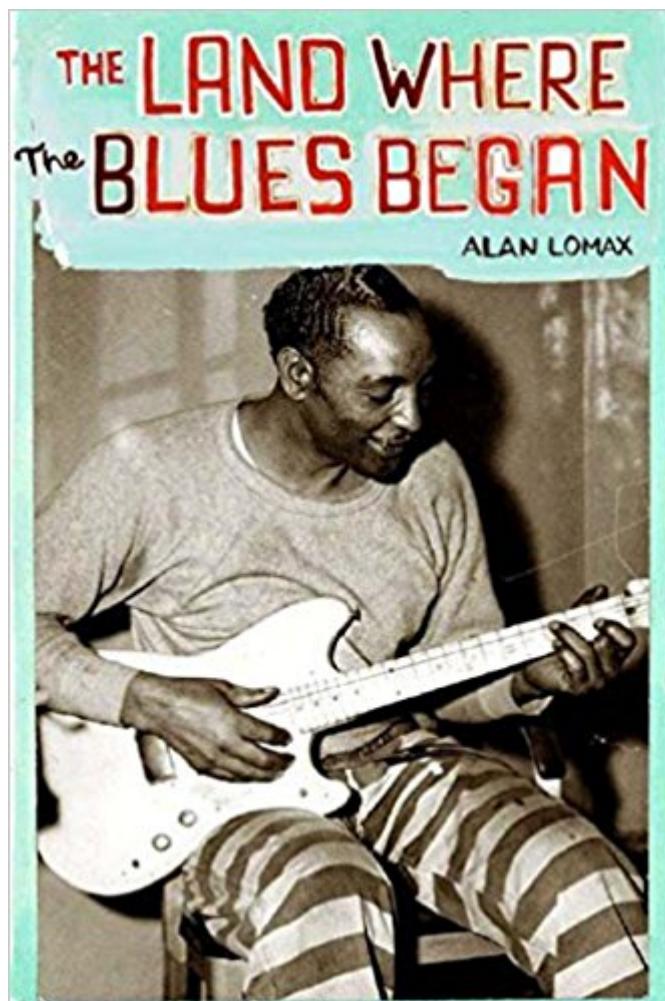


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# The Land Where The Blues Began



## Synopsis

A self-described "song-hunter," the folklorist Alan Lomax traveled the Mississippi Delta in the 1930s and '40s, armed with primitive recording equipment and a keen love of the Delta's music heritage. Crisscrossing the towns and hamlets where the blues began, Lomax gave voice to such greats as Leadbelly, Fred MacDowell, Muddy Waters, and many others, all of whom made their debut recordings with him. *The Land Where the Blues Began* is Lomax's "stingingly well-written cornbread-and-moonshine odyssey" (Kirkus Reviews) through America's musical heartland. Through candid conversations with bluesmen and vivid, firsthand accounts of the landscape where their music was born, Lomax's discerning reconstructions . . . give life to a domain most of us can never know . . . one that summons us with an oddly familiar sensation of reverence and dread. (The New York Times Book Review). *The Land Where the Blues Began* captures the irrepressible energy of soul of people who changed American musical history. Winner of the 1993 National Critics Circle Award for nonfiction, *The Land Where the Blues Began* is now available in a handsome new paperback edition.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Co-founder--with folklorist father John A. Lomax--of the Archive of American Folk Song at the Library of Congress, Alan Lomax traveled the South "from the Brazos bottoms of Texas to the tidewater country of Virginia" in search of the wellspring of American blues. Previously the author of

Mister Jelly Roll, Lomax stalks the ghosts of Robert Johnson, Muddy Waters, Big Bill Broonzy and Charlie Patton, among many other blues pioneers. This winner of the 1993 National Book Critics Circle Award for General Nonfiction is more than just another profile of a musical genre. It's an intimate diary of a purely American art form born of a powerful mix of despair and hope. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Working for the Library of Congress and other cultural institutions, legendary roots-music connoisseur Lomax ( Mister Jelly Roll ) visited the Mississippi Delta with his father, folklorist John Lomax, and black folklorist Zora Neale Hurston in the 1930s; with African American sociologists from Fiske University in the 1940s; and with a PBS film crew in the 1980s, researching the history of the blues in America. Addressing this wonderfully rich vein of scarcely acknowledged Americana, Lomax has written a marvelous appreciation of a region, its people and their music. Burdened early with now long-forgotten technology (500-pound recording machines, etc.) and encountering pronounced racial biases and cultural suspicions about black and white people mixing socially and otherwise, Lomax sought out those in the Delta who knew Robert Johnson and Charlie Patton and others acquainted with musicians once less well known, such as Doc Reese, young McKinley Morganfield (Muddy Waters), Dave Edwards, Eugene Powell and Sam Chatmon. Traveling across the South "from the Brazos bottoms of Texas to the tidewater country of Virginia," Lomax discovers the plantations, levee camps, prisons and railroad yards where the men and women of the blues came from and the music was born. In a memoir that will take its place as an American classic, Lomax records not just his recollections but the voices of hard-working, frequently hard-drinking, spiritual people that otherwise might have been lost to readers. Copyright 1993 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Still reading it. Trying to savor it so I am reading only a page or two a day. I like anything Alan Lomax was involved in. As a music and cultural historian I believe he is very accurate on his record keeping of events. He is not like a lot of historians who make things up. I guess its easier to be accurate when you are actually at the site. If you want to know about the history of the Blues, this is the book as I have read extensively on this subject.

Don't know of any book that covers this part of US history. The music of the times illuminates the conditions of slaves and Blacks in the South during the first half of the 1900's. Blues fans in particular and fans of the other forms of music that were birthed by the blues should consider this to

be a primer of the genre. Mr. Lomax on occasion gets a little carried away with himself. He and his father explored this music in its contemporary state. They recorded music that no longer exists but was the precursor of much of American music (at least the best American music). A must read for any musician.

Being a lifelong blues fan, it is good to have this story. Maybe Alan had his ways to get information that was unsettling for some, but he did nonetheless get it. I couldn't put the book down. Thanks to this information Alan, his father, and minions collected, there will be some (his version) kind of story to tell about the blues in America, its roots, and where it supposedly came from. Thank you Library of Congress for having the insight back in those crazy times to go ahead with this project, and even though it was cut short, continued on with Lomax's love of the blues and all music that has evolved from those time in Africa to now. Johnne in Seattle

I thought Alan Lomax was just a great recorder of songs and voices -- one lucky enough to be in the right place to capture an oral tradition just as the world changed. But this book brings a whole added dimension of significance to his work. Who knew he was also a great story teller? And the things he has seen -- from outrageous repression to the transporting ecstasy! The indomitable human spirit and the drive to express the joys and sorrows of daily life are in full evidence here. This book will blow you away.

I thought there maybe would be some real history in this book, but instead it reads like a jack karouac novel. Its interesting but not historical. I wanted to learn more about old country blues, not live it.

Alan Lomax was a music pioneer. He did not play music, but recorded it. He sought out a lot of the old bluesmen in the south - in the plantations and prisons and the backwater juke joints - to record the music that became rock & roll. I have read many books about how the humble blues men shaped the music and invented rock and this one is excellent. If you are interested in the history of American music, read this!

If I had my way, there would be an international Alan Lomax Day. Alan began an "identify us all by music" movement... and recognized the uniqueness that defines us to one another. The first copy I had of this book was hardback. And taken by someone who did not appreciate it, I am sure. This

copy is easier to hold, and can be taken anywhere. It should be the backbone of a college course.

Great Blues research by Alan Lomax, 537pages the roots of blues for every blues researcher

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