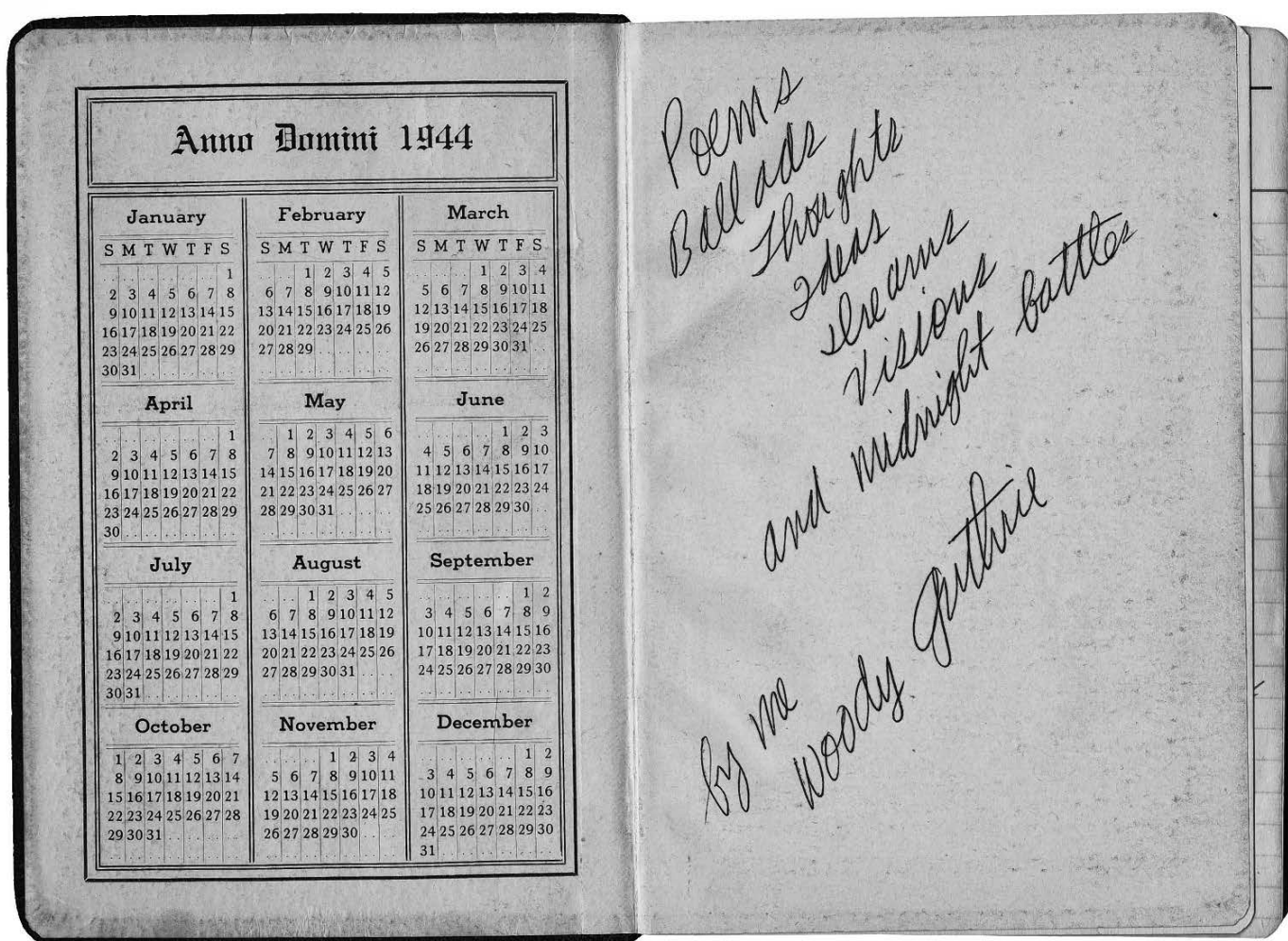


# BOOKS



Woody Guthrie titled and indexed many of his notebooks.

## Woody Guthrie's American chorus

**NONFICTION:** This lovingly curated volume of song lyrics, photos and other ephemera will introduce the singer to a whole new generation.

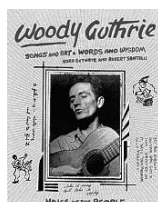
By CHARLIE MAGUIRE  
Special to the Star Tribune

Sitting on the front porch of our farmhouse outside of Buffalo, N.Y., in 1964, I played and sang Woody Guthrie's signature song, "This Land Is Your Land," over and over. He was from rural Oklahoma, and I felt an instant kinship with his work-a-day tunes and familial personality.

Woodrow Wilson Guthrie (1912-1967), already the subject of a couple of solid biographies, proudly wore the tattered and patched social fabric of the United States in the 1930s and '40s. His wry, prophetic songs of the Dust Bowl and hard traveling hit home with marginalized rural and urban audiences, and still do to this day.

His output in a variety of media was non-stop, and the persistent myth of being an aw-shucks hobo singer belied his true talents and artistic successes. In actuality, by age 30 he had been signed by a major label (RCA Victor), poured out a book-length account of his life in "Bound for Glory," and later proved he could hold up his end of a conversation with Albert Einstein.

Weighing in at more than 4 pounds, "Woody Guthrie: Songs and Art, Words and Wisdom" by Nora Guthrie and Robert Santelli reveals a hip social media feeling inside, tracing Woody's life and work, including hand-



### Woody Guthrie: Songs and Art, Words and Wisdom

**By:** Nora Guthrie and Robert Santelli.

**Publisher:** Chronicle Books, 340 pages, \$40.

fuls of original lyrics (many shown actual size) never before published. The classics like "This Land" are here, too, sporting rips, stains and inky notes in Guthrie's hand, lovingly reproduced. Throw in some ephemera and revealing photographs (a nude Woody, and Arthur Dubinsky's seldom-seen pictures) and this book may introduce Guthrie to a new generation seeking to sound off on the present condition of the American Spirit.

Woody's daughter Nora, who has safeguarded and overseen her father's papers most of her working life, brings a clear-eyed and touching vision of her father throughout. Nora's daughter, Anna Canoni, joins her mother and grandmother Marjorie M. Guthrie (who originally saved almost everything here) as a highly praised third-generation Guthrie-woman archivist.

Co-author Robert Santelli, who gets credit for pitching the idea of this lush cornucopia, paces the story and rounds up short essays,

a poem and an interview from 21st-century voices, including performers Arlo Guthrie, Rosanne Cash and Ani DiFranco, as well as historian David Brinkley and actor Jeff Daniels.

Daniels comments that Woody acted out the characters in his songs. Nora Guthrie, in the longest piece, recalls a desperately difficult family discussion after Woody's diagnosis of Huntington's disease, for which there was no cure or treatment. Knowing at 40 that he would never live a normal life outside of a state hospital, Woody and family collectively made the decision to end the marriage in order to foster the future possibility of another "father figure in the house."

And there were "a few," Nora writes, but with each relationship before and after Woody's death, she recalled her mother saying to would-be suitors: "You are marrying both of us, me and Woody."

In this substantial book, that same sentiment echoes throughout. Woody's trusty voice has indeed traveled far and faithfully in common chorus with Americans and people around the world, along with what he made for you and me.

Charlie Maguire is a folk performer and songwriter. He's written about and produced numerous concerts and an album celebrating Woody Guthrie. He lives in Minneapolis.