



MASSACHUSETTS CULTURAL COUNCIL
FOLK ARTS & HERITAGE PROGRAM

FIELDNOTES

Accession Numbers:

MHI-04-13-FN

Fieldnotes

Audio recordings

Photographic documentation

Additional materials

Date(s): July 20, 2004

Related Accession Numbers:

Individual/Group/Event: Georgia Mae Harp, the singing cowgirl

Fieldworker(s): Maggie Holtzberg and Cliff Murphy

Location of Interview: Georgia Mae's home

Street Address:

City:

Zip:

Co:

Contact person (if different from above):

Title:

Sponsoring organization (for event or group):

Address (if different from above):

Phone: Daytime:

Evening: same

E-mail:

Website:

Special Needs (including translation):

Traditions documented on visit (traditional art/skills, occupational experience, ethnic or religious community):

Traditions noted for follow-up:

Other Possible Contacts:

Summary Description: July 1, 2004

Cliff Murphy, who is interning with us this summer, had written to Gordy Brown, President of the New England Country Music Historical Society for suggestions of people he might contact. One of the names was Georgia Mae Harp who he says developed the first colored guitar to match her outfit in 1938. He did say that she had had a triple bypass a couple of years ago and was no longer performing. Some web research on her revealed that she was known as the singing cowgirl and had performed on WBZ during the 1940s.

Maggie phoned her up on July 1 explaining that we would like to come visit with her and learn more about her career. She was very friendly – explaining that she was no longer performing. “I’d been ill for some time. When I had my operation, that thing they put down my throat didn’t do my voice any good. I can still sing, but I can’t count on my voice. So I don’t like to perform.”

When asked about her white guitar, she explained it this way, “I used to wear a white Stetson and white boots and I wanted a guitar to match my outfit, so that I had a trademark.” She mentioned that both Dupont and the Vega Company were involved. She basically performed solo, except for her work with WBZ. The station provided two staff musicians, Al KishKish and Herb Salkin and they called themselves the Buckaroos. When asked if she was from Georgia, she said, “No. I was born in Connecticut but raised in Massachusetts, “I’m a real Yankee.” She says she was named after her aunt Georgiana.

We arranged a visit for July 22nd.

July 22, 2004

Cliff and Maggie left out of Boston at 12:15 and found our way to the cranberry bog country of S. Carver by 1:30. Georgia Mae Harp lives in a retirement community of double-wide trailer homes, nestled in amongst white pines, low scrub and clustered mailboxes. She welcomed us in to her home. The interior decorating was all done in autumnal colors – from the shag rug to the upholstery to the numerous embroidered and crocheted pieces she had laying about. Out on the low coffee table were scrapbooks, sepia toned photographs, newspaper clippings and letters. She had written a two-page biography which she shared with us, as well as copies of photos and letters. Mid-way through the interview, she played us cassette copies of several radio show transcriptions. These included two of her own compositions.