

SKIP GORMAN TRAIL TO MEXICO





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The colorful history of the American cowboy covers a surprisingly brief span of time (only a couple of decades, in fact), but it has left its myth-making imprint on the American psyche as has no other segment of our past. Our national image, cherished here at home and romantically preserved by our friends abroad, has been shaped, to a great extent, by the dusty, wind-blown, rough-and-tumble crews that drove the great herds to the Kansas railheads in the latter part of the 19th century. I was once introduced by a great Scottish ballad singer to her nieces and nephews as "a real cowboy from Chicago," which instantly won for me the youngsters' unqualified admiration and respect. So much for the accuracy of geographical perception; so much for the myth.

The music of that time and place, however, is very real, and possesses all of the vigor, the unpretentious charm, and the rustic poetry of those freedom-loving individualists whose way of life did so much to form the very personality of our nation. Some of this music drifted west from the older southern states with post-Civil War refugees from reconstruction; some of it was brought direct from the Ould Sod by Irish immigrants who helped to build the railroads and then moved off to the cow-camps for want of any other work (none being available to them in the crowded cities where they first landed on America's golden shores). Many of our cowboys were black Americans who sought a fresh landscape to match the glory of their newly-won freedom. Each of these groups contributed its musical influence to the songs and tunes we now associate with our western heritage — hoedowns and rags, one-steps and waltzes — ballads, satirical songs, love songs, comical ditties, whoops, hollers and shouts — and the resultant blend lives on as pure Americana.

With this, his second recording of western material for Folk-Legacy (the first was *Powder River*, FSI-76), Skip Gorman brings us an unusual and exciting collection, performed with remarkable virtuosity on a variety of instruments, and sung with unadorned authenticity and respect for his various sources. We are sure that you will enjoy it as much as we do.

Sandy Paton
Sharon, Connecticut
April, 1987

Recorded at Water Wheel Music, Glastonbury, CT.
Notes by Skip Gorman
Jacket design by Walter A. Schwarz

SIDE 1:

Waggoner One-Step/Panhandle Rag (Inst.)	2:06
Trail to Mexico	3:24
Ways of the World (Inst.)	1:47
Old Melinda (Inst.)	2:29
The Wyoming Round-Up Cook	2:43
Moonlight Waltz/Just a Song of Old Kentucky (Inst.)	3:13
Camp Chase/Bull at the Wagon (Inst.)	2:33
Utah Carroll	5:21

SIDE 2:

Belle of Lexington (Inst.)	2:20
Scum, the Saddle Bum	2:24
Cruel Willie (Inst.)	2:44
Railroading on the Great Divide	3:17
Green Valley Waltz/Amarillo Waltz (Inst.)	3:35
Eck Robertson Medley (Inst.)	4:00
Moonshiner's Dream	2:47
The Coyote Howl (Inst., © Gorman)	2:11

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FSI-103



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SKIP GORMAN TRAIL TO MEXICO

PS-103



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TRAIL TO MEXICO

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The music of that time and place, however, is very real, and possesses all of the vigor, the unpretentious charm, and the rustic poetry of those freedom-loving individualists whose way of life did so much to form the very personality of our nation. Some of this music drifted to the west from the older southern states with post-Civil War refugees from reconstruction; some of it was brought direct from the Old Sod by Irish immigrants who helped to build the railroads and then moved off to the cow-camps for want of any other employment (none being available to them in the crowded cities where they first landed on America's golden shores). Many of our cowboys were black Americans who sought a fresh landscape to match the glory of their newly-won freedom. Each of these groups contributed its musical influence to the songs and tunes we now associate with our western heritage -- hoedowns and rags, one-steps and waltzes -- ballads, satirical songs, love songs, comical ditties, whoops, hollers and shouts -- and the resultant blend lives on as pure Americana.

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Sandy Paton
Sharon, Connecticut
May, 1987

TRAIL TO MEXICO

Skip Gorman

WAGGONER ONE-STEP/PANHANDLE RAG Side 1, Band 1.

I learned "Waggoner One-Step" from the fiddling of Earl Collins, originally from Shawnee, Oklahoma. "Panhandle Rag" is a Texas-sounding hybrid to which I gave a title. There are many others in the key of C that sound similar; "Nobody Loves Me," recorded by Herschel Brown and his Wash-board Band in the 1920's, is the most obvious comparison. Bob Flesher adds the claw-hammer banjo on this cut.

TRAIL TO MEXICO Side 1, Band 2.

This song refers to the cattle trail into the New Mexico Territory, blazed in 1882 by James Stinson. Stinson's trail went farther west and through drier country than any other route at the time. He was said to have driven twenty-thousand head of cattle from west-central Texas to the Estancia Valley in New Mexico in this early year. Cowboys usually shortened "New Mexico" to "Mexico," as in this hybrid version.

*I made up my mind to change my ways,
To leave my crowd that was so gay,
To leave my native home awhile,
And travel west for many a mile.*

*'Twas in the year of '83
That A. J. Stinson hired me;
He said, "Young man, how'd you like to go
And trail my herd into Mexico?"*

*It was early in that year
We started south with all them steers;
I tell you, boys, it was a lonesome ol' go
When we trailed the herd into Mexico.*

*When we arrived in Mexico
I wrote to the gal who loved me so;
I wrote a letter to my dear,
But no return word did I ever hear.*

*So, I started back to my once-loved home,
Inquirin' for the gal whom I adored.
She said, "Young man, I wed in July;
Therefore, young fella, you must take
another wife."*

*Curse the gold and silver, too,
And curse the gal who won't be true;
I'll head right back to the Rio Grande
And get me a job in a cowboy band.*

*Oh, buddy, oh, buddy, please don't go,
And don't you ever leave your home.
If you know a girl more true than I,
Please don't go where the bullets fly.*

*Oh, I know girls more true than you,
And I know gals who won't be true;
I'll head right back where the bullets fly,
Stay on the cow trail till the day I die.*

THE WAYS OF THE WORLD Side 1, Band 3.

This tune comes from a field recording of W. M. Stepp made by Alan and Elizabeth Lomax at Salyerville, Kentucky, in 1937. It appears on a Library of Congress recording titled *American Fiddle Tunes* (AFS-L62), edited by Alan Jabbour. The fiddle is tuned A-E-A-E.

OLD MELINDA Side 1, Band 4.

This comes from Bob Walters, a Nebraska fiddler. It is included in the *Old-Time Fiddler's Repertory*, University of Missouri Press, 1976.

THE WYOMING ROUND-UP COOK Side 1, Band 5.

This is a convenient fusion of two songs: "The Round-Up Cook," which I got from Harry Jackson's *Folkways* album of cowboy songs, and a song called "Dear Old Wyoming Home," which I got from an old 78 record of the Dixon Brothers. Hal Cannon had the 78 record and we used to have a great time singing the tune together in Salt Lake City. The second song works well as a chorus and a yodel for the first one.

*Well, come all you cowboys,
I'll sing you a song;
Stay back from the wagons
Where you belong.*

You think you're right handy
With gun and with rope,
But I notice you're bashful
When handlin' the soap.

When rollin' the Bull
For them brown cigareets,
I'm rollin' the dough
For these biscuits you eat.

Roll on, little dogies,
Roll on, roll on. (yodel)

When you're cuttin' stock,
Then I'm cuttin' steak;
When you're wranglin' them horses,
Then I'm wranglin' cake.

When you're hazin' dogies
And battin' your eyes,
I'm hazin' dried apples
That aims to be pies.

Roll on, little dogies,
Roll on, roll on. (yodel)

Oh, my Wyoming home,
My dear ol' Wyoming home.
I'll jump in my saddle and away I do ride,
Over the hills and across the divide,
Back to my Wyoming home.

Roll on, little dogies,
Roll on, roll on. (yodel)

MOONLIGHT WALTZ/JUST A SONG OF OLD KENTUCKY Side 1, Band 6.

I think Bill Monroe composed the first of these two waltzes, but I always used to see him play it with Doc Watson at festivals. The second tune is an older popular southern waltz that the Monroe Brothers used to sing as a song. I just loved the melody.

CAMP CHASE/BULL AT THE WAGON Side 1, Band 7.

I learned "Camp Chase" from Bill Hicks and Malcolm Owen of the Fuzzy Mountain String Band who used to play it back in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. They got the tune from Burl Hammons of Marlinton, West Virginia. Apparently, Camp Chase was a detention camp near Columbus, Ohio, where the Union Army kept Confederate prisoners during the Civil War. It is said that Sol

Carpenter, fiddler French Carpenter's father, used this piece to fiddle his way to freedom. "Bull at the Wagon" comes from a 78 record of Lewis Dempson, and is imitative of bulls struggling to move a heavy wagon.

UTAH CARROLL Side 1, Band 8.

The author of this song is said to have been a wrangler from Schleicher County, Texas. The story tells of the bold martyrdom of Utah Carroll in his successful attempt to save little Varo's life during a stampede. I learned this version from a 78 record of Carl Sprague.

And now, my friends, you ask me
What makes me sad and still,
And why my brow is darkened
Like the clouds upon the hill.
Draw in your ponies closer
And I'll tell you all a tale
Of Utah Carroll, my partner,
And his last ride on the trail.

We rode the range together,
We rode it side by side;
I loved him like a brother
And I wept when Utah died.
We were rounding up that morning,
The work was almost done,
When on one side they started
In a mad and fearful run.

The bossman's little daughter
Was running down a steer;
The cattle saw her blanket
And they charged with maddened fear.
Little Varo saw her danger,
And turning her pony apace
And leaning in the saddle,
She tied her blanket in its place.

But in leaning she lost her balance
And she fell by that wild tide.
Utah saw her danger;
"Lay still, Varo," he cried.
His only hope was to catch her
And raise her at full speed,
As he had oft been known to catch
A trail rope off his steed.

But the cinches of his saddle
Made that a fatal ride,
For the back cinch snapped asunder
And he fell by Varo's side.
But he picked up that little red blanket,
And swinging it over his head
And running toward the cattle,
"Lay still, Varo," he said.

Well, Utah turned the stampede
And he saved his little friend,
And he turned to face the cattle
And meet a fatal end.
His six-gun from his pocket,
His scabbard, quickly drew,
For he was bound to die defending,
As most young cowboys do.

On some bright future morning
I heard the preacher say,
"I know we'll all meet Utah
At the Great Round-Up someday."
We wrapped him in his little saddle blanket,
Sent by his little friend,
It was the same red blanket
That brought him to his end.

BELLE OF LEXINGTON

Side 2, Band 1.

I got this from Tom Carter's recordings of Emmet W. Lundy, *Fiddle Tunes from Grayson County, Virginia*. Tom points out that this tune has "a direct, discernible British antecedent" in "Kitty's Wedding," an Irish hornpipe. The fiddle is tuned A-D-A-E here.

SCUM, THE SADDLE BUM

Side 2, Band 2.

This comes from the singing of Harry Jackson (see the note for Side 1, Band 5). The fiddle is tuned E-G#-E-A.

They call me Scum, the saddle bum,
Ever since the day
I quit the strife of cowboy life
To travel, sing, and play,
A saddle tramp from ranch to camp,
Just a-ridin' near and far,
A horseback bum to sing and strum
On a Mexican guitar.

I used to work, but now I shirk,
And never more shall hire
To turn (mark) no ear, to brand (turn)
no steer,
To tend no brandin' fire.
The pie and cake is mine to take,
The best of everything;
I lay my head on the softest bed
And blow my harp and sing.

Oh, here nor there nor anywhere
I may choose to roam,
Me they'll feed and my saddle steed
Will always find a home.
I'll tell you that my horse is fat;
I do want you to know
It's mighty fine to ride grub-line,
Be welcome where I might go.

I stay awhile to sing and smile,
But when there does come a rift,
And things get cool, I ain't no fool;
I fork my bronc and drift.
I travel down to that little town
When the winters come along,
To little Neta, sweet senoreta,
And sing to her my song.

When white snows fly o'er the wintry skies,
O'er the mantles, hills and the plains,
I'm coming back to that little shack
And love you, dear, again.
Oh, little Neta, sweet senoreta,
Again I'll come to you;
So don't you grieve until I leave,
For here I will be true.

CRUEL WILLIE

Side 2, Band 3.

Another tune from the late Earl Collins of Shawnee, Oklahoma. Tom Sauber, who produced the record of Collins, said that he was told by Earl that he got the tune from Howdy Forrester. The fiddle is tuned D-D-A-D.

RAILROADING ON THE GREAT DIVIDE

Side 2, Band 4.

This is an old Carter Family song, usually attributed to A. P. Carter. I guess I've changed the words a bit during the years I've been singing it, but Montana and Wyoming are both on the Great Divide.

Nineteen and sixteen, when I started to roam
Out in the west, no money, no home,
I just drifted along with the tide
And landed on the Great Divide.

Railroading on the Great Divide,
Nothing around me but the Rockies and
sky.

There you'll find me as the years go by,
Railroading on the Great Divide.

Ask any oldtimer from old Cheyenne,
Railroading in Montana's the best in the
land.
Them long steel rails and the short
cross-ties,
I landed on the Great Divide.

As I looked out across the field,
Number 3's coming, the fastest on wheels.
Through old Laramie she glides with pride
As she rolls across the Great Divide.

GREEN VALLEY WALTZ/AMARILLO WALTZ
Side 2, Band 5.

I have the "Green Valley Waltz" from an
old 78 of the McCartt Brothers; "Amarillo
Waltz" comes from Eck Robertson.

ECK ROBERTSON MEDLEY
Side 2, Band 6.

This medley of Eck Robertson tunes includes
"The Drunken Billy Goat," "Sally Goodin," and
several others. For more information on Eck
Robertson, see the notes to *Powder River*
(FSI-76), the album of western material I
recorded with Ron Kane for Folk-Legacy.

MOONSHINER'S DREAM
Side 2, Band 7.

This comes from the singing of Riley
Puckett, but I've taken liberties with the
lyrics, adding a couple of lines of my own
where I couldn't understand his. Also, he
sings "Folsom County Jail," whereas I choose
to commemorate Salt Lake County, Utah.

*Last night, while I lay sleeping,
I dreamed one pleasant dream.
I dreamed I was on some mountain
By a still-house stream,
A-makin' blockade whiskey
And selling at retail.
I woke up all broken-hearted
In the Salt Lake County jail.*

(yodel)

*I dreamed my sweetheart came to see me;
She had money to go my bail.
But nothing in dreams is sweet, it seems,
When your body is bruised and pale.*

(yodel)

*I hear the jailer coming
With a dangling bunch of keys,
One little ol' pone of cold cornbread,
And a darn big bowl of peas.*

(yodel)

*Come all you whiskey 'stillers
Who's selling at retail,
The very next place you'll find yourself
Is in the Salt Lake County jail.*

(yodel)

THE COYOTE HOWL (Gorman)
Side 2, Band 8.

I composed this tune to make use of some
of the special old-time effects to which open
fiddle tunings lend themselves. The fiddle
is tuned G-D-A-C# here.

CREDITS:

SKIP GORMAN: fiddle, mandolin, harmonica,
mandolin-banjo, guitar, and vocals.
PETER CRAIG: guitar on all cuts except
"The Ways of the World" and "The Wyoming
Round-Up Cook," vocal harmony on "Rail-
roading on the Great Divide."
BOB FLESHER: claw-hammer banjo.
PHIL ZIMMERMAN: tenor mandolin on "Moon-
light Waltz," guitar on "Cruel Willie."
KARL FERRET: bass on all cuts except "The
Ways of the World" and "The Wyoming
Round-Up Cook."

NOTE: Where I have inadvertently altered the
words during the recording, the preferred
words are parenthetically included.

My sincere thanks to Tom Carter and Hal
Cannon and the boys from Salt Lake for
being old trail buddies.

Skip Gorman

I hear the jolly coming
With a hanging bunch of keys,
One little of pots of cold cornbread,
And a darn big bowl of peas.

(Voiced)

There all you winnowy eaters
Who're sitting in velvet,
The very next place you'll find yourself
Is in the hell hole County jail.

(Voiced)

THE CHURCH HOUSE (Chorus)

Chorus 1, Verse 1

I composed this song to make use of some
of the special old-time effects to which you
shall be used to hear. The Bible
is about 20-30 years.

CHURCH

THE CHURCH: Bible, psalms, hymns,
and songs, and words.
THE CHURCH: Bible, psalms, hymns,
and songs, and words.
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and songs, and words.
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and songs, and words.
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and songs, and words.

NOTE: When I have lastly started the
words during the morning, the preferred
words are particularly indicated.

We should thank to the Father and the
Son and the Holy Spirit for
being in this world.

Step 1, Verse 1

And my mother from old Cheshire
Remembering to Mother's the best of the
land.
Then long steel rolls and the short
crossed-leg.

As I would not across the field
Mother's to control the horses on wheels.
Through old lanes and fields with birds
as the wind moves the Great Britain.

OTHER FARMER MATTHEW'S WALKS

Chorus 1, Verse 1

I hear the "Green Valley Walk" from the
old of the "Green Valley Walk" from the
old of the "Green Valley Walk" from the

THE CHURCH HOUSE (Chorus)

Chorus 1, Verse 1

This book of the Church House is
"The Church House" and "The Church House"
and "The Church House" and "The Church House"
and "The Church House" and "The Church House"
and "The Church House" and "The Church House"
and "The Church House" and "The Church House"
and "The Church House" and "The Church House"

THE CHURCH HOUSE (Chorus)

Chorus 1, Verse 1

The book of the Church House is
"The Church House" and "The Church House"
and "The Church House" and "The Church House"
and "The Church House" and "The Church House"
and "The Church House" and "The Church House"
and "The Church House" and "The Church House"

Last night, while I was sleeping,
I dreamt of the Church House.
I dreamt of the Church House.
I dreamt of the Church House.
I dreamt of the Church House.
I dreamt of the Church House.
I dreamt of the Church House.
I dreamt of the Church House.

(Voiced)

I dreamt of the Church House.
I dreamt of the Church House.
I dreamt of the Church House.
I dreamt of the Church House.
I dreamt of the Church House.
I dreamt of the Church House.
I dreamt of the Church House.
I dreamt of the Church House.

(Voiced)