SONG NOTES

accompanying text

to the

Old Town School

of Folk Music

Song Book

compiled & edited

by Mark Dvorak

Please drop a note with your comments and questions.
For additional copies contact:
Mark Dvorak, PO Box 181, Brookfield, IL 60513
markdv@aol.com
www.markdvorak.com

introduction

Some time ago, a former student gave me a copy of the original Old Town School of Folk Music songbook as a gift. Though the Old Town School opened in 1957, I don't think the first songbook appeared til about a year later. There's no copyright page in mine, so it's hard to tell. I suppose someone somewhere knows. Whenever it came to be, I'm told it was created by Win Stracke, the school's first director and Frank Hamilton, the first instructor. It seems almost inconceivable that anyone would think of starting up a music school without a songbook. But that's the way Win and Frank wanted to do it.

Win and Frank loved music of all kinds. Win was a trained singer with a deep bass voice. He sang folk songs his whole life, but also sang in classical settings, choirs, and even an opera or two. He enjoyed a successful career in radio and television, and at one time was quite the celebrity. Frank grew up in Los Angeles and was remarkably young when he and Win opened the school. He was skilled on several instruments and already an accomplished folk and jazz musician. Frank was also a talented teacher of folk music classes, having learned first-hand from a woman named Bess Lomax Hawes in California.

Both Frank and Win had a great knowledge of and deep respect for folk songs from many countries. Together they envisioned a school where people could not only celebrate the American tradition of song and dance, but could also become acquainted with the musical traditions of different world cultures. Their new school would be a meeting house for musicians, storytellers, folk dancers, folklorists and professional folk entertainers who would gather to share their knowledge and experience with the public.

They fashioned a curriculum and developed a teaching technique. Hailed as "innovative" at the time, Frank and Win's creative new approach to learning music was actually based upon the age old methods folks have always used: listening, watching, trial and error and playing by ear. When they finally did get around to assembling the original "textbook" as it was called, it was done only after considerable discussion and debate.

Win and Frank wanted their book to be easy for students to use. It had to be inexpensive to produce. They wanted it to be representative of the North American folk song tradition. They wanted songs from other cultures to be included. The songs had to be simple. They favored lots of songs which were suitable for group involvement. Where other music schools taught sight reading and performance, Win and Frank wanted the Old Town School "method" to retain it's emphasis on participation and development of aural skills.

Finally, 94 songs were settled upon. Most were North American folk songs, but selections from Israel, Ireland, England, Chile, and a Cajun love song were added. Each page gave a sentence or two of background about the song while the chord progression and rhythm indicators were printed above the verses. Chord fingering charts for guitar, and in some cases banjo, were pictured, and at the bottom of each page the melody was written out in standard music notation.

The book was issued to students unbound. The pages were 3-hole punched and to be put in a ring binder. The intention here was for all students to start out with the same collection of songs. As hand outs from different classes were added to the binder, no two books--or no two students--might evolve

identically.

The current edition of our songbook is the fifth or sixth, depending on whom you ask, and it's a whole lot different than the original. There are now 108 songs in all--two dozen of which are more than forty-year survivors from Win and Frank's original selection. The "Old Town School Musical Guide" in the back has been greatly expanded too. It's chock-full of clearly presented, useful information. And after 30-odd years of teachers watching ring binders crash to the floor, the current book has been spiral bound so it sits better on a music stand.

My hope is that Old Town School teachers and students will find this companion guide helpful. It might be useful in the classroom by providing some context to a group lesson. It might be useful as a reference to give the reader a basic grasp of the genre. Or it might be used as a starting point for further study and research.

In a way, every musician and song writer is a kind of folklorist. We ask questions. In what we learn from people and books and recordings we sometimes find answers. Which lead to more questions. Throughout our musical lives, we review our growing catalogues of truth and sort through our expanding inventories of things unknown. Piece by piece, a personal collection of sounds, images and experiences is somewhere being assembled in our minds and hearts. That collection contains the real stuff out of which real music is made. And with practice comes the promise that our music will one day reveal a beautiful reflection of who we are and from where we've come.

For certain, there is no shortage of virtuosos in our musical world. Performances and recordings abound which remind us that indeed, some are born with extraordinary gifts. But I hope the following pages begin to provide the reader with the sense that, for a long time now, folks with ordinary gifts have been responding musically to the world about them in extraordinary ways. That's the sense I got while digging this stuff up. And that's an idea I now think Win and Frank must have known a whole lot about by the time they opened the Old Town School of Folk Music.

-- Mark Dvorak
Brookfield, IL
September 2000

Amazing Grace

Recordings on File by: The Blind Boys of Alabama, Judy Collins, Buell Kazee, Pete Seeger.

In the late 1700s, before John Newton composed "Amazing Grace," he was the owner and captain of a slave ship.

He experienced what he was later to refer to as his "great deliverance" while attempting to steer his ship through a violent storm in the middle of the Atlantic. When all seemed lost and the ship would surely sink, it is reported that he exclaimed, "Lord, have mercy upon us," and miraculously the ship, it's crew and cargo of Africans were spared.

Later in his cabin he reflected on what he had said and began to believe that God had addressed him through the storm and that grace had begun to work for him. According to popular folklore, Newton then turned his slave ship 180 degrees around and took those people back to their homes.

He sailed back to England, joined the Methodist Church, became a minister and spent the rest of his life in service of the church. In that time Newton composed some 280 hymns, including "Amazing Grace" which describes the great epiphany he experienced at sea.

In the Southern United States, this hymn is traditionally sung in "long-meter" style, where the preacher "lines out" the lyrics to a congregation that may not have been able to afford hymnals or been able to read them.

Sources:

- *Folk Song USA, Alan Lomax, Editor, New American Library*
- *Ford Hall Forum audio cassette, "The New American Gazette" with Pete Seeger.*
- *John Newton page on the World Wide Web.*

Aragon Mill

Recordings on File by: Hazel Dickens, Si Kahn, Rosalee Sorrels.

"Aragon Mill" was written by Si Kahn, one of the finest and most prolific folk music composers at work today. He is also deeply involved with grass roots organizing in the fields of civil rights, labor, voting rights, health care, welfare, the environment and peace.

He says of his music, "The songs I have written grow out of the work I have done and the people I've met and worked with. The words and songs, stories and jokes of the working people of the deep South and Appalachia, have been a source of continuing inspiration to my music and organizing. Their lives and dreams have given me strength and belief. I know that music is not enough to change the world. It takes organizing; it takes people working together to reach the goals they have set for themselves."

Si Kahn's songs have been widely recorded and are sung throughout the world wherever people gather around a cause or just for a good time.

Source: Si Kahn's home pageon the World Wide Web.

Aunt Rhody

Recordings on File by: Pete Seeger, Win Stracke, The Weavers.

For generations, American children of every state have been rocked, joggled and sung to sleep with these sweet-sour lines, the story of Aunt Rhody (Aunt Sally or Aunt Nancy) who lost her feather-bed when her best goose was drowned in the mill pond. "Aunt Rhody" is a classic American folk song. There's irony here, pathos, humor and if you like, history--a reminder of the days when a goose feather bed was the very prime in sleeping, because it cradled you and cuddled you and covered you at the very same time.

The melodies to "Go Tell Aunt Rhody" and "Go Tell It on the Mountain" have very much in common. Also similar is "My Home's Across the Smoky Mountains."

Source: Folk Song USA, Alan Lomax, Editor, New American Library.

Bill Bailey

Recordings on File by: Big Bill Broonzy.

Blues giant Big Bill Broonzy remembers hearing his uncle play the banjo with other musicians at dances and picnics in the South. Among the numbers in their repertoire were old folk and pop songs like "Midnight Special," "Frankie and Johnny," "Oh Susannah" and the Dixieland favorite, "Bill Bailey."

Bill remembers: "I played for big picnics in the South from the time I was around 14 years old. I was in Arkansas then. I played for big picnics, they called them two-way picnics. And barbecues, they cooked big pigs and things like that. And barbecued chickens and ducks and things like that. Free picnics mostly. A two-way picnic is something where they have two stages, one on one side of the band and one on the back of the band. The whites on one stage and the blacks on the other stage. I played the fiddle then. I didn't play the guitar till I came to Chicago in 1920."

Source: "Big Bill Broonzy Interviewed by Studs Terkel," Folkways Records FG3586.

Blow Ye Winds

Recordings on File by: George & Jerry Armstrong, Burl Ives.

If the existence of a merchant seaman was hard, a whaler's life was hell. Voyages often lasted for two or three years. The vessels were clumsy tubs that stank continually from whale oil. Often months went by without a catch. Like a great many workman's ballads, "Blow Ye Winds" is a "gripe song." But like a soldier's "gripe song," it has spirit--no tears--and the melody has the buoyancy of men who can survive and grow strong on hard work and hard living. It has a tune that will carry in a high wind and blow the blues right out of your system.

Source: Folk Song USA, Alan Lomax, Editor, New American Library.

Brown's Ferry Blues

Recordings on File by:The Delmore Brothers, Woody Guthrie & Friends (Jackhammer John), John Jackson, New Lost City Ramblers, The Weavers (Jackhammer John).

The Delmore Brothers were one of the most famous duos in the early history of country music.

Alton, the older of the two brothers, played six string guitar while Rabon played the four string tenor guitar, a sort of large ukulele. Throughout the 1930s and 40s they performed and recorded widely. Their characteristic close vocal harmony and clean duet picking influenced dozens of early bluegrass and country performers including Bill Monroe and Merle Travis.

"Brown's Ferry Blues" is a comical song named for the old ferry site on the Tennessee River near their home in Alabama. It was composed one evening by Alton after the duo had nearly lost a contest to a group who performed a comical number, and The Brothers thought they ought to have one too. Musically, it is very similar to the Brothers' classic "Big River Blues" which is nowadays more often called "Deep River Blues." Woody Guthrie used "Brown's Ferry Blues" as a model for his own "Jack Hammer John."

Source: Liner notes, "The Delmore Brothers, Brown's Ferry Blues, 1933-41 Recordings," County Records 402.

Buffalo Gals

Recordings on File by: Woody Guthrie & Friends, Pete Seeger, Eric Weisberg.

"Buffalo Gals" has its roots in the black-faced minstrel shows of the mid-1800s. Folklorists suspect that traveling musicians began changing it to "New York Gals," "Philadelphia Gals" or "Bowery Gals" depending on the theater they were playing. "Buffalo" probably stuck for poetic reasons, and as such became one of the most popular and most-parodied of American folk songs.

As "Buffalo Gals" traveled west with settlers it became a most popular square-dance number, with or without the words.

Source: Folk Song USA, Alan Lomax, Editor, New American Library.

Camptown Races

Recordings on File by: Dan & Louise Brock, Pete Seeger.

All over the world, Stephen Foster is recognized as America's first great song writer. He is commonly identified with the South, partly because of the subject matter of his songs, and partly because of the Southern dialect in which his lyrics were written and published.

Truth be told, only a small number of Foster's compositions, like "Camptown Races" were suited to or performed by black-face minstrel shows. By far, most of his songs were written within the tradition of the British-American genteel airs that had risen in the 1800s out of the needs and tastes of a growing middle class. Stephen Foster was a true northerner, born on the 4th of July, 1826 near Pittsburgh, PA. The most southerly city he lived in was Cincinnati, and only once did he ever venture into the deep South--when Foster and his wife traveled by steamboat down the Mississippi to New Orleans.

Source: Liner notes by H. Wiley Hitchcock, "Songs by Stephen Foster," Nonesuch Records, H-71268.

Careless Love

Recordings on file by: Joan Baez, Big Bill Broonzy, Carl Jackson, Brownie McGhee, Joe Turner.

"Careless Love" is one of the earliest, if it is not actually the first, blues and is one of the greatest American melodies. Folklorists think that it originated among white singers and was adopted later by Southern African Americans. "Careless Love," like many songs from the South, has changed hands across race lines so many times that it has invariably picked up musical and lyrical characteristics from both cultures.

"Careless Love," like "Easy Rider" and "Make Me a Pallet on the Floor," all share an early blues heritage as well as a common musical structure. Each verse is sixteen measures in length, with the first line repeated 3 times and the "punch" or rhyming line as the fourth and final line of the stanza.

Source: Folk Song USA, Alan Lomax, Editor, New American Library.

Cat Came Back

Recordings on file by: Cisco Houston, Trout Fishing in America

Some say that the minstrel show circuit of the late 1800s was the first pop-song movement in American history. Henry S. Miller, a Chicagoan, was a very popular composer during this time, specializing in comical and novelty songs. Just like the cat in the song, "The Cat Came Back" endures to this day because of and despite many changes and adaptations.

Some suggest that the great Merle Travis used "The Cat Came Back" as a musical model for his classic "Sixteen Tons."

Source: The Collected Reprints from Sing Out! Volumes 1964-73, Sing Out Publications.

Cindy

Recordings on file by: Susan Cahill & Fred Cockerham, Michael Cooney, Jim Craig, Hobart Smith.

Wherever the minstrel show and its music penetrated in America, it carried along the five-string banjo, which might be said to be America's only original folk instrument. After the minstrel shows died out and popular culture had grown tired of the banjo, it found its final home in the lonesome hollers of the Southern mountains. Mountain fiddlers worked at the contraption until they had produced a kind of music that was neither Afro-American, nor minstrel style, nor a transcription of their old-time tunes, but a peculiar and wonderful mixture of them all.

"Darlin' Corey," "John Hardy," "Black-Eyed Susie" and "Cindy" are examples of an American music that strongly bears the influence of the mountain five-string banjo style. And simple songs such as these have literally traveled around the world since their humble beginnings, helping to define the sound and give character to the American song bag.

The lyrics to "Cindy" are little more than a hundred-year-old improvised liar's contest about the fictional girl for whom this song is titled. They tell a story of how much she was in love with this singer or that. The tune is a dance number of common stock for fiddle or banjo and fit for a square dance or a reel.

Source: Folk Song USA, Alan Lomax, Editor, New American Library.

City of New Orleans

Recordings on file by: Judy Collins, Steve Goodman, Arlo Guthrie.

Steve Goodman is remembered as one of Chicago's favorite sons, and is one of the most celebrated musicians the Old Town School of Folk Music can claim as an alumnus.
Goodman wrote dozens of songs and recorded many acclaimed albums in a career that was sadly cut short by leukemia. Those who were lucky enough to hear him acknowledge that his enthusiasm, boundless energy, spirit and sparkling live performances are the stuff out of which legends are made.

There's a story that still gets told around Chicago how Steve and his buddy John Prine were working at a Chicago night club. Arlo Guthrie (son of Woody Guthrie) had just gotten finished with his show at another place, and stopped in to relax and listen to some music and try not to get noticed too much. Well, he did get noticed and Goodman and his pals wanted Arlo to hear a new train song he had just written. The story goes on to say that Arlo was quite annoyed with the imposition and agreed to listen to Goodman play his song if he and his friends would then go away and leave him to his privacy. As things turned out, Arlo loved the song and wound up recording it later that year and "The City of New Orleans" became a gold record.

With the success of Steve Goodman and "The City of New Orleans," in the early 1970s, the tune was then included in the Old Town School of Folk Music's song book and has remained popular with students, teachers and supporters of the school ever since.

Colorado Trail

Recordings on file by: Cisco Houston, Faith Petric, The Weavers.

A beautiful cowboy love song. All sources point to a cowboy from Duluth, MN whose name is unknown. He was brought to the hospital after being thrown and trampled by what he called "a terribly bad hoss." A surgeon, Dr. T.L. Chapman, treated the wrangler for "bones of both upper and lower legs broken, fractures of the collar bone on both sides, numerous fractures of both arms and wrists, and many scars from lacerations."

As the unknown cowboy convalesced and his strength returned, he sang across the hospital ward in a mellowed tenor voice. And the other patients always called for more. One of the songs he sang was "Colorado Trail." Dr. Chapman later remembered the tune to poet and folk singer Carl Sandburg, who included it in his collection The American Songbag.
Source: The American Songbag, by Carl Sandburg. Harcourt, Brace and Jovanovich.

Colours

Recording on file by: Donovan.

Donovan Leitch was born in Glasgow, Scotland in 1946. As a young guitarist, poet and songwriter, Donovan traveled and performed throughout the British Isles, following in the musical footsteps of Bob Dylan and Woody Guthrie. Donovan moved to the United States and had several hit records during the years of the folk boom, including "Colours" while on his way to becoming an international pop icon.

Corrina, Corrina

Recordings on file by: Eric Clapton (Alberta), Michael Cooney (Weeping Willow), Bob Dylan, Mississippi John Hurt, Joe Turner, Doc Watson, Bob Wills and His Texas Playboys.

"Corrina, Corrina" has always been a dance number and is the same song as versions of "Roberta" and "Alberta." Whatever name this tune goes by, it has been a popular song among Anglo and African American musicians for as long as anyone can remember. It's part blues and part hillbilly. Notable among the countless recordings of it are cuts by Mississippi John Hurt, Big Joe Turner and British rocker Eric Clapton, but the song's popularity was undoubtedly sustained when a Texas swing fiddler by the name of Bob Wills and his band, the Texas Playboys recorded it in the late 1930s. The record was a huge hit and became one of their signature pieces.

Source: The Folk Songs of North America, by Alan Lomax, Doubleday.

Crawdad Song

Recordings on file by: Jim Kweskin & the Kids, Win Stracke, Doc Watson, Dick Weisman & Dan Fox.

"Crawdad" is a variant of an older piece named "Sweet Thing," which was born in the levee camps and jook joints of the African American South and it's the kind of tune which is designed to accompany a sort of dance called a "play party."

In the first hundred or so years of our nation's history, many communities permitted play parties as a function of social interaction. Square dancing was frowned upon but permitted. And "round dancing" where a couple danced faced to face with arms around each other, was something no respectable country girl would do.

Play party melodies are characteristically simple and lilting and the words are often improvised responses to the experiences of working, courting and living. Many, many songs in North American folk music have their roots in the play party tradition. When you hear a group of children singing and chanting jump rope rhymes in the school yard, you are listening to an example of a modern day play party.

Source: Folk Song USA, Alan Lomax, Editor, New American Library.

Cripple Creek

Recordings on file by: Michael Cooney, Flatt & Scruggs, David Johnson, Pete Seeger.

When the first settlers came from England to the New World, the violin was still a folk instrument, popular at country dances in the shires, but not yet accepted in polite society. For frontier America, however, the fiddle was not just another musical instrument, it was music itself. Played butt against the chest instead of under the chin, sounding the old English and Irish reels and the wild bagpipe melodies of the Scottish Highlands, it's wailing, throbbing voice rang through the wilderness like the crow of a rooster, calling the folks to their hoedowns, husking bees, log rollings, corn shuckings and weddings.

"Cripple Creek" is another of many North American songs whose roots are in the play party and dance tradition. Nowadays it is also wildly popular as a banjo piece.

Source: Folk Song USA, Alan Lomax, Editor, New American Library.

Deck the Halls

Recordings on file by: John Fahey.

The music to "Deck the Halls" is an old Welsh melody. Mozart used it in a piano and violin duet in the 1700s. The words are believed to be American from the 19th century.

Source: The Anthology of Christmas Music, Montrose Music.

Deep River Blues

Recordings on file by: The Delmore Brothers (Big River Blues), Doc Watson.

Originally composed by the Delmore Brothers as "Big River Blues" in the 1930s, this tune has since become a signature piece of the great Doc Watson. Born in Deep Gap, North Carolina in 1923, Arthel "Doc" Watson lost his sight at a very young age. He possessed a natural talent for music and by the time he was a young man he had mastered the guitar, banjo, harmonica and traditional mountain singing.

Folklorist Ralph Rinzler "discovered" Doc in the late 1950s when he and members of his family and neighbors from Deep Gap were gathered together to record the indigenous music of the region. Although Doc had performed occasionally around North Carolina, he didn't get into the music business full time until 1961 when he was invited to New York for some performances where he was enthusiastically received.

An undisputed master of his instrument, Doc remembered as a young man hearing the Delmore Brothers sing and play "Big River Blues" on record. He worked and worked at learning to pick the tune exactly as it sounded. Finally satisfied that he had done the best he could, he settled on an arrangement that borrowed from the finger-picking style of Merle Travis (after whom Doc named his first son) which suitably duplicated the sounds he heard on the recording. It wasn't until much later that Doc realized the Delmore Brothers used two guitars on their recording and that's what caused him so much difficulty in mastering the arrangement.

Sources:

- *Liner notes "Doc Watson" Vanguard Recording.*
- *The Songs of Doc Watson, Forward by Ralph Rinzler. Oak Publications.*

Dink's Song

Recordings on file by: Pete Seeger, Win Stracke.

John A. Lomax and his son Alan are important names in the world of folk song. They have collected and documented thousands of songs for the Library of Congress and published dozens of books. John Lomax discovered and recorded the great Lead Belly in a Louisiana prison, and he was among the first to recognize the genius in Woody Guthrie's work.

On one collecting trip in 1904, John Lomax was recording the singing of African American levee workers who were brought from Mississippi to Texas to work on a project on the Brazos River. Lomax

brought his huge Edison recording machine to the encampment where the men and women lived while the levee was being constructed.

Lomax "found a woman named Dink scrubbing her man's clothes in the shade of their tent along the Brazos, across from A. & M. University." He was told that Dink knew all the songs, but he did not find her helpful, "until I walked a mile to a farm commissary and bought her a pint of gin."

As Dink drank, the sounds of her scrubbing board increased in volume and intensity. She talked and sang into Lomax's Edison recorder; she described a life that was hard and work that was hard. She talked and sang about her loneliness and a better life for her children. She talked about one day leaving the levee and heading "on up the river where I belong." She sipped her gin and sang and drank until the gin was gone.

When Lomax got back to Harvard University to transcribe his findings, he listened again to Dink's songs and stories and realized he had never asked her for the title of the beautiful lament she had sung, so it simply went into his collection as "Dink's Song."

Win Stracke loved to sing "Dink's Song" and he loved the story behind it's discovery. He recorded it twice.

Source: Folk Song USA, Alan Lomax, Editor, New American Library.

Don't You Hear Jeruslem Moan?

Recording on file by: Sam Bush & Friends.

In terms of number of recordings, Gid Tanner and His Skillet Lickers was the most prolific of the Georgia string bands of the 1920s and 30s. They typified the unrestrained Georgia string band style, featuring comedy skits, fiddle breakdowns, and the hillbilly showman personality of Gid Tanner. The band featured Tanner and Clayton McMichen on fiddle, Fate Norris on a barely audible banjo, and Riley Puckett on guitar.

"Don't You Hear Jerusalem Moan" is an old gospel/novelty song which manages to poke fun at several of the major religions. As if the words weren't enough to make this song outrageous, the chorus has a few extra beats added for good measure.

Source: Old Time Songbook, by Wayne Erbsen. Native Ground.

Done Laid Around

Recordings on file by: Cisco Houston, The Weavers.

In 1961, Pete Seeger reported that he "...first learned 'Done Laid Around' from Larry Ehrlich of Chicago, who learned it from Paul Clayton, who learned it from Arthur Kyle Davis of the University of Virginia, who got it from a small booklet, published by a now deceased French professor. His original sources, African American folk singers of Virginia, were not listed."

Seeger recorded "Done Laid Around" as "Gotta Travel On" in the 1950s with the popular folk-singing quartet, The Weavers. It was a hit record for them and became one of their many signature pieces.

Source: "Sing Out!" Magazine.

Don't This Road Look Rough & Rocky

Recordings on file by: J. D. Crowe & Friends, Emmy Lou Harris, Earl Scruggs & Tom T. Hall.

In the early 1930s, a new form of country music began to emerge from the older Southern mountain traditions. It was called Bluegrass music. Many agree the term was coined by the great Bill Monroe, a Kentuckian who called his band, "The Bluegrass Boys."
Bluegrass musicians pride themselves on their tight harmony singing and instrumental virtuosity. Where old-time string band instrumentalists will all play the melody simultaneously, each musician in a bluegrass ensemble will often "take a break" while the others vamp in the background.

The characteristic sound of bluegrass was complete when banjo player Earl Scruggs, who developed a three-finger picking style, now known as "Scruggs Style Picking," joined Monroe's Bluegrass Boys in the late 1930s. Soon after, Scruggs and guitarist Lester Flatt formed their own band, and helped bring the sounds of bluegrass music to an ever-widening audience. If you remember the music from the the television show, "The Beverly Hillbillys," you've heard Earl Scruggs pick his banjo.

"Don't This Road Look Rough and Rocky" is an old country song, kept alive by the likes of bluegrass masters such as Flatt and Scruggs.

Source: The Bluegrass Songbook, By Peter Wernick. Oak Publications.

Down by the Riverside

Recordings on file by: Big Bill Broonzy, Lead Belly, Brownie McGhee & Sonny Terry, Pete Seeger & Sonny Terry, Joseph Spence, Sweet Honey in the Rock, The Weavers.

Also known as "Study War No More," this powerful spiritual was was first transcribed in the years following the Civil War. It was made popular again decades later when Pete Seeger and the folk singing group, The Weavers revived it in the 1950s. Only a few years later, thousands of Americans were singing it to express sentiments of anti-war and anti-violence during the troubled nineteen-sixties. It's an example of a folk song's power to endure and reflect new meaning to different generations.

Source: Liner notes "Pete Seeger at Carnegie Hall," Folkways FA 2412.

Down in the Valley

Recordings on file by: Burl Ives, Lead Belly, Pete Seeger, Various artists.

Popular music almost always has to do with the subjects of love and heartbreak, and in the days before records and radio, "Down in the Valley" was among the most popular songs sung in rural America. Folklorists count many, many variations of this classic, but each is sentimental and nostalgic and each deals with isolation.

"You Are My Sunshine" and "Home on the Range" are close musical relatives of "Down in the Valley."

Source: Folk Song USA, Alan Lomax, Editor, New American Library.

Drunken Sailor

Recording on file by: Burl Ives.

A sea chantey (or shanty) is a work song. Different types of jobs on a tall ship required different rhythms and tempos. "The Drunken Sailor" is what's known as a "capstan chantey," a song sung to the rhythm of a group of men turning a capstan, a huge device for winding ropes on a tall ship. On the words, "Way hay and up she rises!" the men would stamp loudly on the deck. This led to a whole category of songs known as "stamp and go" chanties.

Source: The Burl Ives Song Book, Ballantine Books.

East Virginia

Recordings on file by: Almanac Singers (I Don't Want Your Millions, Mister), Joan Baez, Flatt & Scruggs, Cisco Houston, Mike Seeger, Pete Seeger, Various artists, The Weavers.

The origins of this song can be traced back to seventeenth century England. One of the first Southern Mountain recordings of it was Clarence Ashley's "Deep Holler Blues," which was sung with five string banjo accompaniment. The tune is modal--neither minor nor major.

Ashley later recorded it again this time to guitar and mouth harp accompaniment. Around the same time, the Carter Family also recorded it in a major key and in two part harmony. Later in the 1930s the song developed into the very popular "Greenback Dollar."

Source: Old Time String Band Song Book, Oak Publications.

El-a-noy

Recordings on file by: Carl Sandburg, Win Stracke, Art Thieme.

Carl Sandburg was not only a cherished poet, but also a first rate collector of folk songs and folklore. At his poetry readings, he often performed several folk songs accompanying himself on guitar. His guitar style was very simple but musical, and his singing, as one might guess, highlighted the sounds of the words.

The title of "El-A-Noy" is actually the phonetic spelling of the state name, Illinois, and this song is actually an old-time real estate advertisement. Biblical images were sure to identify with the targeted market of the early 1800s and the song even supplied directions ("Cross the Shawnee Ferry") in the last chorus.

Sandburg was the first to unearth this tune and included it in his collection, The American Songbag. Win Stracke, who was co-founder of the Old Town School of Folk Music, embraced any song that had its roots in Chicago or Illinois. He sung it around Chicago for years and years and recorded it twice. It was one of his signature pieces.

Erie Canal

Recordings on file by: Burl Ives, The Weavers.

It took eight years and several thousand wild Irishmen to dig the famous canal that connected the

Hudson River with the Great Lakes. By 1825 the canal was finally open and twenty years later, there were four thousand canal boats and twenty five thousand canalers afloat on the 425 mile "ditch." Midwestern states had increased in population and commerce many times over, with goods and people pouring west in a steady stream.

There must have been a great deal of singing on the canal as there are scores of songs and ballads about life on the E-Ri-E.

Source: Folk Song USA, Alan Lomax, Editor, New American Library.

Freight Train

Recordings on file by: Elizabeth Cotten, Peter, Paul & Mary.

The singing and playing of Elizabeth Cotten, from Chapel Hill, North Carolina is well known to anyone interested in traditional guitar styles. Libba had very individual sound; perhaps so because she played the guitar left-handed, with a right-handed guitar held upside down. Nevertheless, she was a fine musician with many years experience, not just with the guitar, but with life. It shows in the strength of her music.

"Freight Train" is Libba Cotten's most well known song. She composed it when she was about twelve years old, wondering where the train that ran past her farm might be headed and what the people there might be like. As an adult, Libba worked as a domestic and raised her own family, all the while keeping at her music. It wasn't until she retired at age sixty-five did Libba hit the road as a full time touring musician.

Considered to be an authentic Piedmont region artist, Cotten enjoyed a thirty year career of performances and recordings. Today, her best known songs are are sung and picked the world over.

Source: Traditional and Contemporary Guitar Picking Styles, by Happy Traum, Oak Publications.

Git Along Little Dogies

Recordings on file by: Woody Guthrie, Sons of the Pioneers, The Weavers.

One of the most enduring of all cowboy ballads, the rhythm of "Get Along Little Dogies" comes from the movement of a horse. The word "dogie" refers to a motherless calf who had to eat grass before being mature enough to digest it. This caused the calf to develop a big stomach which cowboys referred to as "dough guts," later shortened to "dogies."

Source: Folk Song USA, Alan Lomax, Editor, New American Library.

Goin' Down to Cairo

Recordings on file by: Doug & Bonnie Miller, Eric Weisberg (Eight More Miles to Louisville).

There are only a handful of folk songs native to the state of Illinois, and "Goin' Down to Cairo" (pronounced Kay-ro) is one of them. It's a song that is performed as a "singing game," with accompanying steps similar to that of a square dance. Cairo, Illinois sits at the junction of the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers, and the story behind "Goin' Down to Cairo" goes back to the late summer

1858 when an early frost killed all the corn and tobacco in Southern Illinois.

As the crops south of the Ohio River had not been damaged at all, planters from that region sent a portion of their harvest up river to be sold in Cairo, IL. Men journeyed to Cairo, many arriving several days before the boats came in with cargo.

R.B. Shelton, a native to the area remembers: "It was pretty hard to find a good place to pass the time away so the men began going into saloons and various other places to be entertained. Wives noticed on return trips that their husbands had 'blacked their boots' and were dressed up a great deal more than usual and they had been making frequent trips to Cairo.

"Many fabulous tales were told about the men having a 'Liza Jane' that they were interested in. As a result of this, wives began accompanying their husbands and the manner of entertainment in Cairo was somewhat changed.

"Play parties and singing games were played which usually wound up as a square dance. 'Goin' Down to Cairo' was first played as a joke, to poke a little fun at the errant husbands, but the song and the singing game that accompanied it were well-liked and people brought it back with them from Cairo, IL. I remember this was one of the favorite games when I was a boy."

Source: Folk Songs and Singing Games of the Illinois Ozarks, by David McIntosh, edited by Dale R. Whiteside. Southern Illinois University Press.

Golden Slippers

Recordings on file by: Brian Bowers, Jim Post, Carol Ann Wheeler.

James A. "Jimmy" Bland was a most prolific African American songwriter and performer. He was born a free American at Flushing, Long Island, NY in 1854, and it is reported that he composed over 700 songs in his lifetime. Songs of his like "Carry Me Back to Old Virginny," "In The Evening By The Moonlight" and "Golden Slippers" were popular numbers on the minstrel show circuit both in the United States and abroad.

Bland spent twenty years living in and touring Europe and was an extremely successful entertainer at the height of his career. But he lived high and dressed well, and that's probably why he and his money soon parted company. In 1901, he returned to the United States penniless.

Although the days of the minstrel song are long gone, songs like "Golden Slippers" live on in many traditions. You can hear it at old-timey picking sessions, bluegrass jams and the tune was even featured on a television commercial for a breakfast cereal.

Source: "A Brief History of James A. Bland" page on the World Wide Web.

Golden Vanity

Recordings on file by: Bok , Muir & Trickett, Cisco Houston & Woody Guthrie, Burl Ives, Pete Seeger, Art Thieme.

Way back in 17th century England, a song such as "The Golden Vanity" was referred to as a "broadside." A broadside is a topical song which usually levels criticism at someone or something, and broadside singers were the fore runners to the "protest singers" of the 1960's.

One of the greatest broadsides is "The Golden Vanity." It's an epic tale. Over the years, different versions of the heroic saga have evolved, and it's been sung to several different tunes.
Source: The Folk Songs of North America, by Alan Lomax, Doubleday.

Good News

Recordings on file by: Bob Gibson, Kingston Trio.

Spirituals--great songs of faith born out of slavery--represent one of America's important song treasures. The African American spiritual style often features a "call and response" format as well as a two line, interchangeable lyric. A spiritual also often involves an Old Testament or Judgment Day theme.

After the Civil War, African American colleges such as Fisk University, sent their choirs to tour the northern United States and Europe. Groups such as the Fisk Jubilee Singers helped to popularize many of the spirituals that are still widely known today.
Source: A Tribute to Woody Guthrie & Lead Belly, by Will Schmid, Music Educators Conference in Association with the Smithsonian Institution Office of Folklife Programs.

Goodnight Irene

Recordings on file by: Lead Belly, The Weavers.

Along with Woody Guthrie, Huddie Ledbetter is regarded as one of the great American folk song composers and performers. Born near Shreveport, LA in the late 1800s, Huddie's young life was filled with music, traveling, carousing and violence. He did three different stretches in prison in his lifetime, and at the age of 48 was discovered in Angola State Penitentiary by folk song collector John Lomax. Huddie was called "Lead Belly" and played a big twelve string guitar, which he tuned unusually low to imitate the sounds of a barrel-house piano.

Lead Belly was a song collector and an animated entertainer. He was a story teller and a raconteur and a crack musician. He was an improviser who sang blues and work songs, spirituals and pop numbers. Lead Belly was also a skilled composer. Like Guthrie, he had the ability to take old and familiar songs and rework them into fresh material.

Although Lead Belly never achieved great success as performer or recording artist in his lifetime, his songs and legend are inherently woven into the fabric of American folklore and music. His impact is so widely acknowledged and strongly felt that Lead Belly was honored as the first inductee into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 1989.

"Irene" is Lead Belly's signature piece and he sang it his entire life. He composed it at age twenty-three when his heart was broken by a sophisticated young lady from Shreveport. In 1949 a record of "Irene" was released by a group of folk singers who called themselves The Weavers and the song went to number one. It sold a then unheard of two million copies but sadly, Huddie passed away only six months earlier and never saw the fame or fortune that the success of "Irene" would have brought him.
Source: The Folk Songs of North America, Alan Lomax, Doubleday.

Grandfather's Clock

Recordings on file by: Ronnie Burroughs, David Grisman & Tony Rice, Shinobu Sato, Seldom Scene.

Before radio or sound recordings were invented, musical instruments--and the ability to play them--were at the zenith in home entertainment. Sentimental songs and novelty tunes were most popular and composed by the hundreds. Not only did they have to be catchy and fun to listen to, they also had to be easy to play and sing. Sheet music "copies" were sold and distributed in general stores, through mail order and even sold door to door.

Henry Clay Work was one of these first pop-songwriters in the days long before CD players or MTV. "Grandfather's Clock" was one of his big hits, and to this day is still a favorite wherever folk or bluegrass musicians gather to "pick" a good tune.

Source: Burl Ives Songbook, Ballantine.

Greensleeves

Recordings on file by: Frank Hamilton, Pete Seeger.

Harvard University's first professor of English was Francis James Child, a specialist in early English language and literature. He wrote and lectured on the works of great masters like Chaucer, Spenser and Shakespere. He is best known though, for his five volume edition The English and Scottish Popular Ballads, published in the years 1882-89.

Child plowed through a hundred years worth of published manuscripts and narrative collections and culled 305 titles which he considered to be original source material, a Herculean task to be sure. "The Child Ballads" collection stands as a most important historical document in the world of English language folk songs.

"Greensleeves" is one of the most beautiful and cherished melodies in the Anglo song tradition. Francis Child notes that "It's earliest mention is in September 1580 when a Richard Jones had licensed to him 'A New Northern Dittye' of the Lady Green Sleeves."

It is widely acknowledged that Lady Green Sleeves was at the very least a promiscuous young woman and perhaps a prostitute. The reference to the color of her sleeves indicates the grass stains from a recent rendezvous with a suitor.

Sources:

- *Folk Ballads of the English Speaking World, edited by Albert B. Friedman. Viking.*
- *Reprints from People's Songs Bulletin, edited by Irwin Silber. Oak Publications.*

Gypsy Davy

*Recordings on file by: Woody Guthrie, Marianne Mohrhusen.*Many American folk songs and pop songs have their roots in the British Isles where a thriving ballad singing tradition exists to this day. Although the term "ballad" has come to refer to a slow-tempo number, singers and listeners who enjoy songs like "The Gypsy Davy" know that ballad singing is one of the primary disciplines in the traditional folk arts.

A narrative ballad is a story song. It features clearly drawn characters and often a dialogue between

them. And there's lots of action and drama and suspense in a well sung ballad. There's a victory to be won and a price to be paid and sometimes there's a moral to the story to boot.

The ballad, "Black Jack Davy" goes way, way back and to Old England and has many versions. The story usually involves a young lady of good reputation or royalty who meets and falls in love with the roving Gypsy Davy. She agrees to run off with him and soon, the husband or sheriff is in close pursuit. When he finally catches up with the young couple, the woman scorns the husband and gladly leaves her wealth and comfortable lifestyle for a traveling life with the Gypsy Davy.

Woody Guthrie "Americanized" the imagery and language of this wonderful and timeless story.

Gypsy Rover

Recordings on file by: El McMeen, Kingston Trio.

"The Gypsy Rover" is a modern rewriting of an older ballad, "The Wraggle-Taggle Gypsies." Both songs are variants of "Gypsy Davy," but the newer, "Gypsy Rover," has a surprise sort of an ending which probably made the song more acceptable in many social circles.

Hard and It's Hard

Recordings on file by: Woody Guthrie, The Weavers, Eric Weisberg.

"Hard and It's Hard" is Woody Guthrie's re-working of an older lament called either, "There is a Tavern in the Town" or "Beautiful Blue Eyes."

Woody remembers: "...When I got out of jail, I made a run for a bottle of liquor and a pretty woman. I met her in a saloon, I had a couple of shots under my belt and was rarin' to step. She was one-eyed, but that didn't matter none. I had two eyes and she looked mighty good to me through both of 'em. I felt like a man coming up out of the grave when I stepped out of that jail. I had seventy dollars saved up and would have blowed seventy one hundred, if I'd of had it, just for a crack at that one-eyed girl. Her one eye was as pretty as a picture.

"So I slipped my guitar into position and I played her my old Okie love song. You might think it was a funny kind of a serenade. You might think it was too hard boiled and sad to soften up a woman's heart. But that woman was pretty hard boiled and sad herself. She had her heart broke as many times as my uncle's wheat field, and it was broke every spring in planting time. She didn't want no mushy, sissyfied, jukebox lullaby, she wanted a song as real as the oak bar she was leaning against. So I rattled out my old song about how hard it is to love someone who never did love you, and by the end of the first chorus she was smiling through that one eye of hers. And there are a lot of choruses to that song."

Source: The Folk Songs of North America, Alan Lomax, Doubleday.

Hard Times Come Again No More

Recordings on file by: Emmy Lou Harris, Cindy Mangsen, Jody Stecher.

This Stephen Foster masterpiece of 1855 capitalized on the popularity of Charles Dickens' novel,

Hard Times. It is said to be based on a melody Foster heard as a boy attending the church of his black nurse. It has been recorded many times by an incredibly wide range of singers, and was one of the songs sung most often by Foster in his last, hard days.
Source: "Stephen Foster" page on the World Wide Web.

Hard Travelin'

Recordings on file by: Woody Guthrie, Woody Guthrie with Cisco Houston & Sonny Terry, Pete Seeger.

About his song, "Hard Travelin'," Woody Guthrie wrote: "I was born in western Oklahoma and drug up in the Texas Panhandle. That's where the wheat grows, where the oil flows, where the dust flows and the farmer owes--where you hunt for wood and dig for water--where you can look farther and see less--where there's more weather and less climate, more crops and less groceries than any other dadburned place in the universe.

"Then the dust storms come. Dust was so thick you sometimes found yourself runnin' your tractor and plows upside down. Where the buzzards had to wear goggles to fly backwards. You could easy lose your wife and wake up huggin' your mother in law. Sometimes that dust would settle, but the debt wouldn't.

"I decided it would be better in California, so I kissed the family goodbye and swung into a Santa Fe cattle car and whistled down the line. For the last few years I've been a rambling man. From Oklahoma to California and back, by freight train and by thumb--I've been stranded and disbanded, busted and disgusted with people of all sorts, shapes, sizes and calibres--folks that wandered all over the country, looking for work, down and outers and hungry half the time. I slept with their feet in my face and my feet in theirs, with Okies and Arkies that were rambling over the states of California and Arizona like a herd of lost buffalo with the hot hoof and the empty mouth disease. Pretty soon I found I had relatives under every railroad bridge between Oklahoma and California.

"Walking down the big road, no money, no job, no home, no nothing, nights I slept in jails, and the cells were piled high with young boys, strong men and old men. They talked and they sung and they told the story of their lives--how it used to be, how it got to be, how the home went to pieces, how the young wife died or left, how Dad tried to kill himself, how the banks sent out tractors and tractored down the houses. So somehow I picked up an old rusty guitar and started to picking and playing the songs I heard and making up new ones about what folks said."
Source: The Folk Songs of North America, Alan Lomax, Doubleday.

Hobo's Lullaby

Recordings on file by: Arlo Guthrie, Woody Guthrie, Fred Holstein, Pete Seeger.

One who travels and dreams is called a tramp and one who travels and drinks is called a bum. Only one who travels and works and is self-sufficient can count himself, or herself, as a member of the elite family of hobos. To be sure, hobos are not homeless and there are still plenty of them around. And there is a considerable body of lore and music that surrounds the hobo philosophy, lifestyle and culture.

The phenomenon of the American hobo began as the Civil War came to a close and many soldiers were dismissed from their units on the spot and told to go home. Tens of thousands of these men, who had become skilled at living off the land for months, sometimes years at a time, had no homes to return to. Looking for work or adventure, they traveled about an expanding nation and an ad hoc sub-culture of itinerant laborers made up of war veterans began to emerge.

As most of the work they engaged in had to do with farming, the term "hoe boys" was first used to describe the temporary labor force. The racially connotative "boy" was changed to the more elegant "beau" and finally shortened to "bo."

As America industrialized in the decades following the Civil War, so did the hobo culture grow. As a code of ethics, a language, a dress code and a loose sort of government were all adopted throughout the network of jungle camps that followed the expanding railway system, so did a thriving aural tradition of music and poetry also take root.

When the Great Depression of the 1930s came, scores of men once again hit the road en masse. One of these men was Woody Guthrie from Okemah, Oklahoma, who learned "Hobo's Lullaby" from hobo Goebel Reeves. Woody loved the song and called it his favorite. The tune is the beautiful and sentimental Civil War lament, "Just Before the Battle, Mother."

Sources:

- *Done and Been, by Gypsy Moon. Indiana University Press.*
- *"Hobo Times," Newsletter of the National Hobo Society.*

Home on the Range

Recordings on file by: Gene Autry & Roy Rogers, Pete Seeger.

"Home on the Range" was first published around 1911, but for twenty years attracted practically no national attention. In the early 1930s all three radio networks picked up on the song and it was broadcast nightly for two or three years solid. It is said to have been sung on the doorstep of Franklin D. Roosevelt's home by a group of newspaper reporters the night he was first elected President. Consequently Roosevelt often referred to it as his favorite song.

Folklorists have traced the origins of "Home on the Range" to various, unrelated sources that date into the mid 1800s. No one is really sure who first composed the lilting tune or captured the pastoral imagery in lyric. As a folk song, "Home on the Range" is a tried and true American classic.

Source: Folk Song USA, Alan Lomax, Editor, New American Library.

Horse Named Bill

Recordings on file by: Bob Gibson, Carl Sandburg.

Carl Sandburg's ears were well-tuned to the sounds of midwestern life. He found rhythm in everyday language and discourse in nonsense rhymes like "A Horse Named Bill." In his renowned collection, The American Songbag, Sandburg cites several sources for the lyrics of this song which are sung to the melody, "Dixie."

Source: The American Songbag, by Carl Sandburg. Harcourt, Brace and Jovanovich.

I Am a Pilgrim

Recordings on file by: The Byrds, David Grisman & Tony Rice, Merle Travis.

There is a style of playing the guitar called "Travis" picking. The style was developed and made popular by Merle Travis, son of a Kentucky coal miner who wrote dozens of hit songs and whose music has been influential to generations of songwriters and guitarists.

After playing guitar in several hillbilly bands as a young man, Merle wound up living in Hollywood, CA and recording for Capitol Records in Los Angeles (his single "Smoke, Smoke, Smoke That Cigarette" was the first million seller for Capitol). There he got to know the composer Earl Robinson, and was impressed with Earl's manner of explaining an old folk song to make it come alive to an audience.

Merle persuaded Capitol to let him record some older folk songs instead of the commercialized country music he was usually saddled with. Capitol reluctantly agreed and in 1947 "Folk Songs of the Hills" was released, but never promoted. It sold sparsely, but two songs from the album, "Dark as a Dungeon" and "16 Tons" spread slowly across the country.

Around 1955, Nashville recording artist Tennessee Ernie Ford sang "16 Tons" on a television program and to everyone's surprise he got thousands of requests for it. Ford recorded the song and it became one of the biggest hits of the 1950s.

"I Am a Pilgrim" was one of the other pieces Travis arranged in his distinctive picking style and included on his legendary "Folk Songs of the Hills" collection.

Sources:

- *"Ozark Folk Center" home page on the World Wide Web.*
- *The Incompleat Folksinger, by Pete Seeger, edited by Jo Metcalf Schwartz. Simon and Schuster.*

I Know You Rider

Recordings on file by: Dan Eillers, Dan Keding, Frank Hamilton (Long Lonesome Home), Lead Belly (Easy Rider).

"I Know You Rider" is a real blues. It's roots are in the great dark valley of the blues, the Mississippi Delta.

The blues not only formed jazz, but it has influenced all forms indigenous and popular Anglo music. The blues have crept into the churches under the guise of "gospel" songs. What used to be called "hillbilly" and "country western" is now called "country" and it rocks across the air waves with an underlying groove of rhythm and blues. As cante hondo is the national song form of Spain, and the corrido is the national ballad form of Mexico, more than any other song form, the blues are The American Song.

"I Know You Rider," "C. C. Rider," "Easy Rider," and even "Trouble In Mind" are blues that have all borrowed from each other. The rock group Hot Tuna picked up on "I Know You Rider" in the 1960s to redefine it's sound and further the legacy of a classic American blues.

Source: Folk Song USA, Alan Lomax, Editor, New American Library.

I Ride an Old Paint

Recordings on file by: Harry Jackson, Pete Seeger & Woody Guthrie.

"I Ride an Old Paint" was once a very popular song in the west. For many years it was commonly used as the last number of the night at cowboy dances all over Oklahoma and Texas.

It's a slow waltz whose title refers to a kind of horse variously described by the cowboy as paint, pinto, spotted or calico--calico, not because of the color of the horse, but because, mounted on his paint pony, the cowboy rode to see his best girl, his calico. And calico as you might imagine, is the cotton material out of which a dress would be made; the kind of dress a young lady might wear when her sweetheart came to call.

Source: Folk Song USA, Alan Lomax, Editor, New American Library.

I'm On My Way

Recordings on file by: Carter Family, Mahalia Jackson, Various artists.

The Civil Rights movement in 1960s was the singingest movement in American history. Old African American spirituals like, "I Will Overcome," "I'm On My Way to Canaan Land" and dozens of others were adapted by marchers and demonstrators throughout the South and across the nation. By design, the repetitive nature and "call back" structure of a spiritual make it ideal for improvised group singing.

Source: Sing for Freedom, edited and compiled by Guy and Candie Carawan. Sing Out! Publications.

Jamaica Farewell

Recordings on file by: Harry Belafonte, Martin, Bogan & Armstrong.

An actor, humanitarian and the acknowledged "King of Calypso," Harry Belafonte ranked among the most seminal American performers of the postwar era. One of the most successful African American pop stars in history, Belafonte's staggering talent, good looks and masterful assimilation of folk, jazz and worldbeat rhythms allowed him to achieve a level of mainstream eminence and crossover popularity virtually unparalleled in the days before the advent of the Civil Rights movement--a cultural uprising which he himself helped spearhead.

He was born to Caribbean parents in Harlem, NY in 1927 and began his show business career as an actor (studying with the likes of Tony Curtis and Marlon Brando) and a night club singer, putting his velvety clear voice to work on straight pop music. Belafonte became interested in folk music in the early 1950s, after discovering the American folk song archive at the Library of Congress. At this time he also rediscovered the indigenous music of his Caribbean ancestry.

Around the time he began starring in films and on Broadway, Belafonte released a series of albums which featured the swaying rhythm of Calypso music. Among Belafonte's hits were, "Day-O," "Sloop John B." and "Jamaica Farewell."

His records kick-started a national Calypso craze and Harry Belafonte was catapulted towards international stardom. For decades, he used his clout and considerable talent to speak out on social and humanitarian issues, while maintaining active film and recording careers.

Source: "All Music Guide" on the World Wide Web.

Jordan is a Hard Road to Travel

Recordings on file by: Uncle Dave Macon, Merle Travis.

"Uncle" Dave Macon was born near Franklin, TN in 1870. He was a pioneer in recorded country music and one of its most popular and prolific artists. A star performer on WSM's Grand Olde Opry from 1926 until his death in 1952, Macon also recorded some two hundred songs during a fourteen year period, beginning in 1924 when he was already 56 years old. Even more remarkable is the huge body of Macon recordings represent only a part of his vast repertoire, which included topical songs, old-time breakdowns, gospel numbers, popular songs from Tin Pan Alley, and much from the minstrel tradition.

Generations of banjo pickers and lovers of old-time music have learned "Jordan Am a Hard Road to Travel" from Uncle Dave's recording of it, first released in 1927.

Source: Liner Notes from "Uncle Dave Macon:Early Recordings." County 521.

Just a Closer Walk With Thee

Recordings on file by: Red Foley, Tom Rush, Various artists.

In the 1920s, a new style of African American religious song called "Gospel" added a new dimension to the older, spiritual tradition. Thomas Dorsey, a Georgia bluesman who later moved to Chicago, coined the term "Gospel" and was the acknowledged leader of the gospel movement.

This new style added instruments such as the piano and later the Hammond electric organ. It also featured solo quartets and other special performers. Many of the greatest African American singers, such as Mahalia Jackson and Aretha Franklin, got their start singing in their local church gospel choir.

"Just a Closer Walk With Thee" is one of the popular Gospel numbers to come out of this movement, although there is some debate as to its origin. Some sources indicate that the song was a composed piece from the 1930s. But in many cases, a "composed" American song is simply a crystallization of some piece that's been a part of the aural tradition as long as anyone can remember.

"Just a Closer Walk" probably has its roots in the music of black plantation combos and brass bands of the mid 1800s which later grew into Dixieland jazz.

Sources:

- *A Tribute to Woody Guthrie & Lead Belly, by Will Schmid, Music Educators Conference in Association with the Smithsonian Institution Office of Folklife Programs.*
- *"Dixeland and Jazz Overview" page on the World Wide Web.*

Lakes of Ponchartrain

Recordings on file by: Lee Murdock, Art Thieme.

Some argue that the beautiful "Lakes of Ponchartrain" is a Creole love song commonly mistaken as being of Irish origin. Others debate that it is a unique Irish ballad dating from the 1800s when a flood of Irish folks immigrated to New Orleans. Whichever, it's a splendid narrative whose tune is based upon "The Lily of the West."

Source: "Popular Songs in American History" page on the World Wide Web.

Lonesome Road Blues

Recordings on file by: Etta Baker, Big Bill Broonzy, Flatt & Scruggs, Woody Guthrie.

Bill Monroe, the widely acknowledged father of bluegrass music, had a long and impressive career as a performer, recording artist and mentor to hundreds of bluegrass musicians who played in his group, "The Blue Grass Boys." Among them are many of the other all-time greats of bluegrass including Lester Flatt, Earl Scruggs, Carter Stanley, Don Reno, Sonny Osborne and Jimmy Martin.

Bill and his brother Charlie were a popular team in the 1930s, singing duets and playing mandolin and guitar. In 1939, after the two split up, Bill formed "The Blue Grass Boys" and started assembling the elements of what eventually became known as bluegrass music, built around his powerful tenor singing and mandolin playing.

"Lonesome Road Blues" is also known as "Going Down the Road Feeling Bad" and has its roots in both Anglo and African American traditions. In the bluegrass repertoire it's considered a standard, usually played quite fast and featuring instrumental breaks. The defiance of the lyrics have made it popular with generations of folk and blues musicians as well. Woody Guthrie adapted it as "Blowin' Down that Old Dusty Road" and included it on his classic "Dust Bowl Ballads" recording.

Source: The Bluegrass Songbook, by Peter Wernick. Oak Publications.

Mail Myself to You

Recordings on file by: Faith Petric, Earl Robinson, Pete Seeger.

Woody Guthrie has described his musical education pretty well: "The lonesome old ballads sung by my mother, and the honky-tonk blues, the wild hollers I heard from my father and the other men in town."

It is worth mentioning that Woody learned his style of guitar picking straight off the recordings of the Carter Family which were popular around 1931, when he was about eighteen years old. He also learned some of his favorite songs directly off these recordings.

After World War II, Woody settled in New York City. He recorded many songs during this time, among them a collection of children's songs. He and his wife Marjorie were determined to make these sessions and recordings successful. And they were. Woody's "Songs to Grow On" albums sold better than his more "serious" works and were soon a staple in nurseries across the country. Each album contained a little booklet with photographs and Woody's drawings of kids at play.

Woody explains his purposes: "Now I don't want to see you use my songs to divide nor split your family all apart. I mean, don't just buy these records and take them home so your kids can play around with them while you go off and do something else. I want to see you join right in, do what your kids do. Let your kids teach you how to play and act these songs out...

"Please, please don't read nor sing my songs like no lesson book, like no little text for today. But, let them be a little key to sort of unlock and let down all your old bars.

"Watch the kids. Do like they do. Act like they act. Yell like they yell. Dance the way you see them dance. Sing like they sing. Work and rest the way the kids do.

"You'll be healthier. You'll feel wealthier. You'll talk wiser. You'll go higher, do better and live

longer amongst us, if you'll just only jump in here and swim around in these songs and do like the kids do.

"I don't want the kids to be grownup. I want to see the grownup folks be kids."

Sources:

- *The Incompleat Folksinger, by Pete Seeger, edited by Jo Metcalf-Schwartz. Simon & Schuster.*
- *A Life, by Joe Klein. Ballantine Books.*

Midnight Special

Recordings on file by: Lead Belly. Odetta, The Weavers.

Like so many American folk songs, the hero of "The Midnight Special" is not a person but a train. Folklorists report that the legendary train in the song was a real train called The Golden Gate Limited. It pulled out of the Southern Pacific depot at Houston, TX at midnight sharp, headed for San Antonio, El Paso and other points west and ran right past the Texas State Prison Farm at Sugar Land, just outside Houston.

Prisoners lying awake could easily hear the sound of that train crashing through the darkness. And if the ever lovin' light from the headlamp shone through the barred windows and landed on a convict, legend says that man would soon go free.

"The Midnight Special" was first introduced to northern audiences in the mid 1930s by the great folk singer and folk song composer Lead Belly, who had done time at Sugar Land. In the years since, many thousands of musicians, singers and listeners have identified with longing for freedom expressed in the lyrics of "The Midnight Special" without ever having spent a day behind bars.

Source: Folk Song USA, Alan Lomax, Editor, New American Library.

My Home's Across the Smoky Mountains

Recordings on file by: Pete Seeger & Frank Hamilton, Doc Watson.

The most influential group in country music history, the Carter Family switched the emphasis from hillbilly instrumentals to vocals, made scores of their songs part of the standard country music canon, and made a style of guitar playing, "Carter picking," the dominant technique for decades. Along with Jimmie Rodgers, the Carter Family were among the very first stars in country music.

Comprised of a gaunt, shy gospel quartet member called Alvin P. Carter and two reserved country girls--his wife Sara and their sister-in-law Maybelle--the Carter Family sang a pure, simple harmony that influenced not only the numerous other family groups of the '30s and the '40s, but folk, bluegrass and rock musicians like Woody Guthrie, Bill Monroe, the Kingston Trio, Doc Watson, Bob Dylan and Emmylou Harris, to mention just a few. It's unlikely that bluegrass music would have existed without the Carter Family. A. P., the family patriarch, collected hundreds of British Isles and Appalachian folk songs and, in arranging these for recording, both enhanced the pure beauty of these "facts-of-life tunes" and at the same time saved them for future generations.

Those hundreds of songs the trio found around their Virginia and Tennessee homes, after being sung by A.P., Sara, and Maybelle, became Carter songs, even though these were folk songs and in the

public domain. Among the more than 300 sides they recorded are "Worried Man Blues," "Wabash Cannonball," "Will the Circle Be Unbroken," "Wildwood Flower," "Keep on the Sunny Side" and "My Home's Across the Smoky Mountains."
Source: "All Music Guide" on the World Wide Web.

Nine Hundred Miles

Recordings on file by: Woody Guthrie, Mike Seeger, Flatt & Scruggs.

Woody Guthrie reported he had learned this hillbilly railroad blues from a little black shoe shine boy in his hometown of Okemah, OK. The tune has appeared in many disguises and has relatives all over the South. In Virginia, it's called "Old Reuben" and in the backwoods further west, sharecroppers called it "Keep My Skillet Good and Greasy" or "Pay Day," each sung to the tune of "Nine Hundred Miles."

Up in Kentucky and Tennessee, several coal mining ballads have the same melody again but perhaps the oldest of them all are the verses to "Black Girl," otherwise known as "In the Pines."

Where ever this melody has turned up, it has been a vehicle for melancholy, for a yearning toward faraway places and toward things that are lost and irretrievable. It is one of America's most haunting and enduring melodies.
Source: Folk Song USA, Alan Lomax, Editor, New American Library.

Nine Pound Hammer

Recordings on file by: Norman Blake, Merle Travis, Townes Van Zandt.

"Nine Pound Hammer" is one of the few work songs to ever enjoy popularity. Early string bands such as Frank Blevins' Tar Heel Rattlers and Al Hopkins Bucklebusters were the first to introduce it as a performance piece. Bluegrass pioneers Bill and Charlie Monroe and finger picker Merle Travis brought it to a wider audience and are largely responsible for its continuing popularity.

It is said of Merle Travis that he could write you a hit song and sing it; he could draw you a cartoon, play you a great guitar solo, or fix your watch. He was born in western Kentucky in the heart of coal mining country and he would become one of country music's true legends.

Merle developed a style of picking the guitar based on the "Kentucky choke style" which was introduced to him by local players Mose Rager and Ike Everly (father of The Everly Brothers). Soon this approach to playing the guitar would be internationally referred to as "Travis picking."
Sources:

- *"Ozark Folk Center" home page on the World Wide Web.*
- *Old-Time Stringband Songbook, Oak Publications.*

Oh Mary Don't You Weep

Recordings on file by: Lead Belly, Pete Seeger with Willie Dixon, Various artists.

A spiritual out of the African American tradition, "Oh Mary Don't You Weep" pre-dates the Civil War and has been popular for more than a hundred years. The lyrics are right out of the Book of Exodus.

Source: Rise Up Singing, Sing Out! Publications.

Oh Susannah

Recordings on file by: Douglas Jimmerson, Pete Seeger, James Taylor.

In 1846, at age 20, Stephen Foster went to Cincinnati to work for his brother Dunning as a bookkeeper of the firm of Irwin & Foster. This position he held only two years, being very unhappy in this work. As a practical bookkeeper, Stephen Foster was a success; his books were the model of neatness and accuracy. In his heart however, he was a glorious failure. Glorious, to the extent that his distaste for bookkeeping caused him to turn to the one thing he longed to do.

Foster was known to hum tunes and scribble words while perched on his high stool at the office of Irwin & Foster. While Mr. Irwin fretted about "Stephie's writing another song," Dunning feared his brother would never make a business man.

Foster finished only two songs during his musical bookkeeping days in Cincinnati. "Down South Where the Cane Grows" was entered in a contest for minstrel songs, but did not win a prize. The second, "Oh Susannah," was considered a lesser effort and not considered very successful at all. Foster was delighted for eventually receiving $100 for the song.

Source: "Stephen Foster" pageon the World Wide Web.

Old Blue

Recordings on file by: Guy Carawan, Cisco Houston, Art Thieme, Dave Van Ronk.

Backwoods folk of the South lived off game, and they thought more of a good hunting dog than they did of most people. They loved and lied about their dogs and as such, a whole body of folklore about hunting dogs and their super-natural abilities materialized. "Old Blue" is the most common of these canine tall tales. It's a quiet song, very serious and genuinely sentimental. "Old Blue" is the "John Henry" of hunting dogs.

Source: Folk Song USA, Alan Lomax, Editor, New American Library.

Old Dog Tray

Recording on file by: Douglas Jimmerson.

The minstrel show originated about 1830 but it really did not reach its full development until some years later. It was, in those days, the popular form of entertainment and the most popular traveling show was E.P. Christy's Celebrated Band of Minstrels.

Christy's troupe, which was formed in 1842, made the greatest contribution to this form of art. Prizes were often offered by publishers to induce the composing of minstrel songs and Stephen Foster's first direct contribution to this type of music was in 1847 when he sent in as a contribution to one of these contests, "Down South Where the Cane Grows." The song was not accepted as a prize winner but was of sufficient interest to induce those offering the prize to seek to copyright it.

The first of Foster's minstrel songs to be published was "Louisiana Belle," which appeared in 1847

and Stephen Foster was launched on a musical career at the age of twenty two. Most of his songs were sung by the Christy Minstrels for whom, after a time, Foster composed almost exclusively. Christy did much to popularize the songs of Stephen Foster, including the beautifully sentimental "Old Dog Tray."
Source: "Stephen Foster" page on the World Wide Web.

Old Time Religion

Recordings on file by: Cisco Houston, Pete Seeger, Joseph Spence, Various artists.

Some argue that parody is at the very genesis of the folk process. School aged children are the real masters of the form. Who among us hasn't sung, "Mine eyes have seen the glory of the burning of the school..." to the tune "The Battle Hymn of the Republic"? Or "On top of old Smoky, all covered with cheese..."?

Although parody songs are almost always playful and humorous, not all parodies are limited to the world of children's music. "Gimme That Old Time Religion" is a shining example of a folk song parody. The original verses to "Old Time Religion" extolled the virtues of faith in the Baptist Church and were once sung throughout the South. Though still sung in earnest in many congregations, its parody of the same title has far outgrown the original in popularity. It's been sung around the world and now has literally hundreds of clever and undocumented verses to accompany the same simple tune. And there's more being improvised all the time.

Pay Me My Money Down

Recording on file by: The Weavers.

The Georgia Sea Islands is a section of the United States rich in African American folk song. For over a hundred miles, these low flat islands decorate the Atlantic Coast. Here's where slaves were brought fresh from Africa and for generations, spent their entire lives out of touch with the mainland.

In olden days, transportation to the mainland was provided by small boats and strong arms to row them. The oar crews from different plantations prided themselves on their singing, each making up new songs that no other boat would ever sing.

Two of the best known songs whose roots are in this tradition of Georgia Sea Island singing are "Michael Row the Boat Ashore" and the more recent, "Pay Me My Money Down." The melody to "Pay Me" is a re-working of the chantey, "Blow the Man Down."
Source: The Incompleat Folksinger, by Pete Seeger, edited by Jo Metcalf-Schwartz. Simon & Schuster.

Pretty Saro

Recordings on file by: Jean Ritchie & Doc Watson, Doc Watson.

Jean Ritchie was born in Viper, KY, in the Cumberland Mountains in 1922. She was the youngest of 14 children and her family was already well-known in the area for their musical ability. Jean's father first taught her to play the mountain, or lap dulcimer, and she quickly became proficient at accompanying her beautifully clear, untrained voice.

In 1948, Mitch Miller, who would later star on a television sing-a-long show, heard Jean demonstrate her dulcimer playing technique in a store and was impressed enough to produce her first recording. Later, having earned a degree in social work from the University of Kentucky, Jean traveled to New York to gain practical experience at the Henry Street Settlement. With her mountain dulcimer, she taught her family songs and games to the children of New York's Lower East Side, and learned theirs in return.

She was soon invited to entertain at parties and give performances in elementary schools and was introduced by a friend to the well known folklorist, Alan Lomax. Lomax recorded Ritchie's songs, both for his own collection and for the Library Of Congress Folksong Archives and from there Jean's music career flourished.

Fifty years worth of performances, recordings and books have made Jean Ritchie and the Ritchie family name synonymous with the mountain dulcimer and traditional mountain music.

Antecedent versions of "Pretty Saro" were probably first brought to the Cumberlands by Scots-Irish settlers in the 1700s. It's one of the many traditional songs carried around the world by the singing of Jean Ritchie.

Sources:

- *The Dulcimer Book, by Jean Ritchie. Oak Publications.*
- *"The Jean Ritchie Home Page" on the World Wide Web.*

Puff the Magic Dragon

Recording on file by: Peter Paul & Mary.

Peter Yarrow, Paul Stookey and Mary Travers are three folk singers who met in Greenwich Village, New York in the early 1960s. Yarrow held a degree in psychology from Cornell University had come to the Village to explore the vibrant and growing music scene. There he met stand-up comic Paul Stookey and singer Mary Travers, who had grown up in the Village and was already locally established as a vocalist. They rehearsed for seven months in Travers' apartment and debuted at the Bitter End Coffee House in 1961. The influential Albert Grossman became their manager and Peter, Paul & Mary embarked on a touring schedule that would last for ten years.

Although their arrangements were characteristic of the times, Peter, Paul & Mary brought a new voice and a new sensibility to the tradition of group folk-singing. They sought out fresh material from the brilliant young songwriters working and hanging out around the Village. As a result, the music of Bob Dylan, Gordon Lightfoot, John Denver and others was introduced to a national audience.

Peter, Paul & Mary's repertoire also included traditional songs and they committed themselves to using their music to widen the awareness of social issues and injustices. In 1963, their arrangement of Pete Seeger's "If I Had a Hammer" went to number one on the charts and became one of the anthems of the Civil Rights Movement.

After ten years of constant touring and recording, the group separated to pursue individual interests, but reunited in the late 1970s for a string of concerts and recordings that has continued to the present. "Puff the Magic Dragon," a children's song written by Yarrow and a man named Leonard Lipton was one of the groups early hits and has become an American classic.

Source: The "Peter, Paul & Mary" page on the World Wide Web.

Red River Valley

Recordings on file by: Sons of the Pioneers, Ralph & Carter Stanley.

"Red River Valley" stands as a testament to the folk process. It's a re-working of a ditty from New York state called, "The Bright Mohawk Valley." Latter day Western singers cut away much of the original pretentiousness from both the melody and the lyrics.

It's a sentimental piece for sure, and characteristic of music rooted in the late 1800s. But there's a great simplicity and long range stamina to this lazy little tune. It's been featured in movie scores and on hundreds of recordings and by now, destined to become a permanent part of our national folk song consciousness.

Source: Folk Song USA, Alan Lomax, Editor, New American Library.

Roll In My Sweet Baby's Arms

Recordings on file by: Flatt & Scruggs, Bill and Charlie Monroe, Buck Owens.

Another old-time bluegrass classic. "Roll in My Sweet Baby's Arms" was first introduced by the Monroe Brothers and made popular by Flatt and Scruggs, but performed by dozens of bluegrass groups over the years. It has been performed by everyone from parking lot pickers to Buck Owens to Leon Russell.

Although musically, it's a close relative to "She'll Be Coming Around the Mountain," "The Crawdad Song," "Mama Don't Allow" and a whole bunch of others, but "Roll in My Sweet Baby's Arms" is strictly bluegrass.

Source: The Bluegrass Songbook, by Peter Wernick. Oak Publications.

Roll Me on the Water

Recordings on file by: Bonnie Koloc.

A very beautiful song written by singer and former Old Town School of Folk Music student, Bonnie Koloc. Bonnie entertained as a folk singer in Chicago clubs such as "The Earl of Old Town" in the 1970s before expanding her horizons as a vocalist. She has toured the country with her jazz quintet and appeared in several theatrical productions as well. You may have even heard her sing a commercial jingle or two on television. Bonnie still makes occasional concert appearances in Chicago and along with "City of New Orleans," "Roll Me On the Water" is one of the songs most closely identified with the Old Town School of Folk Music.

Roll On Columbia

Recordings on file by: Woody Guthrie, Various artists, The Weavers.

When John Steinbeck's novel, The Grapes of Wrath, told the world about the plight of the Okies,

Woody Guthrie , the dust-bowl poet was singing for them over a one-horse radio station in Los Angeles. He always claimed to have learned how to play the guitar while broadcasting. His Okie fans would write him letters--"Keep it up Woody!"

By 1939, Guthrie wound up in New York City. By then he had mastered the Carter Family guitar style, and became adept at entertaining an audience with his delayed-action, Will Rogers type of humor. Woody had some success recording and broadcasting his songs, but genuinely felt uncomfortable about eating so well and sleeping so soft, when his people were still "wandering around over the west like a herd of locoed buffaloes." One day he blew out of New York without saying goodbye to the "phony, big-shot producers" and took to the highway again with his guitar.

This was the era of the drive to harness the rivers of the Great Northwest for cheap public power. The choice between buying electricity from public and private sources lay with the voters, and the Bonneville Power Administration was battling the private power outfits for votes. The big private companies were flying in Hollywood movie stars to draw the public to their meetings when the Bonneville people called around the country looking to hire Woody as a "public relations consultant."

Woody hitch-hiked to Portland and signed on. For a month he had a car and a chauffeur at his disposal, and he did the Columbia River basin in style, soaking in the scenery, the statistics and the issues--and writing songs. He sat on the soft green banks and the big blue river talked to him. He looked at the Columbia River with the wonder that had filled the hearts of his pioneer ancestors who had come into that country along the Oregon Trail a hundred years before.

The ballads poured out of Woody's typewriter with the fresh flow of the river he had come to love. Twenty-six ballads were composed and recorded in twenty-six days. Soon after, over the radio and through public address systems the people in the Bonneville area were listening to a voice they could believe in--a rural voice, harsh, ironical, humorous, truthful, with the heartbeat of the Southwestern guitar pushing behind it. Apparently, Bonneville voters agreed with him that "twenty million salmon fish couldn't be wrong," for when they went to the polls, they voted overwhelmingly for public power; and some of his Bonneville ballads are sung today by people in the Northwest who never heard his name.

"Roll On Columbia" is probably the best known ballad from Woody's Columbia River collection. He fashioned his wonderfully singable chorus from Lead Belly's "Irene Goodnight."
Source: The Folk Songs of North America, by Alan Lomax, Doubleday.

Salty Dog Blues

Recordings on file by: Erik Darling, Flatt & Scruggs.

"Salty Dog Blues" is another example of an African American blues converted into a mountain style song. It was first recorded by the Morris Brothers with a great deal of interplay between the guitar and mandolin. In 1951, it was recorded by Lester Flatt and Earl Scruggs who learned it first hand from the Morris Brothers. It has since become a classic amongst bluegrass musicians.

It should be noted that the term "salty dog" was considered quite off-color in its day. It alluded to the prurient interests of an excited young man.

Source: Old-Time Stringband Songbook, Oak Publications.

Scarborough Fair

Recordings on file by: Ewan McColl & Peggy Seeger. Simon & Garfunkel.

Francis J. Child's (born 1825) five volume work, The English and Scottish Popular Ballads , is considered by many as the "canon" of folk music. The collection consists of exhaustive research on over 300 ballads, focusing on the history of the words and themes rather than music. Child provides single line melodies for only about fifty of the tunes in an addendum.

Scholars, musicians and traditional music enthusiasts often refer to the titles in Child's collection by the number he assigned. For example, Child #12 = "Lord Rendal." Child #2 = "The Elfin Knight," the original source for the more popular, "Scarborough Fair."

In British Isles balladry, elves are full-grown, lusty men, not the diminutive, sexless creatures of nursery stories. In "Scarborough Fair" the elfin knight is a flirtatious lover and he sets before his prospective bride a series of impossible tasks. Rosemary and thyme are herbs which have magical properties for lovers, and are thus repeated throughout the singing.

In the 1960s, the pop duet Simon & Garfunkel recorded "Scarborough Fair." It was later included in the soundtrack to the motion picture, "The Graduate" which introduced the subtle beauty of "Scarborough Fair" to a generation of new listeners.

Sources:

- *"Folk Music of England, Scotland, Ireland & Wales" site on the World Wide Web.*
- *Folk Ballads of the English Speaking World, edited by Albert B. Friedman. Viking.*

Shady Grove

Recordings on file by: Eric Muller, Jean Ritchie, Various artists, Doc Watson.

"Shady Grove" is a Southern mountain tune suitable for a "play party" dance or frolic. It's a song sung and played to express the happiness of good times with friends and neighbors. It's very popular with banjo pickers who tune to "mountain minor" (gDGCD) to get the melody. The verses are interchangeable with other songs, but certain stanzas remain particular to "Shady Grove."

Source: Old-Time Stringband Songbook, Oak Publications.

Shenandoah

Recordings on file by: Cathy Fink, The Norman Luboff Choir, Jim Post, Paul Robeson, Pete Seeger.

The primitive work chant, which some historians of music believe was the primordial ancestor of all song, comes to life wherever men have to do hard labor with nothing but their bare hands and co-operative spirit to help them.

"Shenandoah" is among the most enduring of sailor's work songs called "chanties," and it is quite likely that no one will ever know exactly where or how the song was made. An early collector of chanties was a man named Captain Whall. He indicates that it may be a voyageur or Missouri River boatman's song, telling the story of a trader who courts the brown daughter of an Indian chief named

Shenandoah.

The melody has the roll and surge and freedom of a tall ship sweeping along before a trade wind, but today "Shenandoah" is often sung as a ballad. Singers and listeners from many backgrounds can identify with the romantic imagery of the lyrics, calling out for a return to a sweetheart, a town or the land itself.

Sources:

- *The Folk Songs of North America, by Alan Lomax, Doubleday.*
- *Folk Song USA, Alan Lomax, Editor, New American Library.*

Simple Gifts

Recordings on file by: George & Gerry Armstrong, Eric Muller, Shinobu Sato.

Shakers and Shakerism is a religious movement formally known as the United Society of Believers in Christ's Second Coming that has received considerable scholarly and popular attention. Although initially related to elements of Quakerism, the Shakers developed an idiosyncratic religious expression which included communal living, productive labor, celibacy, and a ritual noted for its dancing and shaking.

"Simple Gifts," composed in 1848 by Shaker Elder Joseph Brackett as an easy-to-learn tune for Shaker worship, has since become one of America's most popular all purpose melodies. It is performed with or without its original lyrics by folk singers, school choruses, church choirs and symphony orchestras. Versions have shown up in weddings, funerals, two presidential inaugurations, TV commercials -- and even the hit Irish dance revue, "Lord of the Dance."

Sources:

- *"150 Years of Simple Gifts," by David Crumm. Detroit Free Press, 11/98.*
- *New York Public Library Digital Library.*

Skip To My Lou

Recordings on file by: Carter Family, Lead Belly, Mike & Peggy Seeger, Pete Seeger.

In early America, respectable folk in Protestant communities have always regarded the fiddle as the devil's instrument and dancing as downright sinful. Faced with such a religious prejudice for socializing, young people of the frontier developed the "play-party," in which all the objectional features of a square dance were removed or masked so that their grave elders could approve.

No instruments were permitted--the dancers sang and clapped their own music. In time, the play-party acquired a life of its own. It became an ideal amusement for teen agers and young married couples. In many a frontier community, the bear hunters, Indian fighters, the rough keelboatmen and the wild cowboys could be seen dancing innocently with their gals, like so many children at a Sunday school picnic.

"Skip to My Lou" is a simple game of stealing partners. It begins with any number of couples hand in hand, skipping around in a ring. A lone boy in the center of the moving circle of couples sings, "Lost my partner what'll I do?" as the girls whirl past him. The young man in the center hesitates while he decides which girl to choose, singing, "I'll get another one prettier than you." When he grasps the

hand of his chosen one, her partner then takes his place in the center of the ring and the game continues. It's an ice-breaker, a good dance to get a group acquainted to one another and to get everyone in the mood for swinging around.

It's interesting to note that "loo" is the Scottish word for "love." The spelling change from "loo" to "lou" probably happened as our Anglo ancestors, and the song, became Americanized.
Source: The Folk Songs of North America, by Alan Lomax, Doubleday.

Sloop John B.

Recordings on file by: Michael Cooney, Pete Seeger, The Weavers.

Although the pop group, "The Beach Boys" brought this Bahamian folk song to international popularity in the 1960s, the story behind the "Sloop John B.," or as it's originally called, "The John B. Sails," goes way, way back.

Around 1926, John T. McCutcheon and his wife learned to sing this song while spending time in the West Indies. McCutcheon was a world traveller, philosopher and the Pulitzer Prize winning cartoonist for the Chicago Tribune. He said of "The John B. Sails" that, "Time and usage have given the song almost the dignity of a national anthem around Nassau."

A sloop is a kind of sailing vessel which commonly has only one mast and perhaps a bowsprit--a single spar extending forward from the front end of the boat. The kind of sloops that sailed around Nassau, and the kind referenced in "The John B. Sails," were smallish, perhaps 16 footers. They functioned much like country wagons in pioneer America. With a crew of 4 or 5 sailors, a crowded little sloop may have brought livestock, produce, passengers and other goods for trade from an island two or three hundred miles away. Sea-scarred and ragged, its deck only a few inches above the waves, a sloop carried no charts, no compasses and no auxiliary engine. The only navigational tools were the instincts and experience of a Bahamian pilot who was at home on the reef-filled azure sea.

In the mid-1950s, singer and actor Harry Belafonte added many of the popular folk songs from his Caribbean heritage--including "The John B. Sails"--to his performances and recordings, effectively igniting the Calypso movement in American popular song.

Around that same time, the Old Town School of Folk Music was founded in Chicago. There's a story that says "The John B. Sails" was the first song sung by Frank Hamilton, Win Stracke and a host of other musicians and prospective students as part of the opening ceremonies at the Old Town School.
Sources:

- *The American Songbag, by Carl Sandburg. Harcourt, Brace and Jovanovich*
- *The Folk Songs of North America, by Alan Lomax, Doubleday.*

So Long It's Been Good to Know Yuh

Recordings on file by: Woody Guthrie, The Weavers.

In 1929 the New York Stock Market crashed signaling the beginning of a Great Depression that would last well into the 1940s and World War II. During the 1930s, great dust storms followed on the heels of drought and blew away the topsoil on many agricultural areas of the Great Plains. Farmers lost

their homes, banks went bankrupt (there was no FDIC then), and many, many people were out of work.

Woody writes: "I heard folks talk and cry about the dust storms all out across our 16 middlewest states. I saw that lost gone look on their faces when they told me the government didn't follow the plan of FDR and so our land is still a dustbowl hit by dust storms and the dust storms are getting higher and wilder and meaner, and the hearts of the people are getting sickly worried.

"No job, low pay, high prices, higher taxes, bum houses, slummy houses. Great diseases are running and great sores are spreading down across our map and the dust storm and the cyclone and the dirty winds and the twisters ride high and wide low across our whole land. Government experts tell me these dusters will get a lot worse.

"I've lived in these dust storms just about all my life (I mean, I tried to live). I've met millions of good folks trying to hang on and to stay alive with the dust cutting down every hope. I am made out of this dust and out of this fast wind and I know that I'm going to win out on top of both of them if only my government and my office holder will help me."

"So Long It's Been Good to Know Yuh" (originally titled, "Dusty Old Dust") is one of the songs Woody included in his recorded masterpiece, "Dust Bowl Ballads." Using the melody to an older ballad, "Billy the Kid" as a model, Woody simply wrote down what he saw and composed a wonderful, singable chorus. When the popular folk singing group, The Weavers wished to record the song, Woody agreed to rewrite some verses, making the song accessible to a wider audience.

Sources:

- *A Tribute to Woody Guthrie & Lead Belly, by Will Schmid, Music Educators Conference in Association with the Smithsonian Institution Office of Folklife Programs.*
- *Liner notes to "Dust Bowl Ballads" by Woody Guthrie.*

Sporting Life Blues

Recordings on file by: Brownie McGhee, Dave Van Ronk.

Brownie McGhee's death in 1996 represented an enormous and irreplaceable loss to the blues field. Although he had been semi-retired in his last years, he was still the leading Piedmont-style bluesman and guitarist on the planet, venerated worldwide for his prolific activities both on his own and with his longtime partner, the blind harpist Sonny Terry.

Walter Brown McGhee grew up near Knoxville in Kingsport, TN. He contracted polio at the age of four, which left him with a serious limp and plenty of time away from school to practice the guitar chords that he'd learned from his father, Duff McGhee. Brownie's younger brother, Granville McGhee, also became a talented guitarist. He earned his nickname, "Sticks," by pushing his crippled sibling around in a small cart propelled by a stick.

A 1937 operation sponsored by the March of Dimes restored most of McGhee's mobility. Off he went as soon as he recovered, traveling and playing throughout the Southeast. His jaunts brought him into contact with talent scout J.B. Long who got him a recording contract with Okeh/Columbia in 1940. Long's principal blues artist, Blind Boy Fuller, died in 1941, precipitating Okeh to issue some of McGhee's early efforts under the sobriquet of Blind Boy Fuller No. 2. McGhee cut a moving tribute song, "Death of Blind Boy Fuller," shortly after the passing and soon hooked up with whooping harpist

Sonny Terry.

The pair resettled in New York in 1942 and quickly got connected with the city's burgeoning folk music circuit, working with Woody Guthrie, Pete Seeger, and Lead Belly. After the end of World War II, McGhee began to record most prolifically, both with and without Terry, for a myriad of R&B labels before crossing over to the folk audience during the late '50s.

McGhee and Terry were among the first blues artists to tour Europe during the 1950s, and they ventured overseas often after that. Their plethora of albums presented the duo in the acoustic Piedmont-style musical interplay that became their trademark. The wheels finally came off the partnership of McGhee and Terry during the mid-'70s. Toward the end, they preferred not to share a stage with one another, let alone communicate.

"Sporting Life Blues" is one of Brownie's best known numbers, a blues he composed in the 1930s when he was just 19 years old. McGhee's final concert appearance came at the 1995 Chicago Blues Festival; his voice still robust, and his full-bodied acoustic guitar work still rich. His like won't pass this way again.

Source: "All Music Guide" site on the World Wide Web.

South Australia

Recordings on file by: The Clancy Brothers & Tommy Makem.

British folklorist A.L. Lloyd, whose studies and renditions of traditional Australian songs are known throughout the world, says of this sea song: "In the days of sail, "South Australia" was a familiar going-away song, sung as the men trudged around the capstan to heave up the heavy anchor. Some say the song originated on wool-clippers, others say it was first heard on the emigrant ships. There is no evidence to support either belief; it was sung just as readily aboard Western Ocean ships as in those on the Australian run.

"Laura Smith, a remarkable Victorian lady, obtained a 14 stanza version from a colored seaman in the Sailor's Home at Newcastle-On-Tyne in the early 1880s. The song's first appearance in print was in Miss Smith's Music of the Waters. Later, it was often used as a forebitter, sung off-watch, merely for fun with any instrumentalist joining in.

"The present version was learned from an old sailing-ship sailor, Ted Howard of Barry, South Wales. Ted told how he and a number of shellbacks were gathered round the bed of a former shipmate. The dying man remarked, 'Blimey, I think I'm slipping me cable. Strike up 'South Australia' lads and let me go happy."

Source: The Collected Reprints from Sing Out! Volumes 1964-73, Sing Out Publications.

Stewball

Recordings on file by: Woody Guthrie & Friends, Peter, Paul & Mary.

The most famous horse race in folksong history took place on the race course at Kildare, Ireland sometime in the late 1700s or early 1800s. Matched were "Sku-ball," a skewbald horse owned by Arthur Marvell, and a grey mare, "Miss Portly," the property of Sir Ralph Gore. A skewbald horse,

according to authorities, has patches of brown or bay on a white coat.

Whether the horse's name was actually "Sku-Ball" or whether this is just a ballad-singer's license with the word "skewbald," is unclear. In any event, the race was won by Sku-Ball and this was probably something in the nature of a major upset, since the event was memorialized in an Irish street ballad which has now lasted a couple centuries.

Perhaps the song's popularity derives in part from the seeming "common" origin of Sku-ball and the elation of the ordinary folk in triumph over the thoroughbred mare.

The ballad of "Skewball" appears in print as early as 1822 in England, and just a few years later is to be found in an American songster dated 1829. At some point, the old ballad was learned by slaves in the southern United States who thoroughly overhauled the music and the story until all that remained of the original was the horse's name (adapted to "Stewball") and the fact that a race took place (some versions have the name of the mare as Molly).

In various African American versions of the song, the location of the race has been changed to California, Texas and other sites in the United States.

Source: "Sing Out!" Magazine.

St. James Infirmary

Recordings on file by: Louis Armstrong, Doc Watson & Richard Watson, Josh White.

Also known as "The Gambler's Blues," "St. James Infirmary" is derived from a British street ballad named, "The Unfortunate Rake." Here in the States it's had many versions and adaptations, and is even related to the somber cowboy lament, "Streets of Laredo." Cab Calloway and Louis Armstrong both recorded "St. James Infirmary" in the 1930s and it has since been considered a standard in the blues and jazz repertoire.

Guitarist and singer Josh White also performed it as a signature piece throughout his career, though most blues enthusiasts think of Josh White as a folk revival artist.

It's true that the second half of his music career found him based in New York playing to the coffeehouse and cabaret set and hanging out with Burl Ives, Woody Guthrie, and fellow transplanted blues artists Sonny Terry and Brownie McGhee. And in the 1960s, White could be seen performing with his shirt unbuttoned to the waist à la Harry Belafonte. White was clearly a show business personality--a star renowned for his sexual magnetism and his dramatic vocal presentations.

What many people don't know is that Josh White was a major figure in the Piedmont blues tradition. The first part of his career saw him as apprentice and lead boy to some of the greatest blues and religious artists ever, including Willie Walker, Blind Blake, Blind Joe Taggart (with whom he recorded), and allegedly even Blind Lemon Jefferson. On his own, he recorded both blues and religious songs, including a classic version of "Blood Red River." A fine guitar technician with an appealing voice, he became progressively more sophisticated in his presentation.

Like many other Carolinians and Virginians who moved north to urban areas, he took up city ways, remaining a fine musician if no longer a down-home artist. Like several other canny blues players, he used his roots music to broaden and enhance his life experience, and his talent was such that he could

choose the musical idiom that was most lucrative at the time.
Source: "All Music Guide" on the World Wide Web.

Sweet Home Chicago

Recordings on file by: Robert Johnson, Taj Mahal.

If the blues has a truly mythic figure, it's the one and only Robert Johnson. Certainly the most celebrated figure in the history of the blues, Johnson's legend is immensely fortified by the fact that he also left behind a legacy of recordings that are considered the emotional apex of the genre itself.

These recordings--including "Love in Vain," "Crossroads," "Stop Breaking Down" and "Sweet Home Chicago"--have not only entered the realm of blues standards, but have been adapted by rock & roll artists as diverse as the Rolling Stones, Steve Miller, Led Zeppelin and Eric Clapton.

As a young man, Johnson lived on a plantation in rural Mississippi. Branded with a burning desire to become a great blues musician, he idolized the Delta recording star Lonnie Johnson, sometimes introducing himself to newcomers as "Robert Lonnie, one of the Johnson brothers." Scrapper Blackwell, Skip James and Kokomo Arnold were also inspirational to young Johnson and he drew from their styles to help shape his own. His slide technique certainly came from hours of watching local stars like Charley Patton and Son House, among others, but perhaps his biggest influence came from an unrecorded bluesman named Ike Zinneman.

Zinneman never recorded so no one will ever know what his music sounded like. There are documented reports that he liked to practice late at night in the local graveyard, sitting on tombstones while he strummed away. It is also known that after a year or so under Zinneman's tutelage, Johnson returned with an encyclopedic knowledge of his instrument, an ability to sing and play in a multiplicity of styles and a very carefully worked out approach to song construction, keeping his original lyrics with him in a personal digest.

To a man, there was only one explanation as how Johnson had gotten that good, that fast: He had sold his soul to the Devil. He received instructions to take his guitar to a crossroad near Dockery's plantation at midnight. There he was met by the Devil who took the form of a large Black man. The stranger took the guitar from Johnson, tuned it and handed it back to him. Within less than a year's time, in exchange for his everlasting soul, Robert Johnson became the king of the Delta blues singers, able to play, sing and create the greatest blues anyone had ever heard.

As success came with live performances and phonograph recordings, Johnson was constantly haunted by nightmares of hellhounds on his trail. He found release from his pain and mental anguish only in the writing and performing of his music. Just as he was about to be brought to Carnegie Hall to perform in John Hammond's first Spirituals to Swing concert, the news had come from Mississippi; Robert Johnson was dead, poisoned by a jealous girlfriend while playing a jook joint. Those who were there swear he was last seen alive foaming at the mouth, crawling around on all fours, hissing and snapping at onlookers like a mad dog. His dying words were, "I pray that my redeemer will come and take me from my grave." He was buried in a pine box in an unmarked grave, his deal with the Devil at an end.

In the intervening years since his death in 1938 at the age of 26, Johnson's name and likeness has become a cottage growth merchandising industry. Reissues of the 41 original recordings that he made (including out-takes) posters, postcards, t-shirts, guitar picks, strings, straps and polishing cloths--all bearing either his likeness or signature (taken from his second marriage certificate)--have become available, making him the ultimate blues commodity with his image being reproduced for profit far more than any contemporary bluesman, dead or alive.

Sources:

- *"All Music Guide" on the World Wide Web.*
- *Liner notes from "Robert Johnson: The Complete Recordings," Columbia.*

Swing Low Sweet Chariot

Recordings on file by: Joan Baez, Big Bill Broonzy, Bill Monroe, Paul Robeson.

In West Africa the Gods of the river, of the thunder, of the sea, of the wind, of love, of death and of ancestral spirits accompanied, punished, and protected every individual in his daily life. Their worship filled the year with brilliant ceremony and encouraged every person to express himself, in songs, in dance, and in acts of self-dramatization.

In America all these local, tribal and personal protectors were far away, powerless and dumb, and the satisfactory pattern of ritual and dance and song was shattered. African vaudou (which continued to flourish in Catholic areas such as Haiti and Louisiana) survived in Protestant areas only in scraps of black magic. The slaves, impressed by the power of the white man's God and feeling the need of some fixed point in a situation deprived of most human values, embraced the faith of their Protestant masters and became ardent Baptists and Methodists.

Some planters did not allow their slaves to hold religious meetings, fearing, quite correctly, that Christian-Democratic ethics would put rebellious ideas into their heads. Other planters encouraged conversion of their slaves so long as "obey your masters" was made the primary religious doctrine.

Many sincere white Christians welcomed their black slaves into the fellowship of Christ, and, as time passed, this condition became more and more general. By the time of the Civil War, the vast majority of the slaves were practicing Christians, and their African approach to religion attracted the whites to the singing meetings where spirituals like "Jacob's Ladder" and "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot" were born.

In the case of "Swing Low" however, some folklorists suggest that slaves originally sung, "Swing Low, Sweet Harriet," as a literal plea for Harriet Tubman to swing into the deep South and lead them to freedom. The "chariot" in the song may have been inserted to mask the reference to Tubman, one of the most successful "conductors" on the Underground Railroad.

Tubman herself was a slave, but she escaped in 1849 and led more than 300 others to freedom, reportedly forcing the timid ahead with a loaded revolver. She was a friend of the principal abolitionists, and John Brown almost certainly confided his Harpers Ferry plan to her. In the Civil War, Harriet Tubman attached herself to the Union forces in coastal South Carolina, serving as a nurse, laundress, and spy.

Sources:

- *The Folk Songs of North America, by Alan Lomax, Doubleday.*

- *Compton's Encyclopedia.*

Take This Hammer

Recordings on file by: Flatt & Scruggs, Lead Belly, Odetta.

"Take This Hammer" like a sea chantey, is an actual work song. For generations it was a song common to Southern prison farms and work crews. Where some work songs like "Ain't No More Cane on the Brazos," have a slow rock and a free rhythm which leads the cane cutters to strike together, "Take This Hammer" drives the men to keep a swift and steady work tempo.

Songs like "Take This Hammer" and "Ain't No More Cane on the Brazos" have their real roots in Africa, which was and is a land of work songs. Africans brought to North America as slaves also brought with them their work song tradition. The land of the South was cleared and the crops harvested as the black slaves chanted their communal songs. The roads were built, the levees raised, the railroads laid down, the cotton baled, the steamboats loaded--the manual labor of the post Civil War South was done in harmony and rhythm, with satire and with the overtones of sorrow.

Folk singer, song collector and composer Lead Belly recorded and performed "Take This Hammer" as one of his signature pieces, bringing the musical work song tradition of the African American South to a much wider audience.

Source: Folk Song USA, Alan Lomax, Editor, New American Library.

Tell Old Bill

Recordings on file by: Bob Gibson, Jim Post.

Carl Sandburg first heard this grim blues-ballad from Nancy Barnhart of St. Louis back in the 1920s. Ten years later, folklorist and singer Sam Hinton came across an African American farmer in Walker County, TX who sang another version. And in the late 1950s, Bob Gibson introduced "Tell Old Bill" to a wider audience when he recorded an interpretation of Sandburg's version.

While Gibson's records may sound like run-of-the-mill white-boy folk to modern listeners, he played an important role in popularizing folk music to American audiences in the 1950s at the very beginning of the folk boom.

His 12-string guitar style influenced performers like Gordon Lightfoot and Harry Chapin; he was a mainstay at one of the first established folk clubs in the U.S., the Gate of Horn in Chicago; and he wrote songs with Shel Silverstein and Phil Ochs, as well as performing in a duo with Hamilton Camp. Most of all, he was one of the first folkies on the scene--when he began performing and recording in the mid-'50s, there was hardly anyone else playing guitar-based folk music for an educated, relatively affluent audience.

Gibson helped Joan Baez and Phil Ochs in their early days, and was managed by Albert Grossman, who later handled the affairs of such giants as Bob Dylan and Peter, Paul & Mary. He did continue to perform in Chicago in the latter part of his life until he passed away from Parkinson's disease in September 1996 at the age of 64.

Sources:

- *"Sing Out!" Magazine, Volume 9, Number 2.*
- *"All Music Guide" on the World Wide Web.*

This Land is Your Land

Recordings on file by: Flatt & Scruggs, Woody Guthrie, Peter, Paul & Mary, Pete Seeger, The Weavers, Will Geer & Various artists.

"I hate a song that makes you think that you are not any good. I hate a song that makes you think that you are just born to lose. Bound to lose. No good to nobody. No good for nothing. Because you are too old or too young or too fat or too slim, too ugly, too this or too that. Songs that run you down on account of your bad luck or hard traveling.

"I am out to fight those kinds of songs to my very last breath of air and my last drop of blood. I am out to sing the songs that will prove to you that this is your world and that if it has hit ya pretty hard and knocked you for a dozen loops, no matter what color, what size you are, how you are built, I am out to sing the songs that make you take pride in yourself and in your work.

"And the songs that I sing are made up for the most part by all sorts of folks just about like you.

"I could hire out to the other side, the big money side, and get several dollars every week just to quit singing my own kinds of songs and sing the kind that knock you down still farther and the ones that poke fun at you even more and the ones that make you think you've not got any sense at all.

"But I decided a long time ago that I'd starve to death before I'd sing any such songs as that. The radio waves and your movies and your jukeboxes and your songbooks are already loaded down and running over with such no good songs as that anyhow."

Source: Woodrow Wilson Guthrie.

This Train

Recordings on file by: Big Bill Broonzy, Cisco Houston, Pete Seeger & Big Bill Broonzy.

In the African American tradition of spiritual singing, there are many roads leading to heaven. Sometimes a golden chariot is ridden or a prancing white horse is mounted. Sometimes Jacob's Ladder is climbed rung by rung and sometimes the singer inches along like a poor inchworm. Other times he runs down the King's highway with the hell-hounds snapping their jaws at his heels.

As the twentieth century dawned, the imagery in spirituals was updated right along with the changing times. One verse has the angels talking through the royal telephone "with a line running to the church-house and the receiver of my heart."

And ever since the first locomotive whistle split the quiet air of the South and the black engine thundered down the rails, snorting steam and fire like the horses of the Apocalypse, the righteous have been "buying tickets on the snow-white heavenly express for glory." For the gambler, the back-biter, the crap-shooter, and other back sliding sinners, the Black Diamond Express, manned by Satan, was booked and bound for the lower regions.

Source: The Folk Songs of North America, by Alan Lomax, Doubleday.

Titanic

Recordings on file by: Lead Belly, Pete Seeger, Hobart Smith, Art Thieme, Various artists.

One of the most tragic events in maritime history took place on the night of April 14, 1912, when the Royal Mail Steamer Titanic, making her maiden voyage from Southhampton, England to New York City, collided with an iceberg in mid-Atlantic and sank to the bottom of the sea with a loss of 1,513 lives. American street-ballad writers, fired by the dramatic disaster, immediately poured forth a slew of songs documenting the tragic event.

Many of these ballads were composed by African American street singers. Lead Belly claimed his version of "The Titanic" was the first song he composed, and the first on which he accompanied himself with 12 string guitar.

Versions of the Titanic story are still sung widely in the United States today, and popular with singers and listeners of all ages, almost a hundred years after the event.

Source: "Sing Out!" Magazine.

Tom Dooley

Recordings on file by: Kingston Trio, Doc Watson, Doc Watson (Handsome Molly).

Soon after the Civil War ended, a young man named Tom Dula composed his confession song while in a jail cell awaiting his hanging day. Dula was reported to have been, among other things, an "unthinkably" good old-time fiddler. Some say he used the melody of "Handsome Molly" as the model for the self-titled narrative which described the final episode of his life.

"Tom Dula" is a local story involving real people and actual events which had been told and re-told by generations of folks native to western North Carolina. But in 1959, the song "Tom Dooley" became a number one hit record for The Kingston Trio and, for better or worse, is generally acknowledged as the record which launched the "great folk revival".

After serving the Confederacy in the Civil War, it's reported that young Tom Dula rode home to the North Carolina mountains a worn out, badly whipped and bitter Rebel soldier. He'd fought through the war with Zeb Vance's cavalry. He'd seen Gettysburg. The Civil War brought out the ornery streak in him and he was feeling "as mean as a nestful of hornets," but looking forward to a warm welcome from his sweetheart.

His welcome home scarcely matched his expectations. The young lady, Miss Laurie Foster, was cordial, but cool toward him. Tom smelled trouble. He had several rivals, and, as if specially to gall him, one of them was a "dad-burned impudent Yankee schoolteacher." The more Tom brooded about that, the cooler his lady friend grew.

One day he invited her to go for a walk in the hills, and that night she didn't turn up for supper. Nobody knew what had become of her, least of all Tom Dula. The Yankee schoolteacher kept looking around and asking questions. Then one morning, after a rain, as he was moping along through a lonely mountain cove, he noticed a gleam of red against the rocks. He climbed the hill and clawed away the earth. There in a shallow grave lay his sweetheart, white and still, wrapped in her mud covered, scarlet cloak.

When Tom Dula heard about this, he saddled up the same old nag he'd ridden home from the war and took off for the Tennessee line. His brother, in order to throw the posse off his track, galloped off in the opposite direction. Hours later, as Tom was heading his winded animal up through the pass which led into Tennessee and freedom, a quiet voice spoke out of the laurel bushes. Tom pulled up. The Yankee schoolteacher stood there at the side of the path, his rifle lying across the mule's neck. Right there Tom gave up. A "dad-burned Yankee" had outfoxed him again.

Some folks said they never forgot hearing Dula, sitting up in the cart on the way to his hanging ground, singing away at his ballad in a sour baritone, playing the tune over and over on his fiddle between every verse. His stark ballad has lived on among the people of the Great Smokies as a musical epitaph of a bitter returned hero of the Civil War.

Frank Warner, the noted musician and folklorist has collected and documented many ballads and folk songs native to North Carolina and the Appalachian region. He explains that the name of the song's protagonist was probably changed by indigenous singers "since Dooley sings much more easily than Dula."

By the 1950s the song had crept north to New York City where it was picked up by young urban folk-revival musicians including Pete Seeger and Erik Darling. It was Darling who syncopated Dula's original melody and eventually taught his arrangement to Dave Guard. Guard would later join Bob Shane and Nick Reynolds to form The Kingston Trio who recorded "Tom Dooley" on their million-selling album, and the rest as they say, is musical history.

Sources:

- *Folk Song USA, Alan Lomax, Editor, New American Library.*
- *The Songs of Doc Watson, Oak Publications.*

Travellin' Man

Recording on file by: Doc Watson.

The musical tall tale, "Travellin' Man" was a signature piece of the late Pink Anderson, a good-natured finger-picking guitarist who played for about 30 years as part of a medicine show. He did make a couple of sides for Columbia in the late 1920s with Simmie Dooley, but otherwise didn't record until a 1950 session, the results of which were issued on a Riverside LP that also included tracks by Gary Davis.

Anderson went on to make some albums on his own after the blues revival commenced in the early 1960s, establishing him as a minor but worthy exponent of the Piedmont school, versed in blues, ragtime, and folk songs. He also became an unusual footnote in rock history when Syd Barrett, a young man in Cambridge, England, combined Pink's first name with the first name of another obscure bluesman (Floyd Council) to name his rock group, Pink Floyd, in the mid-1960s.

Source: "All Music Guide" on the World Wide Web.

Trouble in Mind

Recordings on file by: Big Bill Broonzy, Sonny Terry & Brownie McGhee, Bob Wills & His Texas Playboys.

"Troubled in Mind" is actually a composed song which attained wide circulation amongst Anglo and African American singers and musicians, both professional and indigenous. It was written by Richard Jones, a New Orleans jazz man and arranger who played an important part in the development of jazz and blues in Chicago from the early 1920s onward.

Jones, born in 1889, was from a musical family. He played a variety of instruments before making the piano his main instrument. He played in Armand Piron's Olympia Orchestra and led his own band called The Four Hot Hounds which included Sugar Johnny Smith and occassionally King Oliver. During World War One he played with Papa Celestin. He left New Orleans in 1919 and moved to Chicago where he set up the Chicago branch of Clarence Williams Publishing Company and music store.

Jones continued to play in bands in Chicago during the 1920s, but his main gig was as manager of Okeh records race records division. He lead his own studio band called Richard M. Jones' Jazz Wizards and accompanied a great number of singers and bands on piano. He continued to be active in music both as a musician and talent scout until his death in 1945.

Sources:

- *The Folk Songs of North America, by Alan Lomax, Doubleday.*
- *The "Richard M. Jones" page on the World Wide Web.*

Wabash Cannonball

Recordings on file by: Carter Family, Ramblin' Jack Elliot, Flatt & Scruggs.

In America, the railroad itself became folklore. From the Catskills to the Cascades the continent was strung with steel like a great harp, singing of money and power to the railroad barons but, for the poor, making a different music. The mule-skinner in the Mississippi bottoms timed his long days by the whistle of the passing trains. The mountaineer, penned up by his Southern hills, heard the trains blowing down in the valley and dreamed of the big world "out yonder." The blue-noted whistles made a man miss pretty women he'd never seen. Boys in hick towns, lost on the prairie, heard the locomotives snorting and screaming in the night and they knew they were bound for small town stagnation only for the lack of a railroad ticket.

From the mid-1800s through the mid-1900s, no subject produced more American music than the railroads. Folk ballads like "John Henry," "Casey Jones" and "Old '97" were popular across the country. A cycle of powerful work songs for every aspect of railroad building emerged form the crews who built and maintained the lines. Spirituals like "This Train" and "All Night Long"were sung by congregations and love songs like "Down in the Valley" and "Careless Love" were common to entertainers and indigenous singers alike. Blues verses without number were composed and improvised upon--indeed the blues might be said to be half-African and half-locomotive rhythm--and an endless string jazz tunes and pop songs such as "Yancey's Special," "Blues in the Night," "Chatanooga Choo-Choo," "The Fireball Mail" and "Tuxedo Junction" filled the dance halls, night clubs and airwaves.

But of all the songs inspired by the rhythm and romance of the railroad, "The Wabash Cannonball"

is perhaps the grand-daddy. The lineage of this classic pre-dates the birth of the recording industry, if not the advent of the phonograph itself. There have been hobo versions, hillbilly versions, country versions, city versions, western versions and versions from Roy Acuff to Lawrence Welk.

Sources:

- *The Folk Songs of North America, by Alan Lomax, Doubleday.*
- *Liner notes from "When Steam Was King," written by Larry Penn. Cookie Man Music.*

Water is Wide

Recordings on file by: Pete Seeger, Various artists.

Pete Seeger probably has had a greater influence on the development of modern folk music than any other single individual. The son of musicologist Charles Seeger, he began playing the banjo in his teens, soon turning to the five-string version that would become his trademark.

He hooked up with Woody Guthrie in the late 1930s, and the two formed the politically oriented Almanac Singers with several other folk singers to promote unions and condemn fascism. He was a cofounder of such organizations as People's Songs (which is now Sing Out! Magazine) and People's Artists. In 1948 he formed the folk group The Weavers, which scored massive hits with "Tzena, Tzena, Tzena," Lead Belly's "Goodnight Irene," and "On Top of Old Smoky" before losing its record contract and bookings during the Communist witch hunts of the 1950s.

Seeger refused to testify before the House Committee on Unamerican Activities and was charged with contempt of Congress, winning his case in 1962. By that time, he had made numerous solo albums for Folkways and more Weavers albums for Vanguard. In 1961, he signed to Columbia Records, staying with the label until the end of the decade.

Seeger was a major force at the Newport Folk Festivals and a promoter of upcoming talent. His marathon-length concerts included Spanish songs, African songs, Negro work songs, new protest songs, and old folk songs, sometimes with rewritten lyrics. And he got everyone singing along, often in multi-part harmony. Seeger's own songs, sometimes adaptations from other sources, became hits for others: "If I Had a Hammer" for Trini Lopez and Peter, Paul, & Mary; "Where Have All the Flowers Gone" for the Kingston Trio and"Turn! Turn! Turn!" for The Byrds. But he was also known for his hit version of Malvina Reynolds' "Little Boxes," for "We Shall Overcome," for "Guantanamera," and for dozens more.

In 1969, Seeger launched the sloop Clearwater and formed a group to help clean up the Hudson River. He has maintained a busy appearance schedule into his octogenarian years, much of it given over to benefits for a variety of causes.

"The Water is Wide" is one of the many traditional folk songs that Seeger has adapted and sung with audiences around the world. He writes of the tune: "This song has been one of the most widely known love laments in Britain. I learned this version from my sister Peggy more than thirty-five years ago. I put it in 4/4 time with the sonority of the twelve string guitar in dropped D tuning, and added a sixth verse to the song. I tend to point out that we have oceans of misunderstanding between the peoples of this world."

Sources:

• *"All Music Guide" on the World Wide Web.*

• *Liner notes from "Where Have All the Flowers Gone: The Songs of Pete Seeger," Appleseed Recordings. 1998.*

Waterbound

Recordings on file by: Michael Cooney, Art Thieme.

"Waterbound" is a play-party song from Grayson County, Virignia, that has since become a favorite of fiddlers and banjo pickers throughout the country. The verses relate to the idea of a mountain frolic that goes until morning because the creek bed road has washed out.

"Waterbound" was recorded in 1938 by the famous Bogtrotters Band of Galax who undoubtedly spread the song about. The "B" part of the instrumental version suggests that the tune may hark back to the well-known "Buffalo Gals."

Source: "Sing Out!" Magazine.

Wayfaring Stranger

Recordings on file by: Almeda Riddle, David Grisman, Emmy Lou Harris, Tim O'Brien & Dirk Powell.

The American Revolution meant not only the promise of freedom from British rule, for many it also meant the promise of religious freedom. The Revolution of 1776 marked the first instance in the history of Christiandom that a people had won full liberty in the religious phase of their culture. Membership in the Protestant faiths mushroomed between the years 1783 and 1800.

These worshippers were not only religious radicals, but they were also carrying out a musical revolution. They needed songs to match their soaring emotions. The result was they threw out the old Psalms and, as had happened in every revolution in the Christian church, brought folk tunes into the hymn books. Ballad tunes, jigs, marches and love songs were again put into the service of the Lord solemnly dressed up with religious texts that spoke directly to the woes and problems of the individuals who sang them.

The makers of hymnals collected and compiled these new songs into the "shaped note" system of notation where the notes on the page were distinguished by their shape as well as their position. In the early 1800s this singing tradition took root as The Sacred Harp movement.

The Sacred Harp singing movement once involved hundreds of thousands of singers in its meetings and to this day these gatherings still produce a most remarkable type of American singing.

The meetings were, and are run in strict parliamentary fashion with every singer given the opportunity to lead two or three songs. The songs are arranged for four part harmony singing and the singers form themselves into a hollow square pattern--basses, altos, tenors and trebles on their respective sides. The leader gives the number of the hymn he prefers, and after the gathering has rustled through their fat Sacred Harp book to find the proper page, the leader intones a pitch, leads the congregation in a run through of the tune, and the group is off, singing in four part harmony at the top of their lungs.

"Wayfaring Stranger" falls into the category of religious ballad and is a song for solo performance at

a religious meeting or for group "shaped-note" singing.

The song began to reach widespread popularity with secular, urban audiences when folk song collector, singer, and actor Burl Ives recorded it in the early 1940s--one of the earliest interpretive commercial folk recordings. Ives is an important figure in the popularization of folk music in the mid-1900s and was an artistic contemporary of Woody Guthrie and Pete Seeger before heading to Hollywood in the 1950s to pursue a film career. For a time, "Wayfaring Stranger" was synonymous with Ives' grandfatherly image and he sung it throughout his life as one of his signature pieces ("Blue-Tailed Fly" was another).

"Wayfaring Stranger" has remained popular with rural people throughout the South and it is certainly one of the most recognizable songs in the Anglo hymn tradition.

Sources:

- *Folk Song USA, Alan Lomax, Editor, New American Library.*
- *"All Music Guide" on the Web site.*

Welcome Table

Recordings on file by: Brownie McGhee, Various artists.

"Welcome Table" is an African-American spiritual with pre-Civil War roots. A spiritual is characteristically repetitive to be easily learned by a group or singers. The lyrics to "I'm Gonna Sit at the Welcome Table" speak of a better day when the singer will be able to "walk the streets of glory" and be "welcomed" to the dinner table of just souls.

During the Civil Rights demonstrations of the 1960s, many of the older spirituals were revived. Their repetitive structure again served impromptu groups of marchers and singers well. And the subject matter of "I'm On My Way," "Study War No More" and "Welcome Table" spoke directly to the worldly concerns of the freedom marchers.

When the Saints

Recordings on file by: Louis Armstrong, Mahalia Jackson, Preservation Hall Jazz Band, The Weavers.

In the years before emancipation, it was not uncommon for backwoods slave owners to bring their slaves to summer revival meetings. Here the slaves could freely participate in the meeting, contribute to the singing and to the general excitement of the occasion.

"Old Ship of Zion" was commonly sung at such a revival and was one of the first songs to cross the race line from white camp-meeting hymn to African American spiritual. Black singers have used the melody to create an entire family of spirituals--"The Gospel Train," "The Whole Round World," "Way Beyond the Sun," and the best known of all, "When the Saints Go Marching In."

It's ironic that over the years "The Saints" has become an international hot jazz standard. The New Orleans jazz men, most of whom came from good religious homes, would never jazz up the normal spiritual, but "The Saints" was an exception. It had already been turned into a red-hot revival tune.

Source: The Folk Songs of North America, by Alan Lomax, Doubleday.

When Things Go Wrong

Recordings on file by: Big Bill Broonzy, Jim Craig.

In terms of his musical skill, the sheer size of his repertoire, the length and variety of his career and his influence on contemporaries and musicians who would follow, Big Bill Broonzy is among a select few of the most important figures in recorded blues history. Among his hundreds of titles are standards like "All By Myself" and "Key to the Highway." In this country he was instrumental in the growth of the Chicago Blues sound, and his travels abroad rank him as one of the leading blues ambassadors.

Born literally on the banks of the Mississippi, he was one of a family of 17 who learned to fiddle on a homemade instrument. Taught by his uncle, he was performing by age ten at social functions and in church. After brief stints on the pulpit and in the Army, he moved to Chicago where he switched his attention from violin to guitar, playing with elders like Papa Charlie Jackson. Broonzy began his recording career with Paramount in 1927. In the early '30s he waxed some brilliant blues and hokum and worked Chicago and the road with great players like pianist Black Bob, guitarist Will Weldon and Memphis Minnie.

During the Depression years Big Bill Broonzy continued full steam ahead, recording continually for Paramount, Bluebird, Columbia and Okeh. In addition to solo efforts, he contributed his muscular guitar licks to recordings by Bumble Bee Slim, John Lee, Sonny Boy Williamson and others who were forging a powerful new Chicago sound.

The early 1940s found Broonzy barnstorming the South with Lil Green's road show or kicking back in Chicago with Memphis Slim. He continued alternating stints in Chicago and New York with coast-to-coast road work until 1951 when live performances and recording dates overseas earned him considerable notoriety in Europe and led to worldwide touring. Back in the States he recorded for Chess, Columbia and Folkways, working with a spectrum of artists from Blind John Davis to Pete Seeger. In 1955, Big Bill Blues, his life as told to Danish writer Yannick Bruynoghe, was published.

In 1957, after one more British tour, the pace began to catch up with Broonzy. He spent the last year of his life in and out of hospitals and succumbed to cancer in 1958. He survives though; not only in his music, but in the remembrances of people who knew him...from Muddy Waters to Studs Terkel. A gentle giant they say, "tough enough to survive the blues world, but not so tough he wouldn't give a struggling young musician the shirt off his back."

Throughout his career, Broonzy sang blues, work songs, spirituals, hollers, folk songs and popular standards, but he mostly sang blues. His music, of course, is absolutely basic to the blues experience. He composed over three hundred blues (most of which he recorded) in his lifetime and sang the definitive blues numbers of his generation: LeRoy Carr's, "In the Evenin' (When the Sun Goes Down)," Big Maceo's "Worried Life Blues," Bessie Smith's "Backwater Blues," and Tampa Red's "When Things Go Wrong (It Hurts Me Too.)"

Sources:

- *"All Music Guide" on the World Wide Web.*
- *Liner notes from "The Bill Broonzy Story." Verve, 1960 & 1999.*

Wild Rover

Recording on file by: Burl Ives.

This traditional ballad is known both in Australia and the United States. It appears to have grown out of an old English street ballad, "The Green Bed," which told of the adventures of a sailor in an uncharitable boarding house. Australian versions, however, are more prevalent than the American, and it is possible there may have been a certain amount of direct swapping between Australians and Americans.

To this day, "The Wild Rover" is still popular in English speaking pubs world wide. It has been recorded many times by a plethora of artists including, The Clancy Brothers and Burl Ives.

Source: The Collected Reprints from Sing Out! Volumes 1964-73, Sing Out Publications.

Wildwood Flower

Recordings on file by: Carter Family, David Grisman & Tony Rice, Sonny Osborne, Weisberg, Paley & Rosenbaum.

For generations now, "The Wildwood Flower" has been one of the most popular songs amongst guitar pickers in the country, for both instrumental performance and just practice. Although it can be heard widely, almost all the present versions can be traced to the original Carter Family recordings by means of recognizing the tune, the distinctive guitar arrangement, as well as the particularly odd wording used in the poetry.

It's a parlor song first published in the United States in 1888 under the title, "I'll Twine Mid the Ringlets" (words by Maude Irving, music by J. B. Webster) and well known prior to the Carter Family's 1928 recording.

Sources:

- *Old-Time Stringband Songbook, Oak Publications.*
- *The Bluegrass Songbook, By Peter Wernick. Oak Publications.*

Will the Circle Be Unbroken

Recordings on file by: Nitty Gritty Dirt Band & Others, Frank Profitt, Various artists, Doc Watson with Clint Howard & Fred Price.

"Will the Circle Be Unbroken" was sung for many years as "Can The Circle Be Unbroken" and is one of the most enduring and popular sacred songs in the American folk tradition. One source says it was composed in 1908, but more than likely, "Can the Circle Be Unbroken" has been around since African and Anglo Americans first began "borrowing" each other's music.

In the 1920s, when phonograph players first began appearing in many American homes, "Can the Circle Be Unbroken" was recorded by by a number of groups including the Metropolitan Quartet, the Silver Leaf Quartet of Norfolk, VA and The Carter Family. It was the Carters who probably changed the title from "Can," to "Will the Circle Be Unbroken."

Source: The Collected Reprints from Sing Out! Volumes 1964-73, Sing Out Publications.

Will You Go Lassie, Go

Recordings on file by: Joan Baez, Clancy Brothers, Jim McCann.

The lyrics to "Will You Go Lassie," or as it's sometimes known "Wild Mountain Thyme," are by Scottish poet Robert Tannahill (1774-1810) of Paisley. The poem is called "The Braes of Balquidder," (pronounced "Balwhither") which was printed as early as 1742. Tannahill's version first appeared in a collection of songs in the Pocket Encyclopedia of Scotch, English, and Irish Songs in 1818. The song had circulated prior to that in magazines and to this day is one of the most enduring pieces to come out the British Isles song tradition.

Source: "Folk Music of England, Ireland, Scotland, Wales and America" site on the World Wide Web.

Wind and Rain

Recordings on file by: George & Gerry Armstrong, Jerry Garcia & David Grisman, Jeff Warner & Jeff Davis.

Folk music is viewed primarily as a rural tradition where songs are passed down by word of mouth. In fact, printed folk music was extremely popular for more than four hundred years, beginning in the sixteenth century. Words to popular songs were printed on sheets of varying lengths and became known as "broadsides."

No music was printed on a broadside, only the words. A note was usually added indicating to which well known tune the words were to be sung. Broadsides were popular in Britain, Holland, France, Italy, Spain and Germany and later in colonial America. Interestingly, many early scholars distinguished between traditional ballads and broadsides, considering broadsides "bad representations of the original."

"Wind and Rain" first appeared on a broadside in 1656 as "The Miller and the King's Daughter." Folk song collector Francis Child has noted 21 different versions of the tune and story, most commonly recognized as "The Twa Sisters" (Child ballad #10).

The haunting theme of a musical instrument being fashioned from the bones and hair of a murder victim is not uncommon in old world balladry. But the instrument naming the murderer is a super-natural element to the story which seems to have been forgotten by American singers.

Sources:

- *"Folk Music of England, Ireland, Scotland, Wales and America" site on the World Wide Web.*
- *"Sing Out!" Magazine.*

Worried Man Blues

Recordings on file by: Carter Family, Woody Guthrie & Cisco Houston, Pete Seeger.

"I always just called the blues, plain old bein' lonesome," said Woody Guthrie when interviewed for the Library of Congress. "Now, a lot of people don't think that that's a big enough word--but then, you can get lonesome for a lot of things.

"People down where I come from, they're lonesome for a job, they're lonesome for some spendin' money, lonesome for some drinkin' whiskey, lonesome for good times, pretty gals--wine, women and song like they see stuck up in their faces every day by other people.

"Thinkin' maybe that you're down and out--disgusted and busted and can't be trusted, gives you a lonesome feeling that somehow the world's sorta turned against you or there's somethin' about it you don't understand. Bein' out of work. Bein' lonesome."

Guthrie learned "Worried Man Blues" from the Carter Family record which circulated the song widely in the early 1930s. It isn't a blues in the classic sense of a 12 bar format, but the lyrics express the same emotions as a blues and it were almost certainly born form the African-American experience in America.

Its structure indicates that it's a musical relative of other early 16 measure blues like, "Goin' Down the Road Feeling Bad," "Easy Rider," "Pallet on the Floor" and "Careless Love." Each verse is sixteen measures in length, with the first line repeated 3 times and the "punch" or rhyming line as the fourth and final line of the stanza.

In the late '50s, folk music experienced an upswing in popularity on college campuses across America. This Folk Revival brought many aging stars, and many older songs back into the spotlight. The Kingston Trio used the same tune but updated the lyrics to "Worried Man Blues" for their smash-hit record of the song.

Sources:

- *"Woody Guthire Library of Congress Recordings," Rounder CD1041-3.*
- *"All Music Guide" on the World Wide Web.*

Union Maid

Recordings on file by: Judy Collins & Pete Seeger, Bobbie McGhee, Pete Seeger, Pete Seeger & Woody Guthrie.

Like hymns and patriotic songs, union songs are songs with a message. Put together, the ballads, anthems and ditties composed by American union members would tell the best part of the history of the American Labor Movement.

Unlike most hymns and patriotic songs, union songs are usually composed by amateurs to suit a particular occasion, and have a short life. More often than not, they are simply new words to an older melody. A few such songs, however, have proven worthwhile enough in melody and lyric to be passed on by one generation of workers to the next. In reality though, there was never as much singing in labor unions as one might suppose.

The singingest union America ever had was the old Wobblies. Their official name was the Industrial Workers of the World--the IWW--and they were started right here in Chicago in 1905 by a man named Big Bill Haywood. Haywood, an organizer for the Western Federation of Miners, and others were dissatisfied with the lack of progress of the little old craft unions under Sam Gompers' American Federation of Labor. So they organized the IWW and membership quickly grew to 150,000 nationwide before World War I. It was put down then by the government because of its opposition to the war, made an upsurge after the war, and then by the 1920s dwindled to a fraction of its old strength.

The Wobblies were a defiantly radical group, mostly anarchist-syndicalists of a sort, and they argued bitterly with Socialists as to the value of trying to elect working-class congressmen. Their idea was to eventually sign up all the workers into One Big Union, improve conditions, and eventually call a

general strike to decide who was going to run the world--the working class or the employing class.

With every new union card they also handed out a little red songbook whose cover carried the motto: "To Fan the Flames of Discontent." Inside were the words to about 50 songs, usually parodies of well-known melodies--pop songs of the day, hymns, or older tunes commonly sung.

Their best know songwriters were Joe Hill and Ralph Chaplin, both of whom rose from the ranks to become full-time organizers for the IWW. Chaplin's "Solidarity Forever" is still sung at labor meetings and conventions nation wide and has become a part of American folklore.

In 1941, long after the Wobblies had lost their punch, a revival in American unionism took place. The Almanac Singers, which included Pete Seeger and Woody Guthrie attempted to carry on the musical tradition and as a result made the very first recording of American Labor music, "Talking Union." One of the original songs included in this collection was Woody Guthire's "Union Maid."

Pete Seeger writes, "I'm proud to say I was present when "Union Maid" was written in June, 1940, in the plain little office of the Oklahoma City Communist Party. Bob Woods, local organizer, had asked Woody Guthrie and me to sing there the night before for a small group of striking oil workers. Early next morning, Woody got to the typewriter and hammered out the first two verses of 'Union Maid' set to a European tune that Robert Schumann arranged for piano ("The Merry Farmer") back in the early 1800s. Of course, it's the chorus that really makes it--its tune, "Red Wing," was copyrighted early in the 1900s.

"Eleven months after I had copied down the song from Woody, I found myself in a recording studio with Lee Hays and Mill Lampell, recording one of America's first albums of union songs. Woody was out west at the time--he joined the Almanac Singers a few weeks later."

Sources:

- *The Incompleat Folksinger, by Pete Seeger, edited by Jo Metcalf Schwartz. Simon and Schuster.*
- *"Sing Out!" Magazine.*

a final note

The research and writing of this companion guide took place between Christmas 1999 and Labor Day 2000. It's not intended to be a scholarly work. As a matter of fact, it's pretty casual. Most of the information has been previously published and was found in sources close at hand.

In hunting down background information, I first looked to three really interesting books about American folk music. Folk Song USA, by Alan Lomax, The Folk Songs of North America, also by Alan Lomax and The American Songbag, by Carl Sandburg. These are eloquent, wonderful books and I highly recommended each. The Resource Center at the Old Town School has copies of all three.

If I couldn't find what I wanted in those main sources, I then looked to record jackets, songbooks, Pete Seeger's Incompleat Folksinger, back issues of Sing Out! Magazine, my memory and of course, the internet. An interesting site called the "Argus All Music Guide" (www.fuzzlogic.com) was helpful for biographical information. Also very informative is the "Folk Songs of England, Ireland and Scotland" site (www.contemplator.com). Here you get history and can listen to the tunes.

It must be said that aside from the introduction, much of the actual writing in this guide is not mine. Mostly, I did a lot of cutting and pasting and smoothing of things out. If anyone would like an electronic version of the text, please get in touch. Once on a word processor, the text can easily be added to or changed as new things are learned.

Finally, thanks to Colby Maddox in the Old Town School Resource Center who continues to be especially helpful. Thanks also to Peggy Browning and Maura Lally for their valuable assistance.
Those who would like a copy of the songbook to which these notes are the companion, should contact the Old Town School of Folk Music in Chicago.

Enjoy, MD

Mark Dvorak is a musician, teacher and songwriter. When not on the road, he lives in Riverside, Illinois, along the DesPlaines River, and teaches at Chicago's Old Town School of Folk Music. He has released nine recordings of traditional and original music to date including the recently acclaimed, *Every Step of the Way*. More information on recordings, instruction and bookings can be found at www.markdvorak.com.