

University of Mississippi

eGrove

Clippings

James W. Silver Collection

5-15-1954

Paul Flowers' Greenhouse 2

Paul Flowers

Follow this and additional works at: https://egrove.olemiss.edu/jws_clip

Recommended Citation

Flowers, Paul, "Paul Flowers' Greenhouse 2" (1954). *Clippings*. 25.

https://egrove.olemiss.edu/jws_clip/25

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the James W. Silver Collection at eGrove. It has been accepted for inclusion in Clippings by an authorized administrator of eGrove. For more information, please contact egrove@olemiss.edu.

Paul Flowers'

GREENHOUSE

Now is the time for all good folksong collectors to come to the aid of the party.

Said party is James W. Silver, doctor of philosophy and Phi Beta Kappa, poobah plenipotentiary of the history department at Ole Miss, fishing crony of William Faulkner, and image-smasher extraordinary. Herr Doktor Professor Silver wants a song. A song to sing and a song to put into print, with words and music and harmonies mellowed in Tallahatchie bottoms.

Once upon a time—all good stories have to start that way, just as they have to close “and they lived happily ever after”—there was a railroad, owned and operated by Bob Carrier, the lumberman. Prof. Silver, avoiding all appearance of a pun, testifies it was a common carrier, and ran from Sardis in the hills to a point named Baptist in the Delta. It was the Sardis & Delta Railroad, and hauled mostly lumber for the Carrier enterprises.

Well, there was a ballad, or aria maybe. Jim Silver customarily worships at the shrine of Clio, who is the Muse of history, but is an also-ran at the court of Polyhymnia who presides over sublime hymns. I go on the assumption that folksongs about extinct railroads come under the heading of sublime hymns. This ballad, aria, or hymn, as the case may be, was about Bob Carrier's common carrier railroad, and there were passages in it about way stations including a place called Johnson's or Johnston's. If there was anything in it about Sardis or Baptist at the other end of the line, deponent sayeth not.

Prof. Silver wants that song. I hasten to refer him to such authorities as William C. Handy, daddy of the blues, still writing songs at his Broadway office; surely Alan Lomax, the Texas folksong collector and recorder, knows the Sardis & Delta Railroad song; Vance Randolph of Eureka Springs, Ark., who compiled four volumes of Ozark folksongs for the Missouri Historical Society, may have heard of it; in all probability C. Bryant Young, the Panola County banker, has joined three colleagues to render it as a quartet number.

And then there's Carl Carmer, the inveterate folklorist, who must have heard of this classic. Bob and Ruth Ballentine of Sardis might know it; or Nash Buckingham, who is an old friend of Bob Carrier's, and probably knew some Horace now sainted who was pretty good at “bassing” songs of the people.

I hesitate to mention these sources to a researcher so accomplished as Herr Doktor Professor Silver, but lest he may have overlooked some, I stick out my neck.

Meantime, no doubt there is a constant reader of this column who knows the song about the Sardis & Delta Railroad. If such reader would be a benefactor to mankind, let him or her pass the words and/or music on to Prof. Silver, either direct, at University of Mississippi, or via this philanthropic medium. Much obliged until Jim Silver credits you with a footnote in the book he is writing.