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& guitar

OHIO VALLEY



BALLADS

OHIO VALLEY BALLADS

SUNG BY BRUCE BUCKLEY, WITH GUITAR

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& guitar



OHIO VALLEY BALLADS

INTRODUCTION AND NOTES by

CHARLES EDWARD SMITH

... Of Ballads and Bullets

"Yesterday all was silent, save the beast and the bird." - Early Settler, quoted in "The Ohio" (Rinehart)

One of our magnificent rivers, the Ohio, flows for almost a thousand miles before it empties into the Mississippi, winding tortuously or stretching serenely in the slanting sun. In the course of its westward journey it drains a watershed of some 203,900 square miles. This distant partner of the Missouri -- the other sizeable branch of the Mississippi -- rises at the confluence of the Allegheny and the Monongohela, at Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The streams that feed the Ohio roll off the tongue like poems -- the Great Kanawha, the Beaver, the Licking and the Muskingum, the Scioto and the Big Sandy, the Wabash and the Green, the Kentucky, the Cumberland and the Tennessee

Many songs of the Ohio Valley reflect a heritage from the past when this whole vast area, from the flame-belching furnaces of McKeesport to the well-nigh impregnable flood walls of Cairo, was frontier country with its attendant conditions of hardship, poverty and physical danger. As the frontier moved westward, hardship and poverty remained for many of the new settlers. The hills and mountains that fed the mighty rivers resisted man's efforts to bend them to the ends of his comfort and well-being.

Among early Ohio Valley songs, after those of the Iroquois that gave the river its name, were French boating songs. Irish, Dutch, German and many other groups brought their songs to the valley with them, adding to the richness of music in this section of country between the Appalachian range and the distant Sierras. The dawn of the industrial age, that has meant so much to the country as a whole, brought perils of its own as the miners -- Irish-, Negro-, Slav-, English-Americans and others -- probed the earth for its riches and, also of their kind, the hard-muscled steel drivers cut holes through stubborn mountains for the iron roads rolling west.

A folk heritage from the British Isles moved westward from two main sources, the South and the North-East. Steel, coal and railroading, in the 19th century, brought an influx of Irish and Negro workers that is reflected in some of the songs included here. Sometimes the folk artists among the miners would change an Irish

ballad (the original in Gaelic) to a collier's reel, or, again, as in the Molly Bonder of this set, the variations from the song as it existed two hundred and more years ago are of a minor character. Not that the traditional is sacrosanct. Changes, sometimes quite abrupt changes, may occur in either words or music, even though the genesis of the original song may have been a slow, consistent process. Thus we have, in all folk art developments, a corollary to the biological process, with both slow evolutionary change and life-sprung mutations contributing to the process. Nor is there mystery regarding the latter, though mutation in song may occur as a flash of intuition. At any rate, more of the surrounding terrain may survive in fact or in story than is always the case in biology.

The betrayal of man by man, as well as the common fund of human fellowship, finds folk expression; tabloid tragedies serve, in a way, to dramatize the commonplace tragic-ness of everyday life. It is important to have love, as the psychiatric popularizers are so fond of telling us these days (sometimes beating the poor old word to death in the process) and, not having it, we are given at times to thinly disguised effusions of self-pity. This emotional identification of betrayal, of the self or by the self, suggests the appeal of the more lugubrious folk sagas, a few of which Bruce Buckley sings for us in a fresh and natural style that is most appropriate to the material.

Again and again the folk ballad has come close to perfection as the vehicle for a story of lust, violence and murder, often sentimentally told but with a shock and pathos underlying it. When one might suppose a song to be in its definitive phase, pinned butterfly-like to a Smoky Mountain dulcimer, it eludes the net of the warriest folksong catcher. In one of the songs in this group, for example, the melody and mood of an old ballad fit an almost contemporary murder (Pearl Bryan).

In music as in literature the tragic, while frowned upon as a subject for morbid preoccupation, is perfectly acceptable material for song and story. The events that seem merely messy and sordid as we read of them in the newspapers, have a poignancy and pathos not merely in great literature but when they are brought to us, for example, by means of radio's on-the-spot coverage -- such as that by Gabe Pressman on NBC -- and it is this latter immediacy of mood that nourishes folk-songs. These things happened, they were real, they had wholeness, solidity and sorrow and in some instances they had a simple dignity that escaped the headlines.

On the popular level, as is well known, there is a taboo almost amounting to a Candide conspiracy, of the seamier side of life. There are, of course, exceptions to it. It is significant, is it not, that in folk, hillbilly and art music no such taboo exists? And if you care for statistical evidence of the extent to which folk and hillbilly represent people in general you are referred to Billboard's annual summary of record and sheet music sales in these fields.

Why, then, is there a category called "popular" music? Is it because there is a vast seething mass of humanity residing in the best of all possible worlds, unbeknownst to the rest of us? This is quite obviously nonsense. In point of fact, the great mass circulation dailies stress vice, depravity, criminality and the casual atrocities of day-to-day living. And despite some snobbish statistical notions, you and I are aware that a reader of such a paper belongs to no specific cultural level; he may be a plumber or professor, preacher or physicist. Why, then, the disparity between "popular" and the equally popular "hillbilly" which, though hopelessly committed to schmaltz, very often draws upon the same material as folk music? There is a possible clue in the observation by the eminent musicologist, H.E. Krehbiel, to the effect that popular music is, generally speaking, created for the people, rather than by them.

Life on the popular level, from this terrifying vantage point, is a study in mass hypocrisy. But whom are we talking about? Who lives on the popular level? Who listens to popular music? The writer of these lines, for one. The truth is, there are no borderlines between one type of music and another. Some examples of folk balladry in this set verge on hillbilly in mood and material, while still being exceptional folk songs. And at least one melody came straight out of Tin Pan Alley, though its composer may have been inspired by a melody from Ireland somewhere along the way (Rarden Wreck).

Side I Band 1

Rowan County Crew

Politics along the Ohio River following the Civil War were marked with flowery promises and bloody events, taking on a clannish character in the mountain regions. In the remarks concerning Sidney Allen we quote a reference to the border raids of Scotland. This is also apropos in connection with many of the famous feuds, though one must think always in terms of the local and political, rather than of the larger issues involved. Cheap cotton was the issue to mill owners, the consolidation of freedom to abolitionists, but party hegemony loomed large in the hills of Kentucky, and this kind of feudin' and fightin' still goes on today, though on a more respectable level.

One of the more sanguine encounters was the Martin-Tolliver feud of Rowan County, Kentucky. Tempers ran high on election day, August 5, 1884, and spilled over just before the polls closed in the killing of Solomon Bradley by Floyd Tolliver. Some Kentuckians -- most Kentuckians are a partisan lot in these matters -- say that John Martin was an innocent bystander. They also say that Sol Bradley merely backed the arguments of his fellow Republican and candidate for sheriff, W. Cook Humphrey. At any rate, Floyd Tolliver killed Bradley and John Martin was wounded in the fracas. This ballad, which is an accurate account of what happened to one of the participants, is in fact only prologue to the flaring feud that subsequently involved the entire county. The version included was heard in southern Ohio but the ballad is well known throughout the region.

In 1887 a joint committee from Senate and House of the Kentucky Legislature was appointed to investigate "the trouble" in Rowan County. Its report, delivered the following March (1888) read, in part: "Your committee finds from the evidence that the feud and lawlessness in Rowan County commenced in August, 1884, and

grew out of the election of W. Cook Humphrey as sheriff of the county. On the day of the August election, one Solomon Bradley was killed in a street fight. A dispute arose as to whether Floyd Tolliver or John Martin did the killing. Bradley was a Republican and a friend of said Humphrey, and from the date of the killing and for some months afterward the feuds partook of a political nature, Humphrey and his followers representing a Republican faction and Craig Tolliver and his followers a Democratic faction."

"The feud," wrote Jean Thomas in "Ballad Makin' In The Mountains of Kentucky," (Henry Holt, NYC) "continued until many innocent persons had been killed, houses burned and John Martin assassinated." Finally, Boone Logan, a Martin man, organized an extra-legal "posse" and "put an end to the Tollivers in an open battle on Railroad Street in Morehead." The "posse" were described as "law-abiding citizens"! Partisan-ship dies hard in the Mountains of Kentucky.

Additional references: Henry's "Folksongs of the Southern Highlands"; Randolph's "Ozark Folksongs II"; Mutzenberg's "Kentucky's Famous Feuds & Tragedies".

Come all young men and maidens
Dear mothers, fathers too,
I'll relate to you the history
Of the Rowan County Crew
Concerning bloody Rowan
And many a heathen be
Oh, friends, please pay attention
Remember how it read.

'Twas in the month of August,
All on election day,
John Martin he was wounded
They say by Johnny Day
But Martin couldn't believe it
He said it was not so
He said it was Frank Tolliver
That struck the fatal blow.

Martin had recovered
Some months had gone and past;
When in the town of Morehead
These two men met at last
Tolliver and a friend or two
All through the streets did walk;
They seemed to be in trouble
With no one which to talk.

They stepped up to Judge Carter's grog shop
They stepped up to the bar
But little did he think my friends
He'd met his fatal hour
The sting of death was nigh him
When Martin came through the door
A few words passed between them
Concerning the row before.

The people got excited
Began to leave the room
When a ball from Martin's pistol
Laid Tolliver in the tomb.
His friends soon gathered round him
His wife to weep and wail
Soon Martin was arrested
And hurried off to jail.

They put him in the jail at Rowan
There to detain awhile
In the hands of law and justice
To bravely stand his trail
The people talked of lynching him
At present it did fail
Soon Martin was removed
To the Winchester Jail.

Someone forged an order
Their names I do not know



A plan was soon agreed upon
 For Martin they did go
 They went and called upon him
 He seemed to be in dread
 "They've set a plan to kill me"
 To the jailer Martin said.

"They shot and killed Sol Bradley
 A sober, innocent man,
 An' left his wife and children
 To do the best they can
 They shot at young Ed Sizemore
 Although his life was saved
 He seemed to shun the grog shop
 He stood so nigh the grave"

They put the handcuffs on him
 His heart was in distress
 They hurried to the station
 Pulled up the night express
 All along the line she lumbered
 Just at her usual speed
 There were only a few in number
 To do this dreadful deed.

Martin was in the smoking car
 Accompanied by his wife
 They did not want her present
 When they took her husband's life
 But when they arrived at Farmers
 They had no time to lose;
 Stepped up to the engineer
 And begged him not to move

They stepped up to the prisoner
 Revolvers in their hand
 In death he soon was sinking
 He died in iron bands.
 The death of these two men
 Should never be forgot
 Their bodies all pierced and torn
 By thirty-two buckshot.

I call this as a warning
 To all young men, beware
 Your pistols cause you trouble
 On that you may depend.
 In the bottom of a whiskey glass
 A lurking devil dwells
 Burns the breast of those who drink it
 And sends their souls to hell.
 In the bottom of a whiskey glass
 A lurking devil dwells
 Burns the breast of those who drink it
 And sends their souls to hell.

Side I Band 2

Pearl Bryan

Pearl Bryan is in the tradition of many old-world folksongs. Its theme is as old as humanity and in its delineation an underlying mood of compassion obscures censure of what is accepted as morally wrong and legally culpable. It borrows a poignant melody that has served not one, but many, ballads in the past. As in many versions the sentiment is sometimes cloying and facts themselves are twisted somewhat or romanticized.

The story, summarized from various accounts, including that of Paul Brewster in "Ballads and Songs of Indiana" (Indiana U. Press), is sparse, depressing and reaches, finally, a gruesome and grotesque climax. In the vicinity of Greencastle, Indiana, we are told, Pearl Bryan was "seduced" by a man named Wood or Woods. For whatever reason he thereupon ceases to be a part of the story. (He may have been a married man; a scoundrel; he may have refused to help the girl; she may have disdained his help; in the absence of facts, the reader is free to draw his own conclusions.) In at least one version of the story, only one of the defendants at the subsequent murder trial was involved be-

cause of friendship with Pearl. The other was merely a friend of a friend. To have gone to either of them, since they were not even regular medical students, suggests a desolate mood and a feeling of desperation. (Her fear and panic were the same as would be those of any girl in a similar situation, irrespective of morals, differing markedly only in her inability to cope; such emotions run deeper than the names we give things, and are not tagged with a moral label for our easier identification later on.)

Seeking a way out of her difficulties, Pearl left Greencastle and went to Cincinnati, Ohio, where she sought the help of Scott Jackson and Alonzo Walling. (At their trial, the charge being murder in the first degree, it was disclosed that they had performed an illegal operation.) Up to this point, of course, the whole affair had been kept secret. Then on February 1, 1896, the headless body of a woman was found near Fort Thomas, Kentucky. A twenty-dollar reward was posted for her identification. Six days later, however, the body was identified by shoes and by the feet -- "Miss Bryan," Paul Brewster casually informing us, "being web-footed". (Whether or not the head was found, we were unable to establish.) Jackson and Walling, their association with Pearl Bryan being established, accused each other of the crime. Both were hanged for murder on March 20, 1897.

This ballad is found in three different versions, apart from word-variants. The first is a simple narrative of events, the second an adaptation of an older song (The Jealous Lover, Florella) and the third a story with a moralistic tone. The one we have included is from southern Indiana and is of the last-named type.

Regional folksong studies that include the story of Pearl Bryan, or ballads from which at least one version derives musically, cover the entire area of the Ohio Valley. Mellinger Edward Henry, in "Folksongs of the Southern Highlands," noted that one of the melodies used for Pearl Bryan could be found in such ballads as -- to name a few -- Lorella, Floella, Flora Ella, Blue Eyed Ella, Poor Lurella, Poor Lora, Poor Loria, Fair Florella and just plain Nell.

Additional references: Eddy's "Ballads & Songs from Ohio"; Cox's "Folk Songs of the South".

Pearl Bryan

Come all you young ladies, a sad story I'll relate
 It happened in Fort Thomas in the Old Kentucky State
 'Twas January the thirty-first this dreadful deed was
 done

By Jackson and by Walling, How cold Pearl's blood
 did run.

Oh, little did Pearl Bryan think when she left her
 home that day
 The grip she carried in her hand would hide her head
 away
 She thought it was her lover's hand she could trust
 both night and day
 Although it was her lover's hand that stole her life
 away.

Little did her parents think when she left her happy
 home.
 This darling girl just in her youth would never more
 return
 How sad it would have been to them to have heard
 Pearl's lonely voice
 At midnight in that lonely spot where those two boys
 rejoiced.

The driver in the seat is all who knows of Pearl's
 sad fate
 Of poor Pearl Bryan away from home in the old
 Kentucky State
 Of her aged parents we all know well what fortune
 they would give

*for Fair Florilla, see Folkways FP 23

If Pearl was but to them returned her natural life
to live.

In came Pearl Bryan's sister falling on her knees
Pleading to Scott Jackson "Oh my sister's head oh
please"
Scott Jackson set a stubborn jaw not a word would he
have said
"I'll meet my sister in heaven where we'll find her
missing head"

In came Walling's mother pleading for her son
"Don't take my son my only son from him I cannot
part"
The jury reached a verdict and to their feet they
sprung
"For the crime these boys committed they surely must
be hung."

Young ladies now take warning, men are so unjust
It may be your best lover but you know not whom to
trust

Pearl Bryan died away from home upon a lonely spot
Take heed, take heed believe me, girls, don't let
this be your lot.

Side I Band 3

Sidney Allen

The creators of this modern ballad appear to have been influenced by Casey Jones*, the railroad song dating from early in this century. It is, of course, generally assumed that both drew upon earlier ballads for inspiration. Casey Jones is of mixed Negro-white origin and inherited some of its verses, as well as something of its melody, from "Been on the Cholly so long" (usually defined as "been on the bum so long"); the pattern from which later versions were cut is out of American Negro blues and ballads and is sometimes called Southern Casey Jones on record labels. At any rate, the relationship of Sidney Allen to Casey is of interest and since it has not, to our knowledge, been mentioned elsewhere, we include it for what it's worth. In its own right, variants of this song have been called Claud Allen and various other titles as well.

The precise background of the Allen-Massie case, as it was popularly known, has been obscured by the dramatic incidents growing out of it. The incident that sparked the drama is inferred by the remark of a correspondent that "It has been a boast of the Allens that no member of the family has ever been in jail, although several of them have at different times been tried and convicted for crimes of violence."

The events in the little courthouse in the Blue Ridge country at Hillsville, Virginia, in 1912, remind one of a frontier town in the roaring west in the middle of the 19th century. It all began when Floyd Allen attacked an officer to retrieve a prisoner. He was arrested and held for trial. "Mountain justice," "honor," and all manner of country cliches were in the air, twisting the feelings of the public and seeding a whirlwind. The talk reached such proportions, according to the Nashville Tennessean, that friends of Judge Thornton L. Massie, who was to preside, advised him to carry a revolver. He is quoted as having rejected this counsel with the remark, "Rather than indicate a fear of law-breakers by sitting on the bench with a weapon in my pocket I prefer to be killed in the administration of justice."

As Judge Massie, at the trial, sentenced Floyd Allen to a year in the penitentiary for "violently attacking" an arresting posse, twenty relatives and friends shot up the courthouse. Barely had he finished pronouncing sentence when the courtroom resounded with shots; it was soon cloudy with smoke and acrid with the smell of cordite. "In less than a minute," reported the Literary Digest of March 30, 1912, "two hundred shots had been fired. The judge, the sheriff, the prosecuting attorney lay dead, and the Clerk of the

Court and several jurors were suffering from bullet wounds. The murderers swung onto their horses and headed into the mountains."

Floyd was wounded, re-captured, and sentenced to death, as was Claud Allen later on. The story of Sidney is told in this ballad, and told with the characteristic veracity of many ballads of this region. It was collected in Lawrence County, Kentucky.

The affair stirred up a nationwide tempest -- rather ironically, in view of Judge Massie's fate -- on the question of judicial recall and, from the flood of comment, appears to have inspired as many interpretations of the behaviour of mountain people as there were newspapers to print them. None of these that have been preserved seems to describe the events through the eyes of the Allens or their friends. Most of us, editorial writers included, tend to think in terms of our own cultural milieu or, even more often, what we think constitutes our cultural milieu, when the truth of the matter is we are most of us so sold on our way of life that we seldom get out of our tight skins for a breath of fresh air. Anthropologists sometimes manage it, in their objectivity, and, once in a while, for example in listening to the simple pathos of these ballads of the Ohio Valley region, we can, too.

With this somewhat tendentious parenthetical out of the way, we quote a better than representative comment from a distinguished name in journalism, The Richmond (Va.) Times-Dispatch:

"The psychology of the Allens is simply that of unbridled individualism, setting itself above all social control. This was partly due to the frontier and mountain environment, wherein each man makes his own laws and executes them by brute force. And partly it is attributed to the isolation and interdependence of a clan. The border raids and reprisals of Scotland's history show to what ferocious lengths this anarchy of individual liberty can go. It is a survival of clan feeling."

One paper, less realistic in its appraisal, suggested that the Allen clan represented anarchistic (political) leanings. At this affront to mountain folk The New York Mail bridled, "These Virginian and Kentuckian and Tennessean outlaws are the most zealous and earnest conservatives in the world. They regulate their lives by immemorial custom. To them all 'book-l'arnin',' means revolution and subversion." "We can testify that they once made their preparations to shoot a young man who told them of the wonders of the World's Fair in Chicago."

Additional references: Henry's "Folksongs of the Southern Highlands"; Thomas' "Ballad Makin' In The Mountains of Kentucky"; Brown's "North Caroline Folklore"; Botkin's "America's Railroad Folklore".

Sidney Allen

Come all you good people if you want to hear
The story of a famous mountaineer
Sidney Allen was the fellow's name
In a courthouse he won his fame
The caller called the jury right at half past nine
Sidney Allen was a prisoner and he was on time
He mounted to the bar with a pistol in his hand
Sent judge Massie to the promised land.

Now, just a moment later and the place was
in a roar
The dead and the dying they were lying on the floor

* Casey was nicknamed for the Kentucky town of Kayce where there is a monument to the engineer of "The Cannonball". In dedicating it our nationally popular Kentucky senator, Alben W. Barkley, expressed satisfaction that this was a tribute "to a man of peace,... just a human being respected by all who knew him."

With a thirty-eight special, a thirty-eight Colt Sidney backed that sheriff up agin the wall The sheriff saw he was in a mighty bad place A mountain man was starin' him right in the face He turned to the window and then he said "In a moment, Lord, and we'll all be dead."

Sidney saddled up his pony and away he did ride His friends and his relatives were ridin' by his side They all shook hands and swore they would hang Before they'd give up to that Coulton gang Sidney Allen wandered and he traveled all around Till he was captured in a western town Taken to the station with a ball and chain They put poor Sidney on an eastbound train.

They arrived at Sidney's home about eleven forty-one He met his wife and daughter and two little sons They all shook hands and knelt down to pray Saying "Lord, don't take our daddy away" The people were all gathered from far and near To see poor Sidney sentenced to the electric chair But to their great surprise the judge he said, "He's a-goin' to the penitentiary instead"

SAM BASS

Side I Band 4

Sam Bass is known and sung by people in and around Lawrence County, Indiana, the famous outlaw's home county. Bruce Buckley's style of singing has a pre-jazz angularity about it in his delivery of ballads, that is particularly gratifying on this one. We wonder if the cowhand on the Chisholm Trail invariably substituted another word for hell in the last line, then recalled that singers of the rough, tough and outspoken school often affect this pseudo-prissiness for the h--of it.

John Denton, an old-time cowpuncher of Gainesville, Texas, is said to have written the verses of this fine American ballad that has kept green the memory and sentimental associations (of otherwise sensible Texas people) about a card-playing, whiskey-drinking, horse-racing, train-robbing man. In his introduction to Folksongs of Texas, J. Frank Dobie, the famous chronicler of the Southwest, remarks: "In the years that followed, (the death of Bass) thousands of longhorned cattle slept on their bedgrounds while cowboys rode slowly around and around the herds singing verses about Sam Bass."

SAM BASS

Born, July 21, 1851
Died, July 21, 1878

A Brave Man Reposes In Death Here

Why Was He Not True?

They've chipped Sam Bass' first gravestone to pieces and now they're working on the second. They're still singing songs about him and collectors are offering exorbitant sums for the cinch straps of his saddle. For Sam was a cowboy, albeit a short-term one, and whereas the typical Texas cowhand "had a ten-dollar horse and a fifty-dollar saddle" and made his livin' punchin' Texas cattle," Sam had a little sorrel mare worth more than the saddle to begin with and costing Sam a lot more in the long run.

One of ten children, Sam Bass was born July 21, 1851, in Lawrence County, Indiana, on a farm north of Mitchell. A brother, George W. Bass, was in the 16th Regiment of Indiana Volunteers and was killed in battle at Richmond, Kentucky, August 30, 1862. Following the death of his first wife in childbirth, Daniel Bass remarried in 1861, joined the M.E. Church and "was a praying Methodist up to the time of his death in 1864."

The children were then given in custody to an uncle on their mother's side of the family. Some

writers have adduced from this a bleak, orphaned childhood. However that may be, it was certainly not an educational one; when Sam "ran away" to St. Louis in 1869 he could neither read nor write and could barely sign his name. From St. Louis he went by riverboat to Rosedale, Mississippi, where he earned a reputation for dissipation, skill at cards, and straight-shooting with a revolver.

The following year he went to Denton, Texas, where he had one and a half years of steady, sober employment with a local hotel. After that he worked as teamster for Sheriff W. F. Egan and "remained until the beginning of his downward career." The sheriff found him trustworthy, efficient and polite but scolded him for habits of economy both on behalf of himself and his employer's horses. Sam rationed out the oats like a miser and never paid more than \$5. for a suit. In contrast to his earlier and later periods of living high on the hog, Sam led a quiet life, one of his few companions being a young boy who taught him how to write.

The interlude of respectability, which seemed to have established Sam's character for the people of the county, lasted less than four years all told. Then came the slow transformation when, according to the neighbors, he became wholly unlike himself, associating with Henry Underwood and other "wild, reckless fellows."

Probably no other bad man's career has been traced to as innocent a filly as the Denton Mare. Not many months after Sam had acquired this nimble bit of horse-flesh the sheriff found it necessary to reprimand him for negligence and finally put it straight to him, the horse or the job. Sam chose the horse. As his biographer put it, "On an evil day in 1874 he became the owner of a little sorrel mare. The mare proved to be fast and its owner soon became faster than the mare." By 1875 his entire outlook on life seemed to have changed. But was there a thread running through its fabric, a thread and a pattern?

"Whatever he did was done with all his might," says his first and most thorough biographer. "As a boy at cards he became the most skillful of all his companions; as an employee he was faithful to his employer; as a bandit he outstripped all the daring characters who have wrought deeds of violence upon the Texas soil."

In Indian Territory * the Denton mare raced for keeps; she outclassed several ponies but their owners refused to part with them. What happened then, as to motivation, foreshadows a part of his death-bed confession. "Bass," we are told, "was determined to have what the mare won. At night he took the ponies he had won and as many more as he could lay his hands on. He drove the horses across the state of Texas and sold them in San Antonio. This was his first known act of robbery."

In the summer of 1876 Sam and Joel Collins gathered up a drove of cattle for the northern market. They added mavericks (unbranded cattle) to the herd and were even rumored to have changed a few brands. This was presented as a deplorable but not uncommon practice.

They rode herd up the Chisholm to Kansas, hired riders to take the herd to Nebraska where they again took over and continued to the Black Hills where it was sold. Ballad melodies being traditional it is intriguing to speculate that Sam and his partner may have sung his own tune to quiet the herd on the long drive up the Chisholm Trail.

* Indian Territory: the official name of the Territory set aside for the Five Civilized Tribes, the Cherokee, Chickasaw, Choctaw, Creek and Seminole. Now Oklahoma.

With two four-horse teams, the partners set up a freight business between Dodge City and the Black Hills. Despite this appearance of thrift and industry there are hints that the Texas cowboys were no match for the bad men (and women) of the northern country. If so, they were unaware of it and gave in to the rope slowly, like calves that don't quite know they're being pulled in for branding. In 1877 they sold out the freighting business and opened a saloon, western style, with gambling and girls, in that unofficial capital of Badlands, U.S.A. known as Deadwood--"a place where only respectability and virtue are crowded into corners."

The 1878 biography suggests that Sam's friend Henry Underwood remained in Texas. Sam wrote him a letter, saying that he and Collins had bought a quartz mine, adding with a hard-earned Texas drawl that almost spoke from the letter, that he had the world by the tail with a downhill pull!

What happened to industry and honest sweat? There is a brief hiatus in the story just about here and one cannot but suspect Sam was "taken". When we next hear of him, Tom Nixon and Jack Davis were his partners in "the robbery business". They staged seven stage-coach robberies in what was later to be known as the best tradition of horse opera, masked faces, drawn guns, and dire threats. The little Denton mare was going to have a lot to answer for.

An enlarged gang planned and successfully brought off the capture and robbery of an eastbound Union Pacific train at Big Spring, Nebraska. Collins is said to have master-minded it at the suggestion of Jack Davis. The gang included Bill Heffridge and James Berry, the latter of Mexico, Missouri. It was so carefully planned that Collins may have been privy to the \$60,000 in gold carried in the express car. The gold and Collins' familiar face -- he must have been carefully masked, if at all -- were their undoing. One passenger, assaulted and beaten up by the gang, recognized him. The gold was mint-marked that year in San Francisco. Ironically, this was the only train robbery in which they attacked passengers.

Big Spring was a lonely water station but the distant sound of the train whistle, usually a welcome one, on September 18, 1877, was the signal for a scene of terror and violence. Even before the light of the through express rounded the bend, the gang held up the station hands. When the train pulled to a stop to take on water, members of the gang went after the engineer and fireman. They had "trouble" with the express messenger who couldn't or wouldn't open the safe -- then by pure chance one of the men noticed some boxes on the floor, opened one and found more gold than he'd ever seen before. And some of the passengers were "reluctant". But although there was some shooting, no one was killed and, aside from wounds, there was as little damage as on a Hollywood set. The main haul was the gold, \$60,000 worth, all in \$20 gold-pieces, all minted in San Francisco and bearing the telltale date, 1877.

(We are reminded by historians that Indiana, in the 19th century, had more than one notorious outlaw gang and that Sam may have been inspired by the Reno Brothers, the Archer gang, and others. The Reno gang are credited with having committed the first train robbery in America, in October, 1866, of a train with a wood-burning engine and \$10,000 in the express car. The gang was lynched by vigilantes in the New Albany, Indiana, jail on December 11, 1868. So much for inspiration. There is no doubt, though, that the Sam Bass gang profited by the well-publicized techniques of their predecessors in armed violence.)

After the first two hundred miles of their getaway they divided the loot and separated into small groups. The authorities had a good description of Collins and were quickly on his trail. Collins and Heffridge (the latter identified also as William Cott)

tried to get past a sheriff's posse that included cavalrymen, with the yarn that they were just a couple of cowhands on the way back to Texas, but the story didn't go over. When he saw he wasn't getting away with it Collins and his partner, although conspicuously outnumbered, went for their guns. Before they could start firing, the men, their horses and their pack-pony were riddled with bullets. The sheriff put his gun away and, after a glance at the dead men, turned to the pack-pony. This seemed to clinch the identification -- wrapped up in an old pair of trousers was \$25,000 in \$20 gold-pieces, 1877 mintage!

Berry got to Mexico, Missouri, cashed in \$9,000 (for greenbacks) was wounded in the leg by a posse and died later from gangrene poisoning. He confessed his own part in the crime and gave the names of his confederates.

Bass' stretch of borrowed time was to carry him a bit further and add greatly to his notoriety. To begin with, he and Davis bought "a one-horse hack" and completed the second leg of their trip to Texas as "detectives" looking for the notorious train robbers! For four days they traveled with a posse of armed searchers, with \$20,000 of the U.P. loot under the buggy seat!

Jack Davis left for a jaunt to New Orleans but re-joined Sam in Denton County and they went on to Fort Worth where Jim Murphy, who was later to stool on them, changed \$4000 of their gold into greenbacks. Meanwhile, though the sheriff's office was unable to arrest Henry Underwood on the U.P. charge (they wanted him badly, claiming that "Tom Nixon" was an alias, but he had a Texas alibi) they sought him on another charge. A surprise party was planned by the sheriff and his men but Underwood, Bass and Jackson were forewarned. Not only did the law officers fail to act in unison, to make matters worse, the strategy leaked out and at least two prostitutes knew of it. The latter were often in the position of being a link to the lawless.

Bass stayed on in country he knew. There he could ride a horse where tracks would be difficult to make out. He knew the hills and the rocks and the hamlets. He knew the bottoms, with their tangled growth of brush and foliage, where it didn't get properly lighted until midday, where a man on a horse had to know his way, skirting swamp deeps. This was badlands on a sizeable scale. Cabins were lost in the woods. No one knew how many fugitives were hidden out; those who had no reason to fear the law had too much respect for their neighbors' skill with six-shooters to gossip.

The outlaws maintained a system of couriers and an environment of friendly neighbors that went right into Dallas and went north-west into Indian Territory. In this set-up, Sam Bass and his gang were merely one group. In the gang itself, on jobs, Sam wasn't always the leader but he had already become so in the eyes of the public. Without a notch on his gun and in less than a year's time, Sam became one of the most notorious train robbers of the century. The outlaws rode into towns and small cities openly and were said to have had business interests in some of them.

So Sam stayed in Denton County, his gold and his good manners making many friends. "He was always so kind and obliging," the neighbors said, echoing sentiments voiced when he was an honest teamster, a man-of-all-work, a cowboy, working for hire. Some said, "Folks'd do 'most anything for him," meaning they would. At the time of the Texas robberies, as Sam Bass' jobs subsequent to the U.P. were called, and which occurred at this period, the Dallas Commercial noted, "A detective fully acquainted with the character of the people says there are women among them who would ride fifty miles to warn one of the gang of approaching danger." Another item editorialized "This stolen gold brought reproach to the whole people, ruin to individuals and sorrow to many homes."

The Texas Robberies

"For outrageous audacity and cool and deliberate proceedings the Texas robberies have never been surpassed, not even in the notorious careers of the James and Younger brothers, nor in the bold assaults made upon the Union Pacific trains. Blow after blow was struck, even when it was known that officers on all trains were on the alert, and that all the express and mail cars were guarded." -- 1878 biography.

All of these robberies occurred at night, the sparsely-lit night of the old-time countryside, and all were staged at small stations. The scene repeated itself with only slight variations, like "frames" in a penny arcade movie. There was the quiet of the Texas night, possibly the far-off howl of some night animal, the lonesome and distant wail of the train's whistle, then the quick thunder of hoof-beats on the hard-packed earth as the outlaws moved in for the crime.

A successful train robbery depended on mobility, a logical but flexible plan of operations and split-second thinking on the part of the leader. This man was called the "conductor" and it was his job to go through the mail and express cars. Once the station hands were immobilized it was the "engineer's" assignment to take care of the engineer and fireman, not killing but getting them out of the engine cab and in front of the express car with other captives, where the railroad and express company employees, and not the outlaws, would be in the line of any fire from within the express car.

The first two robberies were on the Houston and Texas Railroad, and on both occasions it was the express and mail train from Chicago and St. Louis. The first was at Allen Station north of Dallas, and Tom Spotswood, later identified by a glass eye, was allegedly "conductor"; on the second, at Hutchins south of the city, Bass, Jackson, Seaborn Barnes and possibly one other were in the gang. Then they switched west and east of Dallas, respectively, on the Texas and Pacific, for jobs three and four. The first was at Eagle Ford and Arkansas Johnson, who'd made a jail break with Underwood, was in on it with the others. All of these jobs held excitement, suspense and anticipation for the gang, harassment and fear of violence for train and express employees, and there was usually gunfire before the door of the express car was broken in and they got down to business. At Mesquite, the fourth and last job in this series, they wounded a trainman and three of the gang were wounded.

The Sam Bass gang, with their mixture of railroad and outlaw jargon, played hide-and-seek and a grim, grown-up game of cops and robbers with private detectives on the trail of the outlaws and in competition for the reward money offered. One time the gang rode into Denton to deliver a message to the effect that "They had heard that the Dallas party were looking for outlaws and if they were the ones sought, they would like to have them (the detectives) come out and try to take them. They would remain in sight for two hours and a half...." More than a hundred men saw them, in plain view from the public square. The detectives asked help from the authorities but the latter wanted (1) proper credentials from Dallas and (2) the loan of the detectives' fire-arms. Even in the 1870's, it would seem, the private eyes had it bad! Being outflummoxed and out-numbered, they prudently ignored the challenge.

There was no doubt that Sam Bass was a lawless man, leading a life of violence and armed robbery; it was only chance that he had not committed a homicide as well. But Sam was polite; they said you could take his word for almost anything, and out of fool pig-headedness the people of Denton County mistook their erring son for a Robin Hood and the dreary dismal bottoms for Arden Forest.

The forces ultimately deployed against Sam Bass, outlaw and train robber, were certainly impressive. Aside from the sheriff's posse and the redoubtable detectives from Dallas, there were the Texas Rangers under Captain Lee Hall and, in lieu of the Marines, the United States Cavalry were brought into the fracas. The nucleus of Sam Bass' gang numbered six or seven men. Of course, not all of these groups were involved at one time. Misdirection and guerilla tactics split the forces of law and order. Once at Big Caddo Creek, when the outlaws were surrounded and greatly outnumbered, there was a gun battle, the like of which you no longer see except on television late at night, on and off horses and from behind trees. When the smoke cleared Sam and his men were off and away in a cloud of dust with a clatter of hoofbeats.

During the course of the Texas robberies they not only made it their policy not to molest passengers, once the job was done they maintained, within the county, their own brand of goodneighborly relations. They shopped for supplies and paid for them. At one such stop they left a note saying they were headed for Taylor's store and dared the sheriff to come and take them.

The sheriff's posse outflanked them, swinging out into the woods and emerging ahead of the gang, only to find themselves outmaneuvered. There was an ungodly whoop from the trees behind them. The horses broke from cover and the men of the posse were taken before they could draw. Nor was that all. Sam took them along to Taylor's store, got them "boiling drunk" and as a final humiliation left a note chiding the sheriff for having tried to bull-doze Sam Bass and his gang.

At about this time Jim Murphy, who was a friend of Collins' brother, got into the gang as a paid spy. He tipped the authorities as to their whereabouts. The men had come into Round Rock to buy supplies and "case" a bank. Barnes, Jackson and Bass were in Koppel's store and Deputy sheriffs Grimes and Moore came on the run to investigate. The deputies had barely time to state their business when guns were out and in action. Grimes was hit six times and never got his gun out. Moore managed to fire five shots before he was hit with a bullet in his lung.

Rangers Wade, Connor and Herold, hearing the gunfire, came on the run, shooting from the hip. Major Jones and Captain Hall added to the fusillade. Barnes pitched dead while trying to mount his horse. Bass was wounded twice, a shot, said to have been from Herold's (or Herrell's) gun ultimately proving fatal. Jackson helped him mount but he didn't get far. A farmer saw the wounded man near his house, where Jackson had left him temporarily; he reported it and they took the outlaw without incident.

Less than a year after the Union Pacific holdup the fabulous career of Sam Bass, bandit, outlaw and train robber, had etched its epitaph in bullets. Nixon got away early in the year, Spotswood was being held for a second trial but Sam, like most of the others, died from gunshot wounds. In his final confession he said he had been in the "robbing business... before the Union Pacific robbery last fall."

Q. How came you to commence this kind of life?

A. Started out sporting on horses.

Q. Why did you get worse than horse-racing?

A. Because they robbed me of my first \$300.

Q. After they robbed you, what did you do next?

A. Went to robbing stages in the Black Hills -- robbed seven. Got very little money. Jack Davis, Nixon and myself were all that were in the Black Hills stage robberies. Joel Collins, Bill Heffridge, Tom Nixon, Jack Davis, Jim Berry and me were in the Union Pacific robbery.

So much for those who had died or disappeared. Of his still-living confederates, Sam Bass is reputed to have said, "It is agin my profession to tell. If a man knows anything let him die with it in him." This is in character but possibly apocryphal. If there is any moral to his story, it was carved on that first tombstone that souvenir-hunters have long since reduced to rubble.

NOTE: Although many accounts of the short-lived career of Sam Bass were consulted, salient facts and quotations are from "The Life and Adventures of Sam Bass. The Notorious Union Pacific Train Robber" (Dallas, 1878). We thought the details of the original biography would be of interest, particularly as the book is not readily available. Other references to the song: Beldon's "Folksongs and Ballads of Missouri"; Randolph's "Ozark Folksongs II" and many other folksong collections. Additional reference to story: "Pictorial History of the West", by Horan & Sann (Crown, N. Y.)

Sam Bass was born in Indiana it was his native home
And at the age of seventeen young Sam began to roam
Sam first went out to Texas a cowboy for to be
A kinder hearted fellow you seldom ever see.

Sam use to deal in racestock one called the Denton
mare
He entered her in scrub races and took her to the
fair
Sam use to coin the money and spend it just as free
He always drank good whiskey wherever he might be.

Sam left the Collins' ranch in the merry month of May
With a herd of Texas cattle the Black Hills for to see
Sold out in Custer's city and then went on a spree
A harder set of cowboys you seldom ever see.

On their way back to Texas they robbed the UP train
And then split up in couples and started out again
Joe Collins and his partner were overtaken soon
With all their hard-earned money they had to meet
their doom.

Sam made it back to Texas all rightside up with care
Rode into the town of Denton with all his friends to
share
Sam's life was short in Texas, three robberies did he
do
He robbed all the passenger, mail, and express cars
too.

Sam met his fate at Round Rock, July the twenty-first
They filled poor Sam with rifleballs and emptied out
his purse
Sam he is a corpse now and six feet under clay
And Jackson's in the bushes, trying to get away.

Jim had borrowed Sam's good gold and didn't want to
pay
The only shot he saw was to give poor Sam away
He sold out Sam and Barnes and left their friends to
mourn
Oh what a scorching Jim will get when Gabriel blow
his horn.

So he sold out Sam and Barnes and left their friends
to mourn
Oh what a scorching Jim will get when Gabriel blows
his horn
he might have gone to heaven there's none of us can
tell
But if I am right in my surmise....he's gone down
the other way.

Side II Band 1

LULU VIERS

A characteristic of many American ballads now in oral tradition in the Ohio Valley region is their journalistic accuracy. There is also at times an almost prosaic, rather than poetic, approach to subject

matter. (There are, of course, poems in prose and there is poetry in the prosaic.) Story-telling is implicit in balladry. There is not a major event in the history of our country -- from the Boston Tea Party to the raising of the flag on Iwo Jima -- that has not been related in song, to say nothing of the miscellaneous happenings, salubrious or somber, of everyday life.

Balladry, in this and other countries, was a means of communication long before the telegraph tapped out Samuel F. B. Morse's "What Hath God Wrought!" and, of course, long, long before radio and television made yesterday's corpse a really cold cadaver. Salvador de Madariaga once suggested that, historically, the burden of literary expression was in poetry until a few centuries ago. Naturally, he did not make this a categorical imperative. Nevertheless, in this modern age, when balladry is usually thought of as being less for enlightenment than for entertainment, we are likely to forget its utilitarian functions.

In state and national involvements, both folk balladeers and renowned editors and poets wrote ballads pertaining to specific events; these were of necessity accurate, cogently expressed and often written for propaganda purposes (Whittier's "Song of The Vermonters" is an example). Sagas of violence also usually included matter-of-fact details, already traditional in balladry of other countries. And as in the field of journalism, there are in folk (and hillbilly) balladry as many approaches to and attitudes towards the gory and gruesome as one finds amongst one's friends and neighbors.

The urge to relate contemporary tragedies in song persists despite the elaborate system of news dispensing available to the public. We must assume that it fulfills a need above and beyond the clatter of the linotype machine and the staccato voice of the radio news announcer. Balladeers sang about Gerald Chapman, the mail robber, about Sacco and Vanzetti, who died in the electric chair, about Floyd Collins, who was trapped in a cave, and of many another twentieth century tragedy. There are hundreds, probably thousands, of these ballads in the United States and of them the really excellent folksongs, will have been few indeed. But as any farmer could tell you, you need milk to get cream.

Folksong has an intimacy of time and place.

"Come all you good people and stand real close
around,

I'll tell you a story of a pretty young girl..."
In the next couplet, Auxier, Kentucky, is "a place you all know well." In the following stanza the balladeer again invokes his listeners:

"Come all you young people and stand real close
around,

I'll tell you a story how Lulu Viers was
drowned."

And then we are in the meat of the story, sung to us in a vigorous, guitar-rhythmed voice.

Lulu Viers tells the story of a young Kentucky girl killed by her lover, John Coyer. At the time of the murder she was unmarried but had a child, supposedly Coyer's. She left her home in Auxier, Kentucky, went with Coyer to be married in Elkhorn City (the sequence of events suggests a parallel to Dreiser's "An American Tragedy" in some respects). He killed her and threw her body in the Big Sandy, a tributary to the Ohio. Her body was found six months later near Hanging Rock, Ohio.

John was arrested but -- this was in 1918 -- was released to join the army. This ballad was undoubtedly written just after Coyer was arrested and before his trial and release to the army, because in the last

JOHN HENRY

This lively John Henry has the thumping beat of a dance, and reminds one of fiddlin' tunes. (That the John Henry melody was often used for dances is entertainingly described and demonstrated for us by Leadbelly in Folkways Album 2410.)

The saga of John Henry, through the many hollers (work songs), dance songs and ballads about him, has grown to legendary proportions. Unlike the lumberman's Paul Bunyan, who grew gargantuan in size like one of those helium-filled figures in the Mummers' Parade in Philadelphia-- the dimensions of Babe, the Blue Ox, were staggering, too -- John Henry remained variously an ordinary mortal of medium height or, at most, a heavy-set, hard-muscled, six-footed, steel-driving man...

"I'm throwin' twelve pounds from my hips on
down,
Jes' listen to the cold steel ring,
Lawd, Lawd, jes' listen to the cold steel
ring..."

The hundreds of songs about John Henry emphasize a singularity of achievement-- he beat a steam drill in a tunneling operation at the boring of the C. & O. tunnel, Big Bend, West Virginia (1870-72). In the simple story, of which all additions including the love life of John Henry are mere adornments, John Henry, with a ten- or twelve-pound hammer in his hand, was pitted against the machine; he won the contest but he died. In the deeper sense this is a profound and moving allegory of the indomitable spirit of the Negro people but it may also be regarded as one of the first truly great folksongs of the modern industrial era and the century of America's westward expansion.

In the summer or autumn of 1870 work had just begun on the C. & O. tunnel and the heading (shield) was being driven through red shale at the eastern end. A. A. Lloyd, in "The Anatomy of John Henry" (Keynote, London, Aug-Sept. 1947) remarks, "There were many ways for a man to die, without rupturing himself against a steam-drill; there were blasting accidents, rockfalls; silicosis was common, and there was a peculiar fatal illness called 'tunnel trichnosis'." Chappell, in "John Henry" (U. of N. C. Press) quotes an old man: "The Big Bend tunnel was a terrible place, and many men got killed there. Mules too. And they throwed the dead men and mules all together in that fill between the mountains... When I first come they showed me the big fill and said they tried to put John Henry there first, but didn't do it, and put him somewhere else."

A tunnel town was in some respects like a rowdy frontier town, the town of men who worked hard and lived hard. At the end of the boring of the Big Bend, the Border Watchman of Union, West Virginia, stated that the tunnelers "having knocked out the wall between them,"--the rock separating east-west borings-- "they tried to knock out each other." "All the high pitch of violence was there," Mr. Lloyd comments, "and the low pitch of misery that follows it. It was great ground for ballad-making... They had a lot of songs with steel and sex symbols woven together and you never knew whether they were singing of boring a tunnel or loving a woman."

Leaving aside, but not discarding altogether, the theory that John Henry, the ballad, evolved from a work-song, a hammer-song, it seems probable that the melody, like certain of the innumerable stanzas, represents a mingling of American Negro and British Isles influence. This is the opinion of more than one musicologist. As we mentioned in Notes for Blues by Brownie McGhee (FP 30-2) in connection with verses in Careless Love, some verses of the John Henry saga have also been adapted from the ubiquitous, Elizabethan

Lass of Roch Royal.

Machines need no songs to give them pulse and one often finds the best examples of ballads related to worksongs in occupations where men pace their labor with song. Bruce Buckley learned his set of stanzas from a Negro farmer in central Kentucky. Other versions, even some of the best, have come from chain gangs and prison farms.

To those interested in the John Henry story, and the song, we would suggest that there are additional stanzas to be heard on Folkways FP 53 (Leadbelly); an excellent narrative version collected in Alabama by Harold Courlander will also soon be available. And while all John Henry material is grist to the mill, and much of it makes fine flour, an indispensable volume is Guy B. Johnson's "John Henry, Tracking Down a John Henry Legend." (U. of N. C. Press).

Additional ref.: "Best Loved American Folk Songs" by John and Alan Lomax (Grosset & Dunlap) includes musical arrangements by Charles and Ruth Seeger in the spirit of the material transcribed.

John Henry

Oh some say he come from Cuba
And some say he come from Spain
But I say he come from Hardrock levee camp
Because steel-driving John Henry was his name, name,
name
Steel-driving John Henry was his name.

When John Henry was a little infant baby
Mama rocked him in the palm of her hand
It was early one morning that I heard the poor gal cry
"He's got a right to be a steel-driving man, man, man
A right to be a steel-driving man, man, man."

Well, John Henry growed to be a right smart sized boy
He was sittin on his papa's knee
Spied Number Nine tunnel on that C&O road
Says, "It's bound to be the death of me, me, me
Bound to be the death of me."

Well they took John Henry to the tunnel
Oh they put him to headin' the drive
Well the rock's being so high John Henry being so low
He laid down his hammer and he cried -----
Laid down his hammer and he cried.

John Henry said to his captain
"You know I'm nothing but a man
But before I let that steam drill beat me down
I'm gonna die with the hammer in my hand, hand, hand
Die with the hammer in my hand, hand."

Well, they put John Henry on the right hand side
The steam drill on the left
John Henry sais "I'll beat that steam drill down
If I beat my fool self to death, death, death
Beat my fool self to death."

John Henry sais to his captain
"Looky yonder what I see
Your drills done broke and your holas done choked
And you can't drive steel like me, me, me
Can't drive steel like me."

Well, John Henry had a little woman
And the dress that poor gal wore was red
Well she started down the track, she never did look
back
"I'm going where John Henry fell dead, dead, dead
Going where John Henry fell dead."



Side II Band 4

MOLLY BONDER

Song sheets, usually of words without music, were commonly known as broadsides in Colonial America and throughout the 19th century. They were also available as slip-sheets and even today song sheets are called "ballits" in parts of the South. This old broadside, still sung in the Ohio Valley, typifies songs used as models by American ballad makers, though in some respects this lovely old ballad is unusual rather than typical. The haunting, exquisite eeriness of its supernatural element is better than the loudest boast of its Irish ancestry and the liquid melody, though the wine has long since passed from old bottles, has the body and bouquet of a vintage year.

In this country it has been found under many names: Peggy Bawn, Molly Bawn, Molly Bond, Polly Vann, Mollie Vaughn, etc. The supernatural element was sometimes omitted by American ballad-makers. It has been assumed from this that the latter were more factual, a conclusion the Irish might well dispute.* This particular variant -- a very fine example of its kind -- was collected from a "singing Irish family" in Adams County, Ohio.

Among the facts known about Molly Bonder in its various guises we have culled the following from John Harrington Cox's "Folk Songs of the South": Mollie Vaughn (Our Ohio Molly Bonder) arrived in this country with the early settlers. The first printing still extant, though rarer than Button Gwinnet's signature in all likelihood, is in Jamieson's printed circular letter of 1799. He also published the ballad as "Polly Bann" in his "Popular Ballads" (1806). Another early printing was marked, "from a Ballad Printer and Seller in Boston. Isaiah Thomas, 1813."

Additional references: Eddy's "Ballads & Songs of Ohio"; Journal of the Folksong Society, London vii, 17 (The Shooting of His Dear); Joyce's "Irish Music & Song" (Molly Bawn).

*In a version in "Irish Street Ballads," by Colm O Lochlainn (Sign of The Three Candles, Dublin) this song is Young Molly Ban:

"Come all you young fellows that follow the gun
..."

and the ghost of Molly is nowhere to be seen. In the last stanza, the singer suggests you take the maids of the country...

Come all you young huntsmen that handles the gun
And ever go a hunting at the down setting sun
I will tell to you a story that happened of late
Concerning pretty Molly whose beauty was great.

Molly Bonder was a-walking when a shower came on
She went under a beech tree the shower to shun
Jimmy Ramsel was a-hunting all fowling in the dark
When he shot his own true love and he missed not the mark.

He ran along to her and threw his gun down
Saying "Molly truest Molly, I shot Molly Bond
She was the fairest jewel, the joy of my life
I always intended to make her my wife."

He ran home to his uncle and threw his gun down
Cryin' "Uncle, dearest Uncle I've shot Molly Bond
Come and go along with me and for yourself gee
Yonder lies her body under a green growing tree."

Out spoke his old uncle with locks all so gray
Saying, "Stay at home Jimmy and don't run away"
Saying, "Stay at home Jimmy your trial to stand
Perhaps you'll come clear by the laws of this land."

The day of Jimmy's trial Molly's ghost did appear
Saying, "Squire, dearest Squire, Jimmy Ramsel come
clear

He shot me and he killed me the fault was my own
With my apron tucked around me he took me for a
swan."

All the girls in this country they made themselves
glad

When they heard of Molly Bonder her beauty being dead
He said, "Take all from around me and place them in
a row

Molly shown through them like a mountain of snow."

"Take them all in their hundreds, set them all
in a row,
Molly Ban she shone among them like a mountain
of snow."

and the word mountain makes an interior rhyme with "fountain" in the preceding stanza. But Mollie's ghost surely came from somewhere and what is more natural than that she came from Ireland? At any rate, this seems to have been the situation in Massachusetts, where Polly Vann (our Molly still) was the heritage of many generations:

"The judges and lawyers stood round in a row,
Polly Vaun in the middle, like a fountain of
snow."

(quoted in the Journal of American Folklore, July-September, 1917, volume 30.) Mollie's ghost was also seen in Kentucky and no doubt in many other places. Note how close our Ohio version is to the Irish one.

In this enterprise Bruce Buckley not only supplied the voice and guitar for these songs collected in the Ohio Valley region but also gave us brief notes about each song and excellent research suggestions. Mr. Buckley is now a graduate student at Indiana University. He is a native of Scioto County, Ohio, and attended Miami University in that state.

Research and Pictures, New York Public Library.

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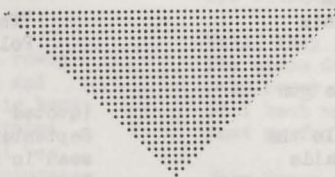
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OHIO VALLEY BALLADS
sung by Bruce Buckley, with guitar

SIDE I

FA 2025 A

- Band 1. THE ROWAN COUNTY CREW
- Band 2. PEARL BRYAN
- Band 3. SIDNEY ALLEN
- Band 4. SAM BASS

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OHIO VALLEY BALLADS
sung by Bruce Buckley, with guitar

SIDE II

FA 2025 B

Band 1. LULA VIERS

Band 2. THE RARDEN WRECK OF 1893
(The Wreck on the CP & V)

Band 3. JOHN HENRY

Band 4. MOLLY BONDER