

"INDIANA'S TREASURE STORE IS A WEALTH OF GOOD OLD HOOSIER LORE"

Judith McCulloh

Recent immigrants to Bloomington, Indiana who missed the opportunity of traveling the Monon Railroad, may not appreciate the depth of nostalgia of those who experienced it. Such variegated memories were evoked the other day, when I came upon the eight Monon Centennial songs written especially for the 1947 dinner show of the "famous Indiana Society of Chicago." The titles include: "Up and Down the Monon"; "Sleepy Little Town (in the Brown County Hills)" (the town is not specified); "Monticello Moon"; "The Belle of the Monon"; "Last Call for Dinner (Wonderful Monon Meals)"; "Hoosier Time"; "The Gentleman Who Paid My Fare"; and "Indiana Is So Rich." The text of this last-named piece (words by John A. McGee and Chester W. Cleveland, music by John A. McGee and Owen Haynes) is representative of the soaring style which pervades the set:

Indiana is so rich,
Not with gold and silver treasures which
Will be gone tomorrow,
Indiana's treasure store,
Is a wealth of good old Hoosier lore,
No one else can borrow,
Memories that linger 'long the Wabash,
Happy hours and friendly hearts we've known
Indiana is so rich,
In my heart she's carved a golden niche,
Hers alone, hers alone.

I trust that the Chicago, Indianapolis and Louisville Railway Co., of Chicago, who copyrighted this in 1947, will not regard its printing in this scholarly journal as an infringement upon their rights.

These eight Monon Centennial songs comprise a fragment of the sheet music collection assembled by the late Dr. Saul Starr, a pediatrician from Eastchester, New York, who accumulated more than 100,000 items during his nearly forty years of scouting. His collection was purchased by Bernardo Mendel and eventually presented to the Lilly Library of Indiana University. A printed slip in the "Music" display case in the Lilly exhibition area gives further description: "The topical collection is extensive: College Music, Presidents, Railroads, Baseball (including the first of 'Take Me Out to the Ball Game'), Bromo Seltzer Advertising, Aviation, Circus, Temperance, Horses, Gambling, Automobile, Bicycle, Trolley, Movies, Posts, Philately, and (of all things) Transvestism; all these issued before 1900. There is a very good file of songsters, including rarities and a rather good assemblage of Confederate imprints and war songs of the United States. There are excellent files of comics, dance and Negro items, band groups, etc. The collection extends into the 1960's and is believed to contain the scores of every Broadway musical since the turn of the century. . . . There are over 1,000 pieces of Negro music from 1880 and a goodly number of American Negro folk songs pre-dating 1880. The collection of ragtime sheets must rank with the finest ever assembled. . . ."

Preliminary cataloguing of the Starr sheet music, for the moment using Starr's subject categories, began in September. Time, staff, and budget permitting, the entire collection may be available for use in a year or two -- hopefully sooner. Even a cursory peek at the boxes of "railroad" sheet music suggests the kinds of things to be learned from such material.

Item: There are four copies of the Siebert-Newton "Casey Jones" (claimed to be the "greatest comedy hit in years -- the only comedy railroad song"), copyrighted in 1909 by the Southern California Music Company, Los Angeles. The song's popularity is also attested by the two follow-ups: Ernie Newton's "Mrs. Casey Jones (The Brave Engineer's Widow)," copyrighted in 1915 by Newton; and Marvin Lee and Clarence Jones' spoof, "Casey Jones Went Down on the Robt. E. Lee," published in 1912 by the Marvin Lee Music Company, Chicago.

Item: In the earliest box (1830-1889) there are many pieces without words (waltzer, marches, and the like) which are assigned to the "railroad" category because they have "train" or "railroad" or a related term in their title, or because they are dedicated to some railway official or company, or because they commemorate the centennial or other anniversary of the company. The second box (1890-1920) contains relatively fewer non-vocal items, and relatively more songs with words. The third box (1920--), so far as I remember, has little in the way of songs without words. Modern parlors are seldom enlivened by live performances of descriptive march-galops for piano like Chas. H. Banning's "The Lightning Express" (copyrighted in 1911 by A. W. Perry Sons' Music Co., Sedalia, Missouri): "Imitating an express train leaving the station. A storm overtakes it. A washout occurs and the train (being thrown over an embankment) is wrecked." Other such programmes call for additional hands to sound bells, chimes, wood blocks, and/or metal sheets, as the train proceeds on its adventures. Our viable (semi-)wordless "train" tradition (such as "Orange Blossom Special" or "Train 45") operates by aural tradition, and I expect this type of sheet music has largely retreated to the province of music teachers and annual recitals. (As for commemoration, the 1947 Monon songs are the most recent I recall seeing in the stack. The day of passenger praise, unless commissioned, or even extant service is setting.)

Item: In 1882, J. A. Roff's "The Great Rock Island Route" was published by the J. M. W. Jones St'y and Prt'g Co., Chicago. The unlikely title hides a text beginning "From a rocky bound Atlantic, to a mild Pacific shore"

Item: A series of songs pick up the motif of the child/passenger who calms the other train travellers, who fear disaster: Chas. Graham's "My Dad's the Engineer" (beginning "We were none of us thinking of danger"), copyrighted in 1895 by Henry J. Wehman, New York and Chicago; E. Lorena Smith's "My Papa's the Engineer" ("One night when a train was rushing to rate"), copyrighted in 1906 by E. J. Smith, Vassar, Michigan; Frank J. Conroy and Albert von Tilzer's "On the New York, New Haven and Hartford" ("The Boston express left New York town"), copyrighted by The York Music Company, New York, 1911.

Item: Occasionally the sheet music carries bonus information about parallel broadside forms. For instance, the Fred Rose and Hy Heath "Midnite Flyer," copyright assigned in 1948 to Camdon Music Company,

Hollywood, proclaims on the front cover: "Recorded by Texas Jim Lewis on Decca Records," and under a photograph, "The Sunshine Boys, featured Columbia Motion Picture Artists, presenting 'Midnite Flyer' in the Columbia picture 'Quick on the Trigger' starring Charles Starrett." This music is printed from the same plates as an earlier issue, copyrighted in 1943 by Milene Music, Nashville, with the notation "featured by Roy Acuff." Or: "The East Bound Train (Was Crowded)," arranged by Nick Manoloff, copyrighted in 1935 by Calumet Music Co., Chicago, "featured by Winnie, Lou and Sally over WLS." Sometimes the discographic reference is more detailed: Charles Hathaway and Bud Averill (words) and Fred Lee, Naomi Meyer, and Handen Simpson (music) wrote "The Union Pacific 'Streamliner'" ("The Union Pacific can proudly claim the new Streamliner's a mighty fine train"); the sheet music bears a 1947 copyright by Richardson Songs, Beverly Hills, and the notice "introduced and recorded by the Plainsmen -- Coast Record No. 256." At something of an extreme is a "Wabash Cannonball" credited to A. P. Carter. One copy, copyrighted in 1939 by Peer International, New York, has a genteel stylized sketch of a cottage on the cover. But another copy, from the same plates, indicates the 1939 Southern Music copyright was assigned in 1941 to Peer International; on this cover is a photograph with the caption "featured by Bill Boyd and His Cowboy Ramblers," also the following list:

Vocalion Record No. 04466 (Roy Acuff)
 Vocalion Record No. 04717 (Roy Hall)
 Bluebird Record No. B 8252 (Morris Brothers)
 Decca Record No. 5713 (Bill Carlisle)
 Decca Record No. 3783 (Terry Shand)
 Montco Record No. 7444 (Morris Brothers).

Publishers are rarely so generous to discographers. The question of correspondence between the records cited and the music printed is too sticky to pursue here. Sometimes the music was actually transcribed from the recording, but in most cases this can be determined (if at all) only by comparing the two.

Many additional titles in the three "railroad" boxes are familiar, of course, and their sheet music appearance should be acknowledged in any case study of those songs. Here I have just hinted at their relevance to discography and the development of other media, to artist repertoire, music publishing and copyright history, railroad history and the experience of travelling the rails, participant vs. passive entertainment, fads and themes in song composition and popularity, the intertwining of commercial, popular, and folk traditions. This kind of material is so hard of general access that we must welcome such a large and varied sampling of it, housed within a few blocks of complementary collections of "good old lore," Hoosier and beyond, in the Archives of the Folklore Institute.