

Wagon Song  
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ENGL 659: Southern Literature  
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### Introduction to The Series

This transcription and its attendant annotations, explanatory material, and bibliography was prepared by students in ENGL 659: Southern Literature. The learning outcomes for this class include the following:

- Demonstrate proficiency with research tools and relevant technology for this subject along with appropriate scholarly material
- Communicate scholarly information to a group of peers
- Develop an appreciation of the culture, history, and art of the region

All work is presented as submitted by the graduate students. While they take great care with their transcriptions and annotations, errors are possible. As they learn throughout this class, good scholarship requires meticulous research and corroboration by authoritative sources. Our objective is to provide transcriptions and annotations of WCU's Special Collections materials that will be useful to the institution, students, scholars, patrons, and all users of our library's resources. If you wish to submit an amendment or correction for this document, please email Dr. Mae Miller Claxton ([mclaxton@wcu.edu](mailto:mclaxton@wcu.edu))

### Introduction to The Audio

The following audio transcription is from a short, 3 minute and 24 second recording that includes the voices of John Parris and Troy Whiteside. This recording seems to be an attempt to record a song called Wagon Song, sung by Whiteside. Parris attempts to get a recording but has trouble with the audio recording device. The audio is muffled at times, and cuts out parts of Whiteside's song. The majority of this audio is Whiteside singing "The Wagon Song", a folk tune about riding in a wagon in the mountains, some time after the Civil war. The audio then ends abruptly after some mic disturbances.

### Transcription

0:00

\*mic noises\*

Troy Whiteside 0:00

You done start there?<sup>1</sup>

John Parris 0:03

Yeah, go ahead, sorry.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Whiteside was an avid community singer, and was involved with his church's choir in Bryson City. He was a Welder and foster parent with his wife, Edna, before his passing. He was a "board member, Chief Scout, Wagon Master, Singer/Songwriter, Story Teller, Trail Blazer, President, and Honorary President" of the Western North Carolina Wagon Train ("Troy Whiteside Obituary").

<sup>2</sup> Parris was a popular writer in Western North Carolina. After returning from WWII, he worked for the Eastern Band of Cherokee before starting his own column, Roaming the Mountains in the Asheville Citizen Times. Parris was well known in WNC and garnered much praise for his writings about the area, and his preservation of cultural traditions (Casada).

Troy Whiteside 0:05

I have to do a little chorus before I get into it.

John Parris 0:10

Alright I'll just hold—

0:12

\*mic noises\*

Troy Whiteside 0:15

Oh, how much money—

0:40

\*mic noises\*

John Parris 0:54

\*Unintelligible\*

Troy Whiteside 0:17

Let them wagons, wagons roll, roll, roll, won't you let them heavy wagons roll. We don't have much money, we don't have much cattle. We got us a wagon train, the big old western saddle. Let them wagons, wagons roll, roll, roll. Won't you let them heavy wagons roll. Mountain High and the mountain steep, starting and a-stopping. Harness dripping wet, sweating, them old, ears a-flopping. Let them wagons, wagons roll, roll, roll. Won't you let them heavy wagons roll. Pony with a little kid. McClellan Army saddle.<sup>3</sup> Watch that young-un bump his can. Hear them wagons rattle. Let them wagons, wagons, roll, roll, roll. Won't you let them heavy wagons roll.<sup>4</sup>

1:02

\*six second pause\*

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<sup>3</sup> A McClellan army saddle was a saddle that was created for the Army by Captain George McClellan in 1859 (“McClellan Saddle”).

<sup>4</sup> This ballad is called The Wagon Song and is sung by Whiteside in a folk-esq tune. This song was written specifically for Claude Angel, in 1978, for the annual WNC Wagon Train. The Wagon Train was and still is a celebration of community and old time traditions. Groups of people go out in their early American wagons, pulled by horses and mules, and live out the day, in the way their ancestors did (Parris, 1).

Troy Whiteside 1:10

A jaw full of backey<sup>5</sup> and a jaw full of gin, spank that mule and watch called Glen. Let them wagons, wagons roll, roll, roll. Won't you let them heavy wagons roll. It's gonna be dinner time soon, boys.

1:22

\*sound of car driving\*

John Parris 1:27

Now is the time for all good men to come to the age of their country. Now is the time for all good men to come to the age of.<sup>6</sup>

1:41

\*mic goes out\*

John Parris 1:41

1234567. I'm having trouble with this thing. 12345.

John Parris 1:47

\*Unintelligible\*

1:47

\*sound of car driving\*

John Parris 1:51

12345. Are you going to stop here? Come on. Let's try it again.

2:06

\*unknown cough\*

Troy Whiteside 2:07

Let them wagons, wagons roll, roll roll. Won't you let them heavy wagons roll. Mountain time, the mountains steep, starting a-stopping, harness dripping with sweating, them old ears flopping.

John Parris 2:21

\*Unintelligible\*

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<sup>5</sup> This is most likely a nickname for chewing tobacco.

<sup>6</sup> It is unclear if Parris meant to have this piece of audio in here, or if he was trying to record audio for another story.

Troy Whiteside 2:22

Let them wagons, wagons, roll, roll, roll. Won't you let them heavy wagons roll. Pony with little kid, McClellan Army saddle, watch that young-un bump his can, hear those wagons rattle. Let them wagons, wagons, roll, roll, roll. Won't you let them heavy wagons roll.

2:42

\*horse braying\*<sup>7</sup>

Troy Whiteside 2:44

A jaw full of bag around a jaw full of gin, spank that mule and watch Claude<sup>8</sup> grin. Let them wagons, wagons roll. roll, roll. Won't you let them heavy wagons roll.

3:23

\*mic noises\* Audio goes out.

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<sup>7</sup> This recording partially seems to be done outside, possibly at the Wagon Train, which is why Parris had issues with the audio.

<sup>8</sup> Referring to Claude Angel, Whiteside made a special edition of the Wagon Song in order to honor Angel. (Parris, 17).

### Works Cited

- Casada, Jim. "John Parris: Muse Of The Mountains." *Smokey Mountain Living Magazine*, August 2022, <https://www.smliv.com/stories/john-parris-muse-of-the-mountains/>.
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