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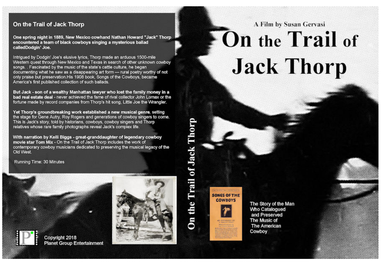
About this capture

On The Trail of Jack Thorp



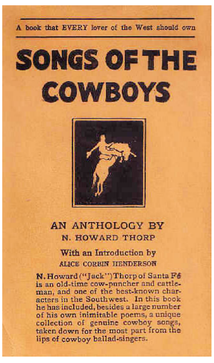
One spring night in 1889, New Mexico cowhand Nathan Howard "Jack" Thorp encountered a team of black cowboys singing a mysterious ballad called 'Dodgin Joe'.

Intrigued by Dodgin' Joe's elusive lyrics, Thorp made an arduous 1500-mile Western quest through New Mexico and Texas in search of other unknown cowboy songs. Fascinated by the music of the state's cattle culture, he began documenting what he saw as a disappearing art form — rural poetry worthy of not only praise but preservation.His 1908 book, Songs of the Cowboys, became America's first published collection of such ballads.



'Dodgin Joe' sung on the open range by a group of Black Cowboys got Thorpe started on his quest.

But Jack - son of a wealthy Manhattan lawyer who lost the family money in a bad real estate deal - never achieved the fame of rival collector John Lomax or the fortune made by record companies from Thorp's hit song, Little Joe the Wrangler.



Thorp put it all together, preserving the musical heritage of The Old West.

Yet Thorp's groundbreaking work established a new musical genre, setting the stage for Gene Autry, Roy Rogers and generations of cowboy singers to come. This is Jack's story, told by historians, cowboys, cowboy singers and Thorp relatives whose rare family photographs reveal Jack's complex life.

Screen the entire 30 minute film here. Vimeo password: jackthorp

With narration by Kelli Biggs - great-granddaughter of legendary cowboy movie star Tom Mix - On the Trail of Jack Thorp includes the work of contemporary cowboy musicians dedicated to preserving the musical legacy of the Old West.

AWARDS: On the Trail of Jack Thorp received a Silver Lei Award for Excellence in Filmmaking at the 2009 Honolulu International Film Festival. It was also an Official Finalist of the 2009 Las Vegas International Film Festival and selected for screening at the 2009 White Sands, New Mexico International Film Festival; the 2009 Delray Beach, Florida Film Festival; the 2009 Sarasota Fringe Festival, the 2009 ReelHeART Film Festival in Toronto, Canada; the 2009 25th Annual Cowboy Poetry Gathering in Elko, Nevada; the 2009 Heritage Film Festival in Largo, Maryland; the 2008 Utopia Film Festival in Greenbelt, Maryland; and the upcoming Gene Autry Museum Film & Music Festival held annually in Gene Autry, Oklahoma. On the Trail of Jack Thorp also recently received the 2009 Will Rogers Medallion Award for outstanding achievement by a film in honoring America's cowboy heritage.

Purchase Options: On The Trail of Jack Thorp

On the Trail of Jack Thorp

Educational DVD with PPR $295.00 USD

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