

2016 Lifetime Contributor—Jeff Warner

The Country Dance and Song Society is pleased to announce that Jeff Warner of Portsmouth, NH, is the 2016 recipient of the CDSS Lifetime Contribution Award. Jeff is one of the nation's foremost performers and interpreters of traditional music and an advocate for bringing folk music to people of all ages, through his deep knowledge and love of American and English folk songs. His warmth and encouragement of singers, both experienced and new, young and old, has enriched many lives.

Jeff grew up in New York City, listening to the songs and stories of his father, Frank Warner, and the traditional singers his parents met during folksong collecting trips through rural America. When traveling with his parents, he listened while they recorded the locals who remembered the old songs of their region and community. (These recordings are preserved in the Library of Congress.)

In the 1960s, after receiving a BA in English at Duke University, and after a two-year stint in the Navy, Jeff was editor-in-training at Doubleday Bookclubs, heading, it seemed, toward a literary career until a friend asked if he would help run a nonprofit music school, the Guitar Workshop, in Roslyn, Long Island. He stayed with the school for nine years, working as administrator, guitar teacher, grant writer, and community program coordinator, and learning music theory and arrangement by teaching. His position also helped put him in touch with the significant people involved in the post-WW II folk revival movement that was embraced by both the commercial and academic worlds. In the '70s, he left to carve out a career for himself in historical music. Because of the US Bicentennial there was an increased demand for American songs in schools and Jeff filled that need with outreach programs into the schools.

He says that he is not a traditional singer in the academic sense—someone who has acquired the traditions either through ethnicity or family ties—but refers to himself as a singer of traditional songs taking an historical approach to the music.

"I teach American history and culture through traditional song and"—borrowing a phrase from historian David McCullough—"making history

as interesting as it really was." For Jeff, old songs are like archaeological objects which teach about history—"they're living historical artifacts that serve as evidence about the people who used them and the times they lived in."

In 1997, he moved to Portsmouth and began performing in New Hampshire schools as a Roster Artist through the State Arts Council. He has recorded for Flying Fish/Rounder, WildGoose (UK), and other labels. His first solo compact disc, recorded in 2005, is *Jolly Tinker* on Gumstamp Records. His 1995 recording (with Jeff Davis), *Two Little Boys*, received a Parents' Choice Award. He is the editor of his mother's book, *Traditional American Folksongs from the Frank and Anne Warner Collection* (Syracuse University Press, 1984), and producer of the CD set *Her Bright Smile Haunts Me Still: The Warner Collection* (Appleseed Recordings, 2000), which is comprised of his parents' field recordings. He appears on the NH State Arts Council's 2003 compact disc *Songs of the Seasons*, for which he also co-wrote the liner notes.



From 1979 to 1993, Jeff toured nationally for the Smithsonian Institution. He continues to travel extensively in the US, Canada, and the UK, performing at museums and historical societies, folk clubs and folk festivals. In addition to singing and storytelling, he plays concertina, banjo, guitar, and several "pocket" instruments, including bones, spoons, and the jig doll/limberjack.

He is past president of the Country Dance and Song Society, and a past officer and founding member of the North American Folk Alliance (now Folk Alliance International). He has been an artist for Virginia and Ohio Arts Councils, is a speaker for NH Humanities, and is a producer of the Portsmouth Maritime Folk Festival. In 2007, he was named a NH State Arts Council Fellow.

We're thrilled to honor the many accomplishments of Jeff Warner. Location and date of the award presentation will be announced later. In the meanwhile you can listen to him sing "Baldheaded End of the Broom" from *Jolly Tinker*, <http://www.jeffwarner.com/Baldheaded.mp3>.