

## **The Library of Congress: Alan Lomax and the Soundscapes of the Upper Midwest: 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1938 Library of Congress Folk-Song Expedition to Michigan**

### **Episode Title 8: “I went to Marquette: The Bellaire of Baraga”**

[Intro]

From the Library of Congress in Washington, DC.

“Finnish Waltz,” performed by Apo Juhani on accordion. Recorded in Calumet, MI, Sept. 27, 1938. *Alan Lomax Collection of Michigan and Wisconsin Recordings* (AFC 1939/007, AFS 2282a3), American Folklife Center, Library of Congress

In 1938 the Library of Congress dispatched the pioneering folklorist and song collector Alan Lomax to conduct a folklife survey of the Great Lakes region. He traveled in a 1935 Plymouth sedan, toting a Presto instantaneous disc recorder and a movie camera. And when he returned nearly three months later, having driven thousands of miles on barely paved roads, it was with a cache of 250 discs and 8 reels of film, documents of the incredible range of ethnic diversity, expressive traditions, and occupational folklife in Michigan.

In early October, after nearly three weeks of focused field work in the Upper Peninsula, Alan began to ramble, on one day driving over to Baraga, on another making a loop up to Calumet and back down to Ontonagon, drifting over several days into Gogebic County, along the Wisconsin border. The driving must have been arduous; save a few stretches of asphalt, his 1938 Texaco map described all the roads in this region as “semi-surfaced.” The warm weather had held, but Alan knew that he was in the far north in late autumn and that conditions could quickly deteriorate. The Library was clamoring for a firm return date to Washington. Lomax wrote to Harold Spivacke outlining his plans and cautiously asked for another ten days. Regarding his immediate intentions:

Monday and Tuesday [October 10-11] in Champion and Baraga, where I found French singers last week – the patriarch of the family died the night I rolled in and of course I couldn’t do anything – I am beginning to think I am Death’s special herald.<sup>i</sup>

For four days in mid-October Alan lodged at the Holmes Hotel in Baraga and devoted his evenings to a group of extraordinary French singers. The session on the 12<sup>th</sup> took place at Joe Morin’s house a few miles out of town. An older couple, Exilia and Mose Bellaire, were there, as were Edward G. King, John Cadeau, Joe Morin, and Dolph Carrier. Exilia Bellaire sang a number of songs including “I went to Marquette”, the lyrics bouncing between French and English.

"I Went to Marquette," performed by Exilia Bellaire, Baraga, MI, Oct. 12, 1938.  
*Alan Lomax Collection of Michigan and Wisconsin Recordings* (AFC 1939/007, AFS 2442b1), American Folklife Center, Library of Congress

In just a few days, Lomax exposed two reels of film and cut more than forty discs, capturing six hours of early recordings of Michigan's French speaking communities.

[Outro]

"Finnish Waltz," performed by Apo Juhani on accordion. Recorded in Calumet, MI, Sept. 27, 1938. *Alan Lomax Collection of Michigan and Wisconsin Recordings* (AFC 1939/007, AFS 2282a3), American Folklife Center, Library of Congress

This podcast series marks the 75th anniversary of Alan Lomax's historic documentation of music and folklore in Michigan, and its enduring impact today. If you would like to more about this remarkable trip, and stay abreast of commemorative programming and performances including a traveling exhibition, and the dissemination of Lomax's recordings to their home communities, visit the American Folklife Center's website at [www.loc.gov/folklife/lomax](http://www.loc.gov/folklife/lomax). And look for the e-book, "Michigan-I-O," published by Dust-to-Digital Records in association with the Library of Congress and available through the iBookstore beginning November 1<sup>st</sup>, 2013.

Alan Lomax's vast documentary collection, including the materials from his 1938 Michigan field trip is housed at the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress. The Center thanks its project collaborators, which include the Michigan Council for the Humanities, the Michigan State University Museum; the Great Lakes Traditions Endowment; the Center for the Study of Upper Midwestern Culture at the University of Wisconsin, the Association for Cultural Equity, and the Finlandia Foundation.

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