

# Folklore Society

of Greater Washington

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THIS MONTH'S EXCITING PROGRAM is a workshop on Negro blues and gospel music. (See poster page for details.) Be sure to see and hear this special concert-demonstration-discussion show. Ed Green, Flora Molton, and John Jackson are all musicians who live in the Washington and who, until recently, have been relatively unknown to people interested in folk music.

JOHN JACKSON was born in Woodville, Virginia, 40 years ago. Although he comes from a musical family - his father was a blues guitarist, his mother played the accordion, and two of his brothers play the guitar - his own repertoire is drawn mainly from early recordings of Blind Lemon Jefferson, John Hurt, Blind Blake, and Jimmie Rodgers. John sings unique versions of such traditional songs as "Sugar Babe," "John Henry," and "Nobody's Business." He began playing the guitar at the age of 4; when he was 10, he was inspired by a guitarist named "Happy," who John says was better than Blind Blake. John plays in three tunings which he calls "cross-note C natural," "C natural," and "Spanish." Although he has played for country dances in his own community and for hunt clubs and similar organizations, he is not a musician by profession. Currently, he lives with his family in Fairfax County.

FLORA MOLTON is a street gospel singer who was born in Louisa County, Virginia, in 1908. She plays a distinctive style of "knife guitar" in a G tuning, often used by Elizabeth Cotton. Her mother played the organ, and Flora began her career playing her father's instrument, the accordion. She switched to the "knife" guitar in 1943. Her favorite singers were Bessie Smith, Sister Rosetta Tharpe, Ma Rainey, and others. Flora usually sings in downtown Washington: Monday thru Thursday at the corner of 7th and F Sts., N.W., and Friday at Connecticut Avenue and 17th St., N.W. Since she came to D.C. in 1937, she has been relatively unrecognized, although many folk-music enthusiasts have visited her home and recorded her music. She has also played in churches and has taken an active part in religious work.

ED GREEN plays blues, sacred, and secular music in a style that predates the earliest recorded Negro folk music. He is 75 years old, and was born in Beecherville, South Carolina. His style belongs very definitely to the period when the interest of Negro folk musicians was turning from the banjo to the guitar. His playing has been compared to that of Son House and Charlie Patton. Ed's father and mother played, respectively, the violin and organ. Ed began the guitar at the age of 12 and only a year later joined John J. John's Carnival (one of the largest at the time) and toured the country with them for five years. He had a fairly active career and blues connoisseurs have stated that, had he ever been recorded, he might have become one of the legendary blues figures. Having worked as a house painter in this area for almost 50 years, and partly because of a lack of recognition, Ed gave up playing his guitar several years ago. With his re-discovery last September, he has begun playing and performing again.

ED MORRIS, the program moderator, has a strong interest in early Negro music which came from such experiences as a tidewater Virginia childhood, an old Memphis Minnie record, rock 'n roll, and two cooks at a military school in Waynesboro who taught him blues guitar. For about the last 4 years especially, Ed has followed all facets of the music from books to the teaching and friendship of performers (mainly, Fred McDowell and Skip James). He is the Discount Record Shop's folk-music expert at the present time.

TO JOIN THE FOLKLORE SOCIETY, send your name, address, and check - made out to "Folklore Society of Greater Washington" - (\$5 for individual, \$7.50 for family membership) to Jim Lee, Route 1, Box 15, Oakton, Virginia 22124, or join at any of the meetings. Also, write Carol Lee, same address, if you wish to continue receiving the newsletter.

PROPOSED PLANS FOR FEBRUARY include such events as a rare program of films on folk music and folk lore.