

ARTIST/INFORMANT DATA SHEET

NAME Tollie Lee

ORGANIZATION/GROUP NAME Elder for Nathalene (FL), Sardis, and Piney Grove Primitive Baptist Churches (Crawfordites)

SEX M

ADDRESS AND PHONE [REDACTED]

COUNTY Nassau (FL)

BIRTHDATE Feb. 4, 1942

BIRTHPLACE Brantely County (born at home)

CATEGORY OF ARTIST singer, instrumentalist, preacher

GENRE/CATEGORY OF PRODUCT harmonica, sacred harp, Primitive Baptist hymns and lined hymns, "delivered" (chanted) sermons

ETHNIC BACKGROUND English (4th great granddad John Lee, b.1752 was revolutionary War soldier. Came to GA. in 1798 from Goldsboro, NC)

TRADITION BASE

ETHNIC

URBAN

OTHER regional--Okefenokee

RELIGION x

OCCUPATION

PRIMARY LANGUAGE English

RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION Crawfordite Primitive Baptist

OCCUPATIONS Tollie Lee Sharpening Service

ORGANIZATIONAL AFFILIATIONS

FIELDWORKER: Laurie K. Sommers, S. Georgia Folklife Project

DATE: 6-18-97 phone interview (recording sessions of music at Sardis Church on 2-25-97)

LOCATION: Phone and Sardis Primitive Baptist Church near Folkston, GA

COMMENTS: Tollie Lee is a very personable individual, a singer of sacred harp in the style of the Okefenokee region, an Elder in the Primitive Baptist Church (he leads services at the Piney Grove Church near Ruskin east of Waycross, Sardis near Folkston, and his home church of Nathalene, near Hilliard, FL), and a fine leader of Primitive Baptist hymns. He also reportedly can play some harmonica and knows some of the secular as well as sacred tunes recorded by Francis Harper (collector of Okefenokee lore) in his 1940s sessions. Tollie grew up hearing and singing sacred harp in the regional style which is very influenced by the a capella Primitive Baptist hymn singing tradition. His father, Silas Lee (who passed away in June of

ARTIST INFORMANT DATA SHEET

Last Name Lee First Name Tollie Middle Name _____ Sex M

Organization/Group Name _____

Address Rt. 1, Box 362

City Callahan State FL Zip 32011

County Nassau Phone (904) 845-2624

Birthdate Feb 4, '42 Deathdate _____

Birthplace Brantley Co.

Category of Artist _____

Genres/Category of Product _____

Ethnic Background Goldstone, N. Cardma - English 4th great granddad John Lee b 1752 Rev. War soldier 1798 - came to GA

Ethnic-based Tradition? _____

Primary Language English

Religious Affiliation Primitive Baptist - Nathalene PB Church Hilliard, FL

Occupation Tollie Lee Sharpening Service Sardis Piney Grove (Rustkin near Waycross)

Fieldworker LK Summers

Date _____ Location phone

FAD Accession # _____ Museum Accession # _____

Participant? _____ Area _____

Vertical notes on left margin:
 Tollie raised in church, but don't go inside - stayed outside + prayed -
 age 28 came into church member 1970
 Sacred harp all her life - dad taught singing schools
 100-250 people - Sat + Sunday
 18 months for 9 towns
 usually through winter

Vertical notes on right margin:
 hymn gone out first time (line w) June Aug Mich
 First one 190 in home book - about 167 -
 Second - 167 -
 hymns what will give out until
 he is back
 206
 207
 cover whole pattern, concept -
 read hymns
 hymn licensed to preach
 hymn will fall in line w)
 read hymns
 hymn - many will fall in line w)
 read hymns
 hymn - many will fall in line w)
 read hymns
 hymn - many will fall in line w)
 read hymns

Handwritten notes at bottom:
 Elden - licensed since May 1972
 Ordained Jan. 1973
 Uncle Pragnite had good gift
 Silas Lee singing
 Dad taught singing
 Came from Maternal Grandfather - Martin E Pawling
 " Great " Lazarus Pawling
 taught singing in 1800s
 1800s taught early 1900s-1935
 sings - Dame Conner's house N. of Hilliard - 1911 US
 gift comes from hard "deliversance" to describe chant
 1st Babu 1st Sunday

1997 at the age of 86) was the singing school teacher and song leader for many years. His maternal grandfather, Martin E. Dowling, and greatgrandfather, Lazarus Dowling, were both song leaders and singing school teachers. Tollie recalls his father would hold singing schools on Sat. and Sunday, one weekend per month for six months, attracting some 100-250 people. Tollie and his wife Ramona, along with daughter Amy now attend the Hoboken sings which have been revived by David and Clarke Lee the Sat. before the third Sun. each. month in the Hoboken School. Some of Tollie's siblings and their families attend as well. In addition, Tollie attends a monthly sing near his home in rural Nassau County in a special building used for sings at Dane Conner's home, off US 1 north of Hilliard. This is held the Saturday before the first Sunday (the same weekend that Tollie holds services at the Nathalene church). The sings are reportedly more "traditional" than the ones at Hoboken in that a single song leader presides and walks time for every song. The group is also smaller.

Although Tollie grew up with sacred harp, he did not grow up in the Primitive Baptist Church. He "went to church" but as a boy he recalls that more often than not he played outside rather than go inside to worship. His parents did not join the church until Silas, Tollie's father, was 42 years of age. Thus Tollie was "less sheltered" (in his words) than families such as that of David Lee (a cousin) since Tollie listened to the radio occasionally and went to picture shows. He played harmonica in a talent contest and grew up with sacred and secular musical influences. His mother Elvira showed him how to play harmonica.

Tollie joined the church when he was 28 (1970). He was licensed as an elder in May of 1972 and ordained in Jan. of 1973. He had never lined a hymn before he was first licensed to preach. The first hymns he "gave out" were #120 in the Lloyd's Hymnal, and then #167. He describes his lining and his musical way of "deliverance" in his sermons and prayers as a gift that comes from the Lord. I recorded a service at the Sardis Church, as well as the hymn sing after church. The service recording is not submitted with project materials at this time due to concern on the part of some deacons of the church. Tollie himself does not mind if others hear his gift. He has a very good voice and is open minded about outsiders coming and recording his services, something that is not the case with many other elders in the region. I was directed to Tollie by John Crowley, asst. prof. of history at VSU, who completed his dissertation at FSU on the history of Primitive Baptists in S. GA and N. FL.