

## Cliff Carlisle: Kentucky's Steel Guitar Pioneer

by Anthony Lis

This essay details the life and career of Kentucky-born steel guitarist, singer, and songwriter Clifford Raymond Carlisle (1903-1983). Carlisle—a yodeling, blues-influenced country-music performer from the hills southeast of Louisville—did much to popularize the Hawaiian steel guitar and the resonophonic guitar in the 1930s and 1940s.

As the late Kentucky-music scholar Charles K. Wolfe has noted, Carlisle was also one of the first Kentuckians to work from a musical base dependent on the commercial country-music tradition (as opposed to the *folk*-music tradition);<sup>1</sup> while counting Carlisle among Kentucky's first successful full-time country musicians, Wolfe has also observed that:

For a time, Carlisle was the heir apparent to [country-music pioneer] Jimmie Rodgers, whose premature death in 1933 had robbed country music of its first national star. Later, Carlisle's career took more complex turns as he sought to merge a variety of styles into his work [including the blues, gospel music, and early bluegrass] and to create a music that was among the most distinctive in country music history.<sup>2</sup>



*Country music pioneer Jimmie Rodgers (1897-1933), whom Cliff Carlisle accompanied on two sides on steel guitar in Louisville in June 1931. Photo from the Center for Popular Music, Middle Tennessee State University*

Interest in Carlisle has increased since his death, as evidenced by the reissues of his recordings on the Arhoolie, JSP, British Archive of Country Music, and Goldenlane labels, as well as the covers of Carlisle songs recorded by an eclectic assortment of contemporary performers, including country musicians Kim and Jim Lansford, blues

guitarist John Hammond, the old-time string band the Stillhouse Rounders, and Cajun fiddler Tom Rigney.

The best-known biographical sketch of Carlisle is Wolfe's article "Cliff Carlisle," which appeared in the December 1984 issue of *Bluegrass Unlimited*. Recent writings on Carlisle include Kurt Wolff's Carlisle essay in *Country Music: The Rough Guide* and Tony Russell's Carlisle entry in *Country Music Originals: The Legends and the Lost*. James C. Claypool's recently-published volume *Kentucky's Bluegrass Music* includes prominent mention of Carlisle in the book's opening pages (along with two photographs including Carlisle).<sup>3</sup>

This article incorporates—for the first time—information gleaned from listings for Carlisle in various city-directories from the early 1920s through the early 1980s (in cities such as Louisville, Asheville, Knoxville, and Lexington), as well as Carlisle's entries in the 1920 and 1930 United States Census. The essay also utilizes information taken from three interviews the Country Music Hall of Fame conducted with Carlisle between 1967 and 1974, as well as Carlisle-related materials held in the sheet music, rare book, and photograph collections at the Center for Popular Music at Middle Tennessee State University.

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Wolfe—in summing up Cliff Carlisle's achievement—observes that:

[Carlisle] was probably the best of the Jimmie Rodgers clones that populated . . . [country] music in the Depression era, yodelling with ease and eventually writing new songs in the Rodgers style. . . . He was [also] a pioneer in adapting the [Hawaiian] steel guitar and [the] Dobro [resophonic guitar] to country music, starting with a small standard Martin [guitar] played Hawaiian style and gradually moving to a metal-bodied National [resophonic guitar], a Dobro, and [eventually] an instrument of his own design.<sup>4</sup>

Wolfe also notes that:

Unlike many guitarists who played Hawaiian style, Carlisle did not start out playing standard guitar; early in his career he inserted a steel nut under the strings of his little Sears guitar, and . . . liked the sound so well that he never tried to play any other way. He became, in the words of his discographer, Gene Earle, "one of the few [country] artists to successfully use the steel guitar as a solo accompanying instrument."<sup>5</sup>

Carlisle was born near the Salt River in Spencer Country, southeast of Louisville, on May 6, 1903.<sup>6</sup> Carlisle was the third of eight children born to Van Luther Carlisle (1878-1954) and Mary Ellen Boes (1880-1961).<sup>7</sup> (Both Van and Mary were born in Kentucky to parents native to the state.<sup>8</sup>)

Carlisle's parents were musically-inclined—Van Luther sang bass and taught shape-note singing at the nearby Briar Ridge Church, while Mary sang alto.<sup>9</sup>

Carlisle—speaking about his early childhood in a self-interview he recorded for the Country Music Hall of Fame in 1967—related that:

My father was a [tobacco] farmer . . . we worked some as sharecroppers. Then . . . [my father] . . . finally bought . . . a farm [of his own] and we worked it for a while. Of course, I was still a very small boy [at the time].<sup>10</sup>

Speaking about music in his youth, Carlisle remarked that:

I always liked music. . . . I had quite a few Hawaiian records, and this is how, I suppose, I got interested in the Hawaiian guitar. I thought it was the most beautiful music I'd ever heard. . . . The Hawaiian guitar was the first musical instrument [I ever played] and, really, the only instrument that I majored on in my lifetime. . . . I taught myself [to play the instrument]. We didn't have any teachers back in the country in th[ose] days to teach you anything. You d[id] the best you could and learned what you could by your own self. . . ."<sup>11</sup>

In a 1974 interview with Douglas B. Green, Carlisle mentioned Honolulu-born steel guitarist Sol Hoopii as an early influence upon his playing, as well as the song “Hawaiian Sunset” (which Carlisle perhaps knew from one of Frank Ferera’s 1926 recordings, or Anthony Franchini’s rendition from the same year).<sup>12</sup>

The 1920 census shows sixteen-year-old Carlisle working as a laborer on his parents’ Spencer County farm.<sup>13</sup> By 1921, Carlisle had moved the circa twenty-five miles northwest to Louisville, then a booming tobacco-trading and manufacturing center of c. 235,000.<sup>14</sup> *Caron’s Directory of the City of Louisville for 1921* shows Carlisle residing in the “county” (i.e., in Jefferson County, somewhere outside the Louisville city limits), employed as a “scratcher” for B. F. Avery and Sons, a southwest-Louisville plow-manufacturer.<sup>15</sup> *Caron’s 1922 Louisville city directory* lists Carlisle boarding on Tennessee Avenue in the southwest part of the city (in the vicinity of Churchill Downs), working as a package-wrapper for Crutcher and Starks, a downtown men’s and boy’s clothing-store.<sup>16</sup> Carlisle worked as a plumber’s-helper in 1923,<sup>17</sup> then as a helper for downtown-Louisville sign-writer Edward W. Sang in 1924.<sup>18</sup>

*Caron’s Louisville Directory 1925* lists Carlisle as a “signwriter.”<sup>19</sup> On April 10 of that year, Carlisle married Alice Henrietta Smith (1910-2004),<sup>20</sup> who was born in Missouri to parents from the state. (At the time of their marriage, Carlisle was twenty-one and Alice sixteen.)<sup>21</sup>

In June 1926, a son, Thomas Raymond (1926-1993), was born to Clifford and Alice; three daughters followed, Violet Louise (1928-2004), Frances E. (b. 1929), and Carolyn Mae (b. 1931).<sup>22</sup>

Around 1927, Cliff and his younger brother William Toliver (“Bill”) Carlisle (1906-2003) began appearing on a Saturday program on Louisville’s WLAP radio apparently titled “Carlisle [Family?] Jubilee.”<sup>23</sup> (Bill recalled in a 1968 interview with Bill Williams that he and Cliff were the anchors of the show, but added that “our father [would] sometime . . . go up there with us [to the station], and [also] our brothers . . . we’d all sing sometime together.”<sup>24</sup>)

*Caron’s Louisville City Directory for 1929* shows Carlisle living at an address in Camp Taylor (a former World-War-I-artillery-training-facility-turned-residential-area six miles southeast of downtown), working as a painter.<sup>25</sup> By the time of the 1930 census, Carlisle, his wife and their three young children had moved back to Tennessee Avenue on Louisville’s southwest side. (In the census-enumeration, Carlisle described himself as a sign-painter of outdoor signs.)<sup>26</sup>

Sometime in 1930, Carlisle began performing on WLAP and WHAS radio with Wilber L. Ball (1906-1983), a Kentucky-born guitarist/vocalist then-working as a general-building carpenter in Louisville. Ball had also recently married (in c. 1927), and was likewise starting a family (with a daughter having been born to him and his wife in early-spring 1928).<sup>27</sup> Billed as the Lullaby Larkers, Carlisle played steel guitar and sang lead vocals while Ball played backup guitar and sang high tenor harmony. Richard Carlin—describing the duo’s sound—remarks that “inspired by Jimmie Rodgers, the pair specialized in blues[-influenced] numbers featuring closely-harmonized yodeling”<sup>28</sup> (becoming—in the process—one of country music’s first yodeling duets).



*Cliff Carlisle (right) and Wilber L. Ball; photo taken at the Mustang Almanac of American Music Festival in San Luis Obispo, CA on May 1, 1971. From the Dough Seroff Country Music Collection, Center of Popular Music, Middle Tennessee State University.*

By the time Carlisle and Ball began their WLAP/WHAS gig, they had perhaps known each other for at least eight years—Paul Kingsbury and Alanna Nash’s *Will the Circle Be Unbroken: Country Music in America* includes a photograph from the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum’s archives with “1922” written in the upper right-hand corner showing a young-looking Carlisle and Ball dressed Hawaiian-style (wearing white shirts, leis, and white duck pants with black sashes around their waists).<sup>29</sup> Gene Earle and Charles K. Wolfe speak of Carlisle and Ball playing Hawaiian shows in the Midwest and “hillbilly” shows in the South on vaudeville- and tent-show circuits of the 1920s.<sup>30</sup> In his 1974 interview with Douglas Green, Carlisle himself referred to playing steel guitar and ukulele in a Hawaiian show including a hula-dancer, sponsored by a theater stock-company.<sup>31</sup> Any touring Carlisle did had to have been sandwiched in between his plow-factory, clothing-store, plumbing, sign-writing, and painting work detailed above.

In late-February 1930, Carlisle and Ball travelled c. 110 miles north to Richmond, Indiana, to the recording studios of the Starr Piano Company, where they recorded six sides for Gennett Records on February 25th. Jimmie Rodgers’s influence upon Carlisle and Ball is evidenced by the fact that four of the sides they recorded were covers of Rodgers recordings (including “Memphis Yodel,” which features especially-vigorous yodeling from Carlisle).<sup>32</sup>

Carlisle and Ball made six more trips to Richmond between July 1930 and April 1931, recording thirty-five more sides for Gennett as either a duo, or with Carlisle accompanying himself on steel guitar. (Seven of these recordings were likewise covers of Rodgers sides.)<sup>33</sup>

In mid-June 1931, Carlisle and Ball were afforded the opportunity to record with their object-of-admiration, Jimmie Rodgers, when he travelled from his adopted home state of Texas to Louisville to record thirteen sides at field-recording sessions for Victor. (While in Louisville, Rodgers recorded two sides with Carlisle and Ball, in addition to waxing sides with the Carter Family [Victor’s other “star” hillbilly act], WLAP’s staff pianist, and the African-American Louisville Jug Band.)<sup>34</sup>

Soon after arriving in Louisville and checking into the city’s Tyler Hotel, Rodgers tuned in one of Carlisle and Ball’s “Lullaby Larkers” broadcasts; impressed with what he heard (and in need of backup musicians), Rodgers asked his producer Ralph Peer to contact Carlisle and Ball through their agent, and the pair was hired.<sup>35</sup>

Carlisle and Ball recorded with Rodgers on the fourth and sixth days of Rodgers’s Louisville sessions, at a makeshift studio assembled in a vacant warehouse located somewhere in the 500 block of West Main Street downtown.<sup>36</sup> (Carlisle—in his 1974 interview with Douglas B. Green—remembered the warehouse being “one of t[hose] old-time buildings . . . long [and] narrow . . . partitioned off with burlap or whatever . . . [to kill] all the echo [for recording] . . .”<sup>37</sup>)

The first song Rodgers, Carlisle, and Ball recorded together was “When the Cactus is in Bloom.” The tune—which colorfully describes “round-up time a-way out west,” complete with references to rattling rattlesnakes, cowhands yelling-out at daybreak, and drinking “coffee from a can”—has been described by Rodgers’s biographer Nolan Porterfield as “‘an ersatz Western [cowboy song]’ . . . the sort of thing that would have a pervasive impact on the singing-cowboy school of cinema on the verge of erupting in Hollywood.”<sup>38</sup> (While the first “singing cowboy” movie, *The Wagon Master*, with Ken Maynard, had premiered two years earlier, the debut of Gene Autry’s first picture, *In Old Santa Fe*, was still three years away.)

Three takes were made of “When the Cactus is in Bloom” during a two-hour afternoon session on June 13, with the second take released.<sup>39</sup> Carlisle ably displays what Porterfield dubs his “mellow steel” technique during “Cactus”’s introduction, his echoing of Rodgers’s yodel at the end of each chorus, and his rendering of a simplified version of the melody during a mid-song solo, while Ball faithfully marks four-four time throughout.<sup>40</sup>

The Anthology of Country Music’s *The Unissued Jimmie Rodgers LP* (ATM 11) contains one of the unreleased takes, which includes Carlisle playing a bit more tentatively than on the released version.

Carlisle and Ball must have liked “When the Cactus is in Bloom,” for they added the tune to their list of Rodgers covers at their next Richmond recording-session, three months later.<sup>41</sup>

Carlisle and Ball’s other recording with Rodgers was “Looking For a New Mama,” a twelve-bar “yodeling blues” in which Carlisle likewise echoes Rodgers’s yodels (at the beginning and end of the recording). Carlisle also plays an instrumental yodel to conclude his mid-song break, while Ball—as before—marks time with his guitar.

Three takes were made of “Looking for a New Mama” during a three-hour session the evening of June 15, with the third take released.<sup>42</sup> Bear Family’s 1992 boxed-set *Jimmie Rodgers: The Singing Brakeman* (BCD 15540) includes the first take, which—apart from a few wording-changes and one botched word by Rodgers—does not vary significantly from the released take.

“When the Cactus is in Bloom” and “Looking for a New Mama” were released in September 1931 and February 1932, respectively,<sup>43</sup> with “Looking for a New Mama” proving to be the best-seller of the two sides.<sup>44</sup>

Following their sessions with Rodgers, Carlisle and Ball made forty-three more recordings together through early-December 1931, in Richmond and New York City. (In Caron’s 1932 Louisville city directory, Carlisle—significantly—referred to himself as a “musician” for the first time.<sup>45</sup>)

Carlisle and Ball split up sometime after their December 1931 recordings, with Ball eventually returning to carpentry-work.<sup>46</sup>



*Jimmie Rodgers’s “Looking for a New Mama,” on which Cliff Carlisle played steel guitar (recorded June 15, 1931).*

*Photo from the Center for Popular Music, Middle Tennessee State University*

In the early 1930s, Carlisle switched from lap steel guitar to resophonic guitar, becoming one of the first country-music performers to do so. (Resophonic guitars effected amplification in the pre-electric days by means of a metal vibrating disc [or, discs] in place of a sound hole, which produced greater volume, as well as a more-sustained, somewhat “nasal” tone.)

Carlisle—in his 1968 interview with Bill Williams—stated that he bought his first resophonic guitar from a dealer in Chicago.<sup>47</sup> In 1932, Carlisle had the National String Instrument Corporation in Los Angeles custom-build a resonator guitar for him with an “exterior of German silver, highly engraved,” as well as a specially-built interior “with three amplifying discs inside,” which Carlisle apparently used on most of his recordings from 1932 onwards.<sup>48</sup>

Carlisle left Louisville in the summer of 1932 for Charlotte, North Carolina, where he garnered his own spot on WBT radio for a time, sponsored by his then-record company, ARC.<sup>49</sup>

In August 1933, Cliff's younger brother Bill joined him as his recording partner; with Bill playing standard guitar, the two made numerous recordings in New York City, Charlotte, and Atlanta through 1947 (sometimes as the Carlisle Brothers). Cliff and Bill's recordings included adaptations of old songs and ballads from the British Isles (“The Girl in the Blue Velvet Band,” “Footprints in the Snow,” and “Black Jack David”), rambler/hobo songs (“I'm Glad I'm a Hobo,” “In A Box Car Around the World,” and “Rambling Yodeler”), and cowboy songs (“On the Lone Prairie” and “They Say It's the End of the Trail, Old Paint”).

Wolfe relates that Cliff Carlisle's forte during the 1930s was the “the risque, double-entendre blues song.”<sup>50</sup> Wolfe notes that Carlisle at first masked sexual innuendo with “animal references”<sup>51</sup> (e.g., “Ringtail Tom,” “When I Feel Froggie, I'm Gonna Hop,” and “It Takes an Old Hen to Deliver the Goods”), an age-old technique employed by morality-conscious rural Americans as a way of being facetious about sex without descending to particulars.

By 1936's “That Nasty Swing,” Carlisle had updated his metaphors to include the phonograph itself as a symbol of sexual prowess (“wind my motor, honey—I've got a double spring”). Accompanied by brothers Bill and Louis (on guitar and string bass, respectively),<sup>52</sup> Carlisle displays his resophonic-guitar proficiency during the introduction and two mid-song solos.

In the later 1930s, Cliff and Bill's penchant for double-entendre songs began to fade somewhat as they began recording gospel numbers (e.g., “Shine on Me,” “The Unclouded Day,” “Shine Your Light For Others,” and “Prepare Me, O Lord,” the latter two songs featuring Carlisle playing resophonic guitar-breaks between each of the verses.)

In early 1936, Cliff's then-nine-year-old son Thomas began recording with Cliff and Bill (after having first-appeared in their stage show at age three);<sup>53</sup> Thomas—re-christened “Sonny Boy Tommy”—sang high harmony on such child-themed sides as “Just a Song At Childhood,” “Just a Wayward Boy,” “Lonely Little Orphan Child,” and “The Blind Child's Prayer” (the latter song featuring Cliff playing a thirty-two-bar resophonic guitar break).

Carlisle spent 1932-1937 moving between Louisville, Charlotte, and Greenville, South Carolina.<sup>54</sup> (While back in Louisville, Carlisle worked for a time as a janitor at the University of Louisville.<sup>55</sup>) By the latter part of 1937, Carlisle had moved to Asheville, North Carolina, where he performed on WWNC radio.<sup>56</sup> (Miller's *Asheville [Buncombe County, North Carolina] City Directory 1938* shows Cliff and his wife Alice living on South French Broad Avenue, just southwest of downtown.<sup>57</sup>) In February 1937 and June 1938, Carlisle participated in two recording-sessions in Charlotte

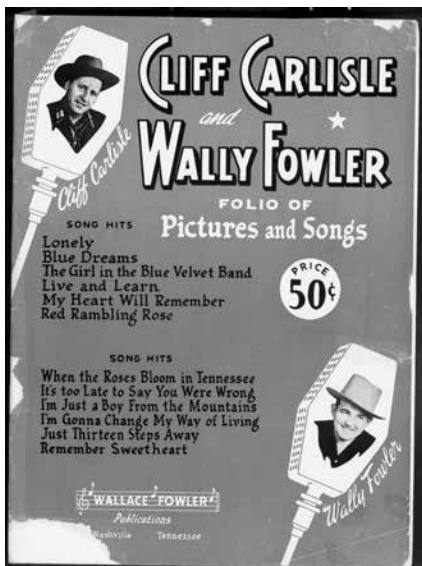
with vocalists/guitarists Leon Scott and Claude W. Boone (who likely performed in Carlisle’s WWNC band),<sup>58</sup> playing resophonic guitar on Scott and Boone’s “Carolina Trail” and “Think of Mother.”<sup>59</sup>

Cliff reconnected with his brother Bill in the summer of 1939.<sup>60</sup> Bill recalled in a 1976 interview with Douglas B. Green that he and Cliff subsequently moved to West Virginia, spending about a year in Charleston appearing on WCHS’s “Old Farm Hour” barn-dance program.<sup>61</sup> By sometime in 1940, Cliff and Bill had settled in Knoxville, Tennessee, where the brothers soon became stars of two WNOX “barn-dance” programs,<sup>62</sup> “Mid-Day Merry-



(top left) Cliff Carlisle: Greatest Collection of Cowboy and Mountain Songs Songbook copywritten on June 1, 1936 by M. M. Cole, Chicago; includes 21 songs composed by Carlisle.

(top right) “Why Did it Have to Be.” Song written by Carlisle with Knoxville lyricist Helen Grayson; recorded by Carlisle with his Buckeye Boys in Atlanta on September 30, 1946.



(bottom left) Cliff Carlisle and Wally Fowler: Folio of Pictures and Songs. Songbook published in Nashville in 1945 by gospel singer and musical promoter John Wallace (“Wally”) Fowler (1917-1994); includes 12 songs composed or co-composed by Carlisle.

All photos are from the collections of the Center for Popular Music Middle Tennessee State University.

Go-Round” and—beginning in 1942—the “Tennessee Barn Dance.” The *Knoxville City Directory 1940* shows Cliff and Bill living with their wives on McCalla Avenue, about a mile-and-a-half northeast of downtown;<sup>63</sup> by the time-of-publication of the 1941 directory, the four Carlisles had moved to Riverside Boulevard, northeast of the city.<sup>64</sup> The 1942 directory shows Cliff and Alice living on East 5th Avenue, about two-and-a-half miles northeast of downtown, with Bill and his wife Leona residing on South 17th Street in what is today the northern part of the University of Tennessee campus.<sup>65</sup>

By spring 1942, Carlisle was living in Columbia, South Carolina, where—according to Wolfe—he made a “brief stay” at radio station WIS (now WVOC).<sup>66</sup> Carlisle’s April 14 application for a Social Security Number shows him living at 614 Hilton Street in east-central Columbia, employed by WIS;<sup>67</sup> the cross-reference portion of Hill’s 1942 Columbia city directory shows brother Bill and Leona residing at the same address.<sup>68</sup> Carlisle—describing his WIS act to radio-broadcaster John Lair—related that:

My brother Bill doubles on comedy [playing] a character (Hot Shot Elmer). Duets are old-time hymns [while] other harmony songs [are sung as] trios . . . [Our act also includes] spirituals and . . . old-time fiddling [along with] yodeling . . .<sup>69</sup>

With World War II well-underway, Carlisle moved back to the greater Louisville area by 1943, to New Albany, Indiana, to work at a gunpowder plant. (Carlisle likely worked at Indiana Ordinance Works Plant 1—then the world’s largest smokeless powder plant—located about ten miles northeast of New Albany.) *Caron’s New Albany Indiana City Directory 1943-1944* shows Cliff and his wife Alice living on Minton Drive, about one mile north of downtown.<sup>70</sup>

By 1945, Cliff and his brother Bill had signed with newly-formed King Records in Cincinnati; in April 1946, the brothers recorded Arthur Q. Smith’s “Rainbow at Midnight” for the label with a third, unidentified vocalist. The song—about a homeward-bound war-veteran who sees a rainbow on the ocean at midnight from his troop ship—reached #5 on the country charts in fall 1946, giving the brothers their first charting hit. (Bill recalled the record selling about 400,000 copies.<sup>71</sup>)

By September 1946, Cliff had moved back to Knoxville. (The *Knoxville City Directory 1947* shows Cliff and his wife Alice living on Fremont Place in the Old North Knoxville section of town.<sup>72</sup>) Following his return, Cliff went back to gigging with brother Bill on WNOX’s “Mid-Day Merry-Go-Round” and “Tennessee Barn Dance” programs.<sup>73</sup>

In late September 1946, Carlisle participated in a recording-session for Victor Records in Atlanta at the city’s Piedmont Hotel, with a backup-quintet christened the Buckeye Boys (composed of Knoxville- and Atlanta-based musicians). Bandmembers included Virginia-born fiddler Burke Barbour and Knoxville mandolinist Curly Farmer.<sup>74</sup> With Farmer’s mandolin adding a notably “bluegrass” tinge to the proceedings, Carlisle recorded four sides, including “Why Did It Have to Be?” (written with Knoxville songwriter Helen Grayson), as well as his own composition “A Mean Mama Don’t Worry Me” (a twelve-bar blues backed by Carlisle’s vigorous resophonic-guitar-strumming which includes instrumental breaks alternating with vocal choruses).

Concerning Victor’s “Why Did It Have to Be?”/“A Mean Mama Don’t Worry Me” coupling, the January 18, 1947 issue of *Billboard*—recommending Carlisle’s record “for the old folks at home”—added that:

The style and singing of Cliff Carlisle harks back to the mountain folk. . . . With a husky flavor of the outdoors in his pipes, Carlisle shouts out . . . in breezy style . . . his own



ditty of lost love in “Why Did It Have to Be” a[s] [well as] his own [song] “A Mean Mama Don’t Worry Me,” [while] the Buckeye Boys, playing fiddles, mandolins . . . and guitars, support in backwoods style.<sup>75</sup>

In late March 1947, Carlisle made eight more recordings for Victor during two recording-sessions conducted at Victor’s Studio A on Lake Shore Drive in downtown Chicago. At these sessions, Carlisle’s backing-band—again dubbed the Buckeye Boys—consisted of the Nashville-area musicians then-backing country-music singer/accordionist Pee Wee King. Included among the performers were guitarist Henry “Redd” Stewart (who’d written the lyrics to “The Tennessee Waltz” the year before) and guitarist Lloyd “Cowboy” Copas (who would die in a plane crash with Patsy Cline almost sixteen years later).<sup>76</sup>

Carlisle’s eight recordings included his co-compositions “The Devil’s Train” and “Scars Upon My Heart,” which Victor coupled as the first release from the sessions. In a May 1947 review of the record, *Billboard* opined that:

[With] the hot fiddling and electric guitars of the Buckeye Boys bringing up a toe-tapping support, Cliff Carlisle’s tenor voice pipes it sweet and sincere for “The Devil’s Train,” a folk spiritual taken at traffic-stopping tempo. Also at a fast clip, Carlisle sings it plaintively for the “Scars Upon My Heart” torch ballad, rich in melodic and lyrical appeal.<sup>77</sup>

By summer 1947, Carlisle had begun writing songs with Toledo lyricist and journalist Marge Engler. (As *Toledo Blade* entertainment-reporter Mitch Woodbury relayed in a mid-July column, “Marge dreams up the wordage and title to a tune and sends ’em to Cliff down Knoxville way. Then he sets ’em to music.”)<sup>78</sup>

By early 1948, Carlisle had established a residence back in Kentucky, in Lexington. (The *Telephone Directory for Lexington: March 1948* shows Carlisle living at 1019 Oak Hill Drive, on the city’s northeast side.<sup>79</sup>) In early-summer 1948, Carlisle appeared on Memphis radio station WMPS with brother Bill and performers “Sunshine Slim” and “Sweet and Sandy Sandusky.”<sup>80</sup> (According to Wolfe, Cliff and Bill also broadcast with Eddie Hill and the Louvin Brothers at the station.<sup>81</sup>)

On June 26 1948, a *Billboard* article referencing the Carlisles’ WMPS residency announced that “Cliff . . . will leave . . . next week for his home in Lexington, Ky. and enter private business.”<sup>82</sup> Bill Carlisle—in his 1976 interview with Douglas B. Green—mentioned that heart-problems likely hastened Cliff’s retirement from the entertainment-world:

[Cliff] told me that [the music business] . . . was kind of getting on his nerves. I think then he [also] sensed his heart was bad, because it wasn’t long ’till Cliff had a heart attack, you know. He said he wanted to be with his family there in Lexington. He just didn’t want to get out and run all over the country any more. He more or less had roots there . . . his . . . two daughters and a son. They got married, and his two daughters still live in Lexington. He didn’t want to pull out and just leave them.<sup>83</sup>

In retirement, Carlisle returned to the painting-work he had pursued in Louisville in the late 1920s. By the time of the publication of *Polk’s Lexington (Fayette County, Ky.) City Directory 1948-49*, Carlisle was working as a painter for south-Lexington painting- and decorating-contractor Bernhard L. Radden.<sup>84</sup> Carlisle subsequently worked for Lexington painters Boyd Hamilton and O. Eugene Beckley before striking out in a self-employed capacity around 1960.<sup>85</sup> By 1966, Carlisle had retired from the

painting-business, although his wife Alice continued working for eight more years as a clerk at the Phillips Market, northeast of downtown.<sup>86</sup>

Cliff continued to perform occasionally—for about a six-month period in 1948, he appeared on “The Carlisle Brothers Show” on WLAP radio (by then relocated to Lexington). (Cliff appeared on the show with his brother Bill and cowboy singer Homer Harris.)<sup>87</sup> Cliff also made a few intermittent recordings with the Carlisles, a quasi-family group formed by Bill Carlisle in 1951 which specialized in “novelty numbers.” Recordings on which Cliff appeared included “Too Old to Cut the Mustard” (1951) and “No Help Wanted,” which went to #1 on the country charts in 1953 (the latter song co-written by Cliff).<sup>88</sup>

By the mid-1950s, Carlisle had cultivated an interest in oil-painting. In 1955, Carlisle relayed to Australian record-collector John Edwards that he had begun to gain some recognition for his work, which consisted of “mostly scenic and historical pictures,” and that he was being “kept busy from orders from all over the country.”<sup>89</sup> (One of Carlisle’s commissions included creating oil paintings for the den of the home of Nashville guitarist/record producer Chet Atkins.<sup>90</sup>)

Bill Carlisle—in a discussion of his brother’s painting- and decorating-talent with Anita Capps—recalled that Cliff would also “paint these high murals [as well as] . . . those baptiseries where they baptize people,” adding that “he even painted some of the pictures I have on the wall at home.”<sup>91</sup>

In Carlisle’s correspondence with Edwards, he also mentioned working as a deacon at a Baptist church (likely Grace Baptist Church, on Bryan Avenue in northeast Lexington), as well as teaching Sunday school with his wife.<sup>92</sup>

With the advent of the “folk revival” in the late 1950s/early 1960s, Carlisle was rediscovered by a new generation of performers, listeners, and “roots-music” researchers. In 1961, The New Lost City Ramblers included a cover of the Carlisle Brothers’ 1933 double-entendre song “Sal Got a Meatskin” on their *New Lost City Ramblers Volume 3 LP*, while two years later, the Rooftop Singers’ cover of Carlisle’s “Tom Cat Blues” (which Carlisle had recorded in 1932 accompanying himself on steel guitar) reached #20 on the pop charts.

In 1962, Carlisle re-entered the recording studio, in Lexington, to participate in the recording of the LP *Carlisle Family Album: Old Time Great Hymns*, for the independent label REM (run by former-rockabilly-performer-turned-X-ray-technician Robert E. Moody).<sup>93</sup> The album—dedicated Van Luther and Mary Carlisle—also included Cliff’s brothers Bill, Milton, and Marion, his sisters Reginia and Henrietta (and Reginia’s husband Louis), and four other extended-family-members.<sup>94</sup> (On the album, Cliff—minus resophonic guitar—can be clearly heard singing lead vocals on “Mountain Railroad” and “The Old Account Was Settled.”) (The *Carlisle Family Album* remained unreleased until 1982, when—through the efforts of guitarist/fiddler Bob Ensign—the LP finally saw the light-of-day on the Old Homestead label.<sup>95</sup>)

In 1963, Carlisle recorded a solo album for REM titled *Kountry Kind of Songs & Hymns*.<sup>96</sup> In a review of the LP, folklorist Donald K. Wilgus opined that “when not smothered by additional and electrified instruments, there is a bit of [Carlisle’s] . . . distinctive steel guitar style audible.”<sup>97</sup> The album included Carlisle’s remake of his 1936 recording “Rambling Yodeler” (released as a REM single b/w “Mine All Mine”); other remakes of recordings from the 1930s on the LP included “Gambling Dan,” “Shine, Shine on Me,” and “Home of the Soul.”

In 1971—after a gap of roughly forty years—Carlisle reunited with Wilber Ball at the Fifth Annual San Diego Folk Festival.<sup>98</sup> While in California, Carlisle and Ball also appeared at the Mustang Almanac of American Music Festival in San Luis Obispo,



Cliff Carlisle's *Kountry Kind of Songs and Hymns LP*, recorded for the Lexington-based REM label in 1963. Photo from the Center for Popular Music, Middle Tennessee State University

appearing in slots with folk musician Mike Seeger and harmonica-player Wayne Raney.<sup>103</sup>)

Sometime during the 1970s, Carlisle also participated in the Smithsonian Institution's American Folk Festival in Washington, DC.<sup>104</sup>

Carlisle spent 1975 teaching beginning and advanced art classes in the Senior Citizens program of the Metro Parks and Recreation Department at the Bell House, a historic mansion in central Lexington.<sup>105</sup> "If you can whip retirement . . . you got it made," relayed Carlisle in a *Lexington Herald-Leader* story detailing activities at the House. Carlisle added that all his life he'd wanted to paint, so upon entering retirement, he made the decision to share the talent he'd developed.<sup>106</sup> (By this point, Carlisle had apparently exhibited his paintings at various locations across Kentucky.<sup>107</sup>)

In October 1977 and 1978, Carlisle appeared at Berea College's Celebration of Traditional Music festival. Recordings of Carlisle's performances in the college's Special Collections and Archives show him rendering rather rough-hewn renditions of such Jimmie Rodgers "standards" as "Waiting for a Train," "California Blues," "Memphis Yodel," and "Blue Yodel," in addition to "Birmingham Jail," which Carlisle had recorded with Wilber Ball in Richmond, Indiana in April 1931, before meeting Rodgers.<sup>108</sup>

Carlisle died of a heart attack at age seventy-eight on April 2, 1983, at Lexington's St. Joseph's Hospital;<sup>109</sup> he was buried in the Blue Grass Memorial Gardens Cemetery in suburban Nicholasville, southwest of Lexington.<sup>110</sup> Wilber Ball died about two months later, after living out his last days in—apparently—Shepherdsville, Kentucky, south of Louisville.<sup>111</sup> Carlisle's wife Alice died at age ninety-four in Huntsville, Alabama in December 2004.<sup>112</sup>

In a 1970s interview with San Diego record-collector Ken Swerilas, Carlisle revealed that he was heartened by the many visits he had received later in life from country-music scholars interested in his impressions of "old-time" performers such as Jimmie Rodgers and guitarist/banjoist Riley Puckett. As Carlisle related:

Maybe this year there will be a dozen people through here [i.e., Carlisle's Lexington

northeast of Los Angeles.<sup>99</sup> (Two snapshots in the Doug Serhoff Country Music Collection at the Center for Popular Music show Carlisle and Ball posing and performing at the festival, while a third photo shows Carlisle explaining the workings of his resophonic guitar to several interested bystanders, while Ball looks on.)

Carlisle and Ball also appeared together at the tenth San Diego Folk Festival in 1976.<sup>100</sup>

In late March 1973, *Billboard's* country-music editor Bill Williams reported that "Cliff Carlisle is recovering from still another heart attack."<sup>101</sup> By July of the following year, Carlisle had recovered to the point that he was able to appear at the Traditional Music & Old Timers Reunion in Renfro Valley, Kentucky (part of the 4th Annual Renfro Valley Music Festival).<sup>102</sup> (The festival-schedule shows Carlisle

home], but that is a dozen that like me. Most of them that are [sic] through here are of the younger generation. This tells me that there's hope for my kind of music to come back. I may not live to see it, but it always comes back. It always has, so it has to again.<sup>113</sup>

\* \* \*



*Carlisle's grave-marker in the Blue Grass Memorial Gardens cemetery, Nicholasville, KY (April 2011). Photo by Anthony Lis.*

Twenty-eight years after Carlisle's death, his music has indeed "come back," as evidenced by the ready availability of his recordings. In 1995, Arhoolie released *Cliff Carlisle: Blue Yodeler and Steel Guitar Wizard*, containing twenty-four tracks from 1930-1937 (including recordings with Wilber Ball, Bill and Tommy Carlisle, and Claude Boone). In 2004, the British label JSP released its four-CD, eighty-four track *Cliff Carlisle: A Country Legacy 1930-1939*, with the label's ninety-seven-track *Cliff Carlisle: Vol. 2: When I Feel Froggie I'm Gonna Hop* following two years later. These

releases—along with the British Archive of Country Music's *Far Beyond the Starry Sky* (2005) (a twenty-track compilation named for a 1939 recording by Cliff, Bill, and Tommy Carlisle) and Goldenlane's *Cliff Carlisle: Country's Most Wanted Hits* (2008)—offer strong evidence of the enduring interest in Carlisle in both America and England.



*1019 Oak Hill Drive, in northeast Lexington (April 2011). Carlisle resided here with his wife Alice from 1948-1954.*



*429 Emerson Drive, in northeast Lexington (April 2011). Carlisle resided here with his wife from 1954-1959.*



*815 Oak Hill Drive, in northeast Lexington (April 2011). The residence of Carlisle's daughter, Violet Louise Reams, and her husband, Harry, with whom Carlisle and his wife lived at this location from 1960-1972.*

*Photos by Anthony Lis*

## Endotes

1. Charles C. Wolfe, *Kentucky Country: Folk and Country Music of Kentucky* (Lexington: UP of Kentucky, 1982) 62.

2. *Ibid.* 62.

3. James C. Claypool, *Kentucky's Bluegrass Music* (Charleston [SC], Chicago, Portsmouth [NH], and San Francisco: Arcadia, 2010) 12-13.

4. Charles C. Wolfe, "Cliff Carlisle," *Bluegrass Unlimited* 19, no. 6 (Dec 1984) 57.

5. *Ibid.*

6. Details of Carlisle's birthplace are taken from Douglas B. Green's 11 Jul 1974 interview with Cliff Carlisle and Henry Gilbert (Renfro Valley, KY, transcript, Country Music Foundation Oral History Project, Frist Library and Archive of the Country Music Hall of Fame, Nashville, TN); Carlisle's birth-date taken from the *Social Security Death Index*.

7. Carlisle's birth-order information taken from Mark A. Humphrey's liner-notes to *Cliff Carlisle: Blues Yodeler and Steel Guitar Wizard* (Arhoolie/Folklyric CD 7039) 5; the full names of Carlisle's parents taken from Carlisle's *Application for [a] Social Security Account Number* (Columbia, SC; 14 April 1942); life-dates for Carlisle's parents taken from the posting "Van Luther, Mary Ellen & Daughter Bertha Regenia" at the ancestry.com genealogical website (which includes a photograph of Van and Mary's gravestone).

8. Van Carlisle, 1920 Census, Spencer Co., KY, Enumeration District 149, page 1-A, line 70; Mary Carlisle, 1920 Census, Spencer Co., KY, Enumeration District 149, page 1-A, line 71.

9. Cliff Carlisle, interview by Douglas B. Green, 11 Jul 1974.

10. Cliff Carlisle, self-interview, 21 Sep 1967, Lexington, Kentucky, transcript, Country Music Foundation Oral History Project, Frist Library and Archive of the Country Music Hall of Fame, Nashville.

11. *Ibid.*

12. Cliff Carlisle, interview by Douglas B. Green, 11 Jul 1974.

13. Raymond Carlisle, 1920 Census, Spencer Co., KY, Enumeration District 149, page 1-A, line 74.

14. *The World Almanac and Book of Facts for 1923* (New York: Press Publishing Co., 1923) 344.

15. *Caron's Directory of the City of Louisville for 1921* (Louisville: Caron Directory Co., 1921) 298.

16. *Caron's Directory of the City of Louisville for 1922* (Louisville: Caron, 1922) 315.

17. *Caron's Directory of the City of Louisville for 1923* (Louisville: Caron, 1923) 318.

The directory shows Carlisle employed by the Standard Sanitary Manufacturing Co.

18. *Caron's Directory of the City of Louisville for 1924* (Louisville: Caron, 1924) 324.

19. *Caron's Louisville Directory 1925* (Louisville: Caron, 1925) 421.

20. Alice's full maiden name was gleaned from Linnell Gentry's *A History and Encyclopedia of Country, Western, and Gospel Music*, 2nd ed. (Nashville: Clairmont, 1969) 389; Cliff and Alice's marriage-date obtained from a perusal of their gravestone in the Blue Grass Memorial Gardens Cemetery, Nicholasville, Kentucky, 15 Apr 2011.

21. Raymond Carlisle, 1930 Census, Jefferson Co., KY, Enumeration District 56-118, page 42-A, line 11; Alice Carlisle, 1930 Census, Jefferson Co., KY, Enumeration District 56-118, page 42-A, line 12.

22. Birth and death dates taken from the *Kentucky Birth Index, 1911-1999* and *Kentucky Death Index, 1911-2000* databases at ancestry.com.

23. Bill Carlisle and Cliff Carlisle, interview by Bill Williams, 18 Sep 1968, Nashville, TN, Country Music Foundation Oral History Project, Frist Library and Archive of the Country Music Hall of Fame, Nashville; Bill Carlisle, interview by Douglas B. Green, 18 Feb 1976, Nashville, TN, Country Music Foundation Oral History Project, Frist Library and Archive of the Country Music Hall of Fame, Nashville.

24. Bill and Cliff Carlisle, interview by Bill Williams, 18 Sep 1968.

(Bill Carlisle—in his 18 Feb 1976 interview with Douglas B. Green—refers to a WLAP program titled "The Carlisle Family Barn Dance," on which "the whole family" performed; it is not clear whether this is the program Cliff Carlisle referred to as "Carlisle Jubilee," or a later program.)

25. *Caron's Louisville Directory For 1929* (Louisville: Caron, 1929) 433.

26. Raymond Carlisle, 1930 Census, Jefferson Co., KY, Enumeration District 56-118, page 42-A, line 11.

27. Wilbur [sic] L. Ball, 1930 Census, Jefferson Co., KY, Enumeration District 56-197, page 12-A, line 26; Georgie Ball, 1930 Census, Jefferson Co., KY, Enumeration District 56-197, page 12-A, line 27; Bettie [?] Ball, 1930 Census, Jefferson Co., KY, Enumeration District 56-197, page 12-A, line 28.

28. Richard Carlin, *The Big Book of Country Music: A Biographical Encyclopedia* (New York: Penguin, 1995) 64.

29. Paul Kingsbury and Alanna Nash, eds., *Will the Circle Be Unbroken: Country Music in America* (New York: DK Publishing, 2006) 83 and 360.

30. Gene Earle, "Cliff Carlisle," *Folk Style*, Vol. 7 (1960) 4; Wolfe, "Cliff Carlisle" 60.

31. Cliff Carlisle, interview by Douglas B. Green, 11 Jul 1974.

32. Tony Russell, *Country Music Records: A Discography, 1921-1942* (New York: Oxford, 2004) 161 and 90.

33. *Ibid.* 161-2.

34. Nolan Porterfield, *Jimmie Rodgers: The Life and Times of America's Blue Yodeler*, new ed. (Urbana: U of Illinois P, 2007) 412, 411, 410, 297, and 413.

35. *Ibid.* 295 and 296.

36. *Ibid.* 412.

37. Cliff Carlisle, interview by Douglas B. Green, 11 Jul 1974.

38. Porterfield, *Jimmie Rodgers: The Life and Times of America's Blue Yodeler* 295.

Wilber Ball, in a 15 May 1978 letter to Nolan Porterfield, said he and Cliff Carlisle provided the music for Rodgers's "When the Cactus is in Bloom" lyrics (Porterfield 428 [footnote #60]; however, San Antonio showman, actor, and bookie Jackson ("Jack") Neville claimed in a 1968 interview with San Antonio entertainment-columnist Sam Kindrick to have composed the song ("Ex-Bookie, Showman, Now 86, Recalls Good, Bad Old Days," *Offbeat, San Antonio Express-News*, 17 Nov. 1968).

39. "Jimmie Rodgers—The Discography" (part of Porterfield's booklet *Jimmie Rodgers*, included as the liner notes to Bear Family Records' Rodgers boxed-set [BCD 15540]) 42.

40. Porterfield, liner notes to *Jimmie Rodgers: Down the Old Road, 1931-1932*, Rounder C-1061.

41. Russell 162.

42. Porterfield, "Jimmie Rodgers—The Discography" 42.

43. Porterfield, *Jimmie Rodgers: The Life and Times of America's Blue Yodeler* 412.

44. Sales information for "When the Cactus is in Bloom" and "Looking for a New Mama" were taken from "Jimmie Rodgers Recordings" (a table apparently containing release-dates, recording-numbers, titles, and sales-figures for Rodgers's original Victor and Bluebird 78 rpm releases), included on *RCA Artist Files*, Roll 36, "Robinson, Floyd to Russell, George" (microfilm), viewed at the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum, Nashville (TN), 26 May and 2 Jun 2009.

According to this source, "Looking for a New Mama" sold 25,103 copies, while "When the Cactus is in Bloom" sold 13,265.

45. *Caron's Louisville City Directory for 1932* (Louisville: Caron, 1932) 394.

46. *Caron's Louisville [Kentucky] City Directory for 1940* (Louisville: Caron, 1940) 138.

47. Bill Carlisle and Cliff Carlisle, interview by Bill Williams, 18 Sep 1968.

("I bought the dobro guitar from a place in Chicago, and I thought for a long time that the National people made it, the National Instrument people. But I found out later that they didn't.")

48. Humphrey, liner notes to *Cliff Carlisle: Blues Yodeler and Steel Guitar Wizard* 15.

49. Wolfe, "Cliff Carlisle" 60.

50. *Ibid.* 58.

51. *Ibid.*

52. Russell 166.

53. *Ibid.*; Bill Carlisle and Henry Gilbert, interview by Douglas B. Green, 11 Jul 1974.

54. Wolfe, "Cliff Carlisle" 60.

55. *Caron's Louisville City Directory For 1936* (Louisville: Caron, 1935) 395.

56. Wolfe, "Cliff Carlisle" 60.

57. *Miller's Asheville [Buncombe County, North Carolina] City Directory 1938* (Asheville: Piedmont Directory Co., 1938) 116.

58. Russell 821; Wolfe, "Cliff Carlisle" 60.
59. Russell 821.
60. Wolfe, "Cliff Carlisle" 60.
61. Bill Carlisle, interview by Douglas B. Green, 18 Feb 1976.
62. James Manheim, biographical sketch of Bill Carlisle at the allmusic.com website <allmusic.com/artist/bill-carlisle-p24147/biography >.
63. *Knoxville City Directory 1940* (Knoxville: City Directory Co., 1940) 759.
64. *Knoxville City Directory 1941* (Knoxville: City Directory Co., 1941) 776.
65. *Knoxville City Directory 1942* (Knoxville: City Directory Co., 1942) 734.
66. Wolfe, "Cliff Carlisle" 60.
67. Cliff Carlisle, *Application for [a] Social Security Account Number*.
68. *Hill's Columbia (Richland County, S.C.) City Directory, Vol. 13 (1942)* (Richmond [VA]: Hill Directory Co.) 89 and 808.
69. Cliff Carlisle, letter to John Lair of 19 May 1942 (John Lair Papers, Box 19, Folder 19-7["Cliff Carlisle {Carlisle Brothers}"]), Special Collections and Archives, Hutchins Library, Berea College [KY]).
70. Bill Carlisle and Cliff Carlisle, interview by Bill Williams, 18 Sep 1968; en.wikipedia.org website <en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indiana\_Army\_Ammunition\_Plant>; *Caron's New Albany Indiana City Directory 1943-1944* (Louisville: Caron, 1943) 110 and 6.
71. Bill Carlisle, interview by Douglas B. Green, 18 Feb 1976.
72. *Knoxville City Directory 1947* (Knoxville: City Directory Company of Knoxville, 1947) 750.
73. "American Folk Tunes: Cowboy and Hillbilly Tunes and Tunesters," *The Billboard*, 21 Dec 1946.
74. Victor "session sheets" #008 0034 and 008 0035 (30 Sep 1946), on *RCA Artist Files*, Roll 8, "George Carlin [to] Chicago Gangsters" (microfilm); viewed at the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum, Nashville (TN), 31 May 2011.
- The fact that Carlisle's backing-musicians were based in Knoxville and Atlanta was gleaned from a listing of the musicians' union-affiliations on #008 0035.
75. "Record Reviews," *The Billboard*, 18 Jan 1947.
76. Victor "session sheets" #008 0032 and 008 0033 (26 Mar 1947), on *RCA Artist Files*, Roll 8; viewed at the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum, Nashville (TN), 31 May 2011.
- The sheet above lists Carlisle's backing-musicians as Henry Stewart, James Boyd, Lloyd Copas, Don Stewart Davis, and Charles Wigington; the fact that these men were Nashville-area-based musicians backing Pee Wee King was gleaned from the musicians' addresses on #008 0033, as well as their listings in *Polk's Nashville (Davidson County, Tenn.) City Directory 1947* (St. Louis: R. L. Polk, 1948) 861, 114, and 244.
77. "Record Reviews," *The Billboard*, 24 May 1947.
78. "Mitch Woodbury Reports: Toledo Woman Writes Hillbilly Hits," *Toledo Blade*, 15 Jul 1947.
- (The titles of the songs which Cliff Carlisle and Marge Engler had written together by this point were "A Letter to the Warden," "Only Embers Remain," and "While I'm Crying.")
79. *Telephone Directory for Lexington: March 1948* (Lexington, KY: Lexington Telephone Company, 1948) 20.
80. "Folk Talent and Tunes," *The Billboard*, 26 Jun 1948.
81. Wolfe, "Cliff Carlisle" 62.
82. "Folk Talent and Tunes."
83. Bill Carlisle, interview by Douglas B. Green, 18 Feb 1976.
84. *Polk's Lexington City Directory 1948-49* (Cincinnati: R. L. Polk, 1949) 79 and 429.
85. *Polk's Lexington (Fayette County, Kentucky) City Directory 1950* (Cincinnati: R. L. Polk, 1950) 71; *Polk's Lexington (Fayette County, Kentucky) City Directory 1954* (Cincinnati: R. L. Polk, 1954) 90; *Polk's Lexington (Fayette County, Kentucky) City Directory 1960* (Cincinnati: R. L. Polk, 1960) 101.
86. *Polk's Lexington City Directory 1966* (Cincinnati [?]: R.L. Polk, 1966).
- Carlisle's directory-entry lists him as "ret[ire]d"; information on Alice Carlisle's employment gleaned from perusals of Polk's Lexington directories covering the years 1966-1974.
87. Anita Capps, *Not Too Old to Cut The Mustard: "Jumping" Bill Carlisle and Friends*

*Talk About His Life and the Country Music Business* (Johnson City [TN]: Overmountain, 2000) 31-32.

88. Bill and Cliff Carlisle, interview by Bill Williams, 18 Sep 1968; Wolfe, "Cliff Carlisle" 62.

89. John Edwards, "Old Time Singers No. 2: Cliff Carlisle," *Country and Western Spotlight* 2 (Dec 1955) 10.

90. Kayo Durham, "Cliff Carlisle, Esquire" (liner notes to REM LP-1002) (c. 1964).

91. Capps 60.

92. Edwards, "Old Time Singers No. 2: Cliff Carlisle" 10.

93. "Cliff Carlisle," Praguefrank's Country Music Discographies website

< <http://countrydiscography.blogspot.com/2009/04/cliff-carlisle.html> >.

*Polk's Lexington (Fayette County, Ky.) City Directory 1963* (Cincinnati: R. L. Polk, 1963) lists Robert E. Mooney as an "X-Ray tech[nician]" at Lexington's Veterans' Administration Hospital (685).

James Clell Neace, in his article "Country Music's 'Molly O'Day'" (which appeared in the June 2000 issue of *Kentucky Explorer*) related the following information about Mooney and REM Records:

"REM, a . . . shoestring operation in Lexington, Kentucky, was started in 1960 by Robert Mooney, a former employee of King Records, who had resigned in the wake of King's crossover [success]. In opening the Lexington studio in his own hometown, Mooney declared, 'I'm going to cut real country music records, whether they sell or not.' For years, he sold REM-produced records out of the back of his car."

94. *Carlisle Family Album : Old Time Great Hymns* (OHCS-303).

95. *Ibid.*; webpage devoted to *Carlisle Family Album: Old Time Great Hymns* at the worldcat.org website <[http://www.worldcat.org/title/carlisle-family-album-old-time-great-hymns/oclc/21390167&referer=brief\\_results](http://www.worldcat.org/title/carlisle-family-album-old-time-great-hymns/oclc/21390167&referer=brief_results)>.

96. "Cliff Carlisle," Praguefrank's Country Music Discographies website.

97. Donald K. Wilgus, "Current Hillbilly Recordings: A Review Article," *Journal of American Folklore*, Vol. 78, No. 309 (Jul 1965) 272.

98. Colin Larkin (ed.), *The Virgin Encyclopedia of Country Music* (London: Virgin, 1998) 64.

99. Mustang Almanac of American Music Festival program (San Luis Obispo [CA]: Cal[ifornia] Poly[technic] [State University] Fine Arts Committee, c. April 1971) (in the collections of the Center for Popular Music, Middle Tennessee State University).

100. Lou Curtiss, "Recordially, Lou Curtiss," *San Diego Troubadour*, Mar 2005 (online ed.) <[http://sandiegotroubadour.com/content/monthlycolumns/recordially.aspx?issue=mar\\_2005](http://sandiegotroubadour.com/content/monthlycolumns/recordially.aspx?issue=mar_2005)>.

101. Bill Williams, "Nashville Scene," *Billboard*, 24 Mar 1973.

102. Advertisement, *Corbin [KY] Times-Tribune*, 30 Jun 1974.

103. 4th Annual Renfro Valley Old Time Fiddlers Convention schedule (Renfro Valley [KY] [?]: Renfro Valley Old Time Fiddlers Convention, July 1974) (in the collections of the Center for Popular Music).

104. Gloria Millner, "Former Country Singer Clifford Carlisle Dies Here," *Lexington [KY] Herald-Leader*, 3 Apr 1983.

105. *Polk's 1975 Lexington (Fayette County, Ky.) City Directory* (Taylor, MI: R. L. Polk, 1975) lists Carlisle as a "div[ision] of recreation w[or]k[e]r" (119).

106. Sue Wahlgren, "Do-Si-Do: Senior Citizens Take to Dance Floor," *Lexington Herald-Leader*, 9 Mar 1975.

107. Milner, "Former Country Singer Clifford Carlisle Dies Here."

108. AC-OR-005-065, AC-OR-005-049, AC-005-050, and AC-OR-005-073; AC-OR-005-090, AC-OR-005-091, AC-OR-005-097, AC-OR-005-113, and AC-OR-005-114 (recordings from Berea College's 1977 and 1978 Celebration of Traditional Music; Special Collections and Archives, Hutchins Library, Berea College).

109. Milner, "Former Country Singer Clifford Carlisle Dies Here."

110. "Carlisle" (funeral notice for Alice Carlisle), *Lexington Herald-Leader*, 4 Apr 1983.

111. Ball, Wilber, *Social Security Death Index*.

112. "Carlisle, Alice" (obituary), *Lexington Herald-Leader*, 29 Dec 2004.

113. Wolfe, "Cliff Carlisle" 62.