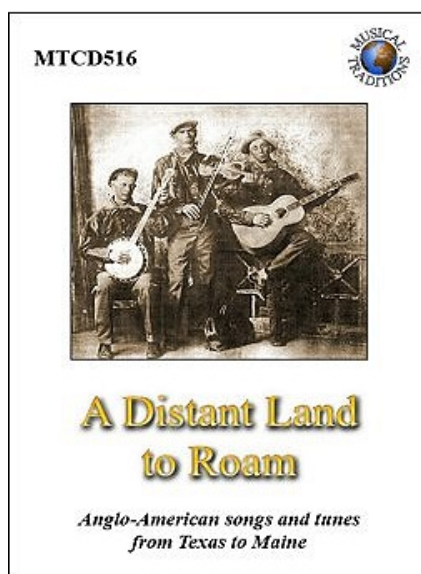


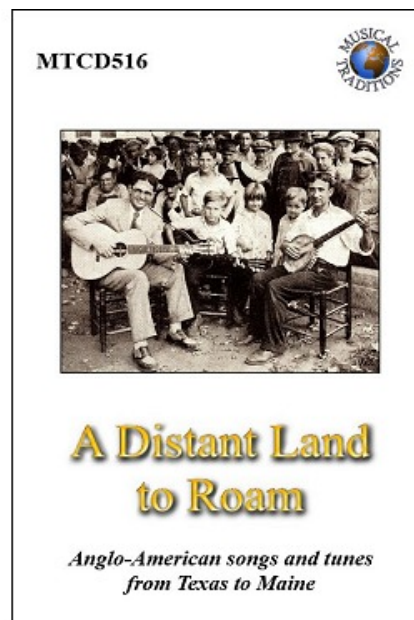
A Distant Land to Roam

*Anglo-American songs and tunes
from Texas to Maine*

MTCD516



CD case cover



CD booklet cover

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|----|---|--|
| 1 | <i>Mountain Rangers</i> | Mellie Dunham's Orchestra |
| 2 | <i>Oh Molly Dear</i> | B F Shelton |
| 3 | <i>Mountaineer's Courtship</i> | Mr & Mrs Ernest V Stoneman |
| 4 | <i>Wild Hog in the Woods</i> | Lonesome Luke & His Farm Boys |
| 5 | <i>Ethan Lang</i> | Emry Arthur |
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| 11 | <i>Soldier, Will You Marry Me?</i> | Riley Puckett |
| 12 | <i>Jimmie and Sallie</i> | The Dixon Brothers |
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A Distant Land to Roam

Anglo-American Songs & Tunes from Texas to Maine

Introduction.

So I left my dear old home
For a distant land to roam.
The Carter Family, 1929

Sometime in the early 1960s I began to realise that many American singers had recorded songs in the 1920s and '30s which had originated in the Old World, especially in England, Scotland and Ireland. I was especially interested to find that some of the ballads brought together by Professor Francis James Child in his monumental collection *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads* had also been recorded, often by people who had originally learnt them from family members or else from close friends, rather than from books. And so I set about trying to obtain copies of these scarce recordings so that they might be reissued on at least one Long Playing album. Unfortunately, I seemed to be the only person interested in this idea and, after a fruitless search for a suitable record company, I decided to shelve the project.

In 2010 and 2014, I wrote two articles (When Cecil Left the Mountains - Early Recordings of American Music' parts 1 & 2) which were published on the Musical Traditions website. The articles dealt with some of the songs which had been recorded on those early 78s, together with details of how and why they had been recorded. Some of these recordings had, by this time, been reissued on various CD anthologies, though many were on hard to find American CDs, which would not have been readily available to British listeners.

And then, in 2015, Nehi Records issued a 3-CD box set of recordings under the title *My Bonnie Lies Over the Ocean - British Songs in the USA* (Nehi NEH3X1). The set came with a booklet of song notes written by the eminent scholar Steve Roud, whose knowledge of English folk songs is second to none. Unfortunately there was nothing said about the performers themselves. The Nehi set contains examples of obscure ballads, such as *Black Jack Davie*, *The House Carpenter*, *Henry Lee* and *Lady Margaret and Sweet William*, together with examples of songs once found across Britain, as well as examples of British Music Hall songs such as *Handy Man* and *I Tickled 'Em*. In all, it is a brilliant set.

But, as I continued to listen to these recordings, I came to realise just how many good songs had been omitted and I was also saddened to see that the set only dealt with songs, there were no examples of some of the many tunes which had also been taken

to America by the early European settlers. And so I approached Rod Stradling, suggesting that we might issue some of these recordings so that they could become better available to a British audience. The result is *A Distant Land to Roam*, a show case for twenty-five of the greatest recordings ever made of Anglo-American folk music.

I should say at once, though, that songs such as the ones found here and on the Nehi set - a total of 100 tracks - are not typical of what was recorded during the 1920s - '40s. These Anglo-American songs and ballads form only a very small percentage of that which was recorded under the catch-all title of 'Old Timey' music. If we look in Tony Russell's magnificent *Country Music Records - A Discography, 1921 - 1942*, Oxford University Press, 2004, we will find that the bulk of the recordings are of songs which were composed either in the late 19th or early 20th century. A large number of American religious songs were also recorded. Of course, when the English folk song collector Cecil Sharp visited the Appalachian Mountains of North America during the period 1916 - 1918 he was able to collect some 1,600 songs and ballads. But Sharp was only looking for 'folk' songs and 'folk' ballads and he would have rejected any piece which did not fit his limiting definition of just what constituted such items. The chances are that Sharp was offered any number of songs which were not to his liking and which he refused to record in his notebooks.

If we look at the total recorded repertoires of the singers heard on this CD, we can clearly see just what sort of songs they preferred to sing. Yes, Riley Puckett probably enjoyed singing *Old Molly Hare* and *George Collins*, but he was equally at home singing such songs as *That Old Irish Mother of Mine*, *Meet Me Tonight in Dreamland*, *In a Little Gypsy Tearoom* and *Red Sails in the Sunset*.

So where did our present singers learn their song and ballads? We know that in at least two cases, *The Fox Hunter's Song* sung by Will Starks and *Wind the Little Ball of Yarn* sung by The Southern Melody Boys, the songs were learnt orally from members of the singer's family. The Skillet Licker with Riley Puckett, Taylor's Kentucky Boys, The Hill Billies and Ernest V Stone-man and the Dixie Mountaineers were playing songs and tunes which came from a common stock. Interestingly, the Taylor group comprised three musicians, fiddler Jim Booker, banjo-player Marion Underwood and guitarist Willie Young. The group was named after their manager, Dennis Taylor, who was not a musician. However, when the group was photographed Taylor replaced Jim Booker, because Booker was black, and Taylor is shown holding Booker's fiddle.

It may be thought that black and white American musicians in the early 1920s had separate

repertoires, but this was not necessarily the case. We only have to look at two albums, *Altamon - Black Stringband Music* (Rounder CD0238) and the unfortunately titled *Black Fiddlers* (Document DOCD-5631) to realise just how (musically) integrated some musicians were. On this CD we can hear two British ballads, *The Fox Hunter's Song* and *Cat Man Blues* being sung by black singers. *The Fox Hunter's Song* would not sound out of place on the lips of an English singer, although Blind Boy Fuller's *Cat Man Blues* has moved away from its original form and sounds more like a blues - Fuller was primarily a blues singer - than a British ballad.

Two singers, Bascom Lamar Lunsford and Bradley Kincaid, came from Appalachian backgrounds, Lunsford from North Carolina and Kincaid from Kentucky. They were both brought up in singing communities and learnt songs from family and friends. But, as they grew older they began to travel through the mountains collecting additional songs on their journeys. They became what folklorists sometimes call 'resident collectors'. Nor were they alone in doing so; the well-known Carter Family, for example, deliberately sought out 'new' songs which they could record, even employing a black guitarist and singer called Lesley Riddle to teach them guitar licks and 'new' pieces which he had collected on their behalf. According to Riddle, he was not the only black singer to give songs to the Carter Family. (See *Lesley Riddle - Step by Step*, Rounder CD 0299.)

Initially many singers travelled to major cities, often in the north such as New York and Chicago, to record. But the companies were soon sending portable recording crews all over the States looking for new talent. The companies would advertise in local newspapers and would-be performers were asked to attend for an audition when the companies later arrived in town. In 1927 the Victor Record Company A & R man Ralph Peer set out for Bristol, Tennessee, where he began recording the local talent. Not only did he record B F Shelton and the Stoneman Family, heard on this CD, but it was also in Bristol that he discovered two of the greatest names in country music, The Carter Family and Jimmy Rodgers. Peer recorded everything from Old-Timey banjo players to Gospel singers and family bands.

It is often hard today trying to work out just why the recording companies recorded some of the things that he did. When Clarence Ashley went to Atlanta GA in 1930 to record for the Columbia Record Company, he offered a version of the Child Ballad *The House Carpenter*. When the engineers asked what it was, Ashley replied that it was an 'old molasses-making song'. Apparently the company was happy with this reply and the record was issued, coupled with the song *Dark Holler Blues*, a version of *East Virginia* (re-issued on County CD 3520).

When the record companies first began recording 'Old Timey' music, they were probably unaware that they were preserving examples of local musical styles. Mellie Dunham's delicate fiddle music, for example, was very different from the raucous multi-fiddle music of Gid Tanner's Skillet Lickers; while Dick Devall's Western singing (and it was quite amazing that a commercial company should record Dick's acapella singing, rather than insisting he should be accompanied by some form of instrumental backing) is far different from B F Shelton's Appalachian delivery. Originally, these recordings would have been sent back to the musician/singer's home region where they could be sold. This made sense, because the performers would have had a bigger following at home. But, over the years these fragile 78s began to spread across the States, so that North Carolina fiddlers could, for example, listen to the fiddle styles of, say, Georgia, or even Texas. Did this affect local musical styles? Perhaps not as much as one might imagine. Listen to the music of Tommy Jarrell and the other Round Peak musicians from NC and then compare it to the tunes that Tommy's father, Ben Jarrell, recorded during the period 1927 - 29 (reissued on Document DOCD8023). It is almost as though time has stood still. Then again, what about the music heard on the three CD set *Traditional Fiddle Music of the Ozarks* (Rounder CDs 0435/36/37) recorded almost fifty years after the artists who can be heard on *Echoes of the Ozark* (County CDs 3506/07). Again, the similarities are striking. And the same, I think, can be said for other regions, from Kentucky to Texas.

Of course there have been some changes. Western Swing and Bluegrass music have sometimes overtaken the more traditional styles of music in some regions. But even these styles are often based on older styles and it should come as no surprise to hear the Bluegrass pioneers the Stanley Brothers singing old family songs such as *Poison in a Glass of Wine*, a song which was taken to America from Britain at least some two hundred years ago.

In Britain the song texts were often spread via the medium of the broadside - sheets of paper with printing on one side - and we know that when the early European settlers arrived on the East Coast of America printers were soon issuing similar sheets there. We also know that many songs travelled west via small booklets and songsters. But, I think that we can say that, from the 1920s onwards, some singers picked up songs directly or indirectly from the type of commercial recordings that can be heard on this CD. For example, North Carolina singer and guitarist Doc Watson learnt his version of the song *Will the Weaver* (he called it *Every Day Dirt*) from a 1930 Victor recording of the song which had been made by Dave McCarn. (Doc's recording is on Smithsonian-Folk-

ways CD SF 40012 and McCarn's recording can be heard on Old Hat Records CD-1007).

Likewise some of the songs which I recorded from the Virginian ballad singer Eunice Yeatts MacAlexander - including *Black Jack David* and *I Know a Pretty Little Girl* - almost certainly came, indirectly, from recordings made by the Carter Family in 1940 and 1935. Both of the Carter Family songs can be heard on a JSP box set JSP7708 (*I Know a Pretty Little Girl* was titled *Kissing is a Crime* by the Carter Family) while Eunice's version of *Black Jack David/Davy* is on E.F.D.S.S. CD02 and *I Know a Pretty Little Girl* is on MTCD 501-2. And, according to John Cohen, the Kentucky singer and banjo player Roscoe Holcomb had, 'absorbed influences from phonograph records and radio'. (Booklet note to Smithsonian-Folkways SF CD 40104 - *The High Lonesome Sound*).

Another song which I recorded from a Virginian singer was *The Lawson Family Murder* sung by Rob Tate of Carroll County. The murder had occurred on Christmas Day, 1929, in Stokes County, NC, and another Virginian singer, Walter Smith, composed the song shortly after the event. In fact Smith recorded the song on 25th March, 1930, and Rob Tate had the song from this recording. (See MTCD 513 for Rob Tate's recording and DOCD-8062 for Walter Smith's original recording). Had the song been written a hundred years earlier I am sure that the words would have ended up on an American broadside or in an American songster.

To begin with, American versions of British songs and ballads almost certainly remained similar to the versions which had been sung in the Old World. But, over time, the songs became modified so that they better fitted into their New World surroundings. Take, for example, the version of the British song *Go and Leave Me if You Wish It* as sung by Frank Jenkins' Pilot Mountaineers (track 22 on this CD). In this case while verses 2 to 6 clearly belong to the original song, the opening verse has been slightly altered to place the song in America, as the opening line - 'Once I loved a railroad flagman' - shows.

The Lawson Family Murder, mentioned above, belongs to an old topical song-writing tradition. And I think that a similar tradition was at work with the Dixon Brother's song *Jimmie and Sallie* (track 12 on the CD). To the best of my knowledge this is the only sighting of this song and so it probably began life in America, although it is certainly very similar, in form and content, to British folksongs. Of course we should not, however, think that songs and tunes only travelled one way, from the Old World to the New. Many songs, such as *Silly Bill*, travelled to Britain from America and, in many cases including this one, apparently entered the British singing tradition.

At times it is hard to realise that most of the recordings heard on the CD were made almost one hundred years ago, and that the singers and musicians are no longer with us. Yet, because of recording technology, we can still enjoy listening to them today. And that is a truly wonderful thing.

Mike Yates - Winter 2018

The Performers

Emry Arthur (1902 - 1967) born Kentucky, is perhaps best known for being the first person to record the song 'Man of Constant Sorrow'. Arthur lost a finger as a young man and was only able to play the guitar in a rudimentary fashion. He came from an area rich in traditional music.

John Baltzell. Little seems to be known about John Baltzell, who was billed as 'Ohio's Champion Fiddler'. He began making recordings some three months after Fiddlin John Carson made his debut recording in 1923, and continued recording until 1928. Some of his recordings were issued as either by Hiram Jones or as by John Barton.

Dick Devall. Devall, who may have been a working cowboy, was from Reed, Oklahoma. He later recorded a less complete version of the *Tom Sherman's Barroom* for John Lomax and the Library of Congress in 1946. Devall is one of only a handful of solo old-timey singers to have been recorded singing acapella by a commercial record company.

Howard & Dorsey Dixon. Dorsey (1897 - 1968) and Howard Dixon (1903 - 1961) began playing music together in the early 1930s, when they were working in a cotton mill in North Carolina. They made a fair number of records, performed on the radio and at public concerts. But by the early 1940s their musical career more or less came to an end and they returned to the cotton mills. Howard died of a heart attack at work at the Aleo Mill, East Rockingham, NC, where Dorsey was also working. Dorsey, having retired with failing eyesight, was rediscovered in the 1960s. He was recorded by Testament Records and the Library of Congress in Washington and twice appeared at the Newport Folk Festival.

Mellie Dunham (1853 - 1931) was born in Norway, Maine. Dunham, one of many fiddlers in that part of America, came to notice after he was invited to play for Henry Ford, who had a home in Dearborn, Michigan. In 1926 he recorded the following sides for the Victor Record Company in New York. These were: *Chorus Jig*, *Lady of the Lake*, *Mountain Rangers*, *Hull's Victory*, *Boston Fancy*, *Rippling Waves Waltz* and *Medley of Reels*. Dunham supplemented his income by making snowshoes and, on one occasion, sold sixty pairs of snowshoes to

Commodore Robert Peary for one of his Arctic expeditions.

Blind Boy Fuller (1904 or '07 - 1941) was one of a number of East Coast bluesmen who recorded in the 1930's. He lived mainly in the North Carolina Piedmont, playing guitar and singing with people such as Blind Gary Davis, Sonny Terry and Bull City Red. Fuller recorded over 120 sides and was one of the most popular blues singers of his generation.

The Hill Billies were founded by pianist Albert 'Al' Green Hopkins (1889 - 1932) who brought together musicians from Watauga County, NC, and from Grayson and Carroll Counties in VA. They first came together in the musically rich area of Galax, VA but were later based in Washington, where they regularly performed on WRC radio. Occasionally, Hopkins' mother would join them on the radio, where she sang ballads. The band became the first old-timey group to perform for an American President, in this case President Calvin Coolidge. It is sometimes said that they invented the term 'hill billies', though this is probably incorrect.

Frank Jenkin's Pilot Mountaineers. Frank Jenkins (1888 - c.1945) was from Dobson NC. He performed with several local musicians and recorded with Da Costa Waltz's Southern Mountaineers - which featured Tommy Jarrell's father, Ben Jarrell, on fiddle - and as Frank Jenkins' Pilot Mountaineers. The Da Costa Waltz and Pilot Mountaineers recordings may be heard on Document DOCD-8023. The latter recordings featured Frank on fiddle, his 19 year old son Oscar on banjo and vocals by Galax resident Ernest V Stoneman (see below for more on Stoneman). During the 1960s Oscar Jenkins recorded two LPs for County Records.

Bradley Kincaid (1895 -1991) was originally from the Cumberland Mountains of Kentucky. His musical career took off in 1926 when he was living in Chicago. Kincaid had enrolled in the YMCA College, where he joined a singing quartet. He was invited to sing on a radio programme, the National Barn Dance, and was soon receiving hundreds of fan letters a week. During the period 1944 - 50 Bradley Kincaid appeared regularly on the Grand Ole Opry. He produced a number of song folios and recorded well over one hundred sides, including versions of British songs such as: *Froggie Went a-Courtin'*, *The Swapping Song*, *The Foggy Dew*, *A Paper of Pins*, *I Wonder When I Shall be Married*, *Billy Boy*, *I Gave My Love a Cherry*, *The House Carpenter*, *Dog and Gun* and *Barbara Allen*.

Lonesome Luke & His Farm Boys. Luke and his boys were best known for their performances over Louisville, KY, radio during the period 1927 - mid 1930s. The band's leader, D C 'Luke' Decker was born in 1900 in Breckenridge County and grew up in

Grayson County. He died in 1964. The group recorded four sides in 1931, *Wild Hog in The Woods*, *Dogs in the Ashcan*, *Halfway to Arkansas* and *Beaver Valley Breakdown*.

Louisiana Lou was born Eva Mae Greenwood in 1910 in Mississippi, or, perhaps Louisiana. She was also known as the 'Southern Songbird' and had one recording session in 1933, when she recorded eight songs. She later moved to the Mid-West where she was often heard on local radio stations.

Bascom Lamar Lunsford (1882 - 1973). Lunsford was born in Mars Hill, NC, and held down a number of occupations. He was variously a lawyer, teacher, fruit-tree salesman and a Democratic Party campaign manager. But he was also a singer and fiddle and banjo player, who loved nothing better than entertaining people. In 1928 he founded the Asheville Mountain Dance and Folk Festival. In 1949 he recorded over 300 songs and ballads for the Library of Congress in Washington, all of which he had picked up during his travels throughout the Appalachians. The 1960 film *Bluegrass Roots - Music Makers of Blue Ridge* (sic), which features Lunsford, is now available as an MRA DVD.

Riley Puckett (1894 - 1946) was a guitarist and singer from north Georgia who is perhaps best known for his recordings with fiddlers Gid Tanner and Clayton McMichen, and string-bands such as The Skillet Lickers, in which all three played. He became blind at a young age before becoming proficient on the banjo and guitar. While many guitarists would be satisfied with playing chords behind the guitar, Puckett developed a whole range of bass runs on his guitar. Fiddler Lowe Stokes once said that Riley 'was a hard man to play with'. Nevertheless Puckett recorded extensively and has left us a vast heritage of superb music.

The Red Fox Chasers were formed at the 1927 Union Grove Fiddler's Convention in western North Carolina. A P 'Fonzie' Thompson and Bob Cranford had already been singing partners, as they grew up together in Surrey County. Paul Miles and Guy Brooks also grew up together, playing for square dances in nearby Alleghany County. Miles learned to play banjo at age 5, using a homemade instrument crafted from a meal sifter and a groundhog hide. When the band formed in Union Grove, Paul Miles seemed to have taken the lead of the group. It was he who devised the name 'Red Fox Chasers', and it was he who arranged for their first recordings for Gennett Records in April 1928. The success of records like *Did You Ever See a Devil Uncle Joe?* got the group several more offers to record in the next few years, and they eventually amassed a total of 48 sides. These included several hits that were to remain influential for years: *Stolen Love*, *Goodbye Little Bonnie*, *Little*

Darling Pal of Mine, Honeysuckle Time, Sweet Fern and the British ballad of *Pretty Polly*.

After the band broke up in the 1930s, all the members continued to stay active in music. Paul Miles recorded for the Library of Congress in the late 1930s, and A P Thompson continued to teach at singing schools, and sang with local quartets.

Ridgel's Fountain Citians, comprised Leroy Ridgel, Charles Ancil Ridgel, Millard Whitehead and Carthel Ridgel who were staying in Fountain City, a suburb of Knoxville, TN, just prior to making their recordings in 1929 and 1930.

B F Shelton. Benjamin Frank Shelton was born in Clay County, Kentucky, on 1st January, 1903 and died in Corbin, Kentucky, on 28th February, 1963. Shelton was a barber in Corbin when he travelled with the gospel singer and preacher Alfred Karnes to Bristol, TN. to record for the Victor Company. Shelton recorded four tracks (vocal accompanied by his own banjo), all of which were issued. The tracks were *Darling Cora, Pretty Polly, Oh, Molly Dear* and *Cold Penitentiary Blues*. Shelton travelled to Johnson City, TN. in October, 1928, where he was recorded by Columbia Records, but these recordings were unissued and no test-pressings are known to have survived.

The Southern Melody Boys, popular in the 1930s, were Odus Maggard, who was born near Hazard, KY, in 1915, and played both guitar and banjo as well as singing, and Woodrow Roberts who hailed from Glaymorgan, VA, where he was born in 1912. They were sometimes accompanied by various fiddle players. The Southern Melody Boys recorded for both Bluebird and Decca, the sides for the latter label originally being released under the name of Odus and Woodrow. Some of the Bluebird sides were part of a series released by Montgomery Wards, distributed through both their stores and catalogues. The group performed material handed down from their parents such as *Wind the Little Ball of Yarn* as well as original songs such as *Down in Baltimore* and *Back in California*, written by Maggard, who dropped out of performing in the late '30s, ringing the death knell for the band.

The Stanley Brothers. Brothers Carter Stanley (1925 - 1966) and Ralph Stanley (1927 - 2016) were born on a small farm in Dickenson County, VA. They performed with their band, The Clinch Mountain Boys, from 1946 to 1966 recording many pieces which were to become classics of Bluegrass music. A biography, *Lonesome Melodies: The Lives and Music of the Stanley Brothers* by David W Johnson was published by the University of Mississippi Press in 2013.

Will Starks, a black singer, was born on a Mississippi plantation near Sardis in 1875. His father, who was a singer, fiddler and banjo player, taught Will many songs. Will could also play the banjo and guitar, the auto-harp and the accordion and apparent played tunes, such as *Billy in the Low Ground* and *Arkansas Traveller* which were common to both black and white repertoires.

Ernest V Stoneman (1893 - 1968) was yet another singer and musician from the Galax region of southwest Virginia. He began his recording career in 1925 and recorded extensively with family members and friends. With a family growing in size he was forced to give up his music during the Depression years, before bouncing back into popularity. It may be said that he possibly recorded too many sides, some of which were not that great. But, at the same time it has to be said that at his best he could be brilliant and he was undoubtedly responsible for some of the greatest recordings ever made during the 'golden age' of old Timey music.

Gid Tanner and His Skillet Lickers were a group of north Georgia musicians centred around the fiddler (and part-time chicken farmer) James Gideon 'Gid' Tanner. Other musicians included Clayton McMichen, Bert Layne, Fate Norris and Riley Puckett (see above) and it would seem that this was one group brought together for the purpose of making records.

Taylor's Kentucky Boys were named after Dennis W Taylor, a farmer and talent scout for the Starr Piano Company in Kentucky. Taylor was also responsible for sending Fiddlin' Doc Roberts and Welby Toomey, two other Kentucky musicians, to the recording studio. Although he was not a musician, Taylor liked Old-Timey music and began to manage a local string band in the mid-1920s which became known as 'Taylor's Kentucky Boys'. This group played for local dances, at school houses as well as at social events and, eventually, Taylor got them a recording contract with Gennett Records. On April 26, 1927, Taylor's Kentucky Boys made their first recordings in Richmond, Indiana. The line-up consisted of Jim Booker on fiddle, Marion Underwood on banjo, and Willie Young on guitar. More sessions during the year of 1927 followed with various line-ups including Aulton Ray, Doc Roberts, Jim, John, and Joe Booker among others. Bearing in mind these dates; it is rather amazing to realise that the Booker family were black musicians, and this at a time when racial segregation was widespread throughout the American south. As mentioned in the introduction, when the group were photographed, presumably for a record catalogue, Jim Booker, the fiddler, was left out of the picture and Dennis Taylor took his place, holding Booker's fiddle,

The Songs and Tunes

Roud numbers quoted are from the databases, *The Folk Song Index* and *The Broadside Index*, continually updated, compiled by Steve Roud. Currently containing almost half a million records between them, they are described by him as "extensive, but not yet exhaustive".

Child numbers, where quoted, refer to entries in *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads* by Francis James Child, Boston, 1882-98.

In the following Song Notes, all Musical Traditions Records' CDs are referred to only by their Catalogue Numbers (i.e. MTCDxxx), as are all Topic Records' CDs (i.e. TSCDxxx) and Veteran CDs (i.e. VTxxx). The names of all other CD publishers are given in full.

1 - Mountain Rangers Roud 8503

Mellie Dunham's Orchestra - Mellie Dunham (f.), Cherrie Noble (p.) M A Noble (calls). 9th January, 1926. New York City.

An 18th century tune from the Scots/Irish tradition, which is better known as *Haste to the Wedding*. The first known version, then titled *The Small Pin Cushion*, seems to be that printed in James Oswald's 'Caledonian Companion' (vol.10, page 8), which was printed in London in 1759. In 1767 the tune reappeared in a London pantomime 'The Elopement', and in a light opera 'Rural Felicity'. It is said that the title *Haste to the Wedding* comes from an Irish tradition of playing it to accompany a bride from her home to church on her wedding day, and in 1840 the tune was played for Queen Victoria as she arrived for her wedding to Prince Albert. The tune's popularity may be partly due to it being frequently played by army bands as a march.

Other recordings: Stephen Baldwin (Gloucestershire) - MTCD334; Neil O'Boyle (Co. Donegal) - Rounder CD 1123; Emmett Lundy (VA) - MTCD514-5; Cecil Plum (OH) - Field Recorder's Collective FRC 404; Stephen B Tucker (MS) - Document DOCD-8071.

2 - Oh Molly Dear Roud 22620 & 22621

B F Shelton (vcl. acc. own bj). 29th July, 1927. Bristol, TN.

Oh once I lived in old Virginy
To North Carolina I did go
There I saw a nice young lady
Oh her name I did not know

Her hair was black and her eyes was sparkling

On her cheeks were diamonds red
And on her breast she wore a lily
To mourn the tears that I have shed

Oh when I'm asleep I dream about her
When I'm awake I see no rest
Every moment seems like an hour
Oh the pains that cross my breast

Oh Molly dear, go ask your mother
If you my bride can ever be
And if she says no, come back and tell me
And never more will I trouble thee

Last night as I laid on my pillow
Last night as I laid on my bed
Last night as I laid on my pillow
I dreamed that fair, young lady was dead

No, I won't go ask my mother
She's lying on her bed of rest
And in one hand she holds a dagger
To kill the man that I love best

Now, go and leave me if you want to
Then from me you will be free
For in your heart you love another
And in my grave I'd rather be

A song which appeared on numerous English broadsides, the earliest dating from c.1820, where it went under such titles as *The Cruel Father* or *The Drowsy Sleeper*. Versions were collected extensively, mainly in southern England, by the early Edwardian collectors, although Cecil Sharp also noted one text from a singer in Newcastle, Northumberland. Unlike America, where it became well known, the song rather died out in England, the last sighting being from a Sussex singer c.1958 (Plunkett collection). There are one or two later Scottish sightings. Apparently, a version collected from Jack Barnard of Somerset in 1907 was sung to a tune found in France for a similar elopement song *Reveillez-vous belle endormir*.

Other recordings: Kelly Harrell (VA) - Document DOCD-8026 & JSP JSP7743; Wilmer Watts & His Lonely Eagles (NC) - Nehi Records NEH3X1; The Oaks Family (TN) - Nehi Records NEH3X1; Callahan Brothers (NC) - JSP Records JSP77113; Blue Sky Boys (NC) - JSP Records JSP7782; The Carter Family (VA) - JSP Records JSP7708; Lee Monroe Presnell (NC) - Appleseed APR CD 1036.; Dillard Chandler (NC) - Smithsonian-Folkways SFWCD40159; Phoebe Parsons (WVA) - Field Recorders' Collective FRC202.

3 - The Mountaineer's Courtship Roud 313

Mr & Mrs Ernest V Stoneman - Hattie Stoneman (vcl.), Ernest V Stoneman (h. gtr. vcl.). 12th May, 1927. New York City. Uncle Eck Dunford (spoken asides).

Oh, when you're coming to see me?
To see me, to see me?
Oh, when you're coming to see me?
My dear old reckless boy? *
I expect I'll come next Sunday
Next Sunday, next Sunday
Expect I'll come next Sunday
If the weather is good.

How long you think you'll court me?
You'll court me, you'll court me?
How long you think you'll court me?
My dear old reckless boy?
I expect I'll court you all night
All night, all night
I expect I'll court you all night
If the weather is good.

Oh, when do you think we'll marry?
We'll marry, we'll marry?
Oh, when do you think we'll marry?
My dear old reckless boy?
I expect we'll marry in a week
In a week, in a week
I expect we'll marry in a week
If the weather is good.

Oh, what're you gonna ride to the wedding in?
To the wedding in, to the wedding in?
Oh, what're you gonna ride to the wedding in?
My dear old reckless boy?
I expect I'll bring my log sled
My log sled, my log sled
I expect I'll bring my log sled
If the weather is good.

Why don't you bring your buggy?
Your buggy, your buggy?
Why don't you bring your buggy?
My dear old reckless boy?
My ox won't work to the buggy
To the buggy, to the buggy
My ox won't work to the buggy
For I've never seen him try.

Oh, who're you gonna bring to the wedding?
To the wedding, to the wedding?
Oh, who're you gonna bring to the wedding?
My dear old reckless boy?
Expect I'll bring my children
My children, my children
Expect I'll bring my children
If the weather is good.

Oh, I didn't know you had any children
Any children, any children
Oh, I didn't know you had any children
My dear old reckless boy
Oh, yes I have six children
Six children, six children
Yes I have six children
Jim, John, Sally and the baby.

Run and tell aunt Sally
Aunt Sally, aunt Sally
Run and tell aunt Sally
Her old gray goose is dead.

The one that she's been saving
Been saving, been saving
The one that she's been saving
To make her feather bed.

* It is hard to say if Hattie sings 'reckless', 'neckless' or 'Nicholas' in this refrain.

According to Iona and Peter Opie (*The Oxford Dictionary of Nursery Rhymes*, 1977, p.75) this song can be dated to broadside texts from 1776, although the tune is mentioned as early as 1683. The Opie's date of 1776 actually comes from a manuscript version of a blackletter broadside text (of a song titled *Nicol o'Cod*) which was actually registered by the broadside printers J Wright, J Grismond, C Wright, E Wright, J Gosson and F Coles on June 1st, 1629. The manuscript text was later reprinted in 1904 in Hans Hecht's *Songs from David Herd's Manuscripts*.

Alfred Williams found that the song was once highly popular in the Thames Valley. 'My first hearing of this was when the military manoeuvres were being held on the Wiltshire Downs about the year 1893. Then I heard it sung, or rather chanted, by a large crowd of soldiers sitting on the ground, at Coate, near Swindon.' For some reason or other Mr & Mrs Stoneman managed to slip in a couple of verses from the unconnected American song *Go tell Aunt Rhody* (Roud 3346) at the end of their recording.

Other recordings: Alice Green (Oxon) - MTCD372.

4 - Wild Hog in the Woods Roud 29, Child 18

Lonesome Luke & His Farm Boys - Luke Decker (f.), Ira Decker (bj.), C W Johnson (gtr.), Lee Day (gtr/calls). 12th February, 1931. Richmond, IN.

This is a tune to an old-world ballad which has now, to all intent and purpose, disappeared from the lips of European singers (although it was collected in the UK from six singers between 1850 and 1905). Alfred Williams found a single text around the time of the Great War and his singer's son, who remembered the song, was discovered in North Wiltshire in the 1960s.

Sadly, this recording is not generally available. The ballad has, though, survived quite well in North America; Sharp, for example collected four sets in the Appalachians. Professor Child called it 'Sir Lionel' and suggested that it was related to the Medieval romance of 'Sir Eglamour of Artois' as well as to several 16th century Scandinavian ballads.

Other recordings: Eunice Yeatts MacAlexander (VA) - MTCD501-2; Nimrod Workman (WVA) - MTCD512; The Kimble Family(VA) - Field Recorders' Collective FRC202 (Tune only); Kilby Snow (VA) - Field Recorders' Collective FRC205.

5 - Ethan Lang Roud 369

Emry Arthur (vcl. acc. own gtr. & h.) 30th August, 1928. Chicago, IL.

My name is Ethan Lang, Ethan Lang
My name is Ethan Lang, Ethan Lang
My name is Ethan Lang,
I'm the leader of the gang
And they say that I must hang, dang their eyes

I killed a man they said, so they said (x2)
I killed a man they said,
when I hit him on the head
And I left him there for dead, dang his eyes

The judge said I must pay, I must pay (x2)
The judge said I must pay, for the life I took away
Now I'm facing judgement day, dang your eyes

They put me in the jail, in the jail (x2)
They put me in the jail, fed me from an iron pail
With no-one to go my bail, dang their eyes

The sheriff brought the rope,
brought the rope (x2)
The sheriff brought the rope
and he sprung his deathly joke
When he said "I hope you choke", dang his eyes

The jailer he came to, he came too (x2)
The jailer he came too
and he brought his (blessed?) crew
For their bloody work to do, dang their eyes

The preacher he did come, he did come (x2)
The preacher he did come
and he looked so awful glum
When he talked of kingdom come, dang his eyes

Oh my sweetheart will be there, will be there (x2)
Oh my sweetheart will be there,
she's the only one who cares
When I'm swinging in the air, dang your eyes

Now I've bid my last farewell, last farewell (x2)
Now I've bid my last farewell
and this story you can tell
How I cursed you as I fell, dang your eyes!

Of *Jack Hall*, Frank Kidson, the pioneer of folksong study, had this to say: 'Jack Hall was a chimney sweep, executed for burglary in 1701. He had been sold when a child to a chimney sweeper for a guinea and was quite a young man when Tyburn claimed him'. Roy Palmer - a latter-day Kidson - was able to expand the story in his book *The Sound of History* which was printed in 1988:

'Jack or John Hall ... was born of poor parents who lived in a court off Grays Inn Road, London, and who sold him for a guinea at the age of 7 to be a climbing boy. Readers of Charles Kingsley's *Water Babies* (1863) will know how such boys (and girls) swept chimneys by scrambling up inside them. The young Hall soon ran away from this disagreeable occupation, and made a living as a pickpocket. Later he turned to housebreaking, for which he was whipped in 1692 and sentenced to death in 1700. He was reprieved, then released, but returned to crime and was re-arrested in 1702 for stealing luggage from a stagecoach. This time, he was branded on the cheek and imprisoned for two years. Finally, having been taken in the act of burgling a house in Stepney, he was hanged at Tyburn on 17 December 1707.'

In the 1840s a Music Hall singer W G Ross revised the song, changing the name to 'Sam Hall' in the process. On 10 March 1848 Percival Leigh noted the following account of an evenings entertainment in an early Music Hall:

'After that, to supper at the Cider Cellars in Maiden Lane, wherein was much Company, great and small, and did call for Kidneys and Stout, then a small glass of Aqua-vitae and water, and thereto a Cigar. While we supped, the Singers did entertain us with Glees and comical Ditties; but oh, to hear with how little wit the young sparks about town were tickled! But the thing that did most take me was to see and hear one Ross sing the song of Sam Hall the chimney-sweep, going to be hanged: for he had begrimed his muzzle to look unshaven, and in rusty black clothes, with a battered old Hat on his crown and a short Pipe in his mouth, did sit upon the platform, leaning over the back of a chair: so making believe that he was on his way to Tyburn. And then he did sing to a dismal Psalm-tune, how that his name was Sam Hall and that he had been a great Thief, and was now about to pay for all with his life; and thereupon he swore an Oath, which did make me somewhat shiver, though divers laughed at it. Then, in so many verses, how his Master had badly taught him and now he must hang for it: how he

should ride up Holborn Hill in a Cart, and the Sheriffs would come and preach to him, and after them would come the Hangman; and at the end of each verse he did repeat his Oath. Last of all, how that he should go up to the Gallows; and desired the Prayers of his Audience, and ended by cursing them all round. Methinks it had been a Sermon to a Rogue to hear him, and I wish it may have done good to some of the Company. Yet was his cursing very horrible, albeit to not a few it seemed a high Joke; but I do doubt that they understood the song.'

Ross's 'dismal Psalm-tune' has been on the go for at least three hundred years and has done service for such songs as *William Kidd*, *The Praties they Grow Small*, *Aikendrum* and the hymn *Wonderous Love*.

Despite the song's age and familiarity it has only been collected from about 18 singers in the oral tradition. Its appeal seems to have been limited to England and the USA, and there have been only six sound recordings made.

Other recordings: Walter Pardon (Norfolk) - TSCD667; Gordon Hall (Sussex) - VT 115.; Harry Cox (Norfolk) - *They Threw Me in the Gaol*, a fragment of an early broadside text of this song.

6 - Old Molly Hare Roud 7781

Riley Puckett (vcl. acc own gtr.), Clayton McMichen (f.). 14th April, 1928. Atlanta, GA.

'Old Molly Hare, what you doing there?'
'Running through the cotton patch
as hard as I can tear.'

'Old Molly Hare, what you doing thar?'
'Sitting in the corner smoking a cigar.'

'Old Molly Hair, what you doing thar?'
'Sitting in the corner playing (a guitar?)'
'Old Molly Hare, what you doing there'
'Running through the cotton patch
hard as I can tear.'

Repeat last verse.

Who's been here since I've been gone?'
'Pretty little gal with a red dress on.'

'Old Molly Hare, what you doing there?'
'Running through the cotton patch
hard as I can tear.'

'Old Molly Hare, what you doing there?'
'Sitting in the corner combing my hair.'

Originally a Scottish tune. The earliest known version that I know of was printed in 1809 by Neil Gow on a four-page foolscap sheet under the title *Largo's Fairy*

Dance. The sheet comprises two tunes, *The Fairies Advancing* - a slow march - and *The Fairy Dance*, composed for the Fife Hunt Ball of 1802, and it is this latter tune which, in America, became associated with the title *Old Molly Hare*. The tune now turns up all over the place, under a variety of names, such as *The Rustic Dance* (US), *La Ronde des Vieux* (France and Canada), *Rinnce Na Sideoga* (Eire) and *Daunse ny Farishyn* (Isle of Man). Riley Puckett omits one verse which is often associated with the tune in America - 'Jump up, jump up, daddy shot a bear/Shot him in the eye and never shot a hair.' - and in a couple of verses he seems to sing 'Old Billy Hare', rather than 'Old Molly Hare'. Mention must also be made of Clayton McMichen's master class of fiddle playing on this track. His constant use of variations is quite stunning.

Other recordings: Haywood Blevins (NC) - Rounder 1166-11599-2; W E Claunch (MS) - Document DOCD-8071; W A Bledsoe (MS) - Document DOCD-8071.

7 - Cat Man Blues Roud 114, Child 274

Blind Boy Fuller (vcl. acc. own gtr.) 29th April, 1936. New York City.

Went home last night, heard a noise,
I asked my wife what was that
Went home last night, heard a noise,
I asked my wife what was that
Said man don't be so suspicious,
that ain't nothin' but a cat

Lord I travelled this world all over mama,
takin' all kinds of chance
Travelled this world all over mama,
takin' all kinds of chance
But I never come home before,
seein' a cat wearin' a pair of pants

Lord I wouldn't call him cat man,
if he'd come around in the day
Wouldn't call him cat man,
if he'd come around in the day

But he waits till late at night woman,
when he can steal my cream away

Lord I want that cat man to stay away
from my house, Lordy when I'm out
Lord I want that cat man to stay away from
my house, oh Lord when I'm out

'Cause I believe he's the cause of my woman,
wearin' the mattress down
Said I went home last night, actin'
just quiet as a lamb

Said I went home last night, actin'
quiet as a lamb
I never raised no stuff man,
'til I heard my backdoor slam

One of the most interesting, and ancient, of the ballads that Professor Child included in his vast collection of *English and Scottish Popular Ballads* was a piece that he titled *Our Goodman*. The story seems simple enough. A man returns home to find another man's horse, dog, boots etc, where his own should be. There follows a formulaic exchange between the man and his wife, who explains that her husband's eyes are deceiving him, and the story ends without rancour, revenge or remorse.

It's a bit of a joke, to be sung in the pub on a Saturday night, although a version collected from George Spicer of Sussex ends with the spoken comment, "I stayed home Saturday night!" And yet, there seems to be something unsaid. A L Lloyd, quoting the Hungarian folklorist Lajos Vargyas, mentions a possible connection between this ballad and one from Hungary, *Barcsai* (which has parallel versions in the Balkans, France and Spain). Here a couple are caught in an adulterous act by a returning husband, who promptly kills both his rival and his wife. There are even Mongol versions of *Barcsai*, so who can say where the story really came from? But, it is still a popular piece in Britain and in North America, and there are several early recordings of the piece, most of which are similar to British versions. Gid Tanner, John B Evans and Earl Johnson recorded it as *Three Nights Experience* while Emmett Bankstone & Red Henderson recorded an extended version, *Six Nights Drunk*, which was issued on two sides of a 78rpm record. These, of course, were white musicians. But, there were also three recordings of the ballad sung by black musicians. The first, sung by the Texas singer Coley Jones, is similar to the versions recorded by Tanner, Evans and Johnson. The two remaining versions, however, were sung by blues musicians Blind Boy Fuller and Blind Lemon Jefferson and they differ considerably from the other versions.

Other recordings: Alice Francombe (Gloucestershire) - MTCD331; George Spicer (Sussex) - TSCD663; Mabs Hall (Sussex) - VT115CD; Harry Cox (Norfolk); Mary O'Connors (Belfast) & Colm Keane (Galway) - Rounder CD 1776; Dr David Rosenbaum (Indiana) - Dust-to-Digital DTD 08; Vern Smelser (Indiana) - Dust-to-Digital DTD 12; Mainer Family (North Carolina) - Rounder CD 1701; Coley Jones (TX) - Document DOCD-5092; Blind Lemon Jefferson (TX) - JSP 7706D; Jenes Cottrell (WVA) - Field Recorders' Collective FRC202.

8 - The Two Sisters Roud 8, Child 10

Bradley Kincaid (vcl. acc. own gtr.) 9th March, 1928. Chicago, IL.

There was an old woman lived on the sea-shore, bow
down
There was an old woman lived on the sea-shore, bow and
balance to me
There was an old woman lived on the sea-shore
And she had daughters three or four
I'll be true to my love, if my love be true to me

There was a young man came courting there
And choice he picked the youngest fair

He bought the youngest a fine fur hat
The oldest sister didn't like that

Oh sister, oh sister let's go to sea-shore
And see the ships come sailing o'er

As these two sisters walked 'long the sea-brim
The oldest pushed the youngest in

Oh sister, oh sister pray lend me your hand
And you shall have my house and land

I'll neither lend you my hand nor my glove
For all I want is your true-love

The miller got his fishing hook
And fished the fair maiden out of the brook

Oh miller, oh miller here's five gold rings
To push the fair maiden in again

The miller's to be hung on his own mill-gate
For the drowning of poor sister Kate

In the earliest versions of this ballad a musical instrument is made from the bones and hair of the murdered girl and, when played, it reveals that the girl had been murdered and names the culprits. This element was also known to the Brothers Grimm who printed a version of the ballad, as a tale, under the title *The Singing Bone*. Scholars have since found variants of this tale all over Europe and as far away as India and Africa. Versions sung by Betsy Whyte, John Whyte (Betsy's son) and Dan Tate (mentioned below) retain the element of the singing bones. It would appear that the first known British version of the ballad appeared during the mid-17th century, when a text was printed on a blackletter broadside.

Other recordings: Lucy Stewart (Aberdeenshire) - Greentrax cassette CTRAZ 031; Elizabeth Stewart (Aberdeenshire) - Elphinstone Institute EICD 002.; John Strachan (Aberdeenshire) - Rounder CD 1835; Jock Duncan (Aberdeenshire) - Sleepytown SLPYCD001; John Whyte (Angus) - Kylvoe 110; Betsy

Whyte (Scotland) - Greentrax 9005; Dorothy Fourbister (Orkney) & Ethel Findlater (Orkney) - Rounder CD 1775; George Fradley (Derbyshire) - VTC4CD; Jean Ritchie (KY) - Smithsonian-Folkways SFW CD 40145; Charles Ingenthron (MS) - Rounder CD 1108. Lee Monroe Presnell (NC) - Appleseed APRCD 1036; Horton Barker (VA) - Rounder CD 1516.; Dan Tate (VA) and Eunice Yeatts MacAlexander (VA) - MTCD321-2.

9 - Silly Bill - The Hill Billies Roud 442

The Hill Billies - Elvis Alderman (fd.), Al Hopkins (pno.& vcl.), John Rector (bjo.), Joe Hopkins (gtr.)
15th January, 1925. New York City.

Billy is a fellow
A fellow you have seen
He's neither black nor yellow
But he's altogether green

His name is not so charming
It is only simple Bill
He wishes me to marry him
But I hardly think I will
He thinks it would be very nice
To go strolling down the hill
Hand in hand together
But I hardly think I will

Last night he came to see me
He made so long a stay
And I thought to my soul that blockhead
Would never go away

He tells me of a cottage
Of a cottage among the trees
And don't you think that fellow
Got down upon his knees

The tears that fellow wasted
Were enough to turn a mill
He wishes me to marry him
But I hardly think I will

[First I learnt to hate him
Of course I hate him still
But he (urges?) me to have him
But I hardly think I will

Of course I wouldn't choose him
But the very truth is in it
He says if I refuse him
He'll die the very next minute

And you know the Holy Bible
Says we must not kill,
So I've thought the matter over,
And I rather think I will]

(Last three verses transcribed from the singing of Sam McGee on a 1927 recording, reissued on Document CD DOCD-8036).

H H Albino collected a set of this song in Leicestershire which was included in Lucy Broadwood & J A Fuller Maitland's *English County Songs* (London, 1893). This is its only sighting in England. (The Sussex singer Bob Blake knew the song, but he almost certainly learnt it from the Broadwood & Fuller Maitland book - see the article 'Bob Blake and the re-invented Self' Musical Traditions article 184, for more on this.) There are also two collected versions from Scotland (See 'The Greig/Duncan Folk Song Collection'. Volume 4, Aberdeen, 1990. Song # 891). However, as many more versions have been collected in California, Ohio, Illinois, Mississippi, Missouri and Toronto in Canada it would seem prudent to suggest that this may actually be a song with an American origin, possibly dating from the 1860s, and, if so, it reminds us that the flow of songs and tunes between Britain and the USA was not always one way.

Other recordings: Norman Edmonds (VA) - Field Recorders' Collective FRC301; Uncle Charlie Higgins & Wade Ward (VA) - Field Recorders' Collective FRC501; The Kimble Family (VA) - Field Recorders' Collective FRC202 (Tune used for 'Going Down to Raleigh'); Doc Boggs (VA) - Smithsonian-Folkways SF 45108 (Tune used for the song 'Cuba').

10 - The Fox Hunter's Song Roud 584

Will Starks (vcl.) 9th August, 1942. Clarksdale, MISS.

Two young men come riding by
And they was dressed very fine
Said, Johnny don't you want to go to hunting?
I have hounds of my own
Just as good as ever known
There is none in England can beat 'em.
God knows.

There is Roxahanna and Kim, Counselow and Jim
There is none in England can beat 'em
There is little old Mary Jane
She's the leader of the strain
There is none in England can beat 'em.
God knows.

As I walked out one morning, take the morning's air
I spied the green grass it was chilling
Oh I spied the old sly fox
He come slipping from the rocks
It was three days and better we caught him.
God knows.

I put my horn up to my mouth

And I sounded north and south
My lead dog she didn't fear to hear me
Oh I blowed my horn so loud
It rung like thunder in the cloud
And the old dog she never looked behind her. God knows.

Saddle up my old grey horse
And I'll throw my legs across
Oh now I'm going foxhunting
Run and tell Miss Mary Ann
She must do the best she can
I am now going foxhunting.
God knows.

It was up the highest hill and down the lowest drill
The old fox was making for the water
We will all go home and leave the fox alone
And we'll roust him so early in the morning.
God knows.

This is quite a remarkable find, being a song first known to have been printed on a blackletter broadside by W Oury of London c.1650. The Reverend Sabine Baring-Gould collected the words and melody from a man named James Oliver and printed it in his *Songs of the West* (1905) under the title *The Duke's Hunt*. He says: "This is a mere cento from a long ballad, entitled *The Fox Chase*, narrating a hunt by Villiers, second duke of Buckingham, in the reign of Charles II. It is in the Roxburghe Collection.' Since then versions have turned up across England, but Will Starks' set is, so far as I know, the only version to have been collected in America. Will learnt the song c.1900 from his father.

Other recordings: George Townshend (Sussex) - MTCD304.

11 - Soldier Will You Marry Me Roud 489

Gid Tanner & His Skillet-Lickers - Clayton McMichen (fd.), Lowe Stokes (fd.), poss. Bert Layne (fd.), Gid Tanner, poss. (fd. harmony vcl.), Fate Norris (bjo.) & Riley Puckett (gtr/lead vcl.) 15th April, 1930. Atlanta, GA.

Soldier, soldier, won't you marry me?
I have a fife and a drum
How can I marry such a pretty girl as you
When I have no hat to put on
Straight to the hat shop she did go
As hard as she could run
She bought him a hat of the finest kind
And the soldier put it on

Soldier, soldier, won't you marry me?
I have a fife and a drum
How can I marry such a pretty girl as you
When I have no coat to put on

Straight to the tailor's shop she went
As hard as she could run
She got him a coat of the finest kind
And the soldier put it on

Soldier, soldier, won't you marry me?
I have a fife and a drum
How can I marry such a pretty girl as you
When I have no shirt to put on
Straight to the dry goods store she went
As hard as she could run
She got him a shirt of the finest kind
And the soldier put it on

Soldier, soldier, won't you marry me?
I have a fife and a drum
How can I marry such a pretty girl as you
When I have no pants to put on
Straight to the tailor's shop she went
As hard as she could run
She got him pants of the finest kind
And the soldier put them on

Soldier, soldier, won't you marry me?
I have a fife and a drum
How can I marry such a pretty girl as you
When I have no socks to put on
Straight to the dry goods store she went
As hard as she could run
She got him socks of the finest kind
And the soldier put them on

Soldier, soldier, won't you marry me?
I have a fife and a drum
How can I marry such a pretty girl as you
When I have no shoes to put on
Straight to the shoe shop she did go
As hard as she could run
She got him shoes of the finest kind
And the soldier put them on

Soldier, soldier, won't you marry me?
I have a fife and a drum
How can I marry such a pretty girl as you
When I have a wife at home

Riley Puckett gives us two for the price of one here, namely an old British children's song sung to the equally old British tune *Brighton Camp*. I call it a children's song, though originally it may have been more a song warning young and not so young women to avoid the amorous advances of a soldier. It would seem that most collected versions are actually from America and Canada (there are seven collected versions, for example, in the Frank Brown NC collection), although Anne Gilchrist believed it to be Scottish in origin. She gives two Scottish versions, together with an English version and a version from Virginia, in the *Journal of the English Folk Dance and Song Society*, vol.3, no.2, 1937. Some Scottish

versions contain the refrain 'With the row and the bow and the sound of the drum' which can also be found in some Irish sets.

Other recordings: Colm Keane (Connemara) - Rounder CD 1742; Hobart Smith (VA) - Atlantic 7 82496 - 2.

12 - Jimmie and Sallie Roud 31091

The Dixon Brothers (Howard & Dorsey) (vcls & gtrs.) 25th September, 1938. Rock Hill, SC.

Jimmie and Sallie they had a quarrel one day
Jimmie caught a freight and he rambled far away

Jimmie left Sallie one bright summer day
Not dreaming of the (vanity?)
that he would have to pay

Sallie gathered flowers and made her a bed
The fairest of lilies she placed all under her head

Jimmie repented, returned home again
To find his little sweetheart and cover up his sins
Come all young true lovers, whoever you may be
Please don't condemn your sweetheart
so quickly like me

For when you find out it was you in the wrong
I'm sure you'll remember the words of my song

When Jimmie came back he found
Sallie was dead
Five hundred bright tears,
then poor Jimmie he did shed

Jimmie, Oh Jimmie don't bear her in mind
There's other young maidens as good and as kind

There's other young maidens
but none of them for me
For death has departed sweet Sallie from me

And I'll soon be leaving, to come back no more
We will be united on Heaven's golden shore

Come all young true lovers, whoever you may be
Please don't condemn your sweetheart so quickly like me

For when you find out it was you in the wrong
I'm sure you'll remember the words of my song

Where, I wonder, does this song come from? It certainly has all the characteristics of a British broadside composition. The names Jimmie and Sallie (or Jimmy and Sally) certainly occur in a number of British songs and the song's final sentiments are also similar to those found likewise in a number of British songs. We may, I think, say that if it is an American

composition (the phrase 'caught a freight' may suggest this) then it is one based on songs within the British tradition. I know of no other version.

13 - The Export Girl Roud 263

Louisiana Lou (vcl. acc. own gtr.) 4th December, 1933. Chicago, IL.

I fell in love with an Export girl
With brown and rolling eyes
I asked her if she's marry me
She said she never denied

'Come on, come on and take a walk
And talk about it now
Then talk about our wedding day
And when it's going to be'

They walked and talked
They walked and talked
'Til they came to level ground
Then he picked up a (seasoned/cedar) stick
And knocked that fair maid down

'Oh Billy, Oh Billy, don't you kill me now
For I'm not prepared to die'
He beat on the fair maid more and more
Until she fell to the ground

He took her by her lily white hand
And he swung her round and round
And took her to some deep water sea
And threw her in to drown

He went to his mother's house
It was the middle of the night
When he found her sleeping there
She woke up in a fright

'Billy, Oh Billy, what have you done
To blood your hands and clothes?'
He answered in a solemn tone
'Been bleeding from my nose'

'Oh mother dear bring a towel
For my aching head
Then mother give me a candle stick
To light me up to bed'

Two months, four months, six months from then
That Export girl was found
Floating down that little mill stream
Right through that Export Town.

They've got me now in an Export jail
An awful death to die
They're going to hang me by my neck
Between the earth and the sky.

MacColl & Seeger quote an American source who says that the villain in this song was a John Mauge, who was hanged at Reading, Berkshire, in 1744. But, we know that *The Export Girl* comes originally from a long 17th century ballad *The Berkshire Tragedy, or, The Wittam Miller*, a copy of which may be seen in the Roxburgh Collection (vol. viii p.629), and it may be that Mauge's name came to be associated with the earlier ballad because of the similarity of his crime. Later printers tightened the story and reissued it as *The Cruel Miller*, a song which has been collected repeatedly in Britain and North America (where it is usually known as 'The Lexington/Knoxville Girl').

Other recordings: Mary Ann Haynes (Sussex) - MTCD320; Mary Delaney (London, ex Co Tipperary) - MTCD325-6; Harry Cox (Norfolk) - TSCD512D; The Blue Sky Boys (NC) - JSP 7782B; Kilby Snow (VA) - Field Recorders' Collective FRC205.

14 - Hop Light Ladies Roud 6679

Ernest V Stoneman and the Dixie Mountaineers - Ernest V Stoneman (gtr.), Kahle Brewer (fd.) & unknown (bjo.) 25th January, 1927. New York City.

Known in Britain and Ireland as *Miss MacLeod's Reel* (or 'Mrs MacLeod's Reel') and in America as *Did You Ever Go to Meeting, Uncle Joe?, Did You Ever See the Devil, Uncle Joe, Uncle Joe? or Hop High Ladies, Cake's all a-Dough*. Apparently the Scottish fiddler Neil Gow collected the tune from a Mrs MacLeod on the Isle of Skye, although Irish versions may predate this. The novelist Thomas Hardy, who was also a fiddler, mentions the tune in his novel *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (1886).

Other recordings: Uncle Dave Macon (TN) - JSP JSP7729; Gid Tanner (GA) - Document DOCD-8060; Fiddlin' John Carson (GA) - Document DPCD-8016; The Kessinger Brothers (WVA) - Document DOCD-8011; Red Fox Chasers (NC) - Tompkins Square TSQ 2219; Doc Roberts (KN) - Document DOCD-8044; Norman Edmonds (VA) - Field Recorders' Collective FRC301.

15 - Two Babes in the Wood Roud 288

The Red Fox Chasers. Bob Cranford (vcl. h.), A P Thompson (vcl. gtr.) 26th January, 1931. Richmond, IN.

Oh don't you remember a long time ago
Two poor little babes, their names I don't know
They were stolen away, one bright summer day
Lost in the woods, I've heard people say

And when it was night (so sad was their plight?)
The moon settled down and the stars gave no light

They sobbed and they sighed and they bitterly cried
These poor little babes just laid down and died

And when they were dead, the robins so red
Brought strawberry leaves and over them spread
And sung them a song, through all the day long
These poor little babes have never done wrong

Repeat last verse

A song which is thought to be based on a (folk?) tale which dates back to the beginning of the 17th century. However, the present song was composed early in the 19th century by William Gardiner (1770 - 1853), who was born in Leicester. Today Gardiner is best known for the hymns that he composed, including *The Lord's My Shepherd*.

Other recordings: Bob & Ron Copper (Sussex) - TSCD534; Dorothy Howard. (New York State) - Applesseed APR CD 1035.

16 - Darby's Ram Roud 126

Bascom Lamar Lunsford. (vcl. & own bjo.) 6th February, 1929. Ashland, KY.

As I went out to Derby
All on a market day
I met the biggest ram, sir
That was ever fed on hay

Chorus:

And he rambled, and he rambled
And he rambled 'til them butchers cut him down

He had four feet to walk, sir
He had four feet to stand
And every one of his four feet
They covered an acre of land

The wool on this ram's back, sir
It reached up to the sky
And the eagles built their nest there
For I heard the young ones cry

This old ram had a horn, sir
That reached up to the moon
And a nigger went up in January
And he didn't get back 'til June

The butcher that cut this ram, sir
Was drown-ded in the blood
The little boy that held the bowl
Was washed away in the flood

To many people *The Derby Ram* represents the embodiment of some ancient ritual, possibly one with undertones of fertility and death and resurrection. Well, that might be the popular opinion but, in fact, the

earliest known sighting of the song is in *A Garland of New Songs* printed c.1790 by Angus of Newcastle, under the title 'The Old Ram of Derby' and the first-known collected set can be found in George Ritchie Kinloch's *Ballad Book* of 1827. In the north of England the song is associated with annual custom of The Old Tup. Often held over the Christmas period, a team of young men, one dressed as a ram, travel around singing and acting out the song. Again, this may suggest some ancient ritual origin, but there seems to be no evidence that this is actually the case.

Other recordings: Danny Brazil (Gloucestershire) - MTCD345-7.; Cas & Doug Wallin (NC) - MTCD321-4.; Pete Harris (TX) - Rounder CD1821; Sid Steer (Devon) - TSCD657; George Fradley (Derbyshire) - VTC7CD; Bobby McMillon (NC) - Dust to Digital DTD - 8.

17 - Tom Sherman's Barroom Roud 2

Dick Devall. Unaccompanied vocal. 13th October, 1929. Dallas, TX.

As I rode down to Tom Sherman's barroom
Tom Sherman's barroom one morning in May
'Twas there I spied a gay, handsome cowboy
All dressed in white linen as cold as the clay

I knew by your outfit that you were a cowboy
That's what they all said as you go riding along
Come gather around me, (you) said the jolly cowboy
And listen to me, comrades, said he
It's each and all may learn and take warning
And quit your wild roving before it's too late

It was once in the saddle I used to go dashing
It's once in the saddle I used to be gay
First taking to drinking and then the card playing
Got shot through the breast and now I must die

Oh bear the news gently to my grey-headed mother
And whisper then lowly to my sister so dear
And don't forget the words that I've told you
For I'm a gay cowboy and I know I've done wrong

So beat your drum loudly and play your fife slowly
And play your dead marches as you carry me along
Oh take me to the graveyard and roll the sod o'er me
For I'm a gay cowboy and I know I've done wrong
Six jolly cowboys to balance my coffin
Six pretty girls to sing me a song
Oh take me to the graveyard and roll the sod o'er me
For I'm a gay cowboy and I know I've done wrong

Oh bring unto me a glass of cold water
A glass of cold water, that poor boy cried
And when I returned, the spirit had left him
And, gone to the Giver, the poor boy had died

This version of the American song *The Streets of Laredo* began life either in Ireland or else in England (probably the former). Often called *The Unfortunate Rake* or *The Young Sailor Cut Down in His Prime*, the earliest known broadside text, from the 1790s, was titled *The Buck's Elegy*. Highly popular with both sailors and soldiers, versions of the song have turned up throughout the English-speaking world. In America it is perhaps best known as *St James Infirmary*, why; because the young man is dying from a venereal disease obtained from one of the 'flash girls of the city'. A writer, who uses the alias 'Stewie' on the Mudcat Café website, has added the following, 'I have a note [but can't recall the source] that 'Tom Sherman' may be a corruption of 'Tom Sheran' who took over the Bull's Head Saloon in Abilene, Kansas, during July 1871.'

Other recordings: Bob Hart (Suffolk) - MTCD301-2; Harry Holman (Sussex) - MTCD309-10; Bill Ellson (Kent) - MTCD320. Harry Brazil (Gloucestershire) - MTCD345; Bill Smith (Shropshire) - MTCD351; Harry Upton (Sussex) - MTCD371; Hobart Stallard (Kentucky) MTCD503-4; Sarah Makem (Co Armagh) - MTCD353-5; Fred Whiting (Suffolk) VTC7CD; Fred Jordan (Shropshire) - VTD148CD; Almeda Riddle & Doc Watson sing two American versions on the CD *A New World*, Root & Branch CD 1; Texas Gladden (Virginia) Rounder CD 1800 and CD 1500; Moses 'Clear Rock' Platt (Texas) & James 'Ironhead' Baker (Texas) - Rounder CD 1821; Vern Smelser (Indiana) - Folk Legacy CD-125; Bessie Gordon (Wisconsin) - on a CD which accompanies J P Leary's book *Folk-songs of Another America*, University of Wisconsin Press/Dust-to-Digital, 2015.

18 - Money Musk Medley

John Batzell (f.), John F Burckhardt (p.). 7th September, 1923. New York City.

A well-known 18th century Scottish tune that was popularised by the Gow family, though one which is probably based on an older tune called *Sir Archibald Grant of Moniemuske's Reel*.

Other recordings: Stephen Baldwin (Gloucestershire) - MTCD334; Lemmie Brazil (Gloucestershire - under the title *God Killed the Devil-O*) - MTCD345-7; Curly McKay & Willie Kemp (Scotland) - TSCD657.

19 - Fair Ellen Roud 4, Child 73

Bradley Kincaid (vcl. acc. own gtr.) c.9th March, 1928. Chicago, Ill.

Oh father and mother come tell me this riddle
Come tell it all to me
The Brown Girl she has houses and land
Fair Ellen she has none

Then my advice to you, dear son
Is to bring the Brown Girl home

He dressed himself in clothes so fine
Put on a mantel in green
And every village that he rode through
He was taken to be some king

He rode till he got to Fair Ellen's hall
He jingled at the ring
And none was so ready as Fair Ellen herself
She arose and let him in

Good news, good news, fair Ellen he said
Good news I've brought to you
I've come to ask you to my wedding
For married I must be

Bad news, bad news, Lord Thomas she said
Bad news you've brought to me
You've come to ask me to your wedding
For married you must be

She dressed herself in clothes so fine
Put on a diamond ring
And every village that she rode through
She was taken to be some queen
And every village that she rode through
She was taken to be some queen

She rode till she got to Lord Thomas's hall
She jingled at the ring
And none was so ready as Lord Thomas himself
He arose and let her in

Lord Thomas, Lord Thomas, is this your bride?
She's very dark and dim
When you could have married this fair fine lady
As ever the sun shone on

The brown girl had a little penknife
It was both keen and sharp
Betwix the long rib and the short
She pierced fair Ellen's heart

Lord Thomas, Lord Thomas are you blind
And can't you very well see?
And can you see my own heart's blood
Come trink-eling down my knee?

He took the Brown Girl by the hand
And led her through the hall.
And with a sword cut off her head
And kicked it against the wall

He threw the sword upon the floor
It flew into his breast
Here lies two lovers all in a row
Lord, send their souls to rest

So dig my grave under yonder green tree
Go dig it both wide and deep
And bury Fair Ellen in my arms
And the Brown Girl at my feet
And bury Fair Ellen in my arms
And the Brown Girl at my feet

Although quite an old ballad, *Fair Ellender and Lord Thomas* has remained popular with ballad singers over the years. This may be partly to do with the story, with its dramatic ending, and partly because it was frequently printed on broadsides. In America it appeared in the popular *Forget Me Not Songster*. The earliest known text can be dated from between 1663 to 1685, and there are several eighteenth century broadsides. In Norway and Denmark the ballad is known by the title *Sir Peter and Liten Kerstin* which, again, was frequently printed on eighteenth century broadsides. The Scottish singer Jessie Murray had a fine version (Rounder CD1175), as did the Virginian singer Texas Gladden (Rounder CD 1800). A version collected from the Ozark singer Dortha Freman can be heard on Rounder CD 1108. Horton Barker, from Virginia, can be heard singing a version that he recorded for the Library of Congress on Rounder CD 1516 and Lila Mae Ledford had a version on June Appal LP 0078. Cecil Sharp noted no less than thirty-one Appalachian versions during the period 1916 - 1918.

Other recordings: Carolyne Hughes (Dorset) - TSCD672D; Cas Wallin (NC) and Doug Wallin (NC) - MTC503-4; Jean Ritchie (KY) - Smithsonian-Folkways SFW CD 40145.

20 - Little Glass of Wine Roud 218

The Stanley Brothers - Carter Stanley (vcl. & gtr.), Ralph Stanley (bjo.), Bobby Sumner (fd.), Pee Wee Lambert (man.) & Jay Hughes (bs.) 3rd March, 1949. Nashville, TN.

Come little girl, let's go get married
I love you so great, how can you slight me?
I'll work for you, both late and early
At my wedding my little wife you'd be

Oh Willie dear, let's both consider
We're both too young to be a-married now
When we're married, we're bound together
Let's stay single just one more year

He went to the ball where she was dancing
A jealous thought came through his mind

I'll kill that girl, my own true lover
For I let another man beat my time

*He went to the bar and he called her to him
Said, Willie dear, what do you want with me?
Come and drink wine with the one that loves you
More than anyone else you know, says he **

While they were at the bar a-drinking
That same old thought came through his mind
He'd kill that girl, his own true lover
He gave her poison in a glass of wine

She laid her head over on his shoulder
Said, Willie dear, please take me home
That glass of wine that I've just drincken (*sic*)
Has gone to my head, and got me wrong

He laid his head over on the pillow
Let me read you the law, let me tell you my mind
Molly dear I'm sorry to tell you
We both drank poison in a glass of wine

They put their arms round each other
They cast their eyes into the sky
Oh God, Oh God, ain't this a pity
That all true lovers are bound to die

* The Stanley Brothers sometimes sang this verse
on later recordings.

Although well-known as a traditional song in England and Scotland - where it goes under such titles as *Jealousy*, *Oxford City*, *Down the Green Groves* or *Young Maria* - it seems to be rather uncommon in rural America today. According to Steve Gardham (private correspondence) it can only be traced back to an eleven stanza version, titled *Oxford City*, which was originally printed by two London broadside printers, Pitts and Catnach. This was then reprinted widely by several other later printers. A seven stanza version, titled *Newport Street Damsel*, possibly from oral tradition, was printed by Batchelar of London. Walden of Gloucester reprinted this version, this time calling it *The Effects of Jealousy*. Steve also points out that 'some versions have become hybridised with other ballads, but this can easily be spotted, especially by comparing with the 11 stanza broadside.'

Other recordings: George Spicer (Sussex) & Freda Palmer (Oxfordshire) - MTCD311-2; Pop Maynard (Sussex) - MTCD309-10; The Brazil Family (Gloucestershire) - MTCD345-7; May Bradley (Shropshire) - MTCD349; Caroline Hughes (Dorset) - MTCD365-6; Garrett & Norah Arwood (North Carolina) - MTCD503-4; Mary Lozier (Kentucky) - MTCD505-6; Nimrod Workman (West Virginia) - MTCD512; Harry Upton (MTCD371); Louie Saunders MTCD372; Roscoe Holcomb (Kentucky) - Smithsonian Folkways SF CD 40077; Fred Jordan (Shropshire) - VTD148CD; Harry Cox (Norfolk) - TSCD512D; Sheila Stewart (Perthshire) - TSCD 515; Joseph Taylor (Lincoln-

shire) - TSCD653; Celia Hughes (Dorset) - TSCD672D; Mary Doran (Belfast) TSCD673.

21 - Soldier's Joy

Taylor's Kentucky Boys. Jim Booker (fd.), Marion Underwood (bjo.), Willie Young (gtr.), Aulton Rat (vcl.) 26th April, 1927. Richmond, IND.

Soldier's Joy dates from the 18th century, when it was well-known throughout England, Scotland and Ireland. Robert Burns knew the tune and used it for a song in his cantata *The Jolly Beggars*. It is equally popular in North America, where it is often called *Love Somebody* from the following verse which can be heard on this recording:

I love somebody yes I do (x3)
I love somebody and it might be you

The second verse employed here - which begins 'I am my mama's youngest son' and possibly ends with the words 'Break my back ??' - belongs to a number of similar verses which have been attached to the tune over the years. These include:

I am my mama's pride and joy
Sing you a song called Soldier's Joy
or:
Play you a tune called Soldier's Joy

I am my mama's darling child
I ain't gonna marry for a good long while

I am my mama's darling pet
I ain't gonna marry for a good while yet

During the American Civil War the phrase "soldier's joy" became either a euphemism for whisky or else for payday.

Other recordings: Just about everyone has recorded this! Some of the more interesting versions include those by: Stephen Baldwin (Gloucestershire) - MTCD334; Fred 'Pip' Whiting (Suffolk) - MTCD350; Daniel Wyper (Lanarkshire) - TSCD601; The Kessinger Brothers (WVA) - Document DOCD-8011; Fiddlin' John Carson (GA) - DOCD-8016; The Skillet Lickers (GA) - DOCD-8059; Uncle Dave Macon (TN) - JSP JSP7769; Corbett Stamper (VA) - Field Recorders' Collective FRC306; Uncle Charlie Higgins & Wade Ward (VA) - Field Recorders' Collective FRC501; Norman Edmonds & The Old Timers (VA) - Field Recorders' Collective FRC302; Sidna & Fulton Myers (VA) - Field Recorders' Collective FRC504.

22 - The Railroad Flagman's Sweetheart Roud 459

Frank Jenkin's Pilot Mountaineers - Ernest V Stoneman (gtr. vcl.), Frank Jenkins (fd.), Oscar Jenkins (bjo.) 12th September, 1929. Richmond, IN.

Once I loved a railroad flagman
And I thought that he loved me
'Til some dark-eyed girl persuaded
Now he cares no more for me

Many a night with you I've rambled
Many a night when you was a-bed
I thought your heart was mine forever
Though I've found it only lent

Many a night, while you lay sleeping
Dreaming in your sweet repose
Me poor girl lay broken hearted
Listening to the wind that blows

When I hear my baby laughing
Makes me think of your sweet face
But when I hear my baby crying
Makes me think of my disgrace

Go and leave me if you wish to
Never let me cross your mind
In your heart you love another
And to her be true and kind

When you see the sun a-setting
Setting in the pale blue sky
Only for my baby's darling
I would only gladly die.

This is a popular song which appeared on several mid-19th century British broadsides. Various titles as *Go and Leave Me if You Wish It*, *Fond Affection* and *Dear Companion* it has been collected from several English singers. Gavin Greig found that *Go and Leave Me* was popular in Aberdeenshire at the turn of the century and Superintendent Ord of the Glasgow City Police included a set in his noted collection of *Bothy Songs and Ballads*. According to the distinguished Missouri folklorist H M Belden, this song was 'a favourite among songs of disappointed love' and there are many collected sets from North America. Bascom Lamar Lunsford (track 16) recorded a version for the Library of Congress.

Other recordings: Daisy Chapman (Aberdeenshire) - MTCD308; Caroline Hughes (Dorset) - MTCD365-6; Percy Webb (Suffolk) MTCD356-7; Fred Jordan (Shropshire) - MTCD372; Amy Ford (Somerset) - MTCD252; Darby & Tarlton (GA) - Nehi NEH3X1 (as *Columbus Stockade Blues*); Carlisle Brothers (KY) - JSP JSP7768.

23 - Leather Breeches Roud 15479

Gid Tanner & His Skillet-Lickers. Clayton McMichen (fd.), possibly Lowe Stokes (fd.), possibly Gid Tanner (fd.) Fate Norris (bjo.), Riley Puckett (gtr.) 14th April, 1930. Atlanta, GA.

This extremely popular tune, known as *Lord McDonald's Reel* in both Scotland and Ireland, was recorded in the 1920s and '30s by numerous old-timey musicians, including Luther Strong (reissued on MTCD514-5), The Carter Brothers and Son (reissued on Document DOCD-8009), Robert Cook's Old Time Fiddlers, Tommy Dandurand, Clifford Gross, W A Hinton, William B. Houchens, Earl Johnson (reissued on Document DOCD-8005), The Leake County Revelers (reissued on Document DOCD-8029), Doc Roberts (reissued on Document DOCD-8042), 'Uncle Bunt' Stephens, Uncle 'Am' Stuart, Gid Tanner (reissued on Document DOCD-8059) and The White Mountain Orchestra. I have heard it said that the title refers to string beans which are hung on American verandas to dry and which are often called 'leather britches'. However, verses such as 'Little boy, little boy, where'd you get your britches/Daddy cut them out and Mommy did the stitches', which often accompany the tune, suggest otherwise.

Other recordings: Michael Coleman (Ireland) - Gael-Linn CEFCD 161; Eck Dunford (Texas) - Smithsonian-Folkways SF CD 40097; Clyde Davenport (KY) - Field Recorders' Collective FRC-103; Ward Jarvis (OH) - Field Recorders' Collective FRC402; Santford Kelly (KY) - Field Recorders' Collective FRC503; Arnold Sharp (OH) - Field Recorders' Collective FRC406; John Hatcher (MS) - Document DOCD-8071; Stephen B Tucker (MS) - Document DOCD-8071.

24 - The Nick Nack Song Roud 2792

Ridgel's Fountain Citians. Leroy Ridgel (f), Charles Ancil Ridgel (md), Millard Whiehead (gtr), Carthel Ridgel (gtr). It is not known which person is singing. 3rd April, 1930. Knoxville, TN.

I married me a wife on the eighth of June
To rissolty-rissolty, row, row, row
And I took her home by the light of the moon
To rissolty-rissolty, ruisticle quality
Hickety-hackety, old John Dobson
Nickety-nackety, now, now, now

I sent her out to milk the old cow
She sat right down, she milked the old sow

She churned her butter in dad's old boots
And for her dasher she used her foot

She swept her floor but once a year
And for her broom she used a chair

She keeps her shoes on the pantry shelf
If you want anymore, you can sing it yourself

(Spoken asides omitted)

According to Steve Gardham (Musical Traditions Article 164, part 26) this song could be related to a 1661 blackletter broadside, *The Tyrannical Wife*. Parts of another blackletter broadside, titled *Oxford Drollery*, which can be dated to 1679, are also similar. A later broadside, *Thrifty Housewife*, was published c.1800 by Kendrew of York, while T Birt of London's 7 Dials published a later sheet as *The Tidy One*.

Edwardian collectors such as Cecil Sharp found the song under the title *Robin a Thrush* and Frank Kidson claimed that a version of the song was popularised by the well-known theatrical clown Joseph Grimaldi in the early years of the 19th century. In Scotland the song became known under a number of different titles, such as *Robin O Rasheltree* and *The Queen of Sluts*. The song travelled to America and versions have turned up all over the place.

The Ridgels almost certainly derived *The Nick Nack Song* from the earlier recording *Nickety Nackety Now Now Now* by Chubby Parker, a popular recording in the late '20s.

Listeners may notice that the song's refrain is similar to that found in some versions of the ballad *The Wife Wrapt in Wether Skins* (Child 277, Roud 117), but the texts to these two songs are different.

Other recordings: Jeff Westley (Northamptonshire), VT 116 & VTC6CD; George Withers (Somerset), VT 133; Chubby Parker's (IND) 1931 recording has been reissued on British Archive of Country Music CD 244.

25 - Wind the Little Ball of Yarn Roud 1404

The Southern Melody Boys - Odus Maggard (vcl. & bjo.), Woodrow Roberts (gtr.) 17th February, 1937. Charlotte, NC.

It's in the month of May when the lambs skip and play
And the little birds are singing all along.
It's there I met a maid and it's to her I said,
Let's wind up her little ball of yarn.

It's, 'Oh no, kind sir, you're a stranger to me
Perhaps you have some other charm
I'd better go with those who have money and fine clothes
Than wind up my little ball of yarn'.

I took her by the waist and I gently sit her down
Not meaning to do her any harm
It's when the blackbirds rush
and appear beneath the bush
We'll wind up her little ball of yarn.

It was in the month of June at twilight of the moon
I'll be way out on the farm
Then you will weep as you go to sleep
For winding up your little ball of yarn.

We were walking through the rye
When you were stepping high and you
said you would not having charm
But the rye I'm going to reap, then you will surely weep
For winding up your little ball of yarn.
We were on the lonesome pine
where you said you'd never be mine
And you said you would not have any charms
But you'll surely cry when I bid you goodbye
Oh winding up your little ball of yarn.

Wind Up the Little Ball of Yarn is a bit of a mystery. The song has been collected from several English singers all of whom know what happens after the man has been winding up the girl's 'little ball of yarn', as this verse from the singer Mary Ann Haynes shows:

*Oh, six long months did pass
And the three it come at last,
She had a dainty babe all in her arms.
"Oh", I said, "my little miss.
I did not expect this,
As I rolled you round my grandfather's farm."*

Some of the song's lines could be based on a Scot's song which Robert Burns knew as *The Yellow, Yellow Yorling* - a 'yorling' being the Scots word for the yellow-hammer. However, in 1884 Earl Marble & Polly Holmes published a song in Boston, under the title of *Winding up Her Little Ball of Yarn*, the text of which is printed below:

Winding Up Her Little Ball of Yarn

It was many years ago,
With my youthful blood aglow,
I engaged to teach a simple district school.
I reviewed each college book,
And my city home forsook,
Sure that I could make a wise man from a fool.
Mr School Committee Frye
Thought 'twould do no harm to try
To see if unruly scholars I could "larn;"
When his daughter I espied,
With her knitting by her side,
As she wound up her little ball of yarn.

I was gone on her at once,
For I wasn't quite a dunce,
And she was an apple-dumpling sort of girl.
With her tender eyes of blue,
Dimpled cheeks of rosy hue,
And her teeth as bright as shining rows of pearl.
Long before the school was done,
I the maid had wooed and won,
As we hunted eggs one morning in the barn.

When her work she laid aside,
Just to please me as I sighed,
And she wound up her little ball of yarn.

Oh, those times were long ago,
And my blood has not the flow
That it had in those sweet days of auld lang syne
But I think of every charm
That endeared me to the farm
When the maid with all her knitting work was mine.
And as round the fire we sit
In these days when shadows flit,
And her trembling hands the stockings take to darn
In my memory I live o'er
All those happy days of yore,
When she wound up her little ball of yarn.

As I say, it is all a bit of a mystery! Clearly traditional singers are not singing the above text, but it could be that this text provided the basis for a parody, namely the bawdy song which is now so popular with singers. Cecil Sharp collected an English version in 1904 (the earliest known collected version - still unpublished) while other collectors have also noted it down. According to Steve Roud there are no known English broadsides of the song, a fact which suggests a late date of composition. A note in the *New Penguin Book of English Folk Songs* by Steve Roud and Julia Bishop, 2012, p.441, only adds to the confusion:

'In his book on American pop music, *Lost Chords* (1942), Douglas Gilbert, used the bawdy *Ball of Yarn* as an example of the type of song sung in taverns in the 1870s, and if this were true it would suggest that the copyrighted song published by Marble and Holmes was a cleaned-up version of an already existing song.'

Other recordings: Mary Ann Haynes (Sussex) - MTCD320.; Walter Pardon (Norfolk) - MTCD305-6.; Ben Willett (Surrey/Sussex) - MTCD361-2; Danny Brazil (Gloucestershire) - MTCD345-7; May Bradley (Shropshire) - MTCD349; Nora Cleary (Ire) - MTCD331-2; Charlotte Renals (Cornwall) - VTC1CD; Gordon Woods (Suffolk) - VTC2CD; Ray Hartland (Gloucestershire) - VTC7CD.

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Booklet: editing, DTP, printing
CD: formatting, production
by Rod Stradling

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Production ©2018

Pictures on next page.



Riley Puckett



Taylor's Kentucky Boys



Bascomb Lamar Lunsford



Blind Boy Fuller



Bradley Kincaid



Southern Melody Boys



Emry Arthur



Hattie & Ernest Stoneman



Lonesome Luke & his Farm Boys



The Hill Billies



Mellie Dunham



Red Fox Chasers



B F Shelton