try to break me down, otherwise you all shall be tomb and doom forever. So any of you all see a guy like me hops and turn — try hide there under the cloud [I beat you?] like stick of fire in a moving wheel. You get that? Let me tell you something fellows. As I walked down the lanes of Kentucky home, I met a poor cowboy. Said:*

### **Sings:**

*As I walked down the street of Laredo, one morning,  
As I walked down the street of Laredo, one day.  
I met a poor cowboy wrapped up in white linen,  
Wrapped up in white linen, as cold as clay.*

**Spoken:** *I said, "Boy, how do you know that he was a cowboy?"*

*"I can see him by his outfit that he was a cowboy,  
And the words that he used when I slowly passed by."*

*He said:*

*"Well, come and sit down beside me and hear my sad story,  
I got shot in my breast and I'm going to die."*

## 28. CHRISTMAS SONG (Instrumental)

Played by Merritt Boddie, flute; Samuel Hanley, guitar; Kelvin Liburd, guitar; James Grant, guitar; Joe Liburd, *cuatro*; Alfred Williams, mandolin; Edmond Henderson, gourd; Hubert Sanders, *baha* (boom pipe); Anderson Duporte, banjo. Recorded on July 9, 1962, in Gingerland, Nevis.

## 29. MR. HIGHBACK (Tea Meeting Speeches and Tunes)

Performed by Louis Hanley, Joseph Hobson, speechmakers; David Freeman, fife; James Powell, *chac chac*; William Freeman, *baha* (boom pipe); George Marchant, tambourine. Recorded on July 11, 1962, in Gingerland, Nevis.

In the following transcription, the information in brackets comes from a transcription of the “right” speeches made by the speaker at a later date.

*Pas' eternity, to ladies and gemplum, as we now jus' from Zeblah going over to Zebadee. Quite so.*

*Let us have some silent time, while we have a grand introdukement, between Mr. Highback, Mr. Pragmatic, Company, and co. Well, we have judge, lawyers, and doctor. Judge from Anguilla, lawyer from St. Martin, doctor from a Booby Hill, and nayga from Salapona [i.e. a mispronunciation of Saltpond, an area of St. Kitts visible from Nevis.] Quite so, quite so, quite so... [...] But a happy interdukement to you now, boy. (Music)*

[...]

**Mr. Pragmatic:** *And a happy interducement to you now, girl.*

**Mrs. Highback:** *The same happy return to you, Mr. Pragmatic.*

**Mr. Pragmatic:** *And, girl, a weh you from?*

**Mrs. Highback:** *I from Barbados.*

**Mr. Pragmatic:** *'Pon me God, a de same very ting I say. Me no got notten no do with dem Badian Nyeagar... And, girl, I bet you got one sweetheart.*

**Mrs. Highback:** *Yes, I got one 'rangutang man call me sweetheart, man.*

**Mr. Pragmatic:** *Girl, you won't form objections, boy, here of old 'rangutang [i.e., he admits to being ugly, like an orangutan.] somet'ing and haul on me, old polite Pragmatic?*

**Mrs. Highback:** *No, because me done already write my father long letter saying he going marry to me.*

**Mr. Pragmatic:** *Then, girl, me cyan' married to mammy girl? [because you are already married]*

**Mrs. Highback:** *No.*

**Mr. Pragmatic:** *Go along. Because you look too worthless.*

**Mrs. Highback:** *No, Mr. Pragmatic, Mr. Pragmatic, don't go yet! I'm going to cook.*

**Mr. Pragmatic:** *Girl, a-wha' you can cook? Wha' you can cook?*

**Mrs. Highback:** *Nottin.*

**Mr. Pragmatic:** *Nottin?*

**Mrs. Highback:** *Mutton.*

**Mr. Pragmatic:** *Nottin?*

**Mrs. Highback:** *I say mutton!*

**Mr. Pragmatic:** *Mammy girl, me no eat mutton, give me goat. (Goes at her with a cutlass — i.e., a machete)*

**Mrs. Highback:** *Boy, you too foolish, and you too chupit [stupid]! What the difference between goat and mutton? Ain't no difference between mutton and goat! [In fact, they are often confused, or taken to be one animal, when they are at the butcher's.]*

**Mr. Pragmatic:** *Goat have hair, mammy girl, and you look too chupit!*

**(Music) [unintelligible] (More music)**

**Mrs. Highback:** *Mr. Pragmatic, wha' you call me a cutlass?*

**Mr. Pragmatic:** *If you are a cutlass, you cutlass for crush a-wood — for chop me up here today [i.e., she doesn't know how to use a cutlass and will cut the wrong thing -- whatever she is going for on Mr. Pragmatic's physiognomy.] Mammy girl, me go along. And a happy interdukement to you now, girl.*

**Mrs. Highback:** *The same happy, happy return to you, Mr. Pragmatic.*

**Mr. Pragmatic (to Mr. Highback):** *Man, move from there.*

**Mr. Highback:** *Man, I stand here as a Barnabus. [Referring to Bible quotation(?)]*

**Mr. Pragmatic:** *Man, you speaking about Barnabus, but I could tell something better than that. When I were going to school, I stop out at A-B-C chapter, you real, real non compus immibus wantus banibus, bibus, sir. [This is the kind of fancy talk that a teacher would be accused of using.]*

**Mr. Highback:** *Could be your mommy belly-bus'. [That is, pregnant — punning on words ending in “-bus” in the fancy talk, even while punning on the pseudo-Latin quotations.] Could your daddy small stuck gone a pound.*

**Mr. Pragmatic:** *If you refuse to be a isnibus ment non compus, you should abide by the “leave us Barnabas.”*

**Mrs. Highback:** *If you love me, have to love de baby boy, and get a nurse 'oo nurse 'e [hire a nurse for the baby].*

**Mr. Pragmatic:** *A wha' de baby boy name?*

**Mrs. Highback:** *Warrick.*

**Mr. Pragmatic:** *A-Warrick what?*

**Mrs. Highback:** *A Warrick Mahayla, then.*

**Mr. Pragmatic:** *Den, me God, all me king and country, we never like to nurse 'em pickinny. But me get a little boy up there name John. Me very like that job. [Calling loudly:] John Afru!*

**John:** *Yes, me parapa [He has a stutter]. Wha me coolie boy do? [It turns out he is East Indian — a coolie boy.]*

**Mr. Pragmatic:** *John, boy, put 'em in box. [Starts feeding the baby.]*

**John:** *Parapa, pap too hard a for dis pickinny-a stomach. Dis want three basket of mothing kittly potato and 'bout six shilling wort' of gar, don't cut the beak too short. [A garfish has a long nose, and is regarded as an appropriate article of fun because of it.] That jus' suit Warrick Mahalya' stomach.*

**Mr. P:** *John, boy, you is the nurse, you mus' know bes'. Get on with your work.*

**(Music and dancing)**

### **30. RAG TIME (Instrumental)**

Played by Eldred Decent, fife; Selwyn Wathey, snare drum; and Joseph Reid, bass drum. Recorded on July 2, 1962, in Irishtown, St. Kitts.

### **31. BULL DOG GOIN' BITE ME**

Performed by George Sweeney, guitar; Alvin Prentice, guitar; Joseph Reid, baha (boom pipe); and Selwyn Wathey, spoon. Recorded on July 2, 1962, in Irishtown, St. Kitts.

*Oh, hold you dog,  
Bull dog goin' bite me.  
Oh, come hold you dog,  
Bull dog goin' bite me.  
Mr. Davis, hold you dog,  
Bull dog goin' bite me.  
Lord, I never see such a big, big dog,  
Bull dog goin' bite me.  
You bite you massa, but you won't bite me,  
Bull dog goin' bite me.  
Mr. Alfred, hold you dog,  
Bull dog goin' bite me.  
Lord, he bite people hard,  
Bull dog goin' bite me.  
This is Christmas, hold you dog,  
Bull dog goin' bite me. (Etc., ad lib.)*

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**CARIBBEAN VOYAGE SERIES — *Kenneth Bilby, Ph.D., Morton Marks, Ph.D.***

*Everywhere I found tidal pools and freshets of indigenous music and dance styles reflecting both the particular qualities of local life and the mainstream Creole performance style that plainly stemmed from West Africa.... Each island had a treasure of such melodies, potentially unlimited because still growing. I believed that all of this music could become a national resource for a federated West Indies. — Alan Lomax*

**In the spring of 1962, Alan Lomax** went to the Lesser Antilles, the chain of islands that form the southeastern edge of the Caribbean Sea. The West Indies that he stepped into were charged with excitement and anticipation. Many of the islands he visited that were part of the British Empire were making plans for independence. The local governments of Trinidad and Jamaica had been promoting a West Indian Federation, and Lomax saw his musical research as a way of finding cultural commonalities that would support the dream of postcolonial Caribbean unity.

The Rockefeller Foundation funded the expedition, and local authorities, scholars, and enthusiasts were eager to cooperate and assist. Lomax worked through the offices of the University of the West Indies and its associates throughout the area, which enabled him to quickly establish good relations everywhere he went. Even more than usual, his recording gear was his calling card:

*I wanted to test the effect of playing back to the village singers the recordings I would make: I called the notion “cultural feedback.” There were no pocket-portable speakers at that time, and I hauled onto the plane two huge loudspeakers that stood three feet high and required high-voltage power so as to display even adequately the stereo sound that I tested out in my fieldwork.... Wherever we recorded, we played back the music to its makers, filling mountain hamlets and village streets with the thunder of the speakers, while whole neighborhoods danced in delight.*



Lomax's plans for this music were to return it, in scholarly and commercial forms, to the communities from which it came. Copies of the tapes were deposited at the University of the West Indies, where they became an important local resource. Lomax made the University a partner in the venture by giving it a portion of publishing rights. He also tried repeatedly to release on disc the full breadth of what he had recorded. These efforts have only now paid off.

This was to be the first systematic study of the region's music, especially that of the smaller islands in the Lesser Antilles. Commercial recording of Caribbean music had begun in the early 1900s and led to the successes of Trinidadian calypso and Martinican beguine, but these recordings barely hinted at the richness of Caribbean music. Pioneering fieldwork by Harold Courlander, Melville Herskovits, Andrew Pearse, J. D. Elder, Laura Boulton, Lisa Lekis, Daniel Crowley, and others had opened the way; Lomax himself had recorded in the Bahamas in 1935 and in Haiti in 1937, but the music of the region was still relatively unknown.

Lomax was also renewing a search, begun with his father in the 1930s, for the sources and varieties of African-American music, its links to Africa, and its relation to European music. He was also eager to apply his nascent "Cantometric" theories on musical style and culture to this rich and diverse area, where folk music reflected West and Central African, English, French, Spanish, Dutch, North American, and East Indian influences, among others. Having recorded the traditional music of several Western European countries and having begun an intensive study of world music, Lomax was as interested in the East Indian and European components of the region's music as in its African side.

The encounter between Europe and Africa occurred throughout the Caribbean, and gave birth to a staggering profusion of musical forms. Underlying much of this extraordinary variety was what Lomax felt to be a "common Creole style," akin to the underlying commonalities of the Creole language that was rhythmically

complex, polyphonic, responsorial, textually repetitive, and concomitantly, highly integrated, group-oriented and participatory. In sub-Saharan African performance styles and their New World descendants, dancers/listeners surround musicians who play off of their participant-audiences. This way of making music characterizes many creole genres throughout the region.

These recordings reveal that within a common process of creolization several other major unifying strands link the islands. Moving from place to place, Lomax noted the ubiquitous presence of village bands. Genres like *bèlé* and *kalendas* (or *kalindas*) form musical subfamilies that cut across the region. Creolized versions of European figure dances such as the quadrille and lancers, brought in by French and English settlers, are found almost everywhere. Jigs and reels from the British Isles were transformed in an almost identical fashion on different islands through contact with African musical practices, as were the Afro-Protestant songs, in the same process that gave rise to black American gospel music. Folk instruments like the *cocoa lute* (mouth bow) and local versions of the banjo also form a line of connection that runs from North America through the Caribbean to Brazil. Groups of schoolchildren on different islands, unbeknownst to each other, have long been performing variants of the same game songs.<sup>1</sup> And in the many varieties of French Creole language and culture, widespread throughout the region, Lomax found yet another of the unifying elements he sought.

Lomax was interested in how such elements reflected a set of creole music styles linked variously to Africa and the Americas. But while intrigued by such connections, he was appreciative of the broader diversity of the region's musical cultures. He sought out and recorded medieval French ballads in St. Barthélemy, for example. In Trinidad he responded with particular enthusiasm and energy to the music of that island's East Indian community. Indeed, among ethnographers, Lomax was ahead of his time in recognizing that creole culture was not the only culture in the West Indies. Lomax's longtime colleague Dr. J. D. Elder, folklore scholar, activist, and former Minister of Culture in Trinidad and Tobago, recalls the project

in the following light:

*In terms of detail, authenticity and quality, the materials Lomax recorded have proved since to be of the highest fidelity and scientific documentation. Under the colonial system of education, peasant and African music, dance, theater, tales and legends had not been recognized as culture. The cooperation and enthusiasm shown by villagers who had never been exposed to such an inquiry encouraged the collectors to work all the more diligently. The villagers welcomed us as friends who recognized them and their lore as valuable to the outside world. Most of them had never heard their voices recorded and played back to friends and admirers.... Hard fieldwork was not the only highlight of this exacting undertaking. Working with organizations such as village councils, youth groups, friendly societies, occasional gatherings, "limes" of fishermen straight from the sea, and religious groups gathered in temples and churches, made the project a humanistic enterprise.*

Many of the traditional styles recorded on this trip have disappeared. Some, infrequently performed, struggle to survive, while others live on in the urban popular styles that have drawn upon folk traditions throughout the Caribbean. This collection affords a wide panorama of the musical complexity of the region both in its diversity and its unifying elements, at a watershed time in Caribbean history.

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<sup>i</sup> See Alan Lomax, J.D. Elder, and Bess Lomax Hawes, *Brown Girl in the Ring* (New York: Pantheon, 1997).