

Recovering transcription discs

In February 2010 the AAFC received a set of Presto lacquer discs recorded in 1951 from the Center for the Study of the Black Belt in Livingston, Alabama to be cleaned and digitized. Presto recording machines were the recording devices that people used before the advent of home tape recorders beginning in the mid-1950s. The significance of this collection is that the recordings were of a program honoring the Noted Alabama folklorist Ruby Pickens Tartt.



Unfortunately, these type of lacquer discs were fragile and over the years would begin to peel and flake resulting in the usual irretrievable loss of data.

Also, lacquer discs over the years often grow a layer of palmitic acid on the discs themselves requiring extensive, painstaking and careful cleaning. This was the case with these discs.

As it turns out, two of the discs contained previously unknown performances by the great Alabamian folk singers Vera Hall Ward and Anna Grace Dodson.

In the spring of 2010, the Archive of Alabama Folk Culture cleaned and transferred several homemade transcription discs recorded in 1951 of the renowned Alabama folk singer Vera Hall.

More information on Vera Hall is available at the [Encyclopedia of Alabama](#). Click below to hear excerpts from previously unknown Vera Hall recordings.

**[Vera Hall: Black Woman](#)
[Vera Hall: Death Comes Creepin'](#)**

These two excerpts are from the actual transcription discs with no noise reduction. Courtesy of the Center for the Study of the Black Belt.



Disc has flaked, resulting in loss of data



Solutions and brushes used for cleaning and removal of palmitic acid



This cleaned disc yielded an excellent transfer