



Holiday At The Sea

Derek Piotr's Top 5 Hits From Fieldwork Archive :: So Far

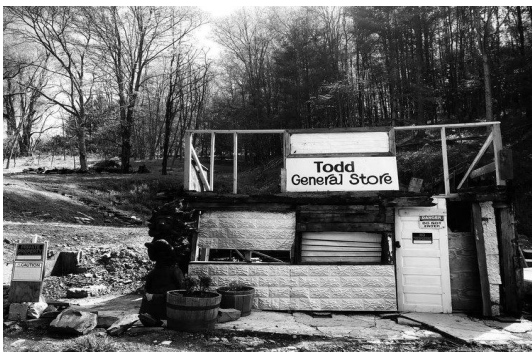
August 23, 2022 in Artist Spotlight, Documentary, Music



Derek Piotr made one of my favorite albums of 2021. If you missed it, I profiled it [here](#). For that album, Piotr mined some pieces from historical folklore while also including original pieces and instrumentation. This sparked a passion in Piotr to focus on archiving vocal recordings. He began archiving vocal recordings in 2020. Like many archivists, Piotr captures poetry, songs, interviews and the like. But what sets this collection apart, Piotr notes, is the “focus of this collection is on the “non-singer”; in other words, someone with no background in musical performance but who can still relate a song or folkloric memory.”

I recently touched base with Piotr about the project and he was kind enough to highlight five recordings which have really stood out to him so far.

01) :: [#208](#) - Helen Barnes-Rielly performing "Le Carillon de Vendôme"



I had gone to Todd, NC, for the 2-year anniversary of the burning of the Todd General Store, and there was a little local T.V. spot going on with the owner, who is feistily trying to rebuild the site right now. Pretty much the only other thing in Todd is this little bakery, run by

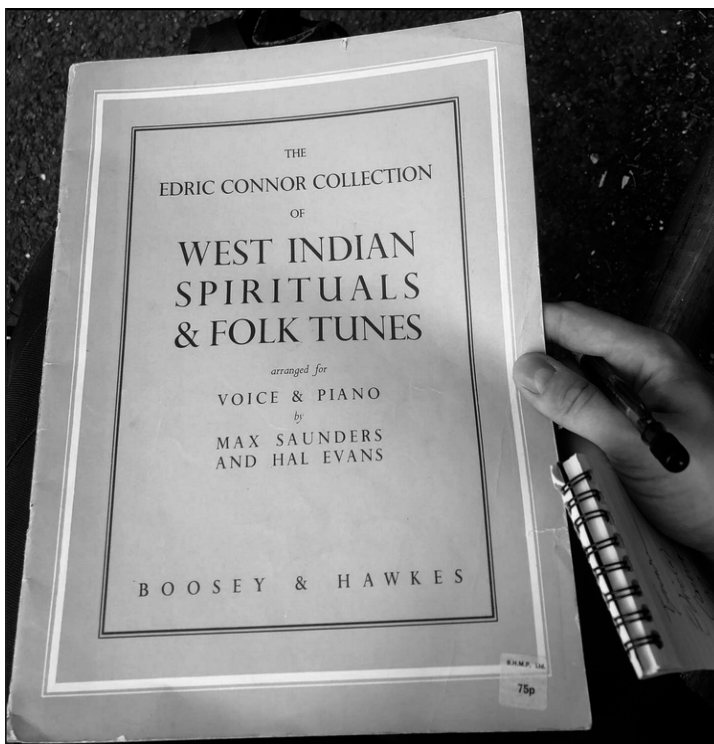
Helen. I asked her what I ask everyone, if her grandparents or parents sang anything, and she remembered this little bit of a song, which she called "Chapels of France". It stayed in my head for months, so I called her up one day and asked for it again, on tape this time. Turns out [it's a children's song](#) from the 1400's that her mother learned in Cincinnati, OH, from some nuns, who have probably been singing it unbroken these 500+ years.

2: [#103](#) - Jim Prentice performing "The German Clock Winder"



A rare example of Connecticut folk singing! I had gone out to West Cornwall to visit Jane Prentice, an Old-Time fiddle player, and she recalled one little tiny song for me that her grandmother sang, but mostly played her fiddle for me. Jim came in towards the end of our visit, and, though slightly hoarse from work, sang me a couple of songs right there and then, with no notice, including this one. It seems to have come to America from the British settlers; I have found several traditional versions from the UK.

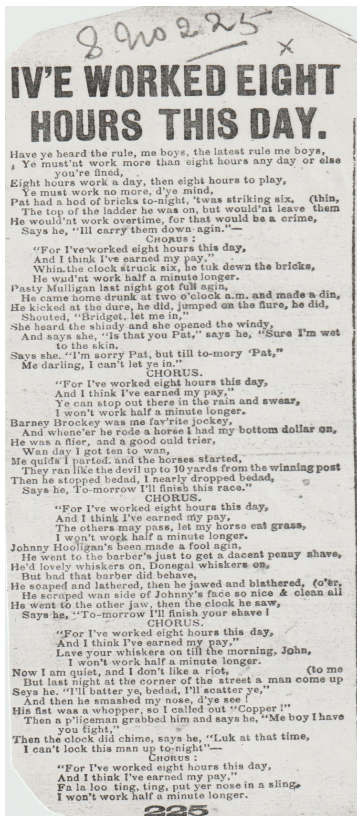
3: [#79](#) - Ian Patterson performing "The Virgin Mary Had a Baby Boy"



As I walked home one evening from where I was staying in York last summer, I noticed an elderly gentleman supervising construction on his roof. I intuited he might have folklore knowledge and this hunch paid off in spades—Ian's mother was a colleague of Edric

Connor's who had traveled to the West Indies when Ian was small to do some field collecting. They collected this song, among many others, and published these songs in a small book. "The Virgin Mary..." in particular found its way into the Cambridge Hymnal, and [the rest is history](#). It was very much a surreal experience to meet the son of the woman who had bridged this carol into broad accessibility, purely by chance.

4: [#207](#) - Sandra Noble performing "I've Worked Eight Hours This Day"



I had left a small advertisement in The Dalesman before I left Yorkshire last autumn, and roughly six months later, I got an email from Sandra, who insisted on singing this song (twice!) down WhatsApp for me. "He was a sea-captain, born 1876", she said of her grandfather. "He probably knew more risqué songs than that, but that's the one I remember. I came to live with my granny and grandad when I was 3 or 4." Bonus points for their hometown's name: Robin Hood's Bay! Spry listeners may also note some of Sandra's variation: Johnny Hooligan becomes Patsy Dooligan, and Donegal whiskers become "galigan".

5: [#210](#) - Judy Arrowood performing "Don't Sell Daddy Anymore Whiskey"



Judy is related to the [Bares](#) and [Turbyfills](#) several times over; she was the last informant I visited and lived literally at the intersection of Elk Park Highway and Turbyfill Road. I spent several hours with Judy, who initially could recall Lena Turbyfill vividly, but nothing specifically musical; it was only when we got on the subject of Lena's sister-in-law [Ethel Bare Turbyfill](#) that Judy remembered Ethel's children, Shirley and Evelyn singing this song.