

Accordions in the Cutover

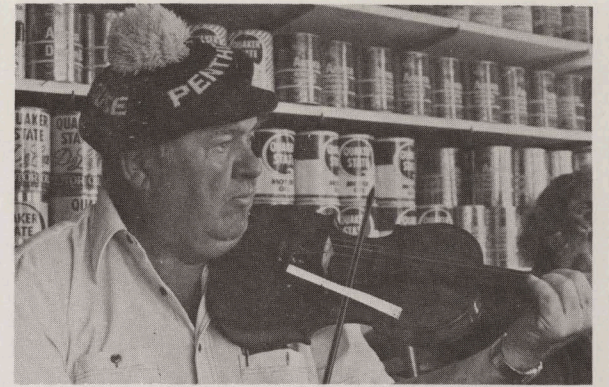


Field Recordings of Ethnic Music From
Lake Superior's South Shore

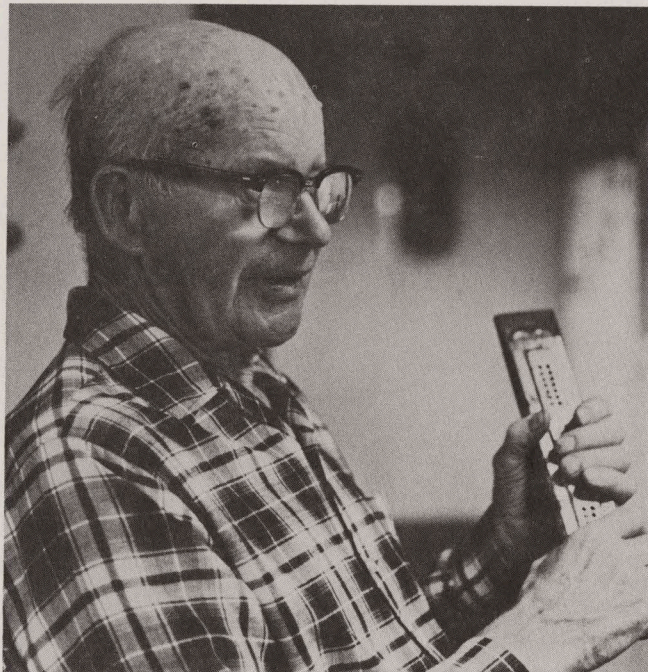
Produced by Northland College with funding from the National Endowment for the Arts.

“There was a French guy had a piano accordion. And he was a good player. He could play mandolin, violin, guitar, and bass fiddle. And he was Francis DuMont. So my dad got brother Bill a mandolin. And, of course, all of us learned to play. There were four of us brothers, and two of my sisters learned how to play too—real good.”

—Waino Lammanen



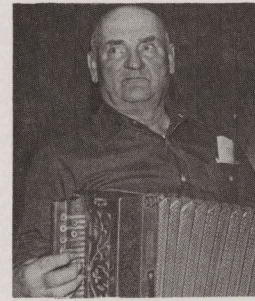
George Nousianen



Jerry Novak



Stan Stangle



Fel Milanowski



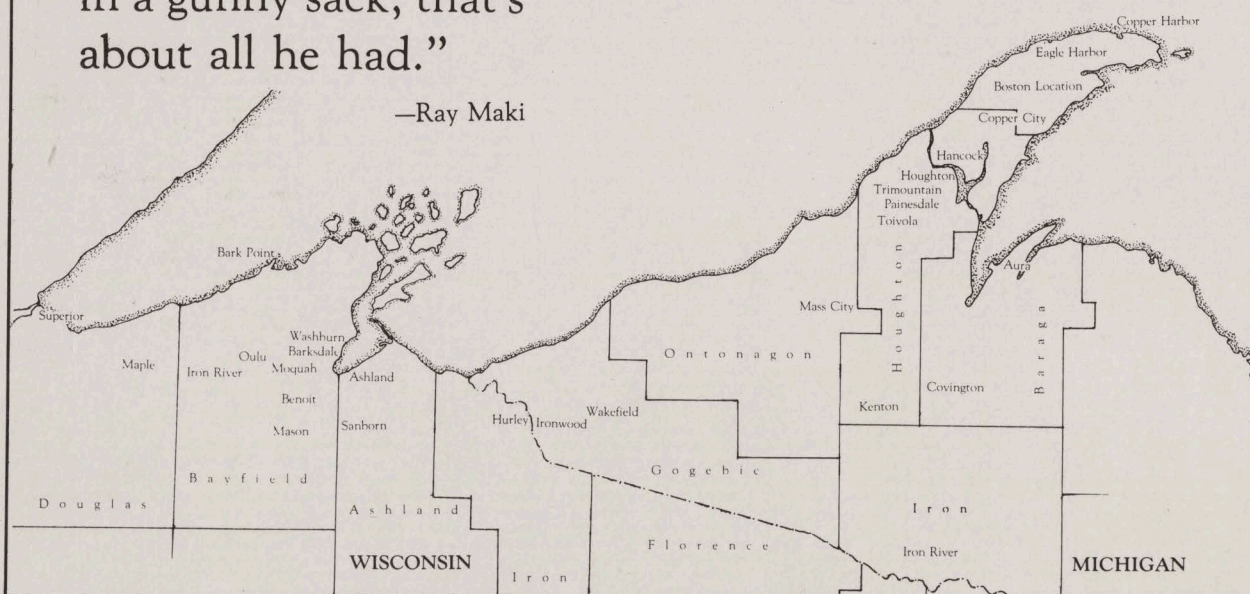
Gogebic Range Tamburitizans



Bill Koskela

“My dad came over with a button accordion in a gunny sack, that’s about all he had.”

—Ray Maki



CREDITS

Frank Gillis, Fred Lieberman, Jim Leary, Richard March, Ellen Stekert, and Tom Vennum served as consultants to Northland College in 1979, the first year of recording. Matthew Gallmann, Joel Glickman, Marina Herman, and Sara Poynter of Northland labored in field and library. The American Folklife Center, the Smithsonian Institution’s Folklife Program, and the University of Kentucky’s Folklife Program all lent Nagra tape recorders. Various hands contributed non-English lyrics and translations: Bill Clark (Slovak), Tom Johanik (Slovak), Odvar Klovrud (Norwegian), Dennis Kolinski (Polish), John Lihani (Czech), Richard March (Croatian), Jingo Viitala Vachon (Finnish), Monica Wahl (Swedish). Kolinski and March also added commentary and March selected the Croatian tunes. Phil Bohlman offered ethnomusicological observations and transcriptions. Biographies, non-Croatian tune selections, and all other notes and commentary are the work of Jim Leary. Folklorists Janet Gilmore and Greta Swenson offered support at various stages of the project. Dave Hill of Inland Sea Recording was the engineer. Don Albrecht designed the record jacket and booklet. Cover photograph courtesy of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin. Stuart Lang administered the project, and Jim Leary was Project Director. This record and booklet were produced by Northland College with funding from the National Endowment for the Arts.

"We used to sing. Some people like to fight, but we would sing."

—Tom Johanik

European Americans settled along the south shore of Lake Superior in the post Civil War era as Yankee entrepreneurs financed or prompted the establishment of rail and shipping lines, mines, logging camps, and, eventually, agricultural settlements on cutover acreage. Irish, French, and WASPS hailing from Canada's maritimes and America's northeast, and Croatians, Czechs, Finns, Germans, Italians, Lithuanians, Norwegians, Poles, Russians, Serbs, Slovaks, Swedes, Swede-Finns, and others arrived to labor in the vast "pinery," the Keeweenaw peninsula's "Copper Country," the iron rich Gogebic Range mines of Ironwood/Hurley, the granite and brownstone quarries of Mellen and the Bayfield peninsula, the sawmills and loading docks of Ashland on Lake Superior's Chequamegon Bay, and on their own farmsteads in stump laden hinterlands.

Boom times ceased as large scale logging and mining industries reduced their operations or shut down altogether in the years preceding and following World War I, and population declined accordingly. Marginal farming, pulpcutting, and tourism support those who remain. Relatively isolated from America's mainstream, south shore residents nonetheless developed a vibrant and pluralistic culture to which music contributes mightily.

The region's most characteristic music is at once ethnic and vernacular. "Ethnic" in the sense of being neither wholly of the old or new worlds, but drawing melody, instrumentation, style, language, theme, and conventions of use from each domain. "Vernacular," a more flexible term than "folk," because—although a majority of performers learned to sing and play in classic folk fashion by hearing, watching, and imitating their elders, and although they likewise acquired a good share of their repertoires traditionally—all were influenced to varying degrees by songbooks, sheet music, 78 r.p.m. recordings, the performances of touring professionals, and regular musical programs within ethnic schools, churches, and fraternal organizations.

Not surprisingly, folklorists have paid periodic attention to the region's musical diversity. In 1919 Franz Rickaby, a Harvard trained ballad scholar, traversed the north woods in search of lumberjack ballads. The late 1930s saw Alan Lomax record performers in northern Wisconsin and Michigan's upper peninsula for the Library of Congress. Between 1940 and 1946, under the auspices of the University of Wisconsin's School of Music, Helene Stratman-Thomas recorded some 700 songs and tunes representing twenty ethnic groups and the traditions of Anglo-Americans, lumberjacks, and Native Americans—some of whom were south shore dwellers.

In 1979 Northland College of Ashland, Wisconsin received a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts to document traditional music in northern Wisconsin and the U.P. Aided by consulting folklorists and ethnomusicologists, Northland students and staff members identified over 100 contacts in the region and interviewed forty of them. From 1980-81, with further NEA support, folklorist James P. Leary was hired to continue the work of recording the life histories and music of ethnic performers and project materials were housed in Northland's McDowell Ethnic Heritage Sound Archive and Resource Center.

Apart from a few supplemental recordings made in the summer of 1983, the 61 selections offered here are a representative sample drawn from more than 100 hours of interviews and performances deposited in the McDowell Archive. Inevitably, their sound quality varies. Tapes were made in homes or at community gatherings under diverse acoustic conditions by a number of fieldworkers using various equipment: A Marantz Superscope stereo cassette machine owned by Northland College, and mono and stereo Nagra's lent for short periods by the Smithsonian Institution, The American Folklife Center, and the University of Kentucky.

Record one is devoted to Slavic traditions: Czechs, Slovaks, and Poles appear on side one, Croatians and Serbs on side two.

Norwegian, Swedish, and Finnish performances occupy the first side of record two, while the flip side is entirely Finnish. Although the south shore, and not some industrial metropolis, is *the* Finnish-American homeland, the new world "heimat" is elsewhere for other groups: Czechoslovakians can rely on Ray Records and other Nebraska companies; Poles enjoy cuts by Chicago's Eddie Blazonczyk and the Versatones over Ashland's WATW radio while tuning in "Chmielewski Funtime" on Duluth television; Pittsburgh's Duquesne Tamburitzans practice at a summer camp in Douglas county and delight Yugoslavians with an annual tour; and Swedes and Norwegians alike look to the Scandinavian-American hotbed of Minneapolis. An apparent overemphasis on Finnish-American music, consequently, reflects the proportional relationship of ethnic vernacular traditions in the region.

The same may be said for secular dance music. Sacred hymns and seasonal carols remain important within ethnic churches; comic, romantic, patriotic, and children's songs are sung occasionally in homes and fraternal halls; but waltzes, polkas, and schottisches dominate in everyday life and on this record. The "new" dance forms diffused throughout Europe at the time of emigration, they prosper as the music common to the heritage of all. These "old time" dances, likewise, are played on the harmonica, button accordion, and fiddle—instruments widely present within all of the region's first generation ethnic communities—as well as on the piano accordion which gained ascendancy among musicians inclined toward modernity in the late 1920s. Lyrics for dance tunes, however, are remembered infrequently and often only as fragments.

Excepting Jerry Novak, John Westlund, and Henry Luokkanen (born in Bohemia, Sweden, and Finland respectively), the performers on this record are second generation ethnic-Americans. They are the children and occupational heirs of miners, loggers, factory hands, farmers, tradesmen, serviceworkers, and small town entrepreneurs. None has ever made a living playing music and, prior to this record, roughly half have never been heard outside the circle of family, church, and neighborhood. Not all of the performances are virtuoso. Inasmuch as cultural documentation and not the creation of the finished product was the original purpose underlying most of the field recordings, an informal house party atmosphere prevailed and performers seldom rehearsed or repeated performances to get them "studio perfect." Occasionally, memory falters, a beat is missed, a string twists out of tune, a throat goes dry, arthritic fingers drag, but where professional sheen is sometimes lacking, the passionate strength of ordinary people making music is abundantly present.

The accompanying booklet provides biographies of performers, lyrics and translations of songs together with historical, cultural, and ethnomusicological commentary, and, when possible, bibliographic and discographic references. Transcriptions of tunes have not been included because of space limitations, but they may be obtained from the McDowell Archive for the cost of photocopying and postage.

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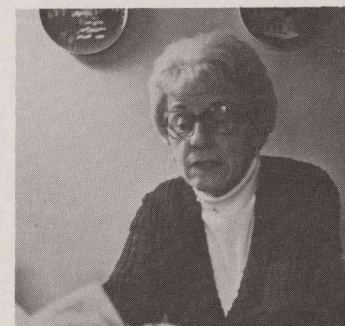
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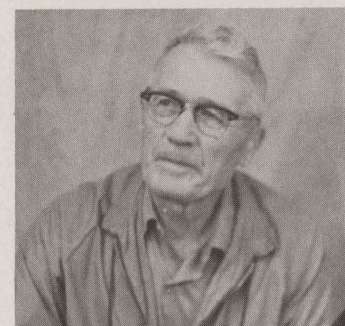
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Art Moilanen



Vera Dvorak Schultz



John Westlund



Julius Chopp



Accordions in the Cutover

Side One

CZECHOSLOVAKIAN

Bob Mathiowetz

1. Concertina Galop
2. Modré Oči
(Recorded 3/2/81)

Moquah Slovak Singers

3. Bodaj By Vas
4. Rychtárova Dcéra
(3/18/81)

Jerry Novak

5. Vy Řezníci
6. Šli Panenki
(3/3/81)

Clara Sveda

7. Svestkova Alej
8. Baruška Polka
(7/18/83)

Vera Schultz

9. Ivanek Naš
(11/5/80)

POLISH

Pete Suminski

10. Nie Bede Sie Zenil
(1/9/81)

Bernice Barnak and Mary Stelmach

11. Pójdźmy Wszyscy Do Stajenki
(2/18/81)

Felix Milanowski

12. Pytala Sie Pani
(11/7/80)
13. Wojenska
14. Filon
(2/24/81)

Bruno Synkula

15. John Stelmach's Tune
(2/23/81)

Side Two

CROATIAN

Tom Marincel

1. Croatian Polka
2. Na Levoj Strani Kraj Srca
3. Bosa Mara Bosnu Pregazila
4. Lepo Ti Je Rano Uraniti
5. Sinoč Si Meni Rekla
6. Croatian Kolo
(8/30/79)

Matt Radosevich

7. Mrkopoljci Samo Su Pijanci
8. Mladi Kapetani
(2/26/81)

Julius Chopp

9. Ti Več Spavaš Milko Moja
(7/18/79)

John Kezele

10. Samo Nemoj Ti
11. Moja Dekla
12. Radujite Se Narodi
13. Dobro Jutro Anice
(7/17/79)

YUGOSLAVIAN

Gogebic Range Tamburitans

14. Čuješ Mala
(August, 1979)

Side Three

NORWEGIAN

Verna Bloomquist and Marian Cuty

1. Kan Du Glemme Gamle Norge
2. Å Kjøre Vatten
3. Se Norges Blomsterdal
(2/20/81)

George Dybedal

4. Den Store Hvite Flok Vi Se
(8/8/79)

SWEDISH

John Westlund

5. Kom
(8/16/79)

Bethany Baptist String Band

6. Lofven Gud
7. Nere I Dalen
8. Tiden Försvinner
(2/21/81)

Vivian Brevak

9. Swedish Waltz
10. Elmer's Tune
(7/18/83)

FINNISH

Henry Luokkanen

11. Variksen Laulu
(6/22/79)

Einard Maki

12. Orpopojan Valssi
(11/22/81)

Matt Saari

13. Jack Kauti's Polka
14. Jack Kauti's Tune
(2/17/81)

Helmer Olavie Wintturi

15. Mama Naki
16. Kaustisen Polkka
(2/17/81)

Side Four

FINNISH

Reino Maki

1. Muurarin Valssi
(3/11/81)

Hugo Maki

2. Aika Poika
3. Iitin Tiltu
(7/17/83)

Charles Mattson

4. Hayfield Tune
(3/26/81)

Matt Peltó

5. Lapsuuden Toverille
6. Uskollinen Lempi
7. Jussin Vanha Haitari
8. Kallen Haitari
(3/24/81)

Art Moilanen

9. Raatikoon
10. Noan Arkki
(3/22/81)

Helmer Toyras

11. Finnish Medley
(3/25/81)

Bill and Mirriam Koskela

12. Mustalainen
(7/13/83)

Bill Hendrickson

13. Vapaa Wenäjä
(2/17/81)

Waino and Howard Lammanen, Jingo Vachon

14. Vapaa Wenäjä
15. Sian Tappajaiset
(3/23/81)

George Nousianen and Oren Tikkanen

16. Ennen Mä Hyppään Kuusen Ja Mantiyn
(7/15/83)