JULY FEATURED SONG *by Paul Cooper*

THIS LAND WAS MADE FOR YOU AND ME

In thinking about an appropriate song for July and the country's birthday, I realized that we have never included Woody Guthrie's best-known song in this column. Woody wrote the first version of "*This Land Is Your Land*" in 1940, and titled it "*God Blessed America For Me*". He wrote it in critical response to the 1938 release of Irving Berlin's "*God Bless America*" by Kate Smith, which he felt was overly sentimental, and failed to acknowledge some of America's legitimate problems. Verses 4 and 5 below can be interpreted as critical of America, and are generally left out in current popular renditions of the song. Woody himself took those two verses out when he performed it in 1944. In 1940, before the US entered World War II, he had been critical of Roosevelt's sending aid to the Allied countries, believing we should have nothing to do with the war. By 1944, in view of what Hitler was trying to do to the world, Woody changed his view and supported the US war effort.

Verse 4 below has been interpreted as anti- private property, and even as a Marxist statement. The first time I heard that verse, I took it as an affirmation of freedom and the joy of having no boundaries. I guess that verse remains open to interpretation. Verse 5 below, which I have added in italics because it is not in the version by Woody that you can listen to here, is actually one of my favorites. Written right on the heels of the Great Depression, it voices a sentiment that is still highly relevant.
You can also hear this song on the HFMS Audio Archive page. I have transcribed it in the key of C. To play along with Woody, capo III.

THIS LAND IS YOUR LAND

By Woodrow Wilson Guthrie

C F C
This land is your land, and this land is my land
G C
From California to the New York island
F C
From the Redwood Forest to the Gulf Stream waters
G C
This land was made for you and me

As I went walking that ribbon of highway
And I saw above me that endless skyway
I saw below me that golden valley
This land was made for you and me

I roamed and rambled, and I've followed my footsteps
To the sparkling sands of her diamond deserts
All around me, a voice was sounding
This land was made for you and me

Image by Carlos Andrés Reyes

There was a big, high wall there that tried to stop me
A sign was painted said "Private Property"
But on the backside, it didn't say nothing
This land was made for you and me

In the squares of the city, in the shadow of the steeple,
By the relief office, I saw my people.
As they stood there hungry, I stood there asking,
Is this land made for you and me?

When the sun come shining, then I was strolling
And the wheat fields waving, and the dust clouds rolling
The voice was chanting as the fog was lifting
This land was made for you and me

This land is your land, and this land is my land
From California to the New York island
From the Redwood Forest to the Gulf Stream waters
This land was made for you and me