A Folklorist's View of the *Song Book*
by Paul L. Tyler

In 1992, the Old Town School of Folk Music published a new version, the third, of its *Song Book* to be used in group guitar, banjo and voice classes. Though many songs were continued from previous editions, half were new–that is, new to the *Song Book.* In fact, the vast majority of the 108 songs in the current *Song Book* are older traditional or public domain pieces. The number of new pieces has been decreased, largely because of concerns over copyrights, and an attempt was made to obtain legal permission to print songs for which there was a clear copyright holder.

The most important continuity from past editions to the present *Song Book* is the aim of the collection. The editors, Michael Miles and Elaine Moore, sought to compile a book of memorable and easily learned songs that could be played by students at varying skill levels. Both Mr. Miles and Ms. Moore were deeply engaged in teaching group classes and had a good feel for what kind of songs were easily singable in a group setting, primarily in the Old Town School's signature "Second Half," a gathering that brought many classes together at the end of the night. Such songs had to be accessible to students of varying degrees of technical competence, and whose primary focus was on learning to strum and or pick a stringed instrument.

Still, the *Song Book* 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 twentieth century are represented: ballads or narrative songs, lyrical folksongs, blues and blues ballads (that is, the distinctive compositional forms of African-Americans), 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 that a later and quite different manifestation of the same basic song.

Nearly all the songs in the *Song Book* tell a story in some sense, especially when the listener's imagination is fully engaged. A few pieces are proper ballads derived from a variety of traditions. "Wind and Rain," for instance, is the essence of the long story told in the old English ballad "The Two Sisters," also known as 'Child 2,' for its position in the authoritative collection assembled at the end of the nineteenth century by Harvard professor Francis James Child. "The Titanic" is a younger specimen of ballad that got its start as a broadside or street ballad, a news report of a recent, tragic event.

The vast majority of the *Song Book* is given over to folk lyrics, short pieces–shorter than traditional ballads–that are centered on emotion and feeling. If the lyric has descended from a longer and more complete narrative, what has been preserved is the heart of the old story, the emotional core. If the lyric is newer–and most pieces in the *Song Book* can only be traced back to the early years of the 20th century–it still represents a distillation of the varieties and vagaries of human experience. As most of these songs thrived in the folk traditions of both Black and White Americans, they are a strong witness to what we all have in common: longings and desires, sorrows and joys, loved ones gone and true love found.

The traditional folksongs that thousands of students have discovered at the Old Town School of Folk Music over the last fifty years are like stones and pebbles found on the beaches of nearby Lake Michigan: the wave action of many years has smoothed away the rough edges,

obliterated some of the finer details, but left behind a solid substance. The *Song Book*'s pieces stand up well to frequent singing. All the melodies, lyrics and stories have thrived in oral tradition and have come down to us in different forms and combinations. It is possible to find historical evidence of the paths these songs have traced, and to perceive a glimmer of the folks before us who composed and sang them. But the nature of folksong is of weathering and of change. Here are some stories of songs that have perservered.

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Shady Grove is first mentioned in print in 1915 in E.C. Perrow's long report on "Songs and Rhymes from the South" in the *Journal of American Folklore.* It appears in two 1930s college student folksong collections from Tennessee. And it was recorded commercially only twice before World War II–both times in Chicago–by the Kentucky Thorobreds (featuring the great fiddler, Doc Roberts) for Paramount in 1927, and by the Prairie Ramblers for Bluebird in 1933. It was one of the first records made by the Ramblers about the time they came to Chicago from their native Kentucky to begin a two-decade long tenure on the WLS National Barn Dance

Many of the verses of Shady Grove float among other songs, such as "Fly Around My Pretty Little Miss," "Little Betty Anne," "Liza Jane," "Pig in a Pen," and even "Old Joe Clark." The first half of the chorus is fairly standard, but the last two lines are rendered in various ways: e.g.,"I'm bound to go away" to rhyme with "I say" in the second line, or "Down at Shady Grove" to rhyme with "my own." The *Song Book*'s version ends with "On my way to Harlan" to rhyme with "My Darling," suggesting that it derives from the version sung by the famous Ritchie Family of Hazard County, Kentucky.

Shady Grove serves as frolic or square dance tunes as well as a love song. The versions played as dance tunes on fiddle and banjo usually include a second higher strain equal in length to the melody of the verse.

Take This Hammer is both a work song and a song about work. It doesn't take the usual call-and-response form found in most African-American shanties or chain-gang songs. But during the long held notes in the middle and end of each line, there's a rhythmic opening for a loud grunted "uh" to accompany the swing of hammers. The song is also about the forced work done by prison gangs, with some pointed words for the "Captain" and a hint of running away.

The *Song Book*'s "Take This Hammer" carries strong connections to two other traditional song families. The mere reference to a hammer links it to the powerful image of John Henry, who swung his hammer mightily enough to outdo a mechanically-power steam drill (but then he laid down and died). The defiance of the lyrics and the melody found here connect more closely to the songs of "Roll On, Buddy" and "Nine Pound Hammer."

The earliest known example of any version of this song was collected in 1915 by Newman Ivey White, author of *American Negro Folksongs*." An interesting variant was included in Carl Sandburg's *American Songbag*, published in 1926. In the 1930s, Jimmie Strothers and several prisoners recorded versions for collectors from the Library of Congress's Archive of American Folk Song. The earliest commercial recording by a Black artist was Hudie Ledbetter's (Leadbelly's) 1940 disc for Victor. Big Bill Broonzy also recorded it late in his life, when he began to play more frequently for the folk revival than in blues clubs. Ironically, the first recording of the core of the hammer verse was in 1928 with "I Got a Bulldog" by the Sweet Brothers, a white string band from Virginia.

I Know You Rider comes from the first of the influential John and Alan Lomax printed collections: *American Ballads and Folk Songs*, published in 1934. The Lomaxes claim that the melody and first stanza was sung to them by an 18-year-old African-American woman who was in prison for murder. They don't provide an identity for the singer, nor do they disclose where they got any of the other nine verses they include under the title "Woman Blue." The *Song Book*'s version includes three of the Lomax stanzas, including the first. The final verse, "Sun's

gonna shine on my back door some day," is a floating lyric that appears in other blues compositions and folksongs, such as Sonny Terry and Brownie McGhee's version of "Trouble in Mind."

Brown's Ferry Blues was composed by the Alton Delmore and recorded by the Delmore Brothers in Chicago for Bluebird in 1933. According to Alton's autobiography, *Truth Is Stranger Than Publicity*, the brothers started performing at fiddlers conventions held in school houses near their home in Limestone County, Alabama when they were just teenagers in the late 1920s. After coming in second to a musically inferior band that performed songs that got a laugh, they decided they needed a comedy song to give them an edge in the competition for prize money. Alton strung together some original twists on traditional lyrics (much as a bluesman would compose a new song out of older materials) using the hook of a local landmark, the Brown's Ferry Road. It worked, they won, and within a short time Alton and Rabon made several trips to recording studios in Atlanta and Chicago.

Brown's Ferry Blues, one of a handful of Delmore compositions that became country and bluegrass standards, was one of the first country hits that spawned sequels. Throughout the 1930s, the Delmores and others recorded Numbers 2, 3 and 4, and a slightly risque variant became popular as the "Oozlin' Daddy Blues."

Though many musicians think that **Trouble In Mind** is traditional and by an unknown author, the *Song Book* credits one Richard Jones. But according to the liner notes of a recent Big Bill Broonzy CD on Smithsonian Folkways–the album is also called *Trouble In Mind*–the words were composed by Charlie Segar, a Chicago piano player, while Big Bill himself made up the tune. Troubled in Mind was first recorded by blues guitarist Sam Collins (aka Salty Dog Sam) in 1931. That performance was never issued, but the following year Big Bill waxed it under the title "Worried in Mind Blues."

When William Broonzy–born in Scott, Mississippi in 1899–came to Chicago in the early 1920s, he was a fiddler, and soon got a job playing with early bluesman Papa Charlie Jackson. He learned guitar during this time, and in 1925 he recorded his first blues records as "Big Bill," accompanying his singing with his own fingerstyle style guitar-playing. The most-recorded bluesman before World War II, after the war Bill began working with Studs Terkel and Old Town School of Folk Music founder Win Stracke in a program of songs and politics called *Come for to Sing*. When the Old Town School first opened its doors in December 1957, Big Bill was a featured performer. Within the next year he lost first his voice and then his life to lung cancer.

Aragon Mill is one of the newer songs in the *Song Book*, and was composed by a city-bred, college-educated rabbi's son. Nevertheless, the song's roots are deep in the life experiences of real American folks. Si Kahn, the composer, was a union organizer who went south to Aragon, Georgia in 1972 after a textile-mill closed and put over 700 people out of work. During a casual conversation at the scene, one of the locals said "After the mill closed down, it was so quiet I couldn't sleep anymore." That lyrical and haunting image became a verse in the song that Kahn pieced together to tell the hardships faced by the folks who lived in Aragon.

At the time, Kahn never thought of music as anything more than a hobby. He wrote many songs for the pleasure of himself and his friends. Aragon Mill spread through the folk music world and was soon recorded in old time and bluegrass settings by artists like the Red Clay Ramblers and Hazel Dickens. It also helped spur Si Kahn into a second career of songwriting,

performing and recording. But he never gave up his day job or organizing for social change to better the lives of people like the laid-off Georgia mill workers.

Worried Man Blues was first recorded in 1930 by the most influential family in early country music, the Carter Family of Maces Springs, Virginia. Following the practices of Ralph Peer, the Victor Company A&R man who discovered them, the song was copyrighted by A.P. Carter, the group's leader. According to one report, the Carters's source for the song was from hearing a prison work gang. Though the sequence of verses and arrangement were more than likely original with the Carters, some of the lyric images were probably picked up by A.P. in his song-collecting jaunts with Leslie Riddle, an African-American neighbor and friend. Dorothy Scarborough's 1925 *On the Trail of Negro Folksong*, for instance, quotes a line about a train that is "sixteen coaches long." A possibly related lyric was recorded by bluesman John D. Fox for the Gennett label in 1927 under the title "The Worried Man Blues." The Carters's song is another example of a completely new song composed out of verses and lines shared with other songs, such as "Two Dollar Bill" [aka "Long Journey Home"] and "Dink's Blues."

During the 1930s, Worried Man Blues recorded by several white string bands like the Carolina Ramblers and J.E. Mainer's Mountaineers. It became even more popular during the post-War folk revival, in part because the repeated opening lines of each verse make it suitable for hootenanies and other sing-alongs. It was recorded in 1944 by Woody Guthrie, and later in a revised form by the Kingston Trio. The *Song Book*'s version is the most common form for the song today, in that the first line of each verse is sung three times. In the Carter Family version, the first line is only sung twice.

The *Song Book*'s **Salty Dog Blues** is relatively new bluegrass standard formed through the merging of several streams of tradition. The earliest recording was "Salty Dog Blues" waxed by Chicago bluesman Papa Charlie Jackson in 1924, accompanying himself on his unique six-string banjo. Two years later he recorded "Salty Dog" in a jazz setting with Freddie Keppard's Jazz Cardinals including the great Chicago clarinetist, Johnny Dodds. The strongest tie between that performance and present number is the so-called 'Circle of Fifths' chord progression. A number of other Black artists recorded a "Salty Dog" during the same decade, including Alexander Robinson's 1929 performance with the Paramount Pickers, again featuring Johnny Dodds. The first recording of the song by a country artists was by the Booker Orchestra, a African-American family band from Kentucky.

Among white country musicians, the McGee Brothers of Grand Old Opry fame recorded a "Salty Dog Blues" in May of 1927, with a melody in a minor key and only a few lyrical ties to the *Song Book*'s Salty Dog. A much closer resemblance is born by a version recorded a month earlier by the Allen Brothers of Chattenooga. Perhaps because of the convincing blues-iness of their performing style, the Columbia company released subsequent blues numbers by the brother team in the company "Race" records series devoted to African-American music. Then in 1938, the Morris Brothers, Zekie and Wiley, of North Carolina recorded "Let Me Be Your Salty Dog," which effectively standardized the piece for following generations of bluegrass and folk musicians.

Upon hearing the song for the first time, many people ask 'Just what is a salty dog?' If you go back to the older versions of the song mentioned above, there is little reason to ask the question. The answer lies in the straightforward sexuality of the older lyrics.

Since it's such a good banjo tune, it's easy to assume that **Cripple Creek** is a frolic tune dating back to ante-bellum corn huskings on southern plantations. But the earliest identifiable version of the song is printed in the same 1915 article in the *Journal of American Folklore* as mentioned in the notes for Shady Grove (see above). The first issued recording of the song was made in 1924 by Sam Jones, a probably African-American singer who was known as 'Stovepipe No. 1.' One day earlier, the piece was also waxed by Fiddlin' (Cowan) Powers & Family of Virginia, but their version was not issued. The song was frequently recorded by white rural string bands throughout the 1920s. A noteworthy recording was made in Richmond, Indiana in 1927 at one of the first integrated sessions in any style of music: fiddler Doc Roberts of Richmond, Kentucky was accompanied on guitar by John Booker of the Booker Orchestra (see notes for Salty Dog).

The question remains, just where is Cripple Creek to be found on the map? Possible answers are in the states of Virginia and Colorado, the later being famous for a successful strike by Western Federation of Miners in 1894. But since the lyrics of the song are all about courting and having fun, there is no apparent connection to Colorado's Cripple Creek and the history of American labor unions. In addition, in other versions of the song the creek in question is "Shootin' Creek" (by Charlie Poole & the North Carolina Ramblers) or "Red Creek" (by Land Norris of Georgia). Western Swing pioneer Milton Brown of Fort Worth recorded it in Chicago in 1935 as "Going Up Brushy Creek." The basic tune of Cripple Creek also closely resembles some versions of the widespread fiddle tune "Ida Red."

Deep River Blues is a song made famous by the great instrumentalist Arthel "Doc" Watson of Deep Gap, North Carolina. Doc was playing electric guitar in a country band in the early 1960s when he was included in a historic recording session at the home of Clarence "Tom" Ashley just across the line in Tennessee. Folklorist Ralph Rinzler, representing the Newport Folk Festival Foundation, had located Ashley, an early country music recording artist who hadn't made a record since 1933. Rinzler was deeply impressed with Doc's incredible knowledge of traditional and old time songs, and soon had him on the path to becoming America's foremost folk song artist. Old Town School audiences have thrilled to Doc's music many times over the last fifty years. And one memorable night on North Avenue, Doc dropped by as special guest at the Second Half, a singalong that capped an evening of guitar and banjo classes at the School.

The song was, in fact, "I've Got the Big River Blues," another composition by Alton Delmore (see notes to Brown's Ferry Blues). The Delmore Brothers first recorded it at a session in Chicago for Bluebird Records in 1933. Doc's and the *Song Book*'s versions essentially differ from the original only in the title and the identifying 'I got them Deep River blues' line. The diminished seventh chord in the opening line of the song is characteristic of the many pieces Alton Delmore composed through his two decades in country music. See his fascinating autobiography Truth Is Stranger Than Publicity, for more interesting stories like the following. By 1932 the Delmore Brothers had a spot on the Grand Ole Opry on WSM in Nashville. Alton reports with regret that a few years later turned down a chance to move to a higher paying job with the WLS National Barn Dance in Chicago. But they were young, and naively let the WSM brass promise them a brighter future that never came through.

Amazing Grace is verifiably the oldest song included in this collection. It was composed by John Newton, a minister in the Church of England some time between 1760 and 1770. As perhaps the best-known hymn in the English-language, its words of anguish and hope, repentance and redemption resonate more clearly upon knowing the personal story of the composer. John

Newton was forcibly impressed into the royal navy in 1744. Abhorring the abusive conditions, he deserted and within a few years found his place on slave ship. He eventually rose to captain his own ship, and prospered by continuing in the slave trade. An encounter at sea with a violent storm brought him to a religious conversion, and he left the sailor's life in order to enter the ministry. According to legend, Newton's conversion led him to become an active abolitionist. Alas, the historical record suggests only that he urged the humane treatment of his own slaves. Once we were blind.

St James Infirmary belongs to an expansive family of songs with roots deep in British folksong traditions. Originally a broadside ballad–that is, a lyric sheet sold on street corners by a singer known as ballad hawker–in British Isles the song is known variously as "The Unfortunate Rake" or "The Young Girl [or Young Man] Cut Down in Her [His] Prime" or even as "The Sailor Cut Down in His Prime." On this side of the Atlantic, the basic narrative has taken shape in songs like "The Bad Girl's Lament," "Tom Sherman's Barroom" and "The Streets of Laredo." In all these cases, a young life is shortened as the result of careless living or bad habits. The dying youth leaves a warning behind for others to beware of the dangers of--take your pick–gambling, drinking, unprotected sex or gun-fighting.

The earliest recordings of "St. James Hospital" by African-American artists include both commercial recordings from the early 1930s and field recordings made by the Lomaxes in Southern prisons in the middle of that decade. Among the earliest recordings were a pair made in Chicago: a 1928 disc of "St. James Infirmary Blues" by Louis Armstrong & His Savoy Ballroom Five, and a 1929 recording of "Gamblers Blues (St. James Infirmary Blues)" by the Hokum Boys, a group that often included Big Bill Broonzy. Recordings by white country artists appeared earlier in the 1920s, and all under titles like "The Dying Cowboy" or "The Cowboy's Lament." Longtime WLS National Barn Dance star the Arkansas Woodchopper–his real name was Luther Ossenbrink–recorded the song for Columbia in 1928.

Don't This Road Look Rough and Rocky comes from bluegrass greats Lester Flatt and Earl Scruggs. Before their influential 1954 recording, the song itself traveled its own rough and rocky road. Flatt & Scruggs may have adapted the song from a 1936 recording of "Can't You Hear That Night Bird Crying" by the Blue Sky Boys (Bill and Earl Bolick). The Bolick Brothers song, in turn, is a variant belonging to a family of songs that includes "Little Bunch of Roses," "Down Among the Budded Roses," and a Carter Family Song titled "Farewell Nellie." The first two titles were recorded by a number of pre-World War II white string bands, such as Frank Blevins & the Tar Heel Travelers and Charlie Poole & the North Carolina Ramblers. Other performances of the song were made under the title "Lover's Farewell. It is worth noting that all of the country bands mentioned in relation to this song, except for the Carter Family, hail from North Carolina.

A most interesting version, called "Last Gold Dollar," was recorded in 1930 by Ephraim Woodie & the Henpecked Husbands. It may be the first to open the refrain with the line "Don't this road look long and lonely," replacing the then more familiar "Take this little bunch of roses." I've not heard all the recorded versions, but what brings out the family resemblances of these varied songs are hint of the same melody, some shared lyrics around the act of separation, and the distinctive lilt and length of the lines of the chorus..

The Flatt & Scruggs song–and thus the *Song Book*'s version–builds on the compelling image of a rough and rocky road. That phrase was more commonly found in 1920s and '30s recordings of blues and gospel artists, such as Cryin' Sam Collins "My Road Is Rough and

Rocky" (recorded in Chicago) and "Rough and Rocky Road" by the Heavenly Gospel Singers." Beyond the shared alliteration, there is no further connection to the *Song Book*'s Rough and Rocky.

Down In The Valley, a song of unrequited love, was first published in H.M. Belden's *Ballads and Folk Songs of Missouri* in 1909. Two other versions that Belden includes are titled "Bird in a Cage," and are clearly the same song, lacking only the first stanza of The *Song Book's* version. Perhaps the first recording of the song, judging only by the title "Down in the Valley Blues," was made in St. Louis in 1925 by blues singer Evelyn Brickey (no relation to the Old Town School's Bill Brickey). Other early recordings were made by early country music Tom Darby & Jimmie Tarlton, in 1927, and Riley Puckett, guitarist and singer with Gid Tanner & the Skillet Lickers of Atlanta. Both discs bore the title "Birmingham Jail." Early friends of the Old Town School, Pete Seeger and Frank Proffitt, made later recordings of the song as "Down in the Valley." There is a separate song also known as "Birmingham Jail," that is more closely related to the "Sweet Thing" or "Crawdad Hole" family of songs.

Old Dog Tray is a Stephen Foster composition and dates back to 1852. Like so many of Foster songs, it has been continuously sung by Americans of all walks of life. Often the singers are unaware of who authored the words on their lips. In the composer's day, Old Dog Tray marked a turning point for his career. With this popular hit, Foster was able to distance himself from the popular theater of blackface minstrelsy that had been the venue for earlier hits like "Susanna" and "Ring De Banjo." He sought, instead, to stake a new claim with home "songs," those that dealt with more sentimental themes, such as mother, longing, loneliness and death.

The *Song Book*'s **Erie Canal** belongs to a group of songs that, perhaps with tongue-in-cheek, tried to transfer the romance and risk of the deep sea sailor's life to the drudgery of working on a slow-moving vessel towed by a team of mules. A creation of oral tradition, the present song should not be confused with a similarly titled piece that starts out "I've got a mule, her name is Sal." That one began life as a popular song published on Tin Pan Alley as "Low Bridge! Everybody Down."

The first two stanzas and the last in the *Song Book*'s version are found in Carl Sandburg's *American Songbag* (1927). Sandburg calls his song "The E-Ri-E," and claims to have gotten it from two Chicagoans, Robert Wolfe and Oliver R. Barrett. Two additional stanzas in the *Song Book* can be found in "The Ballad of the Erie Canal" pieced together from multiple sources –representing six states!–by John and Alan Lomax in *American Ballads and Folk Songs* (1934). Probably the most influential recording of the tune was by the The Weavers, made after their big reunion concert at Carnegie Hall in 1955.

The hymn **Just a Closer Walk** comes from the African-American tradition of sacred song. The earliest recording was by the Selah Jubilee Quartet in 1941. The hymn's popularity has never been limited by any categorical boundaries. An important early recording in the country music field was by Kentuckian Clyde "Red" Foley, who got his professional start on the National Barn Dance on WLS-Chicago. The song is also a popular instrumental in jazz circles.

In the middle of the 20th century **Wayfaring Stranger** was very closely associated Burl Ives, a native of Jasper County, Illinois. After dropping out of college to hobo around the country in

search of work and an education, Ives ended up in New York in 1937. Three years later he had his own radio show on CBS. Titled "The Wayfarin' Stranger,' the show was one of the most popular in the years before World War II. After a hitch in the army, Ives returned stateside to resume his career as a folk singer and Broadway actor. In 1948 he completed his autobiography, *The Wayfarin' Stranger*.

Apart from Ives's activities, the song appeared in the historical record only a few times over the span of three quarters of a century. According to Guthrie Meade's *Country Music Sources*, the song was included in an 1882 song book that remains unidentified. Forty years later it appeared in Howard Odum and Guy Johnson's *The Negro and His Songs*. In 1929 it made perhaps it's first appearance on disc with Vaughan's Texas Quartet's rendition of "Wayfaring Pilgrim." And thirty years later it was recorded again by the great Ozark balladeer, Almeda Riddle, and by the father of Bluegrass, Bill Monroe. Both recordings had a great influence on the song's perserverance in the urban folksong revival.

Libba Cotton was young girl living near Chestnut Street in Carrboro, North Carolina when she composed **Freight Train**, perhaps as early as 1902. She longed to play the banjo and guitar owned by her older brothers, but they hid them from her. So when she snuck the instruments out during their absence, she played them upside down, favoring her stronger left hand. As an adult, Elizabeth Cotton eventually moved to Washington, D.C. where she found work as a domestic in the home of Charles and Ruth Seeger. With the encouragement of the highly musical Seegers –especially Mike and Peggy–Libba Cotton revived her long dormant music career. In 1957, she recorded Freight Train on her album of *Folksongs and Instrumentals* for Folkways Records in New York. The album has been recently reissued on CD by Smithsonian/Folkways.

Midnight Special is a song indelibly associated with the great bluesman and songster Hudie Ledbetter, aka Leadbelly. The *Song Book*'s version closely follows Leadbelly's adaptation of a song he learned while in prison in Texas during the 1920s. Most people sing it today with the legend in mind that if the headlight of the train, the Midnight Special, falls upon the walls of your prison cell, you will be set free. Carl Sandburg–who included of the song in his *American Songbag* in 1927–had a different take on the message of the lyrics: i.e., he interpreted it as a wish for death in the face of a seemingly endless stay in prison.

The Midnight Special was quite popular in oral tradition. Folklorist Vance Randolph collected and published it in his massive *Ozark Folk Songs*, while other 1930s collectors for the Archive of American Folk Song at the Library of Congress recorded versions sung by soloists and groups alike. An early commercial version was waxed in Chicago in 1924 by the State Street Stompers, an ensemble that included Big Bill Broonzy on fiddle. Different versions of the tune warn the listener to "walk right" whenever you're in Houston or Memphis. The earliest recorded version of the song–lacking the "Midnight Special" chorus–was titled "Walk Right in Belmont," a section of Atlanta. The Georgia artists were a white string band with the evocative name Wilmer Watts and the Lonely Eagles.

Most folks think that **Goodnight Irene** was Hudie Ledbetter's creation, and the song was copyrighted in his name in 1936. Perhaps Leadbelly did take some old lyrics and reshape them into a new song, but that is the natural process by which many folk songs came into being. What is unusual is to know such much about the creative personality behind one of the best known American folk songs. Leadbelly reported that he learned the chorus from his uncle, and that the

real Irene was a teen he knew who took up a rambler. Her story inspired Leadbelly's song of courtship, loss and remorse. And after the Lomaxes brought Leadbelly to New York to promote him as the quinessential American folk-song artist, Goodnight Irene became a popular anthem in the folk revival. A Decca recording by the Weavers made it to the top of the pop charts in a 1950.

The lyrical roots of the Goodnight Irene date further back to the white string bands and duets of early country music, and to a song titled something on the order of "Let Him [or 'Her'] Go, God Bless Him [Her]." A text first appears in 1926 in the *Journal of American Folklore*'s publication of Arthur Palmer Hudson's collection of "Ballads and Songs from Mississippi." The first appearance on disc came two years later in Chicago when Fiddlin' Sid Harkreader and Grady Moore recorded "He'll Find No Girl Like Me" for the Paramount label. A 1929 recording of "Let Her Go, I'll Meet Her" by Kentuckians Leonard Rutherford and John Foster bears a remarkable resemblance to Leadbelly's song in both the verses and the melody. However, their tune, similar to that used later by the Louvin Brothers, was in 4/4 time. Leadbelly's Goodnight Irene is always in triple meter. And of course, all these country versions lack the disctinctive chorus that has made Leadbelly's song a favorite last-song-of-the-night sing-along. All join in.

Drunken Sailor, sometimes known as "Early in the Morning," was traditionally a sea shanty, sung by a leader or "shantyman" to help a gang of workers time their exertions together. The shanty in the *Song Book* was used as a "walkaway": that is, the men would give two yanks on the ropes, and then walk along the deck with a steady pull that would hoist the sail a little further up the mast. The common practice when using Drunken Sailor was for the men to stamp loudly with the words of the chorus "Way, hay, and up she rises." Thus, walkaways were also called "stamp and go" shanties.

The lyrics, which allegedly date back at least to 1841, were printed retrospectively in Frank Shay's 1948 *American Sea Songs & Chanteys* and William Doerflinter's 1951 *Shantymen and Shantyboys.* A version sung in 1936 by Richard Maitland, one of the last surviving veterans from the days of the tall ships, was included on the LP *American Sailor Songs and Shanties* issued by the Archive of American Folk Song of the Library of Congress.

The common tune for the song is supposedly derived an Irish dance tune or march, and was included in Cole's Pocket Companion, published in Baltimore in the early 1800s. Fiddler John Baltzell of Mt. Vernon, Ohio, recorded the tune in 1923 (in one of the earliest records made by a country fiddler) as part of the "Drunken Sailor Medley." In melody and lyric meter, Drunken Sailor also calls to mind a wide-spread, comic lyric "The Monkey's Wedding." Carl Sandburg included a verse of the latter in his 1927 *American Songbag.* And both songs are reminiscent of the children's song about "Ten Little Indians."

Folksinger Bruce "Utah" Phillips claims that the the classic hobo song, **Wabash Cannonball** can be traced to a patriotic 1862 song, "Uncle Sam's Farm," that sang the praises of the homestead act. A more direct ancestor "Great Rock Island Route!"–with words and music by J.A. Roff–an 1882 paean to a real railroad line that ran from Chicago to Council Bluffs, Iowa.. The song was rewritten in 1904 by William Kindt to tell of the exploits of fanciful runs of the Wabash Cannonball, a legendary train that was not limited to any actual set of rails.

The first recording of the song, never issued, was made in 1928 by an obscure duo named Clark & Edans. The next year, two classic early country versions were waxed by Hugh Cross, an Atlanta singer who later appeared on the WLS National Barn Dance in Chicago, and by the

original Carter Family of Virginia, who used the melody familiar to everyone today. The most influential version of the song was Roy Acuff's, which he recorded in 1936 and again in 1947. Acuff's stanzas easily line up with the verses in *The Song Book*, though he includes one additional stanza that begins "She pulled in to the station one cold December day." The Carter Family version omits that stanza, but include one that mentions the "IC"–the Illinois Central.

VOLUME 2

South Australia 2:21 Tangleweed

This farewell song served as a work shanty on deep-water, square-rigged ships in the late 1800s. A "capstan" shanty, it was sung at a moderate tempo to accompany the several dozen sailors who heaved together to raise the ship's anchor. Two to three sailors manned each of the wooden bars that extended like spokes from the capstan head, and marched forcefully in circles to reel in the long, heavy anchor cable. In the midst of their exertions, a leader would sing out the lines of the verses, while the rest joined in heartily on the refrains.

One scholar believes "South Australia" originated on British ships that carried emigrants to Melbourne and Sydney. Another notes the song's textual similarities with the "Cape Cod Girls" included in Alan Lomax's *Folksong's of North America*. The latter song was first collected by a folklorist in Nova Scotia and published in 1932. "South Australia" first appeared in print in 1927, though retired sailors attested to it's earlier use in oral tradition.

Last Thing On My Mind 3:09 Kelly Hogan

Written by Tom Paxton–and sung by him often in concerts at the Old Town School–"The Last Thing on My Mind" is one of the most-covered songs created during the 1960s folk music revival. Many Americans heard it for the first time on Peter, Paul & Mary's 1965 album, *See What Tomorrow Brings*.

(When Things Go Wrong) It Hurt's Me Too 2:31 Ted Parrish

Often performed by Chicago bluesmen, "It Hurts Me Too" was composed by one of the earliest stars on the scene, Hudson Whittaker who came up to Chicago in the 1920s. Better known as Tampa Red, Whittaker recorded solo and as well as with Thomas A. Dorsey–aka Georgia Tom–before the latter devoted himself to Gospel music. The Song Book's version is drawn from the singing of Big Bill Broonzy, who became one of Chicago's most prominent blues artists in the 1930s and '40s. More than likely, Broonzy based his setting on Tampa Red's original, though the verses differ. A later and variant version was recorded by Elmore James, and has been covered by Eric Clapton and others.

Goin' Down To Cairo 3:51 Steve Rosen & Paul Tyler

As the southern Illinois city in the title attests, this song belongs to Illinois and was widely known as a play party or singing game in downstate districts. In the decades surrounding World War II folklorists, David S. and Eva McIntosh of Southern Illinois University collected fifteen versions of the song, all but one with the melody heard here. A story related to them 1947 told how nearly a century before an early frost had ruined the crops, and–echoing the Biblical story of Joseph–farmers had to go to Cairo to buy provisions. After a rare trip to the big city, many men came back with their boots blacked and their clothes a little finer, so on future visits to the city they were accompanied by their wives.

Though the Illinois tune is distinctive–a version of "Liza Jane" fiddled by West Virginia native John Hannah is a rare parallel–the use of Liza's name in the lyrics calls to mind a well-known song that dates back at least as far back as a Tin Pan Alley song published in 1916 (with words and music by Countess Ada de Lachau). While verses about Liza Jane have floated into many performances of the song, two melodies are usually associated with Liza: one with shorter

phrases can be called “Little ‘Liza Jane,” while the other longer tune was recorded by early WLS star Bradley Kincaid as “Liza Up the ‘Simmon Tree.” The Song Book’s Liza Jane is rendered by this singular tune contributed by the author, as learned from a recording of the Indian Creek Delta Boys of Charleston, Illinois, who learned it from fiddler Noah Beavers of Elkville.

Red River Valley 4:08 Shelley Miller

One of America’s favorite folksongs, it started out as “A Lady in Love,” circa 1889, or as “The Bright Mohawk Valley, “as published by James J. Kerrigan in 1896. The first recording, by cowboy singer Carl T. Sprague, was issued in 1925 with the title “Cowboy’s Love Song.” Many southern old time singers recorded it as “Bright Sherman Valley,” until a 1927 disc by Hugh Cross (who later performed on the WLS National Barn Dance) and Riley Puckett popularized the title “Red River Valley.” That same year, “Red River Valley” appeared in Carl Sandburg’s *The American Songbag*. Over thirty commercial “Hillbilly” recordings of the song were issued before 1940. A half-century later, Garrison Keilor’s *Prairie Home Companion* used the song as emblematic of the “good old days” days of live country radio.

Simple Gifts 3:39 The Zincs

"Simple Gifts" was composed in Maine in 1848 by Shaker Elder Joseph Brackett. The Shakers were a small Protestant sect, the United Society of Believers in Christ's Second Appearing, who moved to New York in 1774 just two years after their founding in England. Their worship services were perfuse with both song and dance. “Simple Gifts” was sung for a “quick dance” of elaborately patterned movements. First the tune, and then the lyrics became more widely known through Aaron Copeland’s inclusion of them in his score for the ballet *Appalachian Spring* in 1944, and then for his set of *Old American Songs* in 1950.

Gypsy Davy 3:12 Jimmy Tomasello

This song’s impressive literary lineage traces back to “The Gypsy Laddie,” number 200 (out of 305) in Harvard professor Francis James Child’s monumental, five-volume collection *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, published between 1884 and 1898. The oldest known text of the ballad was published in Scotland in 1740 in Ramsey’s *Tea Table Miscellany*. Its long and rich life in oral tradition stretched all over the English-speaking world down to the present. The author of these notes recorded “The Gypso Daisie” in Lebanon, Indiana in 1980, as sung by a retired factory-worker. The Song Book’s “Gypsy Davy” is derived from the version Woody Guthrie sang in 1940 for the Archives of American Folk Song at the Library of Congress.

The common theme in all versions of the song is that the Lady forsakes her noble husband and her baby, and runs off with the Gypsy and his company. In some of the earliest variants there is the suggestion that she has been charmed, and thus perhaps did not elope willingly. In all the oldest texts, the story ends with the Lord reclaiming his Lady by forcefully defeating the Gypsies. By the middle of the 1800s, the story changed and the Lady declared to her husband that she would not return with him, even if it meant forsaking her baby. In a few versions, she desired to go with the Gypsy, but ultimately could not bear to desert her child.

Wild Rover 2:38 Sunnyside Up

Another old British song, The Wild Rover emerged in the early years of the nineteenth century as a broadside ballad: that is, a song hawker performed it on the street and sold a printed

page with the lyrics only–a broadside–to interested passers-by. Many people claim the song is Irish, and surely it is, but it has also been traditionally sung in Australia and the Canadian Maritimes, while the same story was told with different lyrics in an Ozark folk song. A longer version with eight stanzas and no refrain was published in an Irish newspaper in 1938 under the title "The Sailor in the Alehouse." More widely known are the Song Book's four stanzas and refrain, essentially identical to renditions by groups as diverse as the Dubliners and the Dropkick Murphys. Newer versions of the song parody the uncertain life of professional folksingers, or turn the moral of the story on its head to celebrate the joys of the barroom or the rowdyism of English soccer fans.

John Henry 3:12 Foghorn Stringband

A recent scholarly tome asserted that this song "is the most recorded folk song in American history," and that the hero of the ballad is a "towering figure in our culture." The phenomenal "steel-drivin' man" of legend–the real John Henry was probably born a slave–was perhaps a prototype, or at least a precursor, for Superman and other comic book heros. Efforts to find the real story date back to a University of North Carolina professor's 1929 book-length study, *John Henry: Tracking Down a Negro Legend*. The oldest known text of the song dates only to 1909, though the story usually refers to the digging of the Big Bend tunnel that the Chesapeake & Ohio Railroad built in the 1870s.

The song encapsulates the history of African-Americans, but has been equally popular in both Black and White folk tradition. Band leader and composer W.C. Handy published his version of the "John Henry Blues" in 1922. But the earliest recordings of the song appeared in 1924 by White country artists Fiddlin' John Carson and Ernest Thompson. Another version by the ambiguous and unclassifiable street singer, Stovepipe No. 1 (Sam Jones) was issued that same year. The first recordings of John Henry by Black artists came in 1927, on disc by bluesmen William Francis and Richard Sowell, and by Henry "Ragtime Texas" Thomas.

Tell Old Bill 5:30 Tisa Batchelder

The Song Book's version of the song about Old Bill's demise omits the cause of Bill's death. The longer "Dis Mornin', Dis Evenin', So Soon" included in Sandburg's *The American Songbag*, had his widow lament "Dey shoot my husband in the firs' degree." The core lyrics of the song were reported by folklorist Howard Odum in his 1911 article on "Folk-song and Folk-poetry As Found in the Secular Songs of the Southern Negroes." Sandburg's text, which he credits to St. Louis artist, Nancy Barnhart, presents the song in an affected ethnic dialect, which is carried through in the version included in John and Alan Lomax's 1934 *American Ballads and Folk Songs* under the title "Old Bill." The highly repetitive melody of the Song Book's "Tell Old Bill" is probably derived from the rendition published in *The American Songbag*.

Colours 2:19 Laura Doherty

This song was written by Donovan Leitch, a British singer from the 1960s. Donovan's return to the U.S. concert circuit included an appearance at the Old Town School in 1989.

Dink's Song 3:27 Chris Farrell

According to a note in Pete Seeger's *American Favorite Ballads*. "In 1908 John Lomax listened to a woman sing as she washed clothes for her man working in a levee camp. Next year

he tried to look her up again. The townspeople motioned up to the end of the street where the graveyard was. "That's where Dink's living now." The Lomax family remembered her song and passed it on to us, a great flower of beauty." (P. 88)

East Virginia 3:01 Lisa DeRosia

These are floating lyrics, which tell of failed courtships and broken hearts. Many of these stanzas can be found in other well known folk, bluegrass and country songs, such as "Dark Holler," "Greenback Dollar," and even "Molly Dear" or the "Drowsy Sleeper." WLS National Barn Dance artists, Karl & Harty recorded the song in 1936 as "Darling Think of What You've Done," while Grand Ol' Opry star Roy Acuff called it "New Greenback Dollar."

The essential words and melody found in the songbook were first put on record in 1927, by Buell Kazee, a banjo-playing minister and classically trained vocalist from the mountains of eastern Kentucky. An influential version was recorded as "East Virginia Blues" by the original Carter Family of Maces Springs, Virginia. The song was carried to folksong audiences in the 1950s and later by the lanky banjoist and troubadour, Pete Seeger, a close friend of the Old Town School of Folk Music.

Sportin' Life Blues 3:14 Mary Peterson

The Song Book's version of this blues classic is comes from the singing of Walter "Brownie" McGhee, though the order of the verses varies. A native of Tennessee, McGhee and his frequent partner, Sonny Terry, were mainstays in the 1940s and '50s folk scene in New York City, and appeared in concert at the Old Town School in its early days. The song has been frequently recorded by rock artists ranging from the Loving Spoonful to Eric Clapton.

Oh Mary Don't You Weep 2:54 Mark Dvorak

Also known as "Pharaoh's Army Got Drownded," this popular spiritual was first recorded on disc in 1915 by the Fisk University Male Quartet. In the artistic segregation practiced by the music industry of the 1920s, the song was issued again on record by such "race" or Black artists as the Biddleville Quintette and the Birmingham Jubilee Singers, as well as by the "old time" or rural White string band, the Georgia Yellow Hammers. The song was wide-spread in oral tradition, with versions being collected in North Carolina and Arkansas. A variant from an unknown source is found in Sandburg's *American Songbag*. More recently, it was included on Bruce Springsteen's CD tribute to Pete Seeger *The Seeger Sessions*.

Don't You Hear Jerusalem Moan 3:12 Marvin Etziioni

This song delineates the foibles of preachers from the Christian denominations associated with the camp meeting revivals of America's frontier period. The parody in the song book might derive from an older spiritual, "Jerusalem Mourning." The song in question was recorded three times in the 1920s by white southern string bands. The earliest was Bill Chitwood and Bud Landress's 1925 waxing for the Brunswick label. The most influential recording was made a year later by fellow Georgians, Gid Tanner and the Skillet Lickers. Soon after, the song largely disappeared, only to be resurrected six decades later by urban folksong revivalists. The Volo Bogtrotters, an influential string band from Chicago, recorded a version based on verses learned from traditional singer Delmar Tapley of Olney, Illinois.

I Am A Pilgrim 4:03 Nathaniel Braddock

Country singer, Merle Travis, a native Kentuckian, is most closely associated with this song, and is often credited as the composer. The Song Book's version is clearly derived from Travis, as are the many versions recorded by bluegrass artists. However, the song first circulated among Black gospel quartets, and was recorded in 1928 by the Silver Leaf Quartet. The earliest recording was by the Imperial Quartet in 1917.

Git Along Little Doggie 4:54 Steve Doyle

John A. Lomax included "Whoopee, Ti Yi Yo, Git Along, Little Dogies" in his seminal 1910 collection, *Cowboy Songs and Other Frontier Ballads*. Two decades later, western author Owen Wister told Lomax that he had noted down the lyrics and melody from a young singer in McCulloch County, Texas in 1893. The earliest recordings of the song appeared in 1928. The first by Harry "Haywire Mac" McClintock, a noted itinerant radio artist, hobo and union man. The second waxing was by the obscure but authentically western Cartwright Brothers, Bernard and Jack.

"Get Along, Little Dogies" was became a cowboy anthem of sorts, and was recorded later by such media-savvy artists as movie cowboy Maurice "Tex" Ritter and NBC radio singer John I. White. It was also recorded by Chicago radio artists Ken Houchins and the Girls of the Golden West, who appeared on WLS's National Barn Dance in the 1930s.

Lonesome Road 4:16

A bluegrass and old time music standard, the "Lonesome Road Blues"–aka, "Going Down That Road Feeling Bad"–was one of the earliest songs to be recorded by a country singer. Henry Whitter, a textile mill worker from Fries, Virginia recorded the song in 1923. The following year, two versions were waxed by blind minstrels well known in the southern cities: George Reneau of Knoxville and Riley Puckett of Atlanta. Claude Moye of Gallatin County, Illinois, who was better known as the radio artist Pie Plant Pete, was one of three dozen country singers who recorded the song in the 1920s and '30s.

Cindy 3:16 Old Town School Jug Band Ensemble

This hardy song is often presumed to be quite old. For instance, art song composer Robert Beaser included it in his 1984 suite of *Mountain Songs*, identifying it as a "frolic" or "minstrel fiddle tune." This claim suggests that Cindy dates back to pre-Civil War plantation life, or at least to the skewing of African-American folklore represented by 19th century blackface minstrel theatre. However, the earliest documentation for Cindy is from a 1915 report of a "banjo song" by that name heard in Wolf Creek, Tennessee. In *American Negro Folk-Songs* (1928), Newman White opined that the song came from white rural musicians. A few years later, R.D. Bass concurred in the *Journal of American Folklore:* "The tempo of 'Cindy' sounds more like the time in a Buckra [i.e., white] dance number than the time in a Negro song."

Often recorded by white rural string bands, the earliest waxing was in 1924 by the first women country music recording artists, Eva Davis and Samantha Bumgarner of North Carolina. Early Chicago radio starts Bradley Kincaid and Lulu Belle and Scotty recorded the song, respectively, in 1929 and 1935. The National Barn Dance Orchestra included the melody with square dance calls in their 1933 disc, "Barn Dance, Part II."

When The Saints Go Marchin' In 3:15 Lost Bayou Ramblers

In America's imagination, this song belongs to New Orleans, and is associated with the rise of jazz music from the lively sounds emitted by bands on the return leg of a funeral march. However, the song began its life as a spiritual or hymn. It was published twice in 1896 with credit given to J.M. Black and Katherine E. Purvis. The song may have originated earlier in oral tradition. At the least, it quickly entered folk culture and was collected in the Bahamas in 1917.

The earliest recorded versions were by Black blues and gospel artists, such as the Paramount Jubilee Singers in 1923 and Blind Willie Davis in 1927. The earliest White country recording of the song was a 1937 waxing by the Monroe Brothers. The most famous versions of the song are by New Orleans native and jazz great Louis Armstrong, who recorded it several times in the 1930s. Today, it is one of the most recognizable and best-loved pieces of musical Americana.

VOLUME 3

Nine Pound Hammer 1:44 Scott Besaw

Hammer songs, like this one, were used on public works projects by African-American laborers who sought to rhythmically coordinate their exertions. One of the earliest such to be described in print, based on the singing of a Texas work gang in 1891, contained the couplet "Oh, roll on, Johnnie; you rolls too slow / For you roll like a man never rolled befo'." Other work songs made more direct use of the hammer image–e.g., "Take this hammer and carry it to the captain," or "Nobody's hammer rings like mine." Out of the merging and morphing of floating verses like these, came such songs as the ballad of John Henry (see below), and the bluegrass standard "Roll On, Buddy."

The chorus of the Songbook's "Nine Pound Hammer" tells a worker to "Roll on, buddy; don't you roll so slow." This distinctive text, crystallized from the process described in the preceding paragraph was first recorded in 1927 by Al Hopkins & his Buckle Busters. Their "Nine Pound Hammer" featured words and melody that closely resembles Merle Travis seminal recording, which was included in his 1947 album *Folk Songs of the Hills*. The mention of Hazard and Harlan in the Songbook's version is clearly drawn from Travis, a singer who grew up in the shadow of the Kentucky coal fields.

Hard and It's Hard 3:47 Katherine Hall

This song was recorded by Woody Guthrie in 1941 on an Almanac Singers album called *Sod-Buster Ballads*. Woody was credited as the composer, although this is clearly a song that borrows plentifully from other folk songs. The conventional wisdom is that "Hard, Ain't It Hard" is Woody's reworking of the story of a maiden--perhaps with child–spurned by a lover who preferred the social pleasures of a "Tavern in the Town." That older familiar song was first published in the U.S. in 1891 with words and music by F.J. Adams. An earlier version of the lyrics was credited to W.H. Hills and printed as a broadside in London circa 1880.

"There Is a Tavern in the Town" was often printed and recorded–even by the likes of Rudy Vallee–and was frequently collected from traditional singers. The basic story of the carefree lover whose head is easily turned by drink and other women is found in many ballads, such as the "Brisk Young Sailor," "The Butcher's Boy" and the "Railroad Boy." If Woody did, in fact, rework "A Tavern in the Town," he jettisoned the more archaic imagery, such as "I'll hang my harp on the willow tree," in order to focus his lyric on the hard fact of loving one "who never will be true."

Down By The Riverside 4:14 Eric Noden

Carl Sandburg was once told by some university students from Alabama that Black folk in the South would sing "I Ain't Gonna Study War No More" by the hour, all the while freely borrowing lines from other spirituals. Apparently the song was equally well-loved in Chicago's Black Belt (better known today as Bronzeville), for it was included in *Songs and Spirituals*, a 1919 collection published by the Overton-Hygienic Company, owned by local cosmetic entrepreneuer, Anthony Overton.

The first recordings of the song were made by the Fisk University Jubilee Singers in 1920, and soon after by other refined ensembles as the Morehouse College Quartet and the Elkins-Payne Jubilee Singters. The song crossed over to another cultural stratum in 1927, when

it was waxed by Sam Morgan's Jazz Band, and was stretched even further in a 1937 recording by the Blue Chips, a smooth Gospel quartet backed by a jazz band.

Early on white Gospel and country artists also recorded "Down By the Riverside," starting with the Vaughan Quartet in 1924 and Mac & Bob (Lester McFarland and Robert Gardner) in 1926. The latter duo would later become featured performers on radio station WLS in Chicago. Fellow National Barn Dance artists, the Three Little Maids–the Overstake sisters from Decatur, Illinois–recorded the song for Bluebird in 1935.

Corrina Corrina 1:22 James Hand

"Corrine Corrina" can be attributed to the Mississippi Sheiks, a African-American string band from Bolton, Mississippi made up mostly of members of the Chatman Family. A copyright claim for the song lists the composers as "Williams & Chatman." The Sheiks 1930 recording of the song was issued under the title "Alberta Blues." Two years earlier, the number was recorded by one of the brothers, Armenter "Bo" Chatman. (During his long career as a blues artist he was also known as Bo Carter.)

White singers and string bands picked up the song, with early recordings in 1929 by Clayton McMichen and Hugh Cross (both of whom had stints on the WLS National Barn Dance) and by (Tom) Ashley and (W.R.) Abernathy in 1931. WLS band leader Hal O'Halloran recorded it with his Hooligans in1936. By then, "Corinne Corrinna" was a standard among Western Swing bands, such as Milton Brown & his Musical Brownies in 1934 and Leo Soileau's Four Aces (a swinging Cajun band) in 1935. The 1940 recording by Bob Wills & his Texas Playboys helped ensure the song's persistent popularity.

Hard Times 4:18 Jacob Sweet

When Stephen Foster "Hard Times Come Again No More" in the 1850s–the song was published in 1854–his hometown of Pittsburgh was struggling with rampant unemployment and poverty. A recent cholera epidemic had killed over 400. Decades later it was given a new lease on life with inclusion in a popular turn of the century songster, *Heart Songs. Melodies of Days Gone By*. After a wonderful piano-accompanied, parlando rubato version by the Graham Brothers, recorded circa 1930, the song once again faded from view. Once more it was revived on a 1981 album by the North Carolina string band, the Red Clay Ramblers (who performed at the Old Town School most recently in 1990). Since then the song has been covered by artists as diverse as Mavis Staples, Bob Dylan and Nancy Griffith.

Good News 2:45 Eric Lugosh

An African-American spiritual, "Ain't It Good News" was one of 230 songs included in John W. Work III's *American Negro Songs and Spirituals*, published in 1940. Most of the songs were collected in conjuction with Fort Valley State College in Georgia, when the African-American college ran a series of music festivals between 1938 and '43. Work returned to Nashville, where, like his father before him, he was a professor of music at Fisk University.

Work was part of a three-professor team from Fisk that partnered with the Library of Congress on a study of African-American folklore and community life in the Mississippi Delta. Alan Lomax was the Library of Congress representative on that trip. Lomax's findings were published in the influential book *The Land Where the Blues Began*. The Fisk team's report, which came to strikingly different conclusions, was lost and never published, until their recent discovery in Lomax's personal archives. The entire Fisk University contribution to the Coahoma

County Study was finally published in 2005 in *Lost Delta Found*.

Trouble In Mind 2:41 Lost Bayou Ramblers
[note this are my notes for CD 1. I have nothing new to add. Or is this a different song?]
Though many musicians think that **Trouble In Mind** is traditional and by an unknown author, the *Song Book* credits one Richard Jones. But according to the liner notes of a recent Big Bill Broonzy CD on Smithsonian Folkways–the album is also called *Trouble In Mind*–the words were composed by Charlie Segar, a Chicago piano player, while Big Bill himself made up the tune. Troubled in Mind was first recorded by blues guitarist Sam Collins (aka Salty Dog Sam) in 1931. That performance was never issued, but the following year Big Bill waxed it under the title "Worried in Mind Blues."

When William Broonzy–born in Scott, Mississippi in 1899–came to Chicago in the early 1920s, he was a fiddler, and soon got a job playing with early bluesman Papa Charlie Jackson. He learned guitar during this time, and in 1925 he recorded his first blues records as "Big Bill," accompanying his singing with his own fingerstyle style guitar-playing. The most-recorded bluesman before World War II, after the war Bill began working with Studs Terkel and Old Town School of Folk Music founder Win Stracke in a program of songs and politics called *Come for to Sing*. When the Old Town School first opened its doors in December 1957, Big Bill was a featured performer. Within the next year he lost first his voice and then his life to lung cancer.

Shenandoah 2:29 Amy Allison

This song presents some geographical challenges. In 1924, folklorist Joanna Colcord asserted that "Shenandoah" was used as a capstan shanty on deep-water ships in the age of sail. And in 1939, folksong collector Eloise Hubbard Linscott reported that James Linscott had heard the song sung aboard steamships of the U.S. merchant marine. But, one may ask, how does the Shenadoah River of Virginia, or the Iowa city of the same name, relate to the far off horizons of the earth's oceans?

In his 1927 *American Songbag*, Carl Sandburg rendered the name as Shannadore, and suggested it might be the name of a unidentified ship or Indian chief. Further, Sandburg's title for the song, "The Wide Mizzoura" refers, like the Songbook's text, to a river in the North American interior that has little to do with seafaring. More recently, the song was collected in the West Indies as a rowing shanty with a refrain about "the world of misery." Perhaps there is a real historical connection between the work songs used by deep-water sailors and those who rowed and poled through shallower waters.

Hard Travelin' 3:38 Emily Hurd

This one is by Woody Guthrie, from his 1941 commission from the U.S. Department of the Interior to write songs to promote development of public power from Grand Coulee Dam and the Columbia River. Woody recorded the song on an instant acetate disc that was used by government types in Portland and Washington D.C. They lost the original. So along with Cisco Houston on guitar and Sonny Terry on harmonica, he recorded the song again for Moe Asch and Folkways Records in 1947. The lyrics first saw print in typed and mimeographed collection in 1945. There Woody claimed it was one of his "Dust Bowl songs"–and thus predated his trip to the Northwest–written "about a man that rode the flat wheelers, kicked up cinders, dumped the red hot slag, hit the hard rock tunnellin, hard harvesting, the hard rock jail, looking for a woman that's hard to find."

New River Train 3:16 Clack Mountain String Band

The New River cuts through some of the richest coal country in the southern Appalachian Mountains. And wherever coal was mined, railroads were built. The New River Railroad Companies of Virginia and West Virginia were chartered in 1881, and the New River line was completed in 1883. By the 1890s, the fittingly-named Cripple Creek Extension brought the line through the music-rich area around Galax, Virginia. Banjoist Wade Ward, from nearby Independence, claimed that his family had known the song about the "New River Train" since 1895. The first recording of the song, by Henry Whitter, a guitar-strumming textile mill worker from the area, was made in New York in 1924, and was quickly covered by Kelly Harrell, from nearby Fieldale, accompanied by the Virginia String Band. Then in 1928, Galax-native Ernest "Pop" Stoneman recorded the song once again with slightly different lyrics that directly referenced railroading. More common versions of the song limit the railroad to the refrain, and use the verses to enumerate the errors and consequences of loving more than one. The "New River Train" transcended its geography and was soon recorded by country singers from Tennessee (Sid Harkreader) and Texas (Vernon Dalhart). An influential version by the Monroe Brothers in 1936 brought the song into the core of the bluegrass repertoire.

Nine Hundred Miles 3:38 Chris Winters

A good place to start with "900 Miles" is the year 1944, when Woody Guthrie, Sonny

Terry and Cisco Houston recorded the song twice for Moses Asch, the owner of Folkways Records. The first recording was an instrumental version–with Woody on fiddle--of essentially the same minor melody found in the Songbook, but without the tag line to the refrain. In the second recording, called "Railroad Whistle," a mandolin-strumming Woody sang a free form variation of the Songbook's "900 Miles," with the tag line!. Moving forward, we find that Woody's version was transcribed by John and Alan Lomax for *Folk Song U.S.A.*, and recorded several times by Cisco Houston and other folk revival artists. Woody's song was echoed in the song "500 Miles," which was Hedy West's adaptation of a song she learned from her grandmother in Georgia. It was West's song that was covered by 1960s singers as diverse as Peter, Paul and Mary, the Journeymen and Bobby Bare.

Going back to the decades before 1944, we find another fascinating chapter of the song's story. "900 Miles" is melodically and textually intertwined with two folk songs that became classics of bluegrass and early country music: "Reuben's Train" and "Train 45." Verses about Reuben were collected from Black singers in South Carolina as early as 1905, and Bascom Lamar Lunsford, a folksinging lawyer from the North Carolina mountains, claimed he sang some verses of "900 Miles" before the turn of the century. The first time words from any of these songs saw print was in 1909, when Louise Rand Bascom wrote about the song "Midnight Dew" in the *Journal of American Folklore*. The first of the many recordings that followed began with Fiddlin' John Carson's "I'm Nine Hundred Miles from Home" in 1924, "Train 45" by Grayson and Whitter in 1927 and "Reuben, Oh Reuben," by Emry Arthur in 1930.

Hobo's Lullaby 4:13 Barb Silverman

This song–which borrows the melody of sentimental Civil War-era song "Just Before the Battle, Mother"–was written by Goebel Reeves, who called himself "the Texas Drifter." An erstwhile street singer and occasional merchant seaman, he had a long career as radio artist that took him to points as far apart as Chattanooga, Nova Scotia and Los Angeles. In 1933 he was sent by NBC to perform at the Chicago World's Fair and reportedly appeared on the WLS National Barn Dance. He made several dozen records between 1929 and World War II, many of which featured his creative and idiosyncratic yodeling.

Hobo's Lullaby, which Reeves first recorded in 1934, is best known song, in all likelihood because it was one of Woody Guthrie's favorite songs. Reportedly, Pete Seeger and Arlo Guthrie always sang the song on visits with Woody, after he was incapacitated by Huntington's disease. In a representation of such a visit in the movie *Alice's Restaurant,* the producers would not allow Pete and Arlo to sing "Hobo's Lullaby," because, according to legend, the stanza "I know the police cause you trouble / They cause trouble everywhere" would cause the movie makers too much trouble in Vietnam War-era America.

Careless Love 4:50 Chris Walz

In 1954, W.C. Handy, the "father of the blues" recalled that he first heard "See What Careless Love Has Done" in Alabama in 1892. After moving up north, he learned that Blacks in Kentucky had made up the song to tell how the Governor's son was killed over an unhappy love affair. The song has long been a favorite in folk culture, as Howard Odum reported in a 1911 article "Folk-Song and Folk-Poetry as Found in the Secular Songs of the Southern Negro." Robert W. Gordon, who found the Archive of American Folk Song at the Library of Congress collected a traditional version that was included in Carl Sandburg's *American Songbag* (with no identification given of the true folksinger).

"Careless Love" has also been a standard in the worlds of both jazz and country music. Among the earliest recordings by African-American artists are performances by the Original Tuxedo Jazz Orchestra in 1925, Lulu Jackson 1928 and Lonnie Johnson, both in 1928. The first recording by a country singer was the 1926 version waxed by Mac and Bob. Other early discs were by the Johnson Bros in 1927 and Ernest V. "Pop" Stoneman in 1928. (One of Pop's daughters, Ronnie Stoneman, erstwhile star of TV's *Hee Haw*, brought her banjo on a visit to the Old Town School's Old Time Ensemble class in the early part of this decade.)

Greensleeves 2:45 Bill Simmons

Easily the oldest piece in the Songbook, "Greensleeves" first appears in the historical record in 1580, when it was registered with the London Stationer's Company as "A New Northern Dittye of the Lady Greene Sleeves." The oldest extant printing of the lyrics is from *A Handful of Pleasant Delights* in1584 with a slight change in the title to a "A New Courtly Sonnet of the Lady Green Sleeves." The familiar melody, perhaps originally intended for dancing, was first documented a few years later, around 1590, in the manuscript collection now known to historians as William Ballet's Lute Book. Shakespeare referred to the song by name in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, which was performed perhaps as early as 1597 and published in 1602. Few old English songs have maintained such wide-spread popularity.

Wildwood Flower 2:52 Amy Nelson & Cathy Guthrie

"Wildwood Flower" is the classic representative of the "Carter Scratch" style of guitar playing. The style is named after Maybelle Carter, a member of the original Carter Family of Maces Springs, Virginia–the first family of county music.. Their recording career stretched from their legendary discovery in 1927 by Ralph Peer, an A&R (i.e., artists and repertoire) director for Victor Records, through 1941, after which Mother Maybelle carried on with her daughters Helen, Anita and June.

The song was recorded twice by the Carter Family, the first time in 1928. In the following month, and before the release of the Carters' performance, "Wildwood Flower" was also recorded by West Virginia native, Miller Wikel. The song started out as sheet music published in 1860 under the title "I'll Twin 'Mid the Ringlets," with words by J.P. Webster and music by Maud Irving. The Carters probably learned the song from oral tradition, as it's existence is reported in Josiah Combs and Herbert Shearin's 1911 *Syllabus of Kentucky Folksongs*.

Old Paint 1:48 Ted & Marcia Johnson

Carl Sandburg's "I Ride an Old Paint," included in his *The American Songbag* in 1927, is practically identical to the Songbook's setting. Sandburg's source for the song was two southwestern literary figures, poet Margaret Larkin of New Mexico, and Oklahoma playwright, Linn Riggs. Without knowning where Larkin and Riggs learned the song, it is tantalizing to ponder whether they reworked a slightly older cowboy song commonly known as "Goodbye, Old Paint," While the Songbook's "Old Paint" features four-line stanzas and a refrain, the latter song is constructed of couplets–shared with other songs like "Rye Whiskey" and "The Wagoner's Lad"–ending with "Goodbye, Old Paint, I'm leaving Cheyenne."

The earliest documentation for "Goodbye, Old Paint" is in John Lomax's *Cowboy Ballads*. Elsewhere, Lomax related that he noted the song down from an college buddy who he

ran into in 1910 at Frontier Days in Cheyenne, Wyoming. The first recordings were made in 1928 by Kentuckian, Charles Craver (in Chicago) and by itinerant union man and radio singer Harry "Haywire Mac" McClintock. "I Ride an Old Paint" was not put on disc until 1934, when California country star Stuart Hamblen recorded it in Los Angeles in 1934. The next year, his protégé, Patsy Montana recorded it with fellow WLS National Barn Dance stars, the Prairie Ramblers.

Water Is Wide 3:15 Cat Edgerton

This song, under the title "Waly, Waly," dates back to at least the early 18th century. Many scholars connect it to the ballad "Jamie Douglas," number 204 in Francis James Child's monumental *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, and assume that the present short lyric attests to the erosive effects of time, memory and oral transmission. Yet, Child prefaced his narrative texts with an older non-narrative lyric titled "Waly, Waly, Gin Love Be Bony," that begins with three of the four stanzas included in the Songbook.'s version. That early text was from 1729 edition of *Ramsey's Tea-Table Miscellany*, published in Dublin.

The more immediate source of "The Water Is Wide," is Pete Seeger's version as recorded on his 1955 Folkways, *Goofing Off Suite*, and his notated for his 1961 Oak Publications songbook, *America's Favorite Ballads*. In the latter, Seeger claims his source was a version of "Waly Waly" collected by Cecil Sharp in England some time around the turn of the last century. The song's persistent popularity is evidenced by newer recordings from Bob Dylan, Joan Baez, Sarah MacLachlan and the Indigo Girls.

Home On The Range 4:07 Nora O'Conner

By the dawn of the 1930s, the music industry had cranked out a multitude of renditions of this western song, assumed by all to be in the public domain. Though Hollywood and Tin Pan Alley were quick to take advantage of the its popularity, the earliest recordings were made by country artists like Vernon Dalhart–his 1927 disc was the first– and WLS National Barn Dance star, Arkie the Arkansas Woodchopper. Other early records came from a real working cowboy, Jules Allen in 1928, and a show business cowboy, Ken Maynard in 1930. In short order, conflicting claims of authorship were brought forth and the court system got involved.

One New York lawyer, hired by the Music Publishers Protective Association, spent several years traipsing through Arizona and Colorado, interviewing old cowboys, camp cooks and stage drivers. They all testified that the song was "well known to and generally sung by cowboys and other people" in the West. Legal action came to halt when it became apparent that the song originated as "Western Home," a poem written by Dr. Brewster M. Higley, a Ohio-born pioneer, and published in Kansas newspapers as early as 1873. Daniel E. Kelly, a Civil War veteran from Rhode Island, is credited with the melody most commonly paired with the song. Kelley's air, however, differs slightly from the more familiar tune used in the Songbook: originally, the first line of the refrain was "A home, a home," with no time left for "on the range." In effect, the song changed from a general song about the West, to one more focused on the cowboy life.

Shine On, Harvest Moon 3:32 Michael Miles

This song has long been closely linked with its authors, Nora Bayes and Jack Norworth, In fact, a 1944 film titled *Shine On, Harvest Moon* was a biography of these famous singing sweethearts of early twentieth century vaudeville. They published the song in 1908, the same

year that Nora Bayes introduced it to the public in the Ziegfield Follies. The first recording was by Bob Roberts in 1909. The authors recorded it for Victor the next year, but their performance was never issued.

Nora Bayes, it is worth noting, was born in Joliet, Illinois in 1880 as Leonora Goldberg. She began her vaudeville career in Chicago, gained acting experience in San Francisco, and became a major success after moving to New York in 1901. A strong and independent woman, especially for the times, she managed her own career and even established a theater with her name.

Old Time Religion 2:45 Jimmy Tomasello

Long popular in both Black and White traditions, "Old Time Religion" first appeared in print in a 1921 edition of *Songs and Spirituals of Negro Composition*, published by the Overton-Hygienic Company in Chicago. The first recording of the song was by Homer Rodeaver, the longtime music director for evangelist Billy Sunday (who, incidentally, turned from baseball–he played right field for the original Chicago White Stockings–to preaching, after a conversion experience at the Pacific Garden Mission on South State Street). Further recordings quickly followed, including renditions by African-American vocal ensembles like the Cotton Belt Quartet in 1926 and the Cotton Top Mountain Sanctified Singers 1929. Other early recordings were made by white country artists, such as Ernest Thompson in 1924 and the Old Southern Sacred Singers 1927. The latter quartet included Mac and Bob, who would become mainstays on WLS in Chicago beginning in 1931.

The Songbook's version of "Old Time Religion," however, is considerably revised. It was Woody Guthrie who contributed universal new lyrics that reflected his broadly ecumenical views of religion.

Rolling In My Sweet Baby's Arms 3:32 Steve Levitt

Ever since a 1936 recording by the Monroe Brothers–Bill and Charlie–this song has a been standard in the repertoire of bluegrass musicians. The first recording of "I'll Roll in My Sweet Baby's Arms" was made a few years earlier by the fiddle and guitar team of Buster Carter and Preston Young. They came from the same region of textile mill towns on the North Carolina-Virginia border that produced the influential banjoist and string band leader Charlie Poole.

At least several of the verses found in the Songbook's version had been floating around in oral tradition in the first decades of the 20th century. Reportedly, traces of the lyrics can be found in the manuscripts gathered by Robert W. Gordon between 1923 and '26 for his column "Old Songs Men Have Sung," published in *Adventure* magazine. The earliest printed lyric, the first stanza of Songbook's version, appeared 1922 as part of Harvest Song, number 77 in Thomas Talley's *Negro Folk Rhymes.* Talley, a chemistry professor at Fisk University in Nashville, collected most of these rhymes from residents of the countryside of middle Tennessee.

VOLUME 4

Scarborough Fair

Folk tales centered on a battle of wits between would-be lovers are widespread in the lore of the world's cultures. A European ballad (a narrative in song) of a contest in which a maid and her suitor assign for each other imaginative, but physically impossible tasks is found from Spain to Slovenia. From Scotland comes one such ballad, widely known as "The Elfin Knight" (number two in Francis J. Child's *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads*). The earliest known instance was printed around 1670 under the title "The Wind hath Blown my Plaid away." The wardrobe malfunction of the title leads a spectral knight to visit the maiden's bed, but she outdoes him in devising improbable tasks, he secures his tartan, and she keeps her maidenhead.

American variants of the ballad drop all references to unearthly characters. The surviving core of the story is the delineation of tasks traditionally associated with gender. The maid is asked to weave cloth and sew a shirt using unsuitable tools and materials. In turn, she charged her suitor to plough a field and sow a crop with similarly inconceivable restrictions. In the American versions of the ballad, nothing is revealed about the nature of the would-be lovers or their motivations. The main point is that the objectives assigned to each are out of reach.

Common in most American versions are a string of nonsense syllables used as a refrain, such as Indiana folksinger Anna Underhill's "Lie flum-a-lum-a likker slomie." Paul Simon popularized the British "Parsley, sage, rosemary and thyme." And while deep symbolism can be elicited from this recitation of herbs, it is not essential to the narrative. Upstate New Yorker Sara Cleveland used flora to mirror the goals of the actors in the story: "Every rose grows merry in time."

Colorado Trail

This song of the West was originally written by a New Englander, James Bliss, who had a predilection for the compositions of Debussy and Gershwin. Bliss's version first saw print in 1923, and was set to a melody in a minor key. Four years later, a single stanza and the chorus were included by Carl Sandburg in his *American Songbag*. Sandburg obtained the song from a doctor in Duluth, Minnesota, who had learned it from a patient, an old "hoss wrangler." Other verses have been added, amended and deleted by nameless singers through the years. The Songbook's version uses the melody obtained by Sandburg.

Frankie & Johnnie

One of the sturdiest songs in American tradition, "Frankie and Albert [aka Johnnie]" has been recorded by artists as diverse as Mamie Smith & her Jazz Hounds, Elvis Presley, and Ernest Tubb. With the rare twist on the conventions of murder ballads–the victim is a man and the perpetrator a woman–the song is clearly derived from real events, but has taken on a literary life of its own. One well-established theory is that the song's Frankie is related to Frankie Baker of St. Louis, who, in 1899, killed Al Britt out of jealousy over his romantic entanglement with Alice Pryor. The real Frankie Baker, claiming self-defence, was acquitted, moved away, and later sued Hollywood over film treatments of these events from her life.

The basic story was first told in the song "He Done Me Wrong," copyrighted in 1904 by Hughie Cannon. In 1912, the story was given a different musical setting–and the victim's name was changed to "Johnnie"–in the Leighton Brothers "Miss Me in the Days to Come," best known

from 1926 recording titled “Leavin’ Home” by Charlie Poole & the North Carolina Ramblers. One historian has pointed out that the familiar version “Frankie and Johnnie were lovers first appeared in 1925, perhaps on a disc by the obscure Harry Frankel. The first recordings of any variant were by Ethel Wilson, with Johnny Dunn's Original Jazz Hounds, in 1921 and Mamie Smith in1923. Over the next few years, a half dozen versions appeared by early country artists, such as the blind North Carolinian, Ernest Thompson, Roba Stanley (one of the earliest female country recording artists) and Gid Tanner, leader of the Skillet Lickers. In the last years of the decade, several dozen more versions were recorded by jazz, pop and early country artists.

It should be noted that a number of scholars have claimed that at least traces of the ballad predate the 1899 murder of Allen Britt. Carl Sandburg, in particular, championed the notion that the basic story is timeless, and that at least part of the song we know today “was common along the Mississippi River and among railroad men in the middle west as early as 1888.” Another theory is that the song originated from a similar but earlier murder in St. Louis’ red-light district in the first years after the Civil War, and that the infamous Baker-Britt affair of 1899 led to a lasting modification of the older song.

Froggy Went A' Courtin'

The “Frog’s Courtship” is an ancient ditty that has been used for satirical purposes throughout English history. The earliest recorded mention is of a shepherd’s song in Wedderburn's *Complaint of Scotland* from 1549. The oldest extant copy of the lyrics is from 1611. By then, the song’s potential for political satire had been well noted. The unlikely marriage of the song mirrored popular English sentiment about the proposed marriage between their Queen, Elizabeth I, and the French Duc d'Alencon. Other stanzas poked fun at such notables as Sir Humphey Gilbert and Sir Francis Drake.

Long after its topical currency had passed, the song was still sung by folksingers far removed from the centers of power. Traditional versions have been collected from rural residents of Nova Scotia, Indiana and the Ozarks. A popular version appeared on Columbia Records in 1920 under the title “Keemo Kimo,” as sung by minstrel show veteran Harry C. Browne. In 1927, Chubby Parker, a radio star on Chicago’s WLS, first recorded his popular “King Kong Kitchie Kitchie Ki-Me-O,” accompanied by his five-string banjo. (A version recorded the next year was later included in the *Anthology of American Folk Music*, a box set that greatly influenced the post-war urban folk revival) Parker’s fellow National Barn Dance artist, Bradley Kincaid, also recorded the song in 1928 under the title “Froggie Went A Courting.”

Travellin' Man

The earliest instance of this song, collected in 1919 and published in the massive *Frank C. Brown Collection of North Carolina Folklore*, uses a pejorative title that suggests it is derived from a turn of the century fad for racist sheet music known as “Coon Songs.” Nevertheless, the song’s travelling trickster was popular with both Black and White artists. The earliest recordings were made in 1927 by Virginia bluesman, Luke Jordan, and by the great African-American ragtime mandolinist, Coley Jones and his Dallas String Band. Other notable recordings were made by Sid Harkreader, a fiddler on the early Grand Ole Opry, and by Illinois native, Lester “Smiley” Burnette, who appeared with Gene Autry on the WLS National Barn Dance and

became his comic partner in Hollywood. Medicine show musician Pink Anderson–who made a come back during the 1960s folk revival–used "Travllin' Man" as his theme song.

Jack of Diamonds

A song about dissolute life-styles–drinking, gambling, and landing in prison–is part of a large and popular family of American folksongs. When it first saw print in 1910 in John A. Lomax's *Cowboy Songs and Other Frontier Ballads*, it was associated with the West. A distinctive version from Black tradition appeared in 1925 in Dorothy Scarborough's *On the Trail Negro Folk Songs*. Concurrently, Carl Sandburg included a version with the title "Way Up on Clinch Mountain" in the "Southern Mountains" section of his *American Songbag*.

The song family first appeared on a recording in 1925 when Fiddlin' John Carson waxed a variant of "The Drunkard's Hiccups." It was covered the next year by fellow Atlantan, and future WLS National Barn Dance artist, Clayton McMichen. The earliest recording of "Jack of Diamonds" was made in 1927 by a string band from the North Carolina-Virginia border, Da Costa Woltz's Southern Broadcasters, which was soon followed by a disc by Jules Allen, a former cowboy. The best known version of the song was recorded in 1930 as "Rye Whiskey" by Tex Ritter, soon to be a star of stage and screen.

Jordan Is A Hard Road

Of disputed authorship, this topical song dates back to the heyday of the blackface minstrel shows of the 1850s. E.P. Christy, of the original Christy's Minstrels, may have introduced the song on stage, and Daniel Decatur Emmett, of the Virginia Minstrels, is credited with composing the tune. The lyrics are variously attributed to one T. Vaughn, or to Thomas F. Briggs (who is best known for *Brigg's Banjo Instructor* published in 1855).

The original song contained topical references to political matters of the day, such as the United States' dispute with England over the Oregon Territory. The Songbook's version retains a later stanza that references Illinoi native Ulysses S. Grant's exploits during the Civil War. The earliest recording of the song was made in 1916 by Harry C. Browne, famous for dialogue songs from blackface minstrelsy. The song was updated topically by banjoist and Grand Ol' Opry star, Uncle Dave Macon in 1927. Macon's version lampooned Henry Ford's Model T and modern day evangelists. The core structure and overall attitude of "Jordan Is a Hard Road" may have contributed to Fiddlin' John Carson's 1928 "Ain't No Bugs on Me," which satirizes Billy Sunday, the Ku Klux Klan, and the contemporary debate over evolution.

~~Mail Myself To You~~

Paradise (John Prine)

John Prine was born in the Chicago suburb of Maywood, but his family's roots were in Muhlenburg County in western Kentucky, a landscape heavily scarred by strip mining. Named after the family's hometown, Prine's self-penned lament in waltz time was one of the songs that caught the attention of both Kris Kristofferson and Paul Anka. The two established stars helped the young mail carrier land a recording contract with Atlantic Records. "Paradise," which appeared on Prine's first album, a 1971 eponymous LP–along with other modern ballads like

"Donald and Lydia" and "Sam Stone." (The country fiddle on the original was played by Prine's older brother Dave, who played often at the Old Town School with the Fleming Brown String Band and the National Recovery Act.) It has been covered by John Denver, the Everly Brothers, and numerous bluegrass bands, including the Seldom Scene.

Oh Susannah

"Oh! Susanna," one of the jewels of popular song in the 19th Century, established the career of Stephen Foster. Ironically, dire need led Foster to sign away the rights for the song shortly after he composed it 1848, and he never earned more than a pittance from a song that became one of America's favorites. Though "Oh! Susanna" has been often reprinted in song anthologies, it has been less frequently recorded for popular or country audiences. Harry C. Brown waxed it in 1916. Riley Puckett, guitarist for the Skillet Lickers, a popular Atlanta-based string band, covered it in 1924. Also, the same decade saw recordings of the song by two WLS National Barn Dance artists, Chubby Parker and Pie Plant Pete (aka Claude Moye). The latter was farm boy from Galletin County, Illinois.

Go Tell Aunt Rhody

The melody to this well-known children's song has been connected to an instrumental tune used for the gavotte danced by a shepherdess in Jean Jacques Rousseau's 1752 pastoral opera, "Le Devin du Village." The tune, which took on the name "Rouseau's Dream," eventually became associated with the widely known American folk song "The Old Gray Goose." Perhaps the earliest example from oral tradition is the variant Cecil Sharp collected on his trip to the Southern Appalachians circa 1917 in search of English folk songs. While most versions name Aunt Rhody as the presumed owner of the goose in question, she is Aunt Patsy in Scarborough's *On the Trail of Negro Folk Song*, Aunt Tabby in Gardner and Chickerings *Ballads and Songs of Southern Michigan*, and Aunt Nancy in Alan Lomax' *Folk Songs of North America*. The song was recorded only a few times by old time artists, including a 1929 disc by the Pickard Family, recorded during a year-long tenure on radio in Chicago, and a 1932 cover "The Old Gray Goose Is Dead" by the Renfro Valley Boys then beginning their long stay as Karl & Harty on the WLS National Barn Dance.

Lay Me Down a Pallet On My Floor

This song more than likely originated in African-American tradition. It was first referenced in print in a scholarly 1911 article by Howard W. Odum for the *Journal of American Folklore,* "Folk-song and Folk-poetry As Found in the Secular Songs of the Southern Negroes." A version of the song was copyrighted in 1923 by W.C. Handy, the putative "father of the blues," under the title "Atlanta Blues (Make Me One Pallet on Your Floor)" The first recordings were by female blues singers Virginia Liston in 1925 and Ethel Waters the next year. Country Blues artist Mississippi John Hurt followed with a 1928 recording called "Ain't No Tellin'"

The song was soon picked up by white rural stringbands, including the Leake Country Revelers from Mississippi (1928), George Edgin's Corn Dodgers from Arkansas (1932), and the Alabama based Stripling Brothers (1937). In later decades the song was covered by country

singer Louis “Grandpa” Jones and folk icon Woody Guthrie. The latter’s version was called “Bed on the Floor.”

The Rivers of Babylon
Based on the biblical Psalm 137, this song was composed by Jamaican singesr Brent Dowe and Trevor McNaughton. They had a hit record with the song in 1969 with their band, the Melodians, a group that pioneered rocksteady, a slower and soulful sound that by 1970 had supplanted *ska*. Boney M, a quartet from Jamaica and the West Indiies, had an even bigger hit with song in Europe in a 1978 version produced in Germans. The Melodians spiritual plain has been covered by artists as diverse as Sublime, Steve Earle and Sweet Honey in the Rock.

~~Roll Me On The Water (Bonnie Koloc)~~

Smokey Mountains
My Home’s Across the Blue Ridge Mountains: JAF 22 (1909) 245--1909, when Louise Rand Bascom, Ballads and Songs of Western North Carolina–Ashley & Watson 1962
I’m Going Back to North Carolina Kelly Harrell 1925, My Home’s Across . . . CTH 1929 Carter Fmily 1937, Delmore Brothers 1938

Done Laid Around
Better known as “Gotta Travel On,” this well-traveled song was written by Paul Clayton, a singer and song collector who figured large in both the 1950s folk song revival, and the rise of Bob Dylan. The Weavers and Harry Belafonte both introduced the song to American audiences around 1956, and in 1958 it was a hit for country singer Billy Grammer. Then in 1959, Buddy Holly opened what turned out to be his last live show with a solo electric verion of “Gotta Travel On,” which allegedly inspired Dylan to add it to his repertoire. Over the next several decades, the song’s popularity has continued among folk, country and bluegrass artists ranging from Trini Lopez to Eddy Arnold to Ollabelle Reed.

So Long, It’s Been Good to Know You
There are two well-known versions of this Woody Guthrie classic. The earliest, copyrighted in 1940, was included on Woody’s landmark album of fourteen *Dust Bowl Ballads*. Under the title “Dusty Old Dust,” the original was based on the actual events of the 1935 “Black Easter” dust storm in Texas. In Woody’s words, the storm turned the day “so dark that you couldn't see your hand before your face." Many people in the Southwest were then forced to say “so long” to their neighbors and homes, and head off in search of gainful employment. A later, less edgy version, popularized by the Weavers, enumerated more universal reasons–the price of butter or the prospect of a unwise marriage–for the narrator’s leave-taking.

The Cat Came Back

According to Sigmund Spaeth's 1926 history of popular music–*Read 'Em and Weep: The Songs You Forgot to Remember*–this song was popular in 1893. Spaeth credits Henry S. Miller as the composer. The song was not forgotten by early country artists. Fiddlin' John Carson recorded it in 1924, and fellow Atlantan Riley Puckett covered it in 1930. Otto Gray & his Oklahoma Cowboy Band, a widely traveled country vaudeville act waxed a version in 1931. An instrumental by the same name, recorded by Fiddlin' Doc Roberts in 1927, bears little resemblance to the melody of the Songbook's version.

The Dutchman (Smith)

This poignant and well-crafted gem emerged from the pen of Michael Peter Smith, a native of New Jersey moved to Chicago in 1976. The song sprouted in Smith's imagination as another song about young love, until the latent logic of the first two lines propelled the author down another path. "The Dutchman" witnesses to the love between two senior citizens, one of whom is sinking into dementia. Smith recorded it first on the 1972 album *Mickey and Babs Get Hot* (Babs is Barbara Barrow, a long-time guitar teacher at the Old Town School). The following year, Steve Goodman performed it on his legendary *Somebody Else's Troubles* album. It has been frequently covered by the likes of Anne Hills, Josh White, Jr. and the Clancy Brothers and Tommy Makem.

This Train

Like so many gospel-tinged folksongs, this one has been equally well-loved by both Blacks and Whites. The earliest recording dates to 1922, when the song was waxed for the Okeh label by the Florida Normal Industrial Institute Quartet. Seventeen years later, WLS National Barn Dance stars Lulu Belle & Scotty recorded it again for Okeh. And in some of his last vocal performances before he lost his voice to throat cancer, Big Bill Broonzy sang "This Train Is Bound for Glory" for the microphones at WFMT in Chicago (for the Folkways album *Big Bill Broonzy Sings Folk Songs*) and for Pete Seeger's home movie camera (released on the Yazoo video *A Musical Journey: The Films of Pete, Toshi & Dan Seeger*).

Tom Dooley

No song is more emblematic of the folk song revival than "The Ballad of Tom Dooley," and no rendition is better known than the Kingston Trio's 1958 recording. Even more intriguing is the ballads singular path from historical obscurity to wide popularity. The Kingston Trio learned their distinctive refrain–the delay for the downbeat after "Hang down you head" and before "Tom Dooley"–from Roger Sprung, a banjo-playing regular at the folk music jams in Greenwhich Village's Washington Square. Sprung, in turn, learned the song at informal hootenannies sponsored by the likes of Alan Lomax and Bess Lomax Hawes in Washington, D.C.

The folk revival's sole source for the song was from traditional singer and banjo-maker Frank Proffitt of Reese, North Carolina. (Proffitt recorded the song for Frank

Warner, a song collector from the north who brought Proffitt to Chicago for concerts at the Old Town School and the University of Chicago Folk Festival.) Before that, the song circulated in oral tradition in a rather limited georgraphic region, and the only recording was made in 1929 in Memphis when G.B. Grayson sang it for the Victor company.

The ballad recounts the essential facts of the 1886 murder of Laura Foster by Thomas C. Dula in Wilkes Co., North Carolina. According to the ballad, Dula was brought to justice by a man named Grayson, who in fact was Major James W.M. Grayson of the 4th Tennessee (U.S.) Volunteer Infantry and the uncle of fiddler G.B. Grayson.

Welcome Table

This proclamation of spiritual victory has been applied to all manner of struggles. The earliest recording was "The Welcome Table" sung by the Florida Normal Quartet (see notes to "This Train") in 1922. Before the decade was over, the song appeared as "The River of Jordan" by both bluesman Jaybird Coleman and the Carter Family, the first family of country music. A couple of string bands from West Virginia, the McClung Brothers and the West Virginia Night Owls, waxed it under the title "I'm Going to Walk the Streets of Glory."

And in his *American Songbag* of 1927, Carl Sandburg informs us that the Wobblies, radical unionists belonging to the I.W.W. (Industrial Workers of the World) sang the song loudly when they were jailed: "Their favorite verse was 'God's Goin' to Set This World on Fire,'" Sandburg's text was contributed by Brooklynite Arthus Billings Hunt who learned it in rural Virginia from a group of African-American singers.

Will You Go Lassie Go

Often called "Wild Montain Thyme," this favorite came to the urban folk revival from the McPeake Family of Belfast, who recorded it in 1961. Old Town School founder, Win Stracke, included it in the *Songs of Man*, the 1969 anthology he co-edited with Norman Luboff.

This song has been reworked and reshaped by unknown singers dating back to a poem or broadside, "The Braes of Balquhidder," published by Robert Tannahill (1774-1810), a Scottish nationalist known as "The Weaver Poet." Tannihill's lyric inludes the line "Let us go, lassie, go To the braes o' Balquither," and talks of "a bower By the clear siller fountain." The poem tells of a happy life "and the wild mountain hyme."

City Of New Orleans (Goodman)

The seeds for Steve Goodman's most famous song were sown in 1967, when the aspiring musician (and less than stellar student), decided to not disembark at the Illinois Central stop near the University of Illinois, but to ride all the way to the southern terminus. By the time Goodman got back for his mid-week classes, the important opening lines and parts of the chorus were written. Three years later, when Goodman (by now a full-time performer and songwriter) and his new wife took the train south to Mattoon, Illinois to visit her family, two full verses and a completed chorus were coaxed from his muse. A

few nights later he introduced it to fellow pickers at a club in Chicago. They knew it was a potential hit and urged him to write the final stanza.

The finished song–first recorded on the 1970 LP *Gathering at the Earl of Old Town*–became the springboard to national fame for both Goodman and for the burgeoning singer-songwriter scene in Chicago. Arlo Guthrie made it a big hit in 1972, and since then it has been recorded by countless artists including Judy Collins, Chet Atkins, Willie Nelson and the Country Gentlemen.

I'll Fly Away

This hymn was the first one composed by Albert Brumley, a prolific songwriter and composer from the Ozarks. Filled with old favorites, his many inexpensive songbooks, such as *All Day Singin' & Dinner on the Ground*, have been continuously available for decades and can still be found on the Albert Brumley & Sons web site.

"I'll Fly Away" is Brumley's most-recorded song, and has been waxed by such White gospel groups as the Brown's Ferry Four (comprised of the Delmore Brothers, Grandpa Jones and Merle Travis) , as well as by African-American artists like the Rev. Gary Davis and the Selah Jubilee Quartet. The Library of Congress' Archive of Folk Culture holds a non-commercial recording from 1943 made by a group with a name of special interest to Chicagoans: the Lincoln Park Singers.

El-a-noy

Carl Sandburg included "The State of El-a-noy" in his *American Songbag* published in Chicago in 1927, but provided no indication of its source. Sandburg noted that a Chicago attorney of the time remembered his father singing the song when they lived near the Ohio River. A probable ancestor is an obscure broadside called "The State of Illinois," published in New York around the time of the Civil War.

Old Town School of Folk Music founder, Win Stracke, performed the song frequently and recorded it on his album *Songs of Old Town*. Art Thieme, a Stracke disciple, also recorded it on his 1977 live album *Outright, Bold-Faced Lies*.

Angel Band

Written in the years before the Civil War, the words to this long-cherished hymn first saw print in 1860 as “The Land of Beulah” in *The Melodion.* Rev. Jefferson Hascall’s lyric was married to a 6/8 tune by William Batchelder Bradbury–whose credits include “Jesus Loves Me” and “Just As I Am”–which was first printed two years later. Polished by traditional performance practices, the song is now universally rendered in a gentle 3/4 meter, and has become a country and bluegrass standard. The earliest recording was Uncle Dave Macon’s 1927 "O Bear Me Away On Your Snowy Wings." The following year, Smith's Sacred Singers waxed it with the title “My Latest Sun Is Sinking Fast." A gold standard for the song was set in 1955 when the Stanley Brothers recorded a bluegrass version for Chicago-based Mercury Records.

Twelve Gates to the City

A traditional spiritual, “Oh, What a Beautiful City” was first recorded in 1940 by contralto, Marian Anderson. The year before, controversey swirled around Ms. Anderson as the Daughters of the American Revolution barred, on the basis of race, from appearing at Constitution Hall in Washington, D.C. (A crowd of 75,000 people showed up at an alternate concert quickly organized by protestors.) In 1955, she helped break down the walls of prejudice when she became the first Black to perform in New York’s Metropolitan Opera House.

The song itself took a humbler path through the remaining decades of the twentieth century. A favorite in the folk revival, it was a staple in the repertories of Joan Baez, Pete Seeger and harmonica wizard Sonny Terry. This rendition of “Twelve Gates to the City”–by Ed Holstein, a longtime friend of the Old Town School–owes much to the masterful guitar styling of the Rev. Gary Davis.

Simple Gifts

Frank Hamilton, the Old Town School’s founding teacher, adds a second verse to this the most widely known of the songs used in worship by the Shakers (see the notes to Volume 2). Dwelling in communal settlements, the Shakers practiced strict celibacy, but nevertheless have survived, though in small numbers, down to the present. “’Tis a Gift to Be Simple” was a favorite of early Old Town School leaders, George and Gerry Armstrong. Their version is included on the Flying Fish CD *Wheel of the Year. Thirty Years with the Armstrong Family*.

Pay Me My Money Down

This chantey (or shanty) was sung by stevedores or longshoremen while at work in the West Indies or the islands off the coast of South Carolina and Georgia. In 1959, Joe Armstrong of St. Simon’s Island (Georgia) told Alan Lomax that while loading timber on a schooner, the song “ was sung “to make it light for us.” Sea shanty historian, Stan Hugill, claimed that as early as 1888 song was borrowed from the shore workers and adapted by deep sea sailors for use as a halyard shanty.

A version of the song was performed by The Weavers at their seminal Carnegie Hall concerts in 1955 Carnegie Hall concerts. A 1958 recording further popularized the song, as did similar calypso-style "skiffle" versions popular in Great Britain. The Georgia Sea Island Singers, a group of African-American traditional singers organized by Bessie Jones, kept the song alive through the end of the century at folk festivals and educational venues. Most recently the song was featured on Bruce Springsteen's tribute album, *We Shall Overcome: The Seeger Sessions*.

Stealin'

Gus Cannon, banjoist and leader of the Memphis-based Cannon's Jug Stompers is often given credit for this song, as he copyrighted the distinctive opening line "Put your arms around me like a circle 'round the sun." Cannon, however, never recorded the song. The earliest recording is "Stealin' Stealin'" by the Memphis Jug Band from 1928. The song was popularized in the 1960s by the Jim Kweskin Jug Band as well as by the Grateful Dead.

I Shall Not Be Moved

This hymn, composed in 1906 by Alfred H. Ackley, was recorded before World War II by a half dozen White rural string bands–including the McCravy Brothers, the Cauley Family and the Dixie Reelers–and several country bluesmen, most notably Charlie Patton. A 1929 recording by Black preacher, Rev. D.C. Rise was titled "I Shall Not Be Removed." The song was given new life during the post-war folk revival through the work of North Carolina lawyer, Bascom Lamar Lunsford. And in recent years, it is a standard in the repertory of octogenarian fiddler Joe Thompson of Mebane, NC. (Thompson, a respected elder of African-American folk tradition, performed at the Old Town School in 2005.)

The song's imagery of spiritual steadfastness was easily assimilated by labor union singers, and the song was given new life as "We Shall Not Be Moved," recorded in 1944 by the Union Boys (a later manifestation of the Almanac Singers). Pete Seeger, a key member of the group, kept singing the union version, which no doubt contributed to the harrassment he received from the House Un-American Activities Committee and other McCarthyites.