



# Appalachian Dulcimer Traditions (American Folk Music and Musicians Series)

*Ralph Lee Smith*

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The Appalachian dulcimer is one of America's major contributions to world music and folk art. Homemade and handmade, played by people with no formal knowledge of music, this beautiful instrument arrived in the light of the 20th century with virtually no written record. *Appalachian Dulcimer Traditions* is a first-hand report to enlarge our knowledge of the dulcimer's history by searching the hills and "hollers" of Appalachia, looking at old instruments, and listening to the tales of old folks.

After reviewing the instrument's special musical features, the book describes some related instruments, and reveals little-known facts about the dulcimer's origins on the early Appalachian frontier. The book then describes three major design traditions of the dulcimer, each centered in its own geographical area, and focuses on important makers in each of the three traditions?the Melton family of Galax, Virginia, Charles M. Prichard of Huntington, West Virginia, and "Uncle Ed" Thomas of Kentucky.

A final chapter describes four Appalachian makers of the folk revival transition, who began making instruments the old-time way and modernized them to meet the needs of Post-World-War-II urban players. The book concludes with listings of dulcimer recordings in the Archive of Folk Culture of the Library of Congress.

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