

Informant: Gail Perry
216 East Superior Street
Duluth, MN
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Collector: Jim Leary

Gail Perry was listed among our contacts as a person with a large ethnic record collection. Since I was in the Twin Ports to visit Mel's TV, I decided to look her up at her work-place: As You Like It gallery. Gail is roughly thirty years old and has been avidly collecting old ethnic 78 records for three or four years. Her sources have been mainly area garage, estate and rummage sales, but she has also placed ads in the paper. Additionally, she is part of a network of collectors including scholars and record producers Leroy Larson and Bob Anderson.

Gail's collection is particularly strong in Scandinavian materials. For example, she has recordings by the accordion duet of Sundquist and Berg, Otto Rindlisbacher, Thorstein Skarning and the great Scandinavian vaudeville performer Olle Skrattholt. Beyond dance records, Gail also has dialect comedy recordings involving Scandinavians. More generally, she has early Polish, Slovenian (especially Yankovic), and Bohemian (Whoopee John Wifahrt) recordings. She has catalogued much of her material, owns supporting printed information, and has a 78 turntable and cassette recorder for preserving her material. She has generously offered to allow us to copy representative samples from her collection.

Beyond being a collector, Gail also attends regional fiddle contests and is knowledgeable about the continuation and revival of "northern" fiddle style, particularly in Minnesota and the Dakotas. With Bob Anderson, she sometimes judges fiddle contests. Gail tipped me off to a Finnish group from the Iron Range (Third Generation) and I bought their record at a nearby store. She also told me about Terese Aho and the Northernaires who play at the Silver Star Tavern in Wentworth, Wisconsin (see subsequent notes). Armed with this knowledge, and having made arrangements to tape part of Gail's collection at a later date, I departed.