



A FOLKLORIST'S VIEW OF THE SONGBOOK

by Paul L. Tyler

The Old Town School of Folk Music's *Songbook* provides a fine overview of the kinds of songs that have thrived in the oral traditions of English-language American folk cultures. All the major types of folksong genres identified and analyzed by folklorists throughout the 20th century are represented: ballads or narrative songs, lyrical folksongs, blues and blues ballads, work songs, sacred songs, topical songs (often called protest songs), and folk-processed versions of Tin Pan Alley compositions. Such songs are characteristically tough and long lasting at the same time that they are malleable and easily adapted. Nearly all exist in many versions and variations. Even when we can identify an older version, that variant is no more an authoritative original than a later and quite different manifestation of the same basic song. The nature of folksong is of weathering and of change. Here are some stories of songs that have persevered.



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