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NEW YORK FOLKLORE  
129 Jay Street  
Schenectady, NY 12305  
518/346-7008  
Fax 518/346-6617  
Email: [info@nyfolklore.org](mailto:info@nyfolklore.org)  
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# Bill Smith

**Born in 1937** into a large family in the “Featherbed” section near South Colton, on the northern outskirts of the Adirondack Park, Bill Smith is a teller of tales, a singer of songs, and a maker of traditional Adirondack pack baskets. He learned each of these trades first at home from his parents, his father’s lumberjack friends, and the assorted other characters who would come through the Smith house and the nearby woods in Bill’s childhood. The household was without electricity until 1954.

Bill has been a trapper and fur buyer, a pulpwood cutter, and a hunting and fishing guide. For several years, he taught outdoor education in area public schools and colleges.

As the youngest of 10 children, all his brothers had moved out of the house by the

time Bill received his first musical instrument by mail—a guitar from the Sears & Roebuck Company. Bill was inspired to play from hearing Dick Law, an accomplished musician, and also by his mother who played pump organ and taught him many songs.

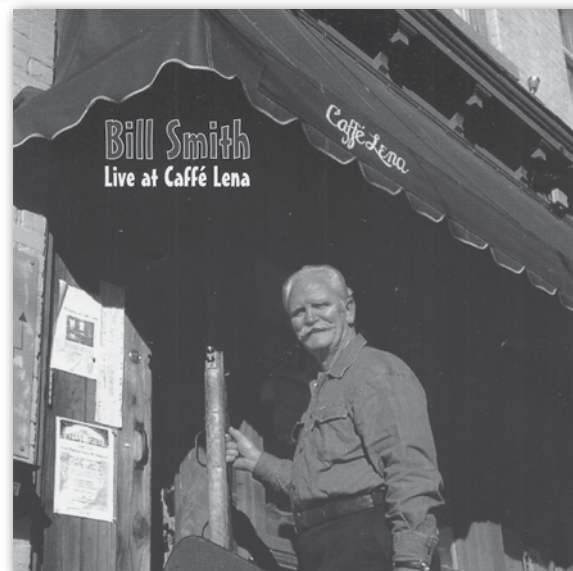
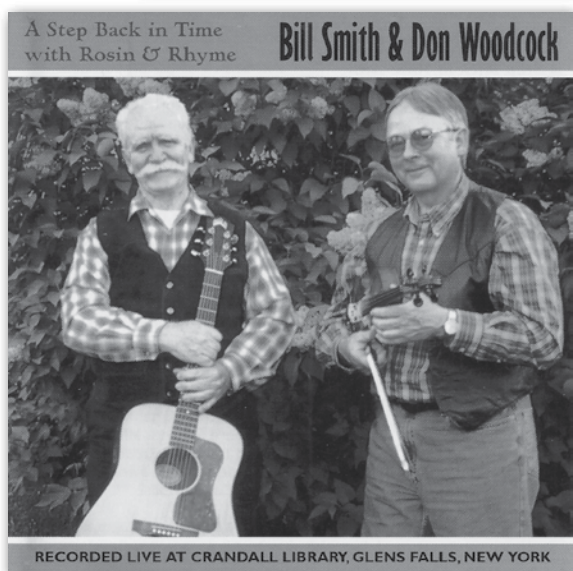
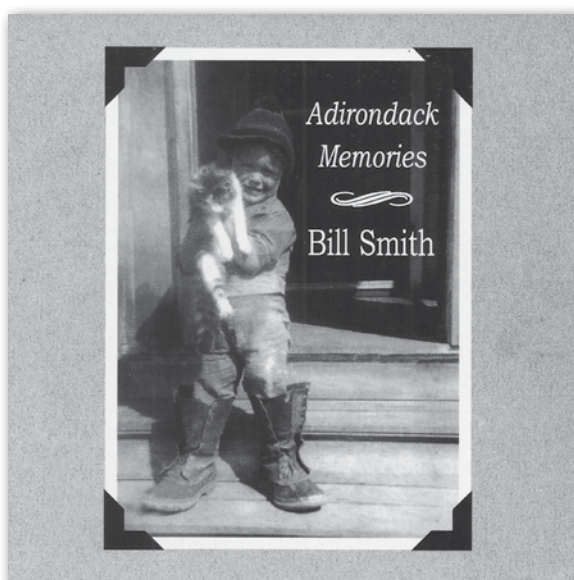
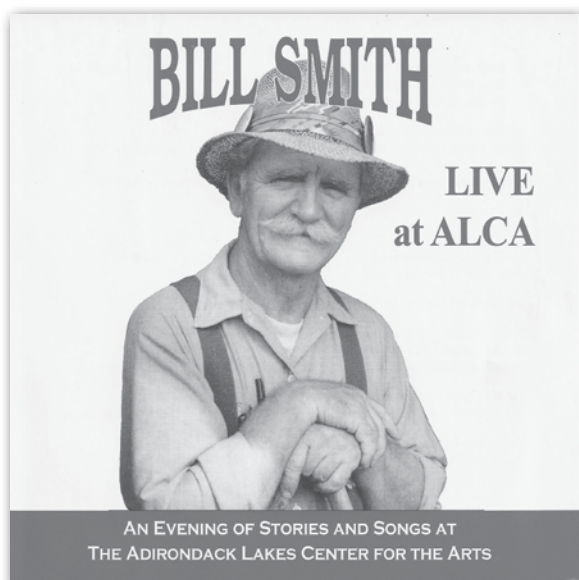
With his father often gone for weeks at a time, working in the woods, Bill and his mother would spend many lonely nights playing and singing together; country songs and sentimental love pieces were among their favorites. Bill remembers well that New Year’s Day in 1953, when he and his mother heard on their car radio that Hank Williams, their musical hero, had died; they both cried.

Bill Smith is widely known throughout the Adirondacks and beyond as a master of various traditional arts of the region.

He performs for a variety of audiences with a wide repertoire of stories and songs about local life. He has been written about in numerous articles and books, and has produced a series of recordings of his stories and songs for Front Hall Records and his own label, Featherbed Productions. ▼

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*Bill’s CDs are available at the Gallery of New York Traditions at the NYFS in Schenectady or online at [www.nyfolklore.org/gallery/store/music.html](http://www.nyfolklore.org/gallery/store/music.html)*



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