

DISC ONE

1. THEME - OLD JOE CLARK
2. ORANGE BLOSSOM SPECIAL
3. I KNOW WHAT IT MEANS TO BE LONESOME
4. CRIPPLE CREEK
5. GONNA PAINT THE TOWN
6. THE WINDOW UP ABOVE
7. SUNNY SIDE OF THE MOUNTAIN
8. COMEDY WITH CHICK STRIPLING
9. CHICKEN REEL
10. RANK STRANGERS
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12. THEME - OLD JOE CLARK
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15. WRECK OF THE OLD 97
16. JACK AND MAY
17. CUMBERLAND GAP
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16. SHARECROPPER'S SON
17. I'M A MAN OF CONSTANT SORROW
18. SINGLE GIRL, MARRIED GIRL
19. SHOUTIN' ON THE HILLS OF GLORY
20. THEME - CRIPPLE CREEK

1961 SHOWS • 1965 SHOW

ST-5003

University of Chicago Folk Festival

February 3, 4 & 5, 1961

ON STAGE • IN PERSON



★
STARS
OF
TELEVISION
RADIO and
RECORDS
★



THE **STANLEY BROTHERS**

CARTER and RALPH

And Their **CLINCH MOUNTAIN BOYS**

STANLEY BROTHERS

FOLK FESTIVAL

Live performances from
1961 and 1965 concerts
at the University of Chicago
Folk Festival featuring
Curley Lambert,
Vernon Derrick,
Chick Stripling,
Mike Seeger,
Red Stanley,
Larry Sparks,
and Ray Tate

2-CD SET

In February of 1961, the student-run Folklore Society of the University of Chicago presented its first University of Chicago Folk Festival. Now in its 42nd year, the *University of Chicago Magazine* noted in April 2000 that the event is “now billed as one of the longest-running college folk festivals in the nation. Staffed by volunteers, it’s about making music, not money. Although the festival continues to broaden the range of traditions represented it stays true to its original purpose of showcasing the roots of American folk music. U of C psychology professor Starkey D. Duncan Jr., PhD ’65, has advised the Folklore Society for 33 years, drawing on his own experiences growing up in Nashville and working summers in the western North Carolina mountains. The festival’s underlying purpose, he says, ‘is to have traditional music performed by people who grew up within the tradition.’

“The first annual University of Chicago Folk Festival set the event’s laid-back, authentic tone. In 1961, the Folklore Society president, Mike Fleisher, AB’64, talked the New Lost City Ramblers into making a stop in Chicago during a concert tour. The band – which included Mike Seeger – played old-time music in the third-floor theater of Ida Noyes. That show started an annual tradition of bringing in outside acts to jam with Folklore Society members, who had been gathering regularly in the Reynolds Club to play the guitar, mandolin, and banjo since the early 1950s.”

Also appearing on the bill was Kentucky ballad singer and banjoist Roscoe Holcomb.

Larry Ehrlich, a traditional music enthusiast and long-time resident of Chicago, was a catalyst for seeing that the Stanley Brothers also appeared on the bill. “I had gone to the University of Chicago and I got out many years before that... but I was back in Chicago in ‘61 and there were a bunch of kids [that] had a folk club. Either they called me or... I don’t know how I got together with ‘em but I suggested the Stanley Brothers to them. I had nothing more to do with it... I mean, it was totally their doing. I had no hand in it other than to suggest the Stanley Brothers to them.”

Consequently, on February 3rd, 4th, and 5th in 1961, the Stanley Brothers and their Clinch Mountain Boys (Curley Lambert - mandolin, Vernon Derrick - fiddle, and Chick Stripling - bass) presented their brand of old-time mountain and bluegrass music to enthusiastic audiences at the festival. Fortunately, Mike Seeger, who was there as part of the New Lost City Ramblers, brought his tape recorder to the event.

He recalled recently, “Yes, I did take it there, it might have been with that [concert] in mind... I can’t remember for sure. I was fairly close to destitute at that time, with a wife and a new baby but I did have an Ampex 600. If I’m not mistaken I think my wife might have rode gain on the recording machine while I was on stage - I can’t remember for sure - I got somebody to do that, of course. I was still using the single microphone technique, you know ... that’s all I could do. They hadn’t gone to multi-mics really at that point yet.”

Judging from the material recorded by Mike at the event, it appears that the Stanley Brothers performed one set each day over a three-day period. Friday’s concert contained the following selections: *Opening Theme - Old Joe Clark, Orange Blossom Special, I Know What it Means to be Lonesome, Cripple Creek, Gonna Paint the Town, The Window Up Above, Sunny Side of the Mountain, Chick Stripling’s comedy routines, Rank Strangers, How Far to Little Rock, and Old Joe Clark.*

Old Joe Clark, an old tune that has been popular with fiddle players for years, was used here as a theme to open and close the Stanley Brothers’ show. Fiddler Vernon Derrick was showcased on the instrumental *Orange Blossom Special*. The Stanleys recorded the tune for Mercury Records on April 5, 1955 and it garnered an Instrumental Recording of the Year award for the duo. *I Know What it Means to be Lonesome* was a solo used to highlight the singing of Curley Lambert. A Tin Pan Alley song dating from 1917, the Carter Family, Clyde Moody, and others recorded it. The Carters’ version came to them by way of Lesley Riddle, a western North Carolina African American songster friend of A.P.’s, who updated the melody and some of the lyrics. *Cripple Creek*, also an old tune, featured the talents of Ralph Stanley on banjo (Curley Lambert mistakenly identifies it as *Cumberland Gap* on the show). Following Ralph’s performance of this tune, Curley introduced the Stanley Brothers. They went on to perform a trio of fairly recent record releases. *Gonna Paint the Town*, a Carter Stanley composition, was released as a single on Starday Records in the summer of 1958. *The Window Up Above* was their most recent recording at that point in time. They recorded it scarcely three weeks prior to this performance, on January 15, 1961. Amazingly, the Stanleys’ label, King Records, acted quickly in moving from studio recording to having finished merchandise available for sale. Carter mentioned on the program, “We’ve got a new

record out, and I'd like to sell the first dozen or two right around Chicago here, I hope you all will watch for it." *Sunny Side of the Mountain* dates from a 1959 recording, also made for King. Chick Stripling, who played bass on the majority of the program, got his own little segment to do a comedy routine. Mike Seeger recalled Chick as "a good fiddle player and a tolerable bass player and a great dancer. He was right on the money. He was an old-time vaudeville song and dance man really but he was down to earth. He was a real asset when he was right." In addition to his comedy routine, he performed a "butter paddle buck and wing dance," to the tune of *Chicken Reel*. Probably one of the top three songs of the Stanley Brothers' career is the gospel classic *Rank Strangers*. They recorded it in May of 1960, for Starday. Curley Lambert, whose wonderful mandolin work added so much to the original recording, adds his voice and playing to this performance. Closing out the set is *How Far to Little Rock*, the only recording by the Stanley Brothers to appear on any of the top-selling record charts. Essentially, it was the Brothers' adaptation of the fiddle tune/comedy skit called the *Arkansas Traveler*. They recorded it for King Records in September of 1959.

As entertaining as this evening's performance was, and the following two evenings of music as well, Larry Ehrlich recalled that the best music that weekend was made off stage. "Curley Lambert and Ralph and Carter and I sat in the basement of Mandel Hall and it must have been for a good hour. Carter would just strum a chord and the three of them would sing the most gorgeous harmonies you ever heard in your life. It was much, much, much better than the concerts. I'd give anything if there was a recording of that but there never was."

On Saturday evening, February 4, the Stanleys gave their second performance of the 1961 University of Chicago Folk Festival. Their set, as of the night before, consisted of about a dozen tunes. It included *Turkey in the Straw*, *Black Mountain Blues*, *Wreck of the Old 97*, *Jack and May*, *Cumberland Gap*, *Jenny Lynn*, *The Story of the Lawson Family*, *Johnson Had An Old Gray Mule*, *Chicken Reel*, *Nine Pound Hammer*, *Man of Constant Sorrow*, and *Come All You Tenderhearted*. The set list seemed to have a slightly more traditional feel to it when compared to the previous night.

Mike Seeger felt that Carter Stanley was good at picking songs for their audiences. "I think he had a pretty good idea of what city folks were after. We'd been

[requesting songs from] Ralph and Carter ever since we started going to their shows. By '56 we were getting to know 'em a fair amount... I think because we'd just show up at all their shows anywhere around Washington or Baltimore. We'd request some of our favorite songs, which tended to be the older folky things, but some of their contemporary pieces, too. Well, actually a fair number of their contemporary pieces."

Turkey in the Straw served as the opening theme for the evening performance. *Black Mountain Blues* was Vernon Derrick's fiddle tune that night. Due to the popularity of recordings by ace country fiddlers Tommy Magness and Curly Fox, the tune was known as *Black Mountain Rag*. However, the Stanleys were well-acquainted with the author of the tune, Leslie Keith - their first fiddle player. Out of deference to their old friend, they continued to feature it and called it by its original title. Keith based his famous tune on a fiddle tune with Alabama roots called *The Lost Child*. Mike Seeger recalled Leslie as "a wonderful old-time fiddler and a fine showman." Curly Lambert's solo was *Wreck of the Old 97*, a song that celebrated a famous train wreck near Danville, Virginia in the early 1900s. Following their introduction by Vernon Derrick, Carter and Ralph sang a duet on *Jack and May*, an old song that comes from the repertoire of the Monroe Brothers. The Stanleys recorded it, as *Lover's Quarrel*, several weeks earlier, at their same session for recording *The Window Up Above*. Ralph was featured next on a series of two banjo instrumentals, *Cumberland Gap* and *Jenny Lynn*. The latter tune was also cut for recording at the recent King session. Another Carter and Ralph duet came next, *The Story of the Lawson Family*. It was a ballad that detailed a grizzly family murder/suicide that took place in North Carolina at the onset of the Great Depression on Christmas Eve in 1929. An old-time performer by the name of Walter "Kid" Smith composed and recorded the song the following year. The Stanleys recorded it for the King at the same January 1961 sessions. *Johnson Had an old Gray Mule* and *Chicken Reel* both featured Chick Stripling. His usual role in the band was as bass player, but he soloed on fiddle with this tune. Chick, a native of Georgia, related, "I was born and raised on a farm and used to plow with a mule quite a bit, back before we had tractors, and I learned this old tune way back in them days." The song was copyrighted, as *Johnson's Mule*, on April 25, 1927 by the Georgia Yellow Hammers. It was

recorded by that group on February 18, 1927 and was later recorded by another popular Georgia string band, the Skillet Lickers. Chick later recorded the song with the Stanley Brothers in May of 1962. *Nine Pound Hammer* served to answer a request from their friend Larry Ehrlich who was in attendance at the concert. Although popularized by Merle Travis, the Stanley Brothers' version seems patterned after recordings by the Monroe Brothers and the old-time team of Grayson & Whitter. Ralph performed his time-honored solo on the ballad *I'm a Man of Constant Sorrow*, a song he learned from his father. The Brothers originally recorded it for Columbia Records in 1950 and then again for King in September of 1959. It is their 1959 arrangement - used here - that is the basis for the song's current *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* popularity. Closing out the set is a compelling solo by Carter on an old hymn called *Come All You Tenderhearted*. On the program, Carter mentions, "I saw an old hymnbook last night that had this one in it..." New Lost City Rambler John Cohen related that it was a hymnbook owned by Roscoe Holcomb that Carter was making reference to.

On Sunday, several musicians from the Festival gathered at the home of Larry Ehrlich. "I remember very vaguely Ralph and Carter and Mike [Seeger] coming over... we all got together at my apartment and we just spent the afternoon, you know, singing and that sort of stuff." Mike Seeger confirmed, "Ralph and Carter were there and so was Chick and I don't remember who else was in the band... I don't remember for sure whether they were there but I know that Chick was there. There were some drinks being served and [in the process] Chick knew exactly what to say to Carter and Ralph to kinda just needle them against one and other. I think we might have been listening to some Monroe Brothers or he kidded them about the Monroe Brothers or something... but I don't remember the specifics. In any case, Chick got out of the way and they asked me to play bass with them [on the Sunday night performance]."

As a side note, the day was a fortunate one for Larry. He recalled, "I think Mike stayed with me, I'm not sure, but it was a Sunday morning and Mike and I were reading the want ads in the *Tribune* and we saw an ad for a Martin D-28. And we called up and we drove out to this guy's place - I don't know if it was a house or whatever it was, but it was a 1936 D-28 with a hard shell case and he wanted all of

\$85.00 for it. And, so I hemmed and hawed and Mike said, 'Well, if you don't want it, I'll take it.' I said, 'No, I guess I'll take it.' I still have that guitar."

The Stanley Brothers' last day of performing at the University of Chicago Folk Festival came on Sunday, February 5. Vernon Derrick and Curley Lambert continued to appear with Carter and Ralph, but Mike Seeger replaced Chick Stripling. Carter made light of the situation by announcing on the show: "Helping out tonight in Chick Stripling's place, Chick's a little bit under the weather..." The audience, who had obviously been in attendance throughout the weekend, erupted in laughter. The bass wasn't Mike's instrument of choice, and he seldom played it. But, he was familiar with the Stanleys' repertoire and was able to drop in to the spot on bass fairly easily. He modestly down-played his role by stating, "I was no George Shuffler." Shuffler, of course, was the Stanley Brothers' legendary bass man from a decade earlier.

Songs from the final performance include a brief fiddle introduction, *Sally Goodin*, band introductions, *Long Journey Home*, *East Virginia Blues*, *Big Tilda*, *Dream of a Miner's Child*, *Angel Band*, *This Wicked Path of Sin*, *How Far to Little Rock*, and *Rabbit in a Log*.

Unfortunately, the opening theme is clipped substantially so as not to be able to determine what tune is being played. Vernon Derrick then offered a rendering of the old fiddle favorite *Sally Goodin*. Following band introductions, the Stanley Brothers sang a duet on a Monroe Brothers favorite from the 1930s called *Long Journey Home*. They performed this often throughout their career, and recorded a version in 1964 for their Baltimore disc jockey friend Ray Davis for release on his Wango label. Another old-time tune, which they also recorded in 1964 for Wango, was *East Virginia Blues*. Of Carter Family vintage, Ralph frequently finger-picked this song on the mandolin; it was a rare departure from the banjo for him. Switching back to the banjo, Ralph performed one of his instrumentals, *Big Tilda*. The Brothers recorded it for Mercury in December of 1955, with Curley Lambert on mandolin. They re-recorded it for King at their January 1961 session but it, for some reason, remained unissued until fairly recently. Carter dedicated the tune to Festival organizer Mike Fleisher. A tune that the Stanleys featured on shows in the early '60s, but never recorded, was

Dream of a Miner's Child. It's an old ballad dating from the early 1900s and several old-time recordings are known to exist. The exact source of this song for the Stanleys is unknown. Two hymns were featured next: *Angel Band* and *This Wicked Path of Sin*. *Angel Band* is an old hymn that is found in numerous hymnals through the south. They recorded it for Mercury Records in December of 1955 and released it on their late-'50s album "Country Pickin' and Singin'." *This Wicked Path of Sin* comes from Bill Monroe, who recorded it in the 1940s with Lester Flatt & Earl Scruggs - the version of Monroe's Blue Grass Boys that many consider to be the original bluegrass band. The Stanleys included their version on a 1959 gospel album for King called "Hymns and Sacred Songs" (King-645). Ralph was featured next on *Little Birdie*, a solo where he sang and played an old-time style of banjo playing. He first recorded the tune for release on the regional Rich-R-Tone label in 1952. It remained a Stanley Brothers favorite over the years and is popular in his shows to this day. Ralph has forgotten his source for the tune, but said it mostly came from Wade Mainer or the Coon Creek Girls. A repeat from Friday's performance was *How Far to Little Rock*. Closing out the show was a rousing rendition of the Monroe Brothers' favorite *Feast Here Tonight*. Curley Lambert muffed his mandolin break and Carter shamed him into re-doing it. Caught off guard, Curley made a few audible laughs while trying to recover and then went on to deliver a break that was met by thunderous applause by the audience. Perhaps playing to an urban audience, Mike Seeger noticed, "I never heard Carter do that before, he wouldn't have tried to do that for a country show." But on that upbeat note, Carter offered a "Goodnight everybody" and the show was over. Thus ended three days of great picking and singing and good times.

In January of 1965, the Stanley Brothers made a return trip to the University of Chicago Folk Festival. By this time, the make-up of their Clinch Mountain Boys had completely changed. Appearing in the group at this time was Red Stanley on fiddle, Larry Sparks on lead guitar, and Ray Tate on bass. Carter introduced fiddler Red Stanley as follows: "Back here with the fiddle is from Jamestown, Tennessee - I'll mention this, he ain't no kin to us, he just happened to get stuck with our name..." Red worked for about a year with the Stanley Brothers in 1964 and 1965. He appeared with them at their 1964 Newport Folk Festival performance and also participated on recordings that the group made for the Wango label, as John's

Country Quartet, in November of 1964. Larry Sparks got his professional start with the Stanley Brothers. Carter mentions, "... this is his first year out on the road." A youthful performer here, he was only 17 at the time. Two years later, he served as Ralph Stanley's first lead singer in the post-Carter Stanley years. For the last three decades he has been one of traditional bluegrass music's leading performers. Appearing on bass is Ray Tate from Owensboro, Kentucky.

Unfortunately, the fidelity of this 1965 performance does not match the level of the 1961 event. However, the sound is certainly adequate, given the time and circumstances, and the tapes offer a rare glimpse of the Stanley Brothers from this phase of their career, one that seems under documented in terms of live concert recordings. For years, cassette copies of this concert have been traded between Stanley Brothers' fans. The tape contains the contents of this particular set as well as one additional show, presumably from another day at the Folk Festival. The tapes used in producing this part of the collection came from the archives of Radio Station WFMT in Chicago, an organization that recorded the Folk Festival over the years. A search of their holdings netted this lone performance. So, the whereabouts of the other original recordings, or who made them, remains a mystery at this time.

As they had done on their 1961 shows, the Stanleys presented performances that mixed some of their original and recorded material with a selection of traditional songs and tunes. Songs from this 1965 show include *How Mountain Girls Can Love*, *Cacklin' Hen*, *When You and I Were Young Maggie*, *Don't Go Out Tonight*, *Sharecropper's Son*, *I'm a Man of Constant Sorrow*, *Single Girl Married Girl*, *Shouting on the Hills of Glory*, and *Cripple Creek*.

How Mountain Girls Can Love was written by Carter Stanley in 1958 and was recorded by the Brothers on their first album for King Records later that same year. It has since become a bluegrass standard and is often heard in Ralph's shows today. *Cacklin' Hen* is an old fiddle tune that was used to highlight the talents of Red Stanley. *When You and I Were Young, Maggie* is likewise a showpiece, this time for Larry Sparks. He traded guitar and banjo licks with Ralph Stanley, much as Stanley and legendary guitar player George Shuffler had done on the 1963 recording of the tune by the Stanley Brothers. Red Stanley

then introduced the Stanley Brothers who went on to perform *Don't Go Out Tonight*, a tune they'd recorded for Starday Records in May of 1960. They learned it from a late 1920s recording by the Grayson & Whitter duo. Carter introduced a new tune, *Sharecropper's Son*. He said of it, "Now, I'd like to do one that I wrote about two weeks ago. This is not a folk song, I don't guess... it might be a folk song, too - it's not an old song, I'll put it that way. It's called *A Sharecropper's Son*. We haven't recorded that yet, we plan to this coming week." For whatever reason, the Stanley Brothers never got the opportunity to record the song, but it did appear on Ralph Stanley's first solo recording, with Larry Sparks singing lead. As he did on the 1961 show (and countless others in between) Ralph performed his trademark rendition of *I'm a Man of Constant Sorrow*. Reflecting his admiration for the music of the Carter Family, Carter does a solo on one of the Family's early recorded efforts, *Single Girl, Married Girl*. It dates from the famed Bristol sessions of 1927. The lone gospel song on the set was *Shoutin' On The Hills of Glory*, a song they recorded in April of 1964 for release on their "Hymns of the Cross" album. In 1970, Ralph introduced it on stage by saying, "That's an old-timer there that we learned back in the hills of Kentucky." The show ended with Carter bidding the audience farewell while Ralph cranked out a quick version of *Cripple Creek*.

Gary B. Reid

Roanoke, Virginia • September 2001



*This recording was prepared with the cooperation and consent of the
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ST-CD-5003

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"Folk Festival"

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