

John was 'discovered' playing the guitar at a gas station near his home in Rappahonick County, VA, by folkie/mandolinist/banjoist Ralph Rinzler in the early 1960s. John worked at many jobs, but was a grave digger for most of his life and proud that he could cut a perfect-cornered grave with just a pick and shovel. This digging of graves 'exercise' aroused in John a deep interest in the Civil War and the finding, identifying, background/history, and cherishing of relics. He spent some of his 'own time' time searching for Civil War relics, beyond what items he may have encountered when working at his job. John loved the outdoors, and animals, he always tried to visit the zoo in any 'new' city he may visit when on tour playing music. He was a superb storyteller and teller of 'tall tales' (liar). Compelling and fascinating to listen to in his Virginia hybrid/Southern US/Cockney English speech. He would generally inform his audience when he was telling the truth and when he was about to tell a 'tall tale.' When playing slide guitar, he used the 'handle' of a pocketknife, with the blade open, sharp side up, with the blade held between his 3rd finger and pinky of his left hand, using the handle of the pocket knife to 'fret' the strings, He learned to play 'by ear' from listening to the 78 rpm records of Blind Blake (the song, "That Will Never Happen No More," as posted in video above in this thread by Jerry is a Blind Blake song), Blind Willie McTell, Jimmie Rodgers, Sam McGee, etc., and John Jackson played far more than 'just blues' He played whatever music he enjoyed, a true 'Blues/Songster', for lack of a better term, and a true gentle-man. :)

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Memories of John Jackson:

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- by Michael Hawkeye Herman (photos © Michael Hawkeye Herman)





Hawkeye Herman and John Jackson
1994 Mississippi Valley Blues Festival, Davenport, IA



photo by Marcie Ryan

John Jackson and Hawkeye Herman