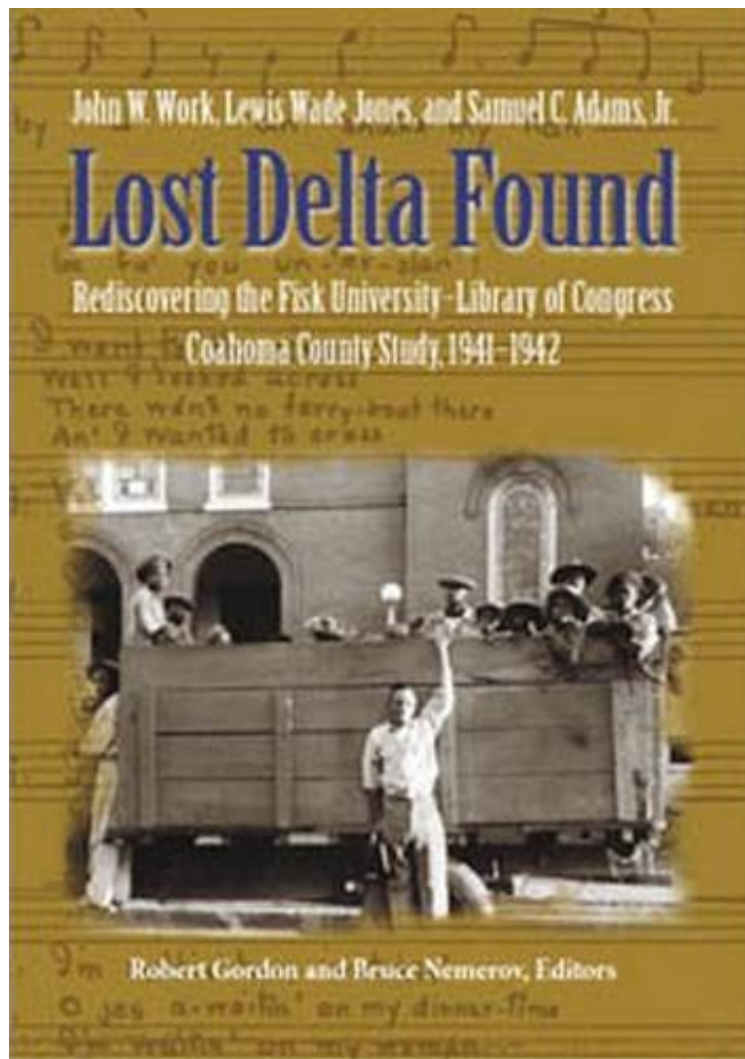


(Download free ebook) Lost Delta Found: Rediscovering the Fisk University-Library of Congress Coahoma County Study, 1941-1942

Lost Delta Found: Rediscovering the Fisk University-Library of Congress Coahoma County Study, 1941-1942

John W. Work, Lewis Wade Jones, Samuel C. Adams Jr.

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John W. Work, Lewis Wade Jones, Samuel C. Adams Jr. : Lost Delta Found: Rediscovering the Fisk University-Library of Congress Coahoma County Study, 1941-1942 before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Lost Delta Found: Rediscovering the Fisk University-Library of Congress Coahoma County Study, 1941-1942:

8 of 9 people found the following review helpful. the songsBy Andrew CalhounTo read some of these reviews, you'd think the introduction to the material was more important than the substance of the book - source material, copies of

many previously unpublished songs in John Work's own handwriting, an essay that gives you the pulse and taste of life in the delta in 1941. "Down by the Green Apple Tree," a children's song collected from Sarah Teague, is worth the price of the book. I'm grateful to everyone who collected the songs, which to me are 99% of the whole point anyway. To give this book one star because you are quibbling with academic interpretations is to miss the whole point of the book - to revive the material itself, and to honor the people who created and sang it. The authors' intention is to celebrate John Work's contribution, not to denigrate Alan Lomax'."Down by the green apple tree, where the grass grows so sweetMiss Julie, Miss Julie, your true love is deadHe wrote you a letter to turn back your headDown by the green apple tree..."23 of 34 people found the following review helpful. Crucial for anyone dealing with race, with blues, with LomaxBy Tony ThomasNemerov and Gordon have done an immense service to the scholarship of blues, to the scholarship of race in scholarship itself, to the understanding of Black music. This book helps us understand rather than the beneficent and hallowed benefactors of African Americans he liked to picture himself, Alan Lomax perpetuated the same racism and paternalism that has been a hallmark of white scholarship of African Americans since this country began. The trips to Mississippi in the 1940s that Lomax made were supposed to be part of a joint project between between Lomax's team at the Library of Congress and a team of Black scholars at Fisk University led by the great John W. Work III, one of the greatest African American folklorists, the musical director of the Fisk Jubilee singers, and one of the major Black intellectuals of his period. The lure of Lomax to the Fisk scholars was that he was supposed to lend resources from the Library of Congress, especially portable recording equipment, and would advance the publication of the joint study. In particular, the connection with the Library of Congress would make things easier with white authorities in Memphis and in the Mississippi Delta. Lomax seemed to be after the cooperation of Fisk professors and graduate students who knew their way around the Black south, especially Mississippi. What turned out is that Lomax demanded that Work give part of the archive of folk recordings he had achieved to the Library of Congress. While Work, and two graduate assistance wrote cogent studies, that included many transcriptions of songs, hymns, sermons, and other Black folk culture, all that came out were recordings done by the Library of Congress. Nearly 50 years later, Alan Lomax came out with a book on this trip called *The Land Where the Blues Began* which won many prizes and set the stage for another reissue of the recordings made on this expedition. Yet, the studies by Work, Adams, and Jones were allegedly "lost" by the Library of Congress and Lomax, although researchers found this information in Lomax's papers several years ago. While Lomax uses photographs taken by Work, data and interviews compiled by Adams and Jones, there is no attribution to these Black scholars. Indeed, Lomax makes many mistakes and even confuses the two trips he actually made with one. The studies by the Black scholars here that are finally seeing the light of day are important. Rather than focusing solely on remnants of the past and perpetuating the image of the Delta as a dynamic center of change, a mixing pot of Black culture, and place the traditional culture in the context of real change in the real Black community. If Lomax focuses on older Black folk singers and seems to prefer, as Nemerov and Gordon point out in their introduction, the inarticulate, who necessitate interpretation by Lomax, Work, Adams and Jones interview a very articulate cross section of Black people from the Delta ranging from high school students to great grand mothers to give a picture of Black folklore and live in the world. As Adams and Jones were sociologists working on the equivalent of Master's Theses under the supervision of Charles S. Johnson, their papers about life in the Delta and its connection to folklore are important for anyone interested in Black history and culture in general, and life in the Delta in particular. There is none of the romanticism that non-African American blues writers like to invest Mississippi and the Delta with in their writing. There is no garbage about meeting the devil at the crossroads, but there is a lot about the growing race consciousness and growing refusal to take the oppression whites were dishing out that would explode into a civil rights movement.Since I wrote this review, I have found the scholarship here, particularly about the changing sociology of the Delta to be extremely useful in discussing several questions that people have asked me, or thinking about other questions involving the history of the blues, banjos, old time music and the civil rights music. When I say helpful, I mean it has provided clear and documented answers to questions academics working these fields have raised with me.This is a useful serious work written with great concision and clarity. It stands in stark contrast to the sloppy purple prosed, self centered, stereotype seeking and producing "white boy who knows Black folks" approach Alan Lomax took in his book *The Land Where the Blues Began* which purports to cover the same material.57 of 65 people found the following review helpful. Lost Delta AssassinatedBy M. B. AllenAn edition of the writings of the joint Fisk University-Library of Congress Cohahoma project undertaken in the 1940s is long overdue and would have been most welcome. Unfortunately, Lost Delta Found is sloppily and tendentiously edited. Most disgracefully, Robert Gordon and Bruce Nemerov, themselves white, create a highly biased, falsified frame for the valuable writings they present by means of omission of key information, selective quotations, and bogus insinuations of romanticism and racism against Alan Lomax that pervade their editorial apparatus. They fail to duly credit Lomax with courage in initiating an unprecedented bi-racial study of a hotbed of racial discontent in the heart of Mississippi Delta plantation country in the 1941-42 Jim Crow South. They omit mention of the fact that Lomax and his wife were arrested and briefly jailed for fraternizing with black sharecroppers. They also don't mention that the Dixiecrat US congress cut out all arts funding in spring of 1942 while the study was going on, specifically prohibiting federal arts workers from collecting statistical information and and

making field recordings of folk songs. It is to be hoped that some day a fair and factually accurate edition of the Coahoma Project materials will appear - one that reproduces all the relevant historical documentation. Tragically, the publication of this book may prevent that from happening.

Claim [in Lost Delta Found]: The Coahoma study was composer John Work's idea and was appropriated by Alan Lomax and the Library of Congress.

Fact: In 1940, Fisk Professor John Work proposed a study of ballad origins after a disastrous fire in Natchez, Mississippi. The grant application to fund it (written by Fisk President Thomas Johnson, not John Work, to a foundation in New York) was turned down. A year later, during a visit by Lomax to present a concert at Fisk, President Johnson, Sociologist Charles S. Johnson, and Lomax proposed a different, joint Fisk-Library of Congress field recording project, centered in Clarksdale (in Coahoma), using sociology students to gather data. Alan Lomax wrote the application and questionnaire for the study. Gordon and Nemerov supply no evidence that Lomax knew of Work's earlier Natchez fire proposal much less "stole" it. (Funds for the Coahoma study came from Charles Seeger's Pan American Union, under the War Department - information they omit).

Claim: The Land Where the Blues Began is Alan Lomax's version of the Coahoma Study.

Fact: Land Where the Blues Began, a memoir written in 1993, when Lomax was in his seventies, covers Lomax's field recording experience from 1933 through the 1970s.

Claim: In Land Where the Blues Began, Alan Lomax slighted the contributions of his African-American collaborators on the Coahoma Study -- Lewis Jones, Samuel Adams, and John Work.

Fact: Alan Lomax thanked and mentioned them (especially Lewis Jones) over 18 times and at considerable length, including in the formal acknowledgements of Land Where the Blues Began.

Claim [In Lost Delta Found]: Alan Lomax was not a Southerner and therefore had "romantic ideas" about the South.

Fact: Alan Lomax was a Southerner and a life-long champion of civil rights. The editors of Lost Delta Found smear his character (there are over 70 mentions of Lomax in the introductions and index, all derogatory) when they insinuate that he was a crypto-racist and "romantic" who did not acknowledge his black co-workers (when in fact he did so over and over). They also don't mention the fact that Lomax and Lewis Jones collaborated again in the early 1960s.

Claim: [In Lost Delta Found] Alan Lomax's Land Where the Blues Began has many inaccuracies "the most important of which" was his omission of mention of the August, 1941, preliminary Coahoma trip undertaken by Lomax and Work.

Fact: Lomax's omission of the 1941 preliminary trip in the Coahoma study is arguably a narrative expedient, not an error. No other "inaccuracy" in Land Where the Blues Began is identified. That all of Lomax's Library of Congress Coahoma recordings are, and have always been, accurately dated, with full and proper credit to participants (including Work) is not acknowledged by Gordon and Nemerov.

Claim [in Lost Delta Found]: Lomax ought to have edited the Coahoma study after leaving the employ of the Library of Congress.

Fact: The study was interrupted by US entrance into World War II. Alan Lomax's ethical obligation to the study ended after he left the Library in 1942 to join the army.

Claim: After the war, Alan Lomax and the Library of Congress suppressed the results of the Coahoma study when they lost or "filed away" the one extant manuscript of John Work's essay about the project.

Fact: Letters in the Library of Congress state that in 1943 the Library sent John Work multiple copies of his unfinished Coahoma manuscript drafts (along with mimeographed copies) after he wrote that he himself had lost them. After 1945, study participants had permission from Fisk and the Library to use the Coahoma material in their own writings. Lewis Jones used the material in completing his sociology degree; and in December, 1947, participant Samuel Adams published an article (albeit brief) about his Coahoma work in 'Social Forces' (pp. 202-205). In 1958, John Work wrote to the Library of Congress asking for permission to write a book based his Coahoma essay and received a go-ahead. He did not mention that his manuscript was "lost" at that time, suggesting that at that time he possessed copies of his own writings. None of this information, all on public record and available to any diligent researcher, appears in Lost Delta Found.

Claim [made by a reviewer]: Alan Lomax's black colleagues urged him to record newer, gospel music rather than older call-and-response spirituals.

Fact: The only "evidence" for this is Robert Gordon's highly implausible suggestion in Lost Delta Found that John Work's classified index of 68 spirituals collected during the Coahoma project constitutes a coded "hidden message" (a' la Leo Strauss) criticizing the emphasis on collecting spirituals. It especially strains credulity, since Work himself was a noted enthusiast of (nearly extinct) black string band and sacred harp music. (There is little point in collecting material that is widely commercially available.)

Claim [in Lost Delta Found]: John Work "anticipated the blues as poetry movement by ten years."

Fact: Harlem renaissance writers Sterling Brown, James Weldon Johnson, Langston Hughes, and Alain Locke championed blues as poetry ten years *before* John Work.

This remarkable book recovers three invaluable perspectives, long thought to have been lost, on the culture and music of the Mississippi Delta. In 1941 and '42 African American scholars from Fisk University--among them the noted composer and musicologist John W. Work, sociologist Lewis Wade Jones, and graduate student Samuel C. Adams, Jr.--joined folklorist Alan Lomax of the Library of Congress on research trips to Coahoma County, Mississippi. Their mission was to explore the musical habits and history of the black community there and "to document adequately the cultural and social backgrounds for music in the community." Among the fruits of the project were the earliest recordings by the legendary blues singer and guitarist Muddy Waters. The hallmark of the study was to have been a joint publication of its findings by Fisk and the Library of Congress. However, the field notes and manuscripts by the

Fisk researchers became lost in Washington. Lomax's own book drawing on the projects findings, *The Land Where the Blues Began*, did not appear until 1993, and although it won a National Book Critics Circle Award, it was flawed by a number of historical inaccuracies. Recently uncovered by author and filmmaker Robert Gordon, the writings, interviews, notes, and musical transcriptions produced by Work, Jones, and Adams in the Coahoma County study now appear in print for the first time. Their work captures, with compelling immediacy, a place, a people, a way of life, and a set of rich musical traditions as they existed sixty years ago. Until the surfacing of these documents, Lomax's perspective was all that was known of the Coahoma County project and its research. Now, at last, the voices of the other contributors can be heard. Including essays by Bruce Nemerov and Gordon on the careers and contributions of Work, Jones, and Adams, *Lost Delta Found* will become an indispensable historical resource, as marvelously readable as it is enlightening. Illustrated with photos and more than 160 musical transcriptions.

From Publishers Weekly Gordon and Nemerov have rescued from oblivion an important study of black life in rural Mississippi. Famed folklorist Alan Lomax (1915-2002) won a National Book Critics Circle Award in 1993 for *The Land Where the Blues Began*, his memoir about recording Southern blues music 50 years earlier. Lomax, however, made scant mention of his research associates, three African-American scholars from Fisk University in Nashville: composer-musicologist Work, sociologist Jones and graduate student Adams who made significant, valuable contributions. Work's 160 song transcriptions of 1941-1942 field recordings form the 100-page centerpiece of this book, and equally illuminating are insightful essays by the Fisk trio on plantation folklore and traditions, already fading at that time as urban influences permeated the Mississippi Delta. Although a joint Fisk Library of Congress publication was originally planned, the once-lost Fisk manuscripts have never seen print until now. More than a few editorial comments hint at the conflicts involving Lomax: "That the manuscripts were found in the Lomax archives six decades after they went missing may reveal much about how research is, and is not, shared, attributed, and published." Photos. (Aug. 30) Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. Book restores credit for the definitive Delta-blues research to the men who conducted it--PASTE Magazine. . . these original documents . . . paint a compellingly accurate portrait of the Mississippi Delta in the 1940s. . . Work, Jones, and Adams are finally getting their due at a time when Mississippi seems consumed with righting its past wrongs . . . --Mojo (5-star review) Gordon and Nemerov have rescued from oblivion an important study of black life in rural Mississippi. . . Work's 160 song transcriptions of 1941-1942 field recordings form the 100-page centerpiece of this book, and equally illuminating are insightful essays by the Fisk trio on plantation folklore and traditions, already fading at that time as urban influences permeated the Mississippi Delta.--Publishers Weekly. . . splendid and significant . . . Work was instrumental in uncovering and giving the work of bluesmen Muddy Waters, Son House, Son Sims, and Willie Brown to the world; every library that owns [Alan Lomax's book *The Land Where the Blues Began*] should own this one, too. An essential purchase for music collections . . . --Library Journal (starred review) This may well be the greatest unpublished goldmine of early research into the music of black Mississippians, and its appearance is a boon not only to music scholars but to anyone interested in Southern life in a period of intense change and musical expression. --Sing Out! From the Publisher "We have never known the truth of how the great music of African-Americans in the Mississippi Delta was discovered and made known to the rest of the world. Here, myths are dispelled, mysteries solved, lost treasures found, veils lifted from facts and ideas long suppressed. The names of Lewis Jones, Samuel Adams and, above all, John Work rise now to the front ranks of American music scholarship. We are very fortunate to have this materials, and even more so because we have Robert Gordon and Bruce Nemerov shepherd us through its rediscovery. From this time forward, all folk music history takes a sharp bend - toward the light." - Dave Marsh "This is an untold story about America and its culture that history has conspired to make a forgotten story, told here with grace, quiet anger, and a will to raise the dead. John Work worked to raise the dead; now Robert Gordon and Bruce Nemerov have done the same for him." - Greil Marcus "Essential reading for anyone interested in United States history and culture of the South during the early decades of the twentieth century, this book concerns the music and sociology of a rural American culture when changes were transpiring because of migration, urbanization, and generational gaps. In addition to providing important insights about black life in rural Mississippi in the 1940s, the book demonstrates that John W. Work III, an African-American music scholar, was a pioneer and forerunner in dealing with social issues in music research. At a time when ethnomusicology was in its infancy as a scholarly discipline (the term ethnomusicology had not been coined) and most researchers (blacks and non-blacks) were focused on the study of so-called elite, serious, or art music, Work was conducting fieldwork among rural blacks because he realized that social context was an essential variable in understanding musical creativity and the shortcomings of promoting one genre over another. His excellent and intuitive analyses give fresh, new, and different interpretations regarding both secular and sacred black vernacular music. *LOST DELTA FOUND* not only explains why John W. Work (a culture bearer) was silenced as a researcher and received little support for his efforts to promote a more holistic view of African-American music and culture, the book also reveals why it has taken sixty years for Work's research methods and findings to be made available to the public." - Jacqueline Cogdell DjeDje, Director, Ethnomusicology Archive, UCLA "This is a very welcome and significant addition to the scholarly record. The project

brings critical voices of African American scholars to the fore. The attendant contextualizing material, drawing on correspondence and interviews, adds to the work that was formerly known primarily as the work of Alan Lomax and helps us better understand a complex history between Fisk and The Library of Congress." - Ruth M. Stone, Director, Ethnomusicology Institute, Indiana University