



## Questing with Alan Lomax: Michigan's Historic Field Recordings Inspire a New Generation

by Laurie Kay Sommers and Samuel Seth Bernard

"What a place Traverse City is a-coming to be!" Retired lumberjack Lester Wells once sang these words while sitting with his aging buddies in Launtner's Tavern (now Union Street Station—still a bar with live music) in downtown Traverse City, Michigan. The folklorist Alan Lomax recorded the song by cutting a 12-inch disc on the spot with his Presto instantaneous disc recorder. The year was 1938, and Lomax—then a 23-year-old Assistant in Charge at the Archive of Folk-Song—was in the midst of a 10-week folk music collecting trip of the "Lakes States," gathering examples of Michigan's rich trove of traditional song to enrich the Archive's holdings at the Library of Congress.

Seventy-five years later, a new generation discovered Lomax's recordings and made them their own. [The Quest—A Celebration of Community](#) was an innovative, place-based afterschool arts program in seven underserved schools in northwest Lower Michigan. Seth Bernard, Artistic Director of the Quest, envisioned a project in which participants would “embark on a creative adventure, discovering the awesomeness of both our place and our path, and in doing so, to co-create a professional performance to share with our communities.”<sup>1</sup> The Finale concert featured students' artwork and collaboratively written songs, inspired by Lomax's 1938 Michigan recordings. The culminating performance took place May 9, 2014, in front of several hundred friends, family, and community members in the historic Traverse City Opera House, just around the corner from where Lomax made his 1938 Traverse City recordings.

The Quest concluded a five-year federal 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Center grant to [SEEDS](#), a Traverse City nonprofit. Community Learning Center grants provide “academic enrichment opportunities during non-school hours for children, particularly students who attend high-poverty and low-performing schools. The program helps students meet state and local student standards in core academic subjects, such as reading and math; offers students a broad array of enrichment activities that can complement their regular academic programs; and offers literacy and other educational services to the families of participating children.”<sup>2</sup>

**The main goal of the Quest “is to empower youth to create change.”** SEEDS literature continues: “Empowering youth means helping them tap into their own sources of power and supporting them as they find their own voices. As they gain confidence in one arena, they are able to bring a confident attitude to others.”<sup>4</sup>

The 2014 Quest project highlighted here was the second of the series of “Quests,” immersive arts and education experiences organized around differing themes. In the pilot year, the theme was “Personal Resilience.” Year 2 leveraged the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Alan Lomax's Michigan folksong recordings. Year 3 (2015), “The Quest for Something Fresh,” explored the agricultural bounty of the region through music and art.<sup>5</sup>

SEEDS has been working in northwest Lower Michigan since 1999, providing innovative hands-on learning experiences that help bridge the achievement gap between poor and rich schools. SEEDS focuses on local solutions to global problems—with an emphasis on energy sustainability, community-building, and ecological issues—and has a 15-year track record of weaving arts into their programs by partnering with two local arts organizations, [Blackbird Arts](#) in Traverse City and [Earthwork Music Collective](#). For most SEEDS students, arts education has been partially or completely cut from the school experience or is available only to those who can pay extra. Through experienced and professional art educators, SEEDS provides youth “with opportunities to engage in the creative arts using the entire artistic cycle from inspiration to formation to production to performance or display.”<sup>3</sup>

The Quest 2014—with its focus on local place and heritage inspired by the Lomax 1938 recordings—was the first SEEDS project to coalesce around an archival folksong collection. Throughout the spring semester, 80 to 100 middle- and high-school students from Benzie Central, Brethren, Forest Area, Frankfort, Kalkaska, Manistee, and Suttons Bay schools prepared for the project Finale by investigating local history, exploring personal journeys, learning songs from the Lomax archives, and writing new material for the concert production.

The Quest unfolded over four months, fostering a rich learning experience for participants. In addition to the Lomax materials, individual sites explored local cultural heritage in different ways. Suttons Bay students, for example, identified significant historic places in their county and then

researched historic photos of the same locations. Their PowerPoint presentation—enhanced by audio from the Lomax Michigan Collection—ran as a "prelude" to the Quest Finale as audience members entered the auditorium. At Brethren, where students chose a lumberjack ballad as their muse, they visited a local historical museum and a still functioning Civilian Conservation Corps Camp. They also went to one of their local places—Tippy Dam, on the nearby Manistee River—and performed the song they had written for a fisherman they met there. Seth Bernard recalled that these local explorations "really added depth to the experience for the students."<sup>6</sup>

### **Teaching Materials based on Alan Lomax's 1938 collecting trip in Michigan**

American Folklife Center, Library of Congress, Alan Lomax Collection Michigan Project Homepage <http://www.loc.gov/folklife/lomax/michiganproject.html>  
(Includes a series of podcasts).

The complete Alan Lomax Collection of Michigan and Wisconsin Recordings  
<http://www.loc.gov/collection/alan-lomax-in-michigan/about-this-collection>.

*Michigan-I-O: Alan Lomax and the 1938 Library of Congress Folk-Song Expedition*, Todd Harvey's pioneering multimedia ebook <http://www.dust-digital.com/michigan>.

The companion CD to the above, released by Global Jukebox/ACE  
<http://culturalequity.org/features/globaljukebox/michigan/index.php>.

Guha Shankar's blog on Alan Lomax Goes North, about the documentary film he and Jim Leary made based on Alan's 1938 silent color film footage  
<http://blogs.loc.gov/loc/2013/08/inquiring-minds-alan-lomax-goes-north>.

Jim Leary's book *Folksongs of Another America: Field Recordings from the Upper Midwest, 1937–1946* (2015), which includes Lomax Michigan material and the DVD documentary of the 1938 Lomax film footage, mentioned above <http://uwpress.wisc.edu/books/5231.htm>.

The Michigan State University Museum traveling exhibition, "Michigan Folksong Legacy: Grand Discoveries from the Great Depression," available for loan through the museum's traveling exhibition service <http://museum.msu.edu/museum/tes/MIFolksong.htm>.

Lesson plans using the Alan Lomax Collection of Michigan and Wisconsin Recordings, by Laurie Kay Sommers with Patricia Shehan Campbell. See "For Teachers" under "Resources" on the Association for Cultural Equity website [http://www.culturalequity.org/rc/ce\\_rc\\_teaching.php](http://www.culturalequity.org/rc/ce_rc_teaching.php).

### **Place and Heritage Educational Resources**

Educators interested in additional ideas and lesson plans for incorporating place and heritage are encouraged to consult some of the excellent resources available online, among them the Montana Heritage Project <http://montanaheritageproject.org> and *Folkwriting, Lessons on Place, Heritage and Tradition for the Georgia Classroom* <http://archives.valdosta.edu/folklife/proj-fw.html>.



In addition to collaborative songwriting and place-based learning, students created original backdrops and a life-sized Lomax puppet for the Finale, incorporated sound recording technology, and shared their works in progress through a Dropbox. As Sarna Salzman, SEEDS Executive Director, explained to the Finale audience, “This is the face of 21<sup>st</sup> century education. This is reading and writing and core academics. This is STEM [science, technology, engineering, and math]. We’re dealing with sound equipment, amplification, and chord structures.... This is also community place making. This is the grand vision in action. This is history. This is intergenerational engagement. This is pride of place. And, most importantly, and what inspires me the most, this is the voice of youth. Our youth. These are their thoughts, their dreams, their reflections.”<sup>7</sup>

The Quest emerged from a remarkable synergy of timing and organizations. SEEDS was in the final stages of its grant-funded collaboration with Earthwork Music and Blackbird Arts. Seth Bernard, co-founder of Earthwork Music, and Sarna Salzman of SEEDS were brainstorming about creating something wonderful for their last semester of funding. Enter Todd Harvey, curator of the Alan Lomax Collection at the American Folklife Center, Library of Congress, and AFC’s project to digitize the 1938 [Alan Lomax Collection of Michigan and Wisconsin Recordings](#).

The Library hoped these Michigan materials would inspire new models for making archival holdings accessible and interesting to new audiences, including young people. Todd knew of Earthwork Music, a group of Michigan singer-songwriters who believe in the intrinsic and historical power of music to raise community and self-awareness and facilitate and encourage original music, so he reached out to Seth at just the right time, offering to make the digitized recordings available prior to their planned public launch on the Library of Congress website.



Alan Lomax returned to Traverse City in more ways than one. Throughout the Quest Finale, the audience heard samples from the 1938 Lomax recordings that inspired the student work, listened to the voice of Lomax explaining his impressions of Michigan, and watched as three students manipulated a life-sized papier-mâché Lomax puppet, created with the guidance of artists from Blackbird Arts in Traverse City. Photo by Laurie Kay Sommers, courtesy of Michigan State University Museum.

The timing was serendipitous. Seth realized that the Lomax Michigan Collection could form the basis for an amazing student quest that would explore music, place, personal journeys, creativity, and collaboration. Seth had previously written a song titled “Keep Up the Quest” with lyrics that shaped his idea of “questing” as a trope for creative empowerment: “Whatever you do, it’s up to you, Don’t let them bring it down. Whatever you do, will come true. Once done, you can’t undo. Keep it collective, we love you. Keep up the Quest....” For Seth and the other project educators, collaborative songwriting was a “positive, fun, participatory” technique “to empower kids to find their creative voice and to develop a relationship with the creative process that works for them.”<sup>8</sup>

Composing songs that explore the possible and the potential in students’ lives—although extremely valuable—is not inherently a folklore-in-education project. What folklore—and in this case, the

Lomax Collection—adds is the crucial connection to past and place. With Lomax providing the source material, the result, as Seth puts it, is “music that is true to the times that we live in and also dips into the rich, local cultural heritage.”<sup>9</sup>

The seeds for using an historic folk music collection already had been planted during previous years of the grant, which had funded PA systems and placement at every site of a copy of the Smithsonian Folkways’ influential reissue of *The Anthology of American Folk Music* (edited by Harry Smith). Seth originally planned to use the Smith Anthology, not Lomax, as a point of reference for students, pointing out its profound impact on the music of the 1960s, when a new generation of musicians was inspired by Smith’s carefully indexed and annotated collection of American folk music (much of it previously unknown to the general public). Seth wanted students participating in the Quest to have the same kind of discovery experience. But when Todd Harvey offered a sneak preview of the Lomax Michigan Collection, it “turned out to be so big and so much more directly related to [students’] experience of place.” Seth and his collaborators shifted their focus to the Lomax materials for historic source material and creative impetus. “We allowed them to explore the Harry Smith Collection on their own time,” Seth recalled, “but we focused our time in the school with them listening to the Lomax Collection and working on the creative process. Ultimately, that’s what kept them engaged.”<sup>10</sup> Lomax’s Michigan Collection had names of towns the students knew, making it a powerful teaching tool. This uniquely local historic folk music collection challenged students to explore and embrace their identity of place and inspired both new compositions and new interpretations of the old songs, under the supportive guidance of Earthwork musicians.



Earthwork Music Collective member John Hanson, also a project musician, produced this video promo for the Quest. The soundtrack includes two songs by participating students: “Little Sleeping Bear,” inspired by a local legend about the origin of Sleeping Bear Dunes and the Manitou Islands and “Traverse Town,” inspired by Lester Wells’ 1938 recording of a song of the same title. (Used with permission.)

The Quest—A Celebration of Community represents a replicable case study for engaging students in community, history, and traditional music through collaborative songwriting. Cultivating youth empowerment is key. The project’s success derived from creative, experiential group learning in which students helped shape the project from start to finish. After a final public performance,

students realize they can do anything—and then they do it again.<sup>11</sup> The semester-long format allowed for deeper personal relationships to develop between educators and students. Some of the same students and musicians had been involved for several years in SEEDS afterschool programs, further enhancing trust and safe learning environments. Earthwork musicians came to see themselves as mentors: professional working musicians “showing up” and showing interest in students’ lives and creative potential.

Helping students find their creative voice and empowering them through all phases of an immersive, cooperative project has inherent value and can be organized around all kinds of themes. The critical piece of this project for folklore and education is the use of an historic folksong collection that has *local relevance* to the participating students. These students connected with Alan Lomax’s 1938 Michigan Collection. Other online historic folksong collections will resonate with students from other regions of the country (see [American Folklife Center, Online Collections and Presentations](#)). A growing body of research links increased self-esteem, pride, and ownership in accomplishments, increased student interest in learning and comprehension, and positive relationships between students, teachers, and the community, to the kind of learning evidenced in the Quest.<sup>12</sup>

At the close of the Quest Finale, Seth offered his take on the benefits of the project. Through exploring their creative potential, students learned to support each other and take calculated creative risks. Through exploration of the historic songs in the Lomax Michigan Collection, they expanded their musical boundaries. As Seth told the audience, “It’s so wonderful when our circle of understanding and compassion widens. That’s what the arts do for us.”<sup>13</sup> And when the students were told that their songs and performance were being documented and archived by the Michigan State University Museum (just as the earlier field recordings by Alan Lomax had been archived by the Library of Congress), everyone cheered. In the words of “The Presto Machine,” a collaborative song created during the project,

*Everyone has a story,  
Made into song.  
And they’ll live on.*

**Laurie Kay Sommers** served as program director for the Lomax Michigan Legacy Project 2013-14. She has been involved with various folklore in education projects, among them lessons plans using the Lomax Michigan materials (for the Association for Cultural Equity website); The Florida Music Train, which won the 2003 Dorothy Howard Prize for Folklore and Education from the American Folklore Society; and Folkwriting: Lessons on Place, Heritage, and Tradition for the Georgia Classroom.



**Seth Bernard** co-founded Michigan’s Earthwork Music Collective. With a background in music, theater, and outdoor education, Seth is a fixture of the independent music scene in Michigan and beyond. In addition to an active performance schedule, Seth serves as Artistic Director of the Quest, which implements afterschool arts enrichment programs in northern Michigan through the Traverse City nonprofit, SEEDS.



## Acknowledgements

Special thanks to the Alan Lomax Collection of Michigan and Wisconsin Recordings (AFC 1939/007), American Folklife Center, Library of Congress, for recordings of “The Gallagher Boys” and “Once More A-Lumbering Go.”

## URLS

[www.KeepUpTheQuest.com](http://www.KeepUpTheQuest.com)  
[www.ecoseeds.org](http://www.ecoseeds.org)  
[www.blackbirdartstc.com](http://www.blackbirdartstc.com)  
[www.earthworkmusic.com](http://www.earthworkmusic.com)  
<http://www.loc.gov/collection/alan-lomax-in-michigan/about-this-collection>  
<http://www.folkways.si.edu/anthology-american-folk-historical-award-winning-collection/african/music/article/smithsonian>  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=otNBzz-FAk8>  
<http://www.loc.gov/folklife/onlinecollections.html>

## Notes

1. Sarna Salzman, electronic correspondence to Laurie Sommers, July 20, 2015.
2. U.S. Department of Education, 21st Century Learning Centers, accessed April 25, 2015.  
<http://www2.ed.gov/programs/21stcclc/index.html>
3. Sarna Salzman, electronic correspondence to Laurie Sommers, July 20, 2015.
4. Ibid.
5. See [www.KeepUpTheQuest.com](http://www.KeepUpTheQuest.com).
6. Seth Bernard, interviewed by Laurie Sommers, June 28, 2014. Michigan State University Museum Cultural Collections, East Lansing.
7. Sarna Salzman, Quest Finale, May 9, 2014, Laurie Sommers, fieldworker. Michigan State University Museum Cultural Collections, East Lansing.
8. Seth Bernard, interviewed by Laurie Sommers, June 28, 2014. Michigan State University Museum Cultural Collections, East Lansing.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid.
11. Sarna Salzman, electronic correspondence to Laurie Sommers, July 20, 2015.
12. Promise of Place, Enriching Lives Through Place-Based Education. Center for Place-based Learning and Community Engagement, accessed July 20, 2015.  
[http://promiseofplace.org/Research\\_Evaluation/why\\_it\\_matters](http://promiseofplace.org/Research_Evaluation/why_it_matters).
13. Seth Bernard, Quest Finale, May 9, 2014, Laurie Sommers, fieldworker. Michigan State University Museum Cultural Collections, East Lansing.



## Classroom Application: Questing Design Template

The semester-long Quest involved students in multifaceted activities, among them design (sets, album art, and publicity), songwriting (instrumentation, lyrics, poetry, listening, collaborating), production (staging, sound, lighting), and performance—all inspired by historic Michigan field recordings made by Alan Lomax in 1938. The following organizational template, as conceptualized by Seth Bernard, structured the project.

### Phase 1 (two months)

#### *Exploration*

Creative listening and learning of songs from the collections, with a focus on extracting meaning and reinterpreting, even rewriting the songs. Fieldtrips to local natural and historic sites. How does this exploration of place relate to each young person's personal story and their path ahead? They are on their Quest, individually and collectively.

### Phase 2 (two months)

#### *Creation*

Group composition of original songs for the final performance begins. Old songs are selected and arrangement and interpretation begins. The Quest continues and the creative process is working tangibly. Ideas become realities, imagination becomes sound.

### Phase 3 (final month)

#### *Refinement*

Songs are arranged and rehearsed, performers become as comfortable with the material as possible. We understand our opportunity to nourish our community with this work.

### Phase 4

#### *Performance*

The Quest is actualized! Students participate in a pre-concert tech day when they record their work prior to sharing it in the final community performance. True connections to our place, deep commitment to our work, strong support of our friends. We honor our self-respect. We were born to shine and our lives mean the world to us. We can do it. We just did.<sup>1</sup>

Seth and his Quest co-director Josh Davis selected 15 Lomax Michigan recordings as springboards for collaborative songwriting. They chose songs that represented the geographic scope of Lomax's Michigan journey—from Detroit to the western Upper Peninsula—and connected with students' home areas. Lumberjack ballads struck a chord with the region's past and present logging economy. The rhythms and poetic forms of Detroit blues resonated as a shaping force of much of today's



Quest co-director Seth Bernard (right) and Kalkaska Middle School students performing the place-based anthem, "Kalkaska Is Awesome," which began with a chorus modeled on the "come all ye" formulaic opening of many traditional ballads recorded by Lomax in 1938. "Hey, everybody, come on along, Kalkaska is awesome, we can tell you in song!" Students brainstormed about places they loved in their town and incorporated them into the song. Seth recalled, "By putting things that are important to them into song, they then have this capsule, this song, that lifts up their town." Photo by Laurie Kay Sommers courtesy of Michigan State University Museum.



popular music. Songs of Great Lakes sailors connected with students who grew up along the shore of Lake Michigan. Perhaps the most powerful songs were those Lomax collected in Traverse City, site of the Quest Finale, and nearby Beaver Island. "Traverse Town" <sup>2</sup> evoked people and places of 19<sup>th</sup>-century Traverse City. The students' collaborative rewrite (with each school providing a verse) describes places and notable characters of the town today as the students experience it. "The Gallagher Boys," [Audio #1] sung by Beaver Islander Dominick Gallagher, chronicles a 19<sup>th</sup>-century Lake Michigan shipwreck between Beaver Island and Traverse City. Gallagher sings the song and then tells Alan Lomax a personal story about the events that inspired it. "That was really cool for the kids," Seth recalled, "to hear a 75-year-old guy telling a 65-year-old story from his life. There are many different layers and nuances of inspiration for the kids. Also, it's historic. So we tried to bring with this project a sense of reverence and excitement, opportunity for these kids. They need to be proud of where they're from. We show up as working musicians from Michigan, excited about the Library of Congress. We tell them how cool that is, and that Alan Lomax is this major guy. Without his work we wouldn't have discovered the roots musicians who influenced our music today." <sup>3</sup>

The use of historic source material provided some challenges. Seth had to inspire "kids who identify with artists like Miley Cyrus, Skrillex, metal, dubstep, and hip hop," not the ballads and blues of the Lomax Collection. Students and facilitators spent time listening to and talking about the original songs, sometimes learning a chorus or the whole piece. The "hook" was to engage students in the historic source material, not as scratchy old recordings but as a rich source for student creative work. "The process was adventurous," Seth wrote, "and the results were dynamic and refreshing. Instead of mimicking the source songs, students felt excited about using song elements as a tool to explore their personal, cultural, and physical landscapes. It was neat to watch the musical palates of both teachers and students grow throughout this program. I know that my own writing was influenced by both the source recordings and the modern stylings of these young interpreters." <sup>4</sup>



Earthwork musician-educator Sam Cooper (black hat) works on collaborative songwriting with students from Brethren. Photo courtesy of SEEDS and Earthwork Music.

**Key to the project's success was the five-step collaborative songwriting process.** Young people naturally become more invested in songs they are writing together. Normally the teaching musicians would start from scratch when brainstorming with the group, but with the Quest they used Lomax source material as inspiration, prompting more listening. Here is a brief overview of the process.

**Step 1** Brainstorming and free association, ideally with a circle of 5 to 20 people. Participants each contribute a word or sentence that the facilitator writes down. After one round, everyone closes their eyes, and the facilitator recites the group's ideas. Everyone listens to the sounds of the words or phrases and creates mental pictures. The first round of words shapes another round of brainstorming. Some words and phrases connect. Some may be another phrase that rhymes. A large group of participants may only have to go around the circle twice.

**Step 2** The facilitator asks about connections of words and phrases. Is a story or form emerging? Is a chorus emerging? Sometimes students will already have melodic ideas. Find rhythms of words and musical motifs that go with that. Employ democracy and give everyone's idea a chance—it works!

**Step 3** Work out verses, choruses, bridge, or riff. With the Lomax Collection, there were already tunes, rhythms, and melodic ideas that served as a springboard for content.

**Step 4** Perform and record the song using a smartphone or a recording engineer. Do at least two takes of a song, creating a professional environment. Re-work the song as needed. Emphasize that everyone has a role.

**Step 5** Give a public community performance.

In his project blog, Seth described the new collaboratively written songs as “a combination of original songs, inspired by our home places, and rewrites of old folk songs from the Lomax Michigan treasure trove, a truly magnificent collection.” All the songs were terrific, but we'll highlight just three, which illustrate creative integration of technology as well as differing fusions of the field recordings with contemporary musical styles.

“Hoedown Showdown (Sissy Walking in Brethren)”—a title that combines current pop culture with an old-time dance form—was inspired by the 1938 Lomax recording of Archie Stice singing the lumberjack ballad, “Wild Mustard River.” Earthwork musician-educator Sam Cooper worked with students from Brethren Schools in heavily forested Manistee County on creating this song. In her blog, Cooper wrote, “It's a rather gruesome lumbering song that memorializes the young Johnny Styles, who catches his foot in a logjam and meets his end under the rushing river. So, we changed up the meter of the song and sang about life near the local Manistee landmark Tippy Dam as the kids have (or would like to) experience it.”<sup>5</sup>



Watch students from Brethren Schools, Manistee County, perform “Hoedown Showdown (Sissy Walking in Brethren).” The excerpt includes a clip from “Wild Mustard River,” which provided source material for students' songwriting, and Seth Bernard explaining some of the process. Video by Laurie Kay Sommers, courtesy of Michigan State University Museum.

In “Comb the Whole World Over (Michigan I Call My Home)” Earthwork musicians Ben Cohen and Akile Jackson used their mobile beat lab with Forest Area Schools to facilitate hip-hop empowerments with students. Undergirding “Comb the Whole World Over” is a sampled track [Audio #2] with excerpts from the Lomax 1938 Michigan recordings, including Lomax's voice identifying one of his recordings as “2266 B1 and 2” and a clip of Carl Lathrup's rendition of “Once More A-Lumbering Go” [Audio #3] which also inspired the chorus of “Comb the Whole World Over,” which morphed from the original—“I've roamed the wildwoods over, and once more a-lumbering go”—into “I've combed the whole world over, Michigan I love the most.” Students also wrote original rap lyrics about Michigan as “home.”

Michigan I Call My Home

Chorus:

I've been through Appalachia  
And I've walked through Tennessee  
The shores of the United Kingdom  
And France and Italy  
The Big Apple in the East to  
The gold Pacific Coast  
I've combed the whole world over  
Michigan I love my most

From the warmth of Alabama to  
The palms of Florida's Keys  
Volcanoes of Hawaii to the giant  
redwood trees  
Across the big blue oceans – all the  
wonders  
I've been shown  
I've combed the whole world over  
Michigan I call my home

Luis Rap:

Michigan is my home  
Michigan is my place, a  
fantastic state  
with all the great views, And  
all the great lakes  
I've been born and raised in a  
place called Fife Lake  
I go to Forest Area I'm a true  
warrior  
Don't hate, I don't discriminate  
Cause we all can participate  
Yeah I can play  
when it comes to sports- I'm a  
total B.A.  
hold up I'm getting off topic  
Let me go mudding vroom vroom  
I'm on it  
That's one of them things  
I love about Michigan  
A lot of good mud and a lot of  
good friends  
and meeting good people,  
Meeting good friends,

And seeing good birds,  
And love pigeons,  
Truth is, my whole point to this  
Michigan is alive and well  
If rapping dies off,  
I'm a go with it as well

*Repeat Chorus*

(Jamie verse)

Michigan, Michigan  
Say it again,  
From the U.P.ers in the north to  
Detroit  
Are all our friends  
oh Michigan, Michigan  
Say it again  
From the nation, all over,  
Throughout the world  
Are our friends

*Repeat Chorus*

(Austin's Rap)

I've been through Appalachia and  
I've walked through Tennessee,  
the shores of the U.K. France  
and Italy  
Chicago's Big Bear  
Might be mean  
But there isn't a place that  
packs a punch like Northern  
Michigan's woody crunch  
with calm forest and our Great  
Lakes  
Michigan is full of great traits  
Best of all states  
Urban or rural, we have it  
And I love every bit  
Trees to the bees  
Summer and winter  
A wooden splinter  
Easy and not a hurry  
No city life don't worry

"Comb the Whole World Over" lyrics [[Listen: Audio #4 "Comb the Whole World Over \(Michigan I Call My Home\)"](#)]

"The Presto Machine," also performed by Forest Area Schools, is a rock anthem of Lomax's Michigan journey. The title refers to Lomax's recording technology, the Presto instantaneous disc recorder, which made 12-inch records on the spot. Each verse evokes a song Lomax recorded in 1938: the lumberjack ballad "Once More a-Lumbering Go," sung by Carl Lathrup of St. Louis, Michigan; "We'd Rather Be a Couple of Bums," sung by Mason Parmer of Newberry; and "The Gallagher Boys," about a shipwreck between Traverse City and Beaver Island in 1873, sung by Dominick Gallagher of Beaver Island.



### **The Presto Machine**

A pioneer man  
Travelin the world  
Collecting people's words  
Every boy  
And every girl  
Their voices should be heard  
In my car  
I'm ready to rock  
With my recorder in the back  
A presto machine  
That just won't stop  
Gonna record 3,000 tracks

### **Pre Chorus**

Everyone has a story  
Made into a song  
And they'll live on!

### **Chorus**

Recording  
All across the land  
Doing all I can  
As a traveling man  
Music  
Is the key to the soul  
And my presto machine  
Is filled with Rock-N-Roll

A lumbering man  
Headin down Sharon Rd.  
A double saw in his hand  
He tells me his story  
As he carries his load  
Of the lumber in demand  
"No time for hunting  
Buck or doe  
My family must be fed  
We go out singing  
A lumbering go"  
I recorded all he said

**Pre Chorus**  
**Chorus**

A couple of bums  
Living on the streets dreamin what life  
could be  
Stolen shoes  
Cover their feet  
As they tell their story to me  
"We haven't got a nickel  
We haven't any cares  
We'd have it no other way  
We see the worries of the  
millionaires"  
I listen to what they say

**Pre Chorus**  
**Chorus**

Boarding a ferry  
A man ready to go  
But the weather is looking grim  
His uncle stops him  
And tells him no  
Your chances of survival are slim  
I listen to his story  
Of how he stayed behind  
As the ship went down in the lake  
Nobody knew  
That he was alive  
Until he walked into the wake

**Pre Chorus**  
**Chorus**

Lyrics to "The Presto Machine"  
[Listen: Audio #5, "Presto Machine"]

### **URLS**

- Audio 1 [https://youtu.be/Q\\_YKn8YkqOQ](https://youtu.be/Q_YKn8YkqOQ)  
Audio 2 <https://youtu.be/LrHbegAvjeU>  
Audio 3 <http://youtu.be/bCvCp4T2Itw>  
Audio 4 <http://youtu.be/XDiEh5nkzno>  
Audio 5 <http://youtu.be/hRC14C0SjyQ>

### **Notes**

1. Seth Bernard, electronic mail correspondence with Todd Harvey and Laurie Sommers, December 6, 2013.
2. The student version of "Traverse Town" is featured in the soundtrack to the Quest promotional video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=otNBzz-FAk8>.
3. Seth Bernard, interviewed by Laurie Sommers, June 28, 2014. Michigan State University Museum Cultural Collections, East Lansing.
4. <https://www.earthworkmusic.com/blog?page=ind&i=161>.
5. <http://www.samanthacooper.org/news/teaching-for-the-quest-program>.