

Solomon Valley Ballads

sung by Eugene Jemison
with Guitar

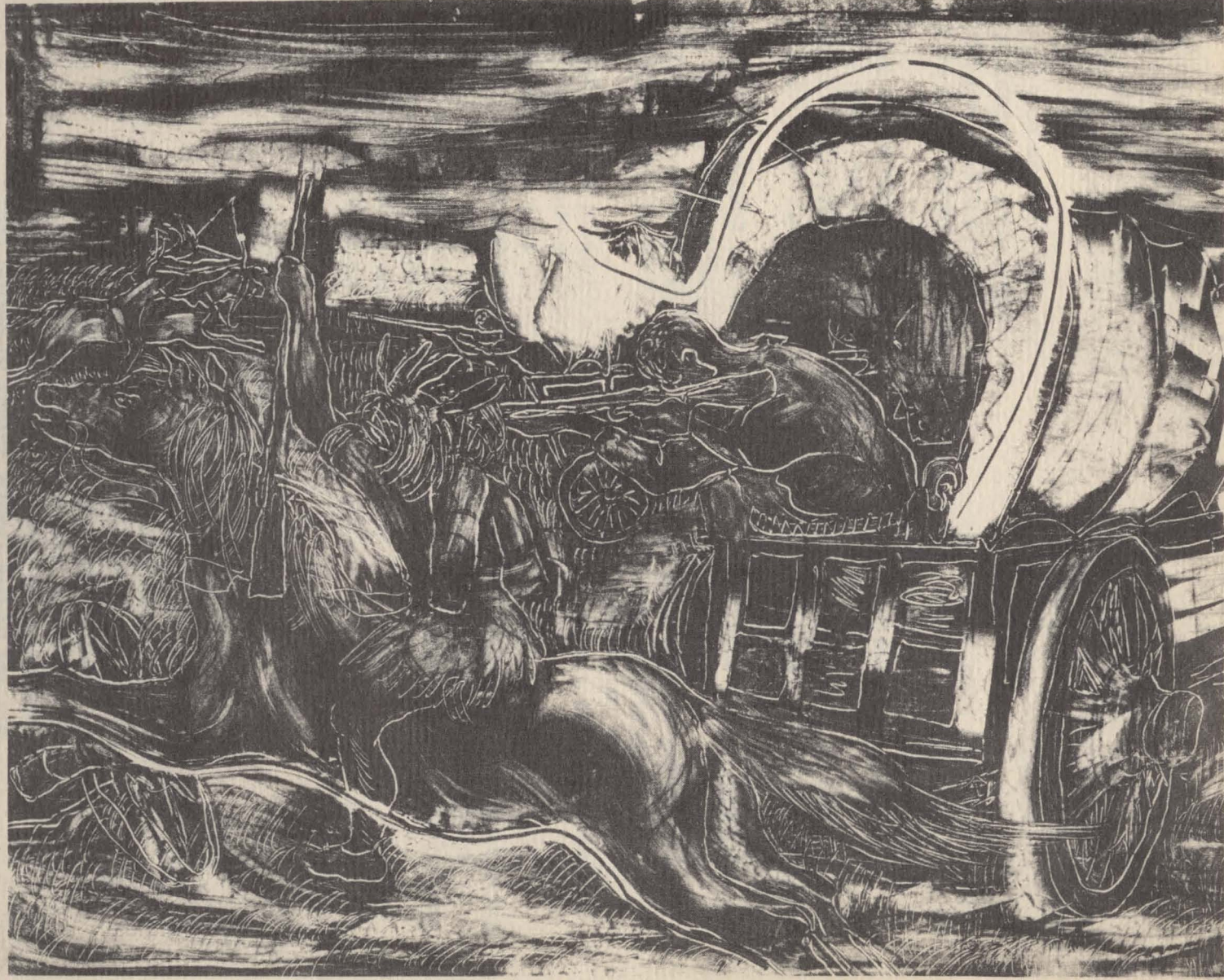


TEN THOUSAND MILES AWAY • THE OCEAN BURIAL • CROSSING THE PLAINS • FAIR FLORILLA
THE BACHELOR'S COMPLAINT • GIRLS, QUIT YORE ROWDY WAYS • THE OLD ELM TREE
FP23 *Folkways Records* COME ALL YE MERRY HUNTERS • FAIR CHARLOTTE



FOLKWAYS RECORDS Album No. FP 23

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Side I, Band 4: FAIR FLORILLA.

This ballad is rather widely known for the version heard on this record is a composite of many old and more recent versions. The song has made its way by oral tradition since no printed copy of the ballad is known to exist. Though the theme is thoroughly traditional the tragedy of the "Fair Florilla" is recounted here in language that gives it a romantic and sentimental setting characteristic of the nineteenth century.

Down by yon weepin' willow
Where flowers so sweetly bloom
There sleeps the fair Florilla
So silent in her tomb.

She died not broken hearted
Nor sickness e'er befell,
But in one moment parted
From all she loved so well.

One night the moon shone brightly
And gentle zephyrs blew,
Unto her bed so lightly
Her treacherous lover drew.

Come, love, come let us wander
Upon yon fields so gay
And there we'll sit and ponder
Unto our wedding day.

This field seems dark and dreary
And I'm afraid to stay
Of wanderin' I am weary
Wilt thou retrace thy way.

Retrace thy way-- no, never
Nor to give this world to know
So bid farewell forever
To parents, friends, and home.

For in these fields I've got you
And here you've got to die
No power on earth can save you
Nor from me can you fly.

Down on her knees before him
She begged for her life
When deep into her bosom
He plunged that fateful knife.

Oh William I have loved you
With fond and loving heart
But William you've deceived me
So now in death we part.

Oh William I'll forgive you
Was her last dying breath
Her pulses ceased their motion
Her eyes were closed in death.

Down by yon weepin' willow
Where flowers so sweetly bloom
There sleeps that fair Florilla
So silent in her tomb.





The Songs

Side I, Band 1: TEN THOUSAND MILES AWAY. This rollicking song with its nonsense refrain has long been popular with American college students in an absurd parody, "The Walloping Window Blind." The song has been recorded in New England and Texas as well as in the Mid-West. It is localized in the present version by its reference to the Missouri, thus furnishing an additional example of the manner in which folksongs travel and integrate themselves into the life of the community.

Oh my true love she was handsome,
And my true love, she was young;
Her eyes were blue as the violet's hue,
And silvery was the sound of her tongue,
And silvery was the sound of her tongue,
my boys,
But while I sing this lay-ay-ay,
She has taken a trip in a government ship,
Ten thousand miles away.

Chorus: Then blow ye winds, heigh ho!
A-roving I will go;
I'll stay no more on England's
shore,
But let the music play-ay-ay.
For I'm off on the morning train,
Across the raging main,
For I'm on my way to my own
true-love,
Ten thousand miles away.

The sun may shine through an eastern fog,
The Missouri run bright and clear,
The ocean's brine be turned to wine,
And I forget my beer,
And I forget my beer, my boys,
In the landlord's quarts lay-ay-ay
But I never will part from my own sweet-
heart,
Ten thousand miles away.

Oh dark and dismal was the day,
When last I saw my Meg;
She'd a government band around each hand,
And another one round her leg,
And another one round her leg, my boys,
But while I sing this lay-ay-ay,
She's taken a trip in a government ship,
Ten thousand miles away.

Side II, Band 3: COME ALL YE MERRY
HUNTERS. This merry hunting song with its
infectious, jingling rhythm and onomatopoeic
refrain has long been a favorite of folk sing-
ers. "Bull Reynard" is a perversion of "Beau
Renard", the fox of tradition. In other ver-
sions of the song he appears as "Balriginor"
and "Bull Raider." Although the version sung
here comes from the plains states, it differs
but slightly from the New England texts.

Come all ye merry hunters who love to chase
the fox,
Who love to chase Bull Reynard among the
hills and rocks.

Chorus: Then a ho ho ho and hi lo, along the
merry stream
Tay tay tay and a ti ti ti, and sway
to the rocky bow wow wow,
With a yank fi fiddle and a bugle-horn
Through the fields we'll run brave
boys
Through the fields we'll run!

The first they saw was a teamster a-loadin'
up his team,
He said he saw Bull Reynard go floating up
the stream.

The next they saw was a blind man as blind
as he could be
He said he saw Bull Reynard run up a hollow
tree.

The next they saw was a hunter a-windin' up
his horn,
He said he saw Bull Reynard a-runnin'
through the corn.

The next they saw was a little boy a-walkin'
down the road,
He said he saw Bull Reynard a-eatin' up a
toad.

During the closing decades of the nineteenth century social life in the rural areas of Kansas and Nebraska centered around the "Literary Society." Meeting regularly during the winter months in the sod school house, this institution provided intellectual, artistic and social entertainment for the immigrants who had recently taken up homesteads on the plains. A ten-mile ride by horse and buggy, sleigh or bob-sled was richly rewarded by the long and elaborate programs. Recitations, dialogues, readings and singing made up the first part of the program. After an intermission the meeting was called to order and a debate lasting several hours followed. "The Old Elm Tree" was a favorite that appeared frequently on the program, often sung by one or two young girls. The version sung here is similar to one found in the Barry collection at Harvard University. The text was recorded in Kansas.

Chorus: Oh Laura, dear Laura, my own true
 love,
Shall we meet in the angels' home
 above?
Earth holds not a treasure so dear
 to me
As the moss-grown scene 'neath
 the old elm tree.

'Twas there, 'neath the bright blue sky above,
I told her the tale of my heart's true love;
And there, ere the blossoms of summer died,
She had whispered the promise she'd be my
 bride;
And there fell the tears of our parting sore
But ah - little did I dream we should meet
 no more;
For ere I came from the dark blue sea,
They had made her a grave 'neath the old
 elm tree.







Side I, Band 5: THE BACHELOR'S COMPLAINT. Humorous folksongs in a lighter vein provided the pioneers many pleasurable hours of entertainment and relaxation from the rigors and hardships of life on the prairie. The "Bachelor's Complaint", one of a large group of songs dealing with the trails and troubles of the older unmarried man, fits into this category. During the homesteading period men far outnumbered the women, so girls were afforded an opportunity to pick and choose their husbands. Some men, like the one in this song, were left out or "given the mitten" as they said then.

Once I heard an old bachelor say,
When his hair was turning gray,
"I wonder what the matter can be
That all the pretty girls so dislike
me."

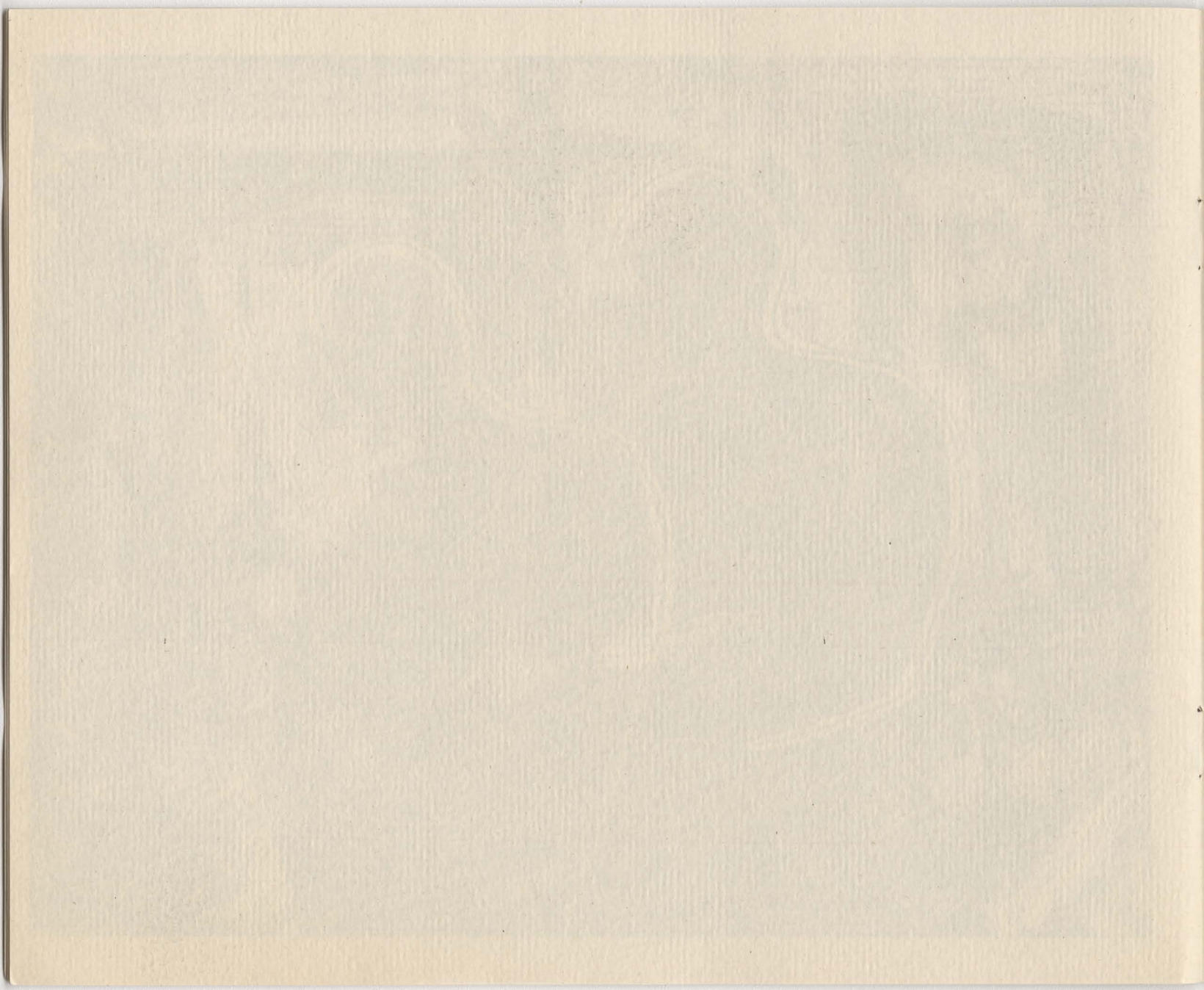
"I've tried the rich and I've tried
the poor,
And many a time I've been kicked
out the door,
I've tried silver, and I've tried
gold,
And many a lie in my life I have
told."

"Three good horses I rode them to death
I rode them as long as they had breath
Three good saddles rode bare to the tree
Trying to find the girl that would marry
me."

He wept and he mourned and he wailed
and he cried,
And in this condition, this bachelor died,
And if he lies here, I fear he'll come to
life,
And still be a-trying to get him a wife.

Come, all ye pretty fair maids, come
gather around,
And put this old bachelor under the ground,
For if he lies here, I fear he'll come to
life,
And still be a-trying to get him a wife.







Photograph by Gene Pyle

Original drawings and paintings are available from Mr. Eugene Jemison
c/o The Kansas City Art Institute, 4415 Warwick Boulevard, Kansas City 2,
Missouri.

About The Singer

Among the students in my course in Folk and Primitive Music, at Columbia University, Eugene Jemison attracted my attention with his performance of American folk songs. His unaffected, straight-forward presentation of songs appealed to me by virtue of his sincerity and directness. Here was no effort to imitate the mannerisms of an older generation of folk singers, nor had he been beguiled into cultivating the contemporary sophistications and refinements of the concert hall. Jemison re-creates his songs from his own folk heritage. His mother's family were from the hills of Kentucky and his father's family brought their fiddles with them from Pennsylvania to the sod dug-out that became their home on the homestead land in Kansas. He has lived most of his life on a farm along the south fork of the Solomon River, planting, harvesting, singing and painting.

In his development as an artist, Jemison has distinguished himself as a painter of folk themes. Finding his inspiration in folk song and folk poetry, he has attempted to synthesize this cultural expression and translate it into visual forms. Jemison has had numerous exhibitions of his work and has contributed to various art galleries throughout the country. He is presently a member of the teaching staff of the Kansas City Art Institute.

to other hunting grounds from the bend of the river in the Solomon valley.

The song is sung to a familiar English air, but has none of the humor associated with it. Using the same tune over and over for different texts and various subjects was characteristic of much of the folk music of the Midwest and West.

We formed a corral on the green grassy
ground,
While our horses and mules were graz-
ing around,
While taking refreshments we heard a
loud yell,
'Twas a band of Kaw Indians just down
in the dell.

We sprang to our rifles with a flash in
each eye,
Called out our bold leader, "We'll fight
till we die."
And of our little band there were only
twenty-four,
And of the Kaw Indians two hundred or
more.

They made a bold dash, came near our
wagon train,
Till the arrows fell around us like hail
and like rain.
But with our long rifles we fed them
cold lead
Till many Kaw Indians around us lay dead.

We killed their bold chief at the head of
his band,
He died like a warrior with his gun in his
hand.
When they saw their bold chief lyin' dead
in his gore
They whooped and they hollered and we
saw them no more.

We hooked up our horses, started on our
wagon train,
We'd two more bloody battles while
crossing the plain;
At the last of these battles two brave boys
they fell,
And we laid them to rest in a green shady
dell.

Side I, Band 3: CROSSING THE PLAINS.

Simple and straightforward in what might be called rhymed prose, this ballad reports one of the countless tragic incidents that accompanied the settling of the West. The violation of government treaties with Indian tribes by the land-hungry white settlers often gave rise to bloody encounters that stained the pages of history. The impingement of white civilization with its firearms, "fire-water," and disease wrought disaster and annihilation for many of the Plains tribes. Jemison recalls tales told him by his grandmother of Indians camping west of their sod house when she was a little girl, and how they moved on









The authorship of this traditional American ballad has been attributed by Phillips Barry, the distinguished scholar of folksong, to William Lorenzo Carter, who was born at Benson, Rutland County, Vermont, November 14, 1813. Based on an incident verified by a Vermonter "who knew that the story was as it is related, . . ." this ballad appears to have been in oral circulation since 1835. In the course of a century "Fair Charlotte" has been sung from Maine westward to the Dakotas, thence southward to Oklahoma, and has also been recorded in Nova Scotia. Its wide distribution "is due largely to the wanderings of the nomadic Carter himself, a modern representative of the old-time wandering minstrel." Unlike many so-called "vulgar" ballads whose circulation was facilitated by broadsides, "Fair Charlotte" never appeared in printed form. For the student interested in definition and origins it stands as significant evidence that folk song and folk ballad "can be accounted for on the basis of individual invention, with subsequent communal re-creation."

"Oh such a night I never saw,
My lines I scarce can hold."
Fair Charlotte said, in a feeble voice,
"I am exceeding cold."

They mourned the loss of a daughter dear,
And Charles mourned o'er her doom
Until at last his heart did break
And they both lie in one tomb.

Side II, Band 1: **GIRLS, QUIT YOUR ROWDY WAYS.** This is of the type known as a composite song. Here each verse appears more or less as an independent and separate entity, the unity of the song being dependent upon the constant repetition of the melody for each successive verse. The effect is one of a sustained mood rather than that of a narrative, so incongruities are seldom noticed by the singer or listener. Mr. Jemison says, "In the Mid-West these songs are known as fiddle tunes by the 'old-timers' and are used both for country dances and for singing."

Oh girls, quit your rowdy way,
Oh girls, quit your rowdy way,
Your rowdy ways will kill you dead,
And lay you in your lonesome graves.

Oh honey, where you been so long?
Oh honey, where you been so long?
I've been in the wheat bin with the rough
and rowdy men
And I'm goin' back again 'fore long.

Oh honey, where you been so long?
Oh honey, where you been so long?
I've been across the river with the gay
young fellers,
And I'm goin' back again 'fore long.

Oh Sarah, let your hair hang down,
Oh Sarah, let your hair hang down,
Let your hair hang down and your curls
hang around,
Oh Sarah, let your hair hang down.

I don't like an Eastern man,
I don't like an Eastern man,
An Eastern man will kill you if he can,
And drink down your blood like wine.

Oh Beulah, you don't like me,
Oh Beulah, you don't like me,
You don't like me like I like you
Oh Beulah, you don't like me.

Oh Lucy, you can't love three
Oh Lucy, you can't love three
You can't love three and still love me,
Oh Lucy, you can't love three.

Oh Maudie, you can't love four,
Oh Maudie, you can't love four,
You can't love four and love me any more,
Oh Maude, you can't love four.

Oh girls, quit your rowdy ways
Oh girls, quit your rowdy ways
Your rowdy ways will kill you dead,
And lay you in your lonesome graves.



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SOLOMON VALLEY BALLADS

Sung by Eugene Jemison with guitar

SIDE 1

FP 23 A

- Band 1. Ten Thousand Miles Away
- Band 2. The Ocean Burial
- Band 3. Crossing The Plains
- Band 4. Fair Florilla
- Band 5. The Bachelor's Complaint

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SOLOMON VALLEY BALLADS
Sung by Eugene Jemison with guitar

SIDE II

FP 23 B

- Band 1. Girls, Quit Your Rowdy Ways
- Band 2. The Old Elm Tree
- Band 3. Come All Ye Merry Hunters
- Band 4. Fair Charlotte

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