## Folksongs and Ballads of Kansas Sung by Joan O' Bryant

Accompanying herself on Guitar

Girls quit your rowdy ways
The Butcher Boy
Common Bill
The Zebra Dun
Sweet William Died
Lord Batesman
Kansas Boys
Old Limpy
In Kansas
Molly Bann
Quantrill

Old Blue

FOLKWAYS RECORDS FA 2134



# Folksongs and Ballads of Kansas

DESCRIPTIVE NOTES ARE INSIDE POCKET

FOLKWAYS RECORDS Album No. FA 2134 © 1957 Folkways Records and Service Corp., 701 Seventh Ave., NYC USA

Folksongs
and Ballads
of Kansas
Sung by
Joan O' Bryant

## ABOUT THE SINGER

JOAN O'BRYANT is a native Kansan, born in Wichita some 26 years ago. Her mother's family includes Kansas pioneers who came to Wichita in the 1890s. The people in Miss O'Bryant's family are largely professional, and though the family was muscial, it was certainly not "folk."

Miss O'Bryant received her BA and MA degrees at the University of Wichita and the University of Colorado, and became interested in folk music while at college. After college she worked in the advertising field, but disliked the work and obtained a position at the University of Wichita in the English department. Her interest in folklore soon became an academic interest, and she organized a course in folklore at the University.

While attending the Ozard Folk Festival at Eureka Springs, Arkansas, she met the outstanding folk-lorist Vance Randolph who suggested that she do fieldwork instead of being merely a "library folk-lorist." She took his advice and has been collecting in the field ever since.

She taught herself to play the guitar and began singing professionally about five years ago, including among her appearances performances in colleges and clubs in the West and Mid-West, and occasional television work as well.

She is presently an Assistant Professor of English at the University of Wichita, teaching classes in folklore and creative writing in addition to the usual courses in freshmen composition, etc. She also teaches a two-week summer workshop in folklore each summer at Kansas State Teachers College in Pittsburg, Kansas.

Her future plans include doing as much field collecting as possible in Arkansas, Kentucky and nearby states.

## AN INTRODUCTION TO KANSAS FOLKSONGS AND BALLADS

Most Kansans think of Dodge City ("The Cowboy Capitol"), frontier marshalls, and the rough days of the old West when the folklore of their state is mentioned. Actually, Kansas folklore is more subtle, more varied, and quite a bit more difficult to pin down.

Kansas, a hundred years ago, saw vast numbers of westward migrants. Many stayed. They came from everywhere---and a goodly number were from New England. There is a sturdy strain of Puritanism in long time rural Kansans. Southerners, especially highlanders from the Appalachians and the Ozarks came to Kansas in much smaller numbers, but people from these regions did settle in the eastern third of the state. This has always been a state in which people moved around a good deal, and you seldom find families who have lived for ten generations on a farm, as you do in the Appalachians or the Ozarks.

In collecting Kansas folklore I have found that folk tales, superstitions, sayings and proverbs, ghost stories, etc., are easy to come by; songs and ballads are harder. Kansas isn't a "singin' state" as is Arkansas. I have encountered many old people who remembered the general idea of old ballads, and said they heard them sung as children, but couldn't remember more than fragments. I have collected maddening one and two verse bits of many Child ballads.

Since I am more interested in the collection of ballads than in frontier lore, I have collected mostly in the eastern part of Kansas, where there are singers who came originally from Kentucky, Tennessee, or the Ozarks. I have found that the area around Pittsburg, Kansas, in the extreme eastern part of the state, is, perhaps, the best area in which to collect.

JOAN O'BEYANT

Notes by KENNETH S. GOLDSTEIN

## SIDE I, Band 1: GIRLS, QUIT YOUR ROWDY WAYS

This song is a typical example of folk lyric, many of its stanzas being found in wide spread tradition in combination with lines from various other songs and ballads, though usually sung to melodies in the same tune family. Other songs with similar or related stanzas include "The New River Train," "Mole In The Ground," and the Ohio River roustabout song "Alberta".

Miss O'Bryant learned this version from Billie Corday of Pittsburg, Kansas, who had learned it from a boy near Salina, Kansas.

Girls, quit your rowdy ways,
Girls, quit your rowdy ways,
Your rowdy ways will kill you dead,
And lay you in your lonesome grave.

Honey, where you been so long? Honey, where you been so long? I've been across the river with the gay young fellows And I'm going back again 'fore long.

Honey, where you been so long?
Honey, where you been so long?
Been in the wheat bin with the rough and rowdy men
And I'm going back again 'fore long.

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

Girls, quit your rowdy ways, Girls, quit your rowdy ways, Your rowdy ways will kill you dead, And lay you in your lonesome grave.

## SIDE I, Band 2: THE BUTCHER BOY

This ballad of false true love traces back to British broadside and popular balladry, though the specific form in which it appears in this country seems to be definitely an American amalgamation of various English themes. Its popularity in print (there were numerous broadside, garland and songster printings of this ballad and its earlier forms in both the British Isles and the New World) may explain its widespread circulation in this country.

Local pride and identification by folksingers have resulted in the action of the ballad taking place in various towns; it is only natural that a Kansas version should talk of a Kansas town, specifically Kansas City in this case. Another interesting peculiarity of the ballad is the rapid shift of person in the telling of the tale; the ballad begins as a narrative told in the first person by the jilted girl, and ends with a third person narration concerning her demise.

This version contains several interesting ballad "commonplaces" usually associated with other songs

or ballads, e.g. the "apron high, apron low" stanzas which are widely known from the song "Careless Love," and the ballad ending which is commonly found in versions of "The Sailor Boy."

This version was collected from Mrs. Vesta Belt of Wichita, Kansas, who learned it from her mother, Mrs. E. D. Messenger.

In Kansas City where I did dwell, A butcher boy I loved him well, But he holds a strange girl upon his knee And tells to her what he once told me.

I wish I was a turtle dove,
I'd fly away to the land of love,
And there I'd sit and I would mourn
For the loss of a true love that'll never return.

When I wore my apron low, He followed me through frost and snow; But now my apron's to my chin, He passes my door and he won't come in.

Get me a chair to sit upon, Pen and ink to write a song, At the end of every line I'll drop a tear, At the end of every verse cry, "Oh, my dear."

Her father came home one evening late Inquiring for his daughter, Kate; They found her hanging from a rope And in her hand this note she'd wrote.

"Go dig my grave both wide and deep, Put marbles at my head and feet, And on my breast a snow-white dove, To let the world know that I died for love."

## SIDE I. Band 3: COMMON BILL

This delightful little song, of probably English origin, has been collected from widely separated areas of this country. The standardization of the text (for almost all collected versions are identical) would suggest widespread printings of the song, but aside from some 19th century songster appearances, it has been reported almost exclusively from an oral tradition.

This version was collected from Fibbie Wyatt and Jeanne Garnett of Wichita, Kansas, who had learned it in Arkanses.

I will tell you of a fellow,
Of a fellow I have seen,
He is neither white nor yellow
But is altogether green.

His name is nothing charming,
It is only Common Bill,
He wishes me to wed him,
But I hardly think I will.

One night he came to see me, And he made so long a stay I began to think that blockhead Never meant to go away. And the tears that creature wasted
Was enought to turn a mill,
He wished me to wed him
But I hardly think I will.

He said if I refuse him
He would not live one minute,
Now you know I wouldn't choose him
But the very deuce is in it.

Now you know the blessed Bible
Plainly says we musn't kill,
So I thought the matter over
And I rather think I will.

## SIDE I, Band 4: THE ZEBRA DUN

The theme of the tenderfoot or greenhorn having a rought time on a bucking bronco is a popular one with old-time compunchers, and various ballads and tales concerning such an incident are widely known in cowboy lore. The hero of this ballad, however, has the last laugh on his practical-joking acquaintances. The bronco referred to in the ballad was a dun, or dull grayish-brown horse. He probably got the name "Zebra Dun" as the result of the corruption of the ranch name "Z Bar" -- Z-Bar Dun.

Miss O'Bryant learned the text from an old-time cowboy who had lived in Caldwell, Kansas, once a great center for the Chisholm Trail.

We was camped on the plains at the head of Cimarron, When up stepped a stranger and began to argue some; He looked so awful foolish, he talked so awful round, We thought he was a greenhorn, just escaped from town.

He said he'd lost his job upon the Sante Fe,
And thought he'd strike across the plains and go some
other way;

He didn't say how come it, some trouble with the boss And asked for to borrow a fast saddle horse.

This tickled all the boys to death, they laughed up their sleeves.

"Wa'll lend you a fine horse, fresh and fat as you please."

So Shorty got the lariat and roped the Zebra Dun, And brought him to the stranger and waited for the fun.

Old Dunny was an outlaw, he had grown so awful wild, He could haul the moon down, he could jump for a mile, But Dunny stood right still, just as if he didn't know, Until we got him saddled and ready for to go.

When the stranger hit the saddle, Old Dunny quit the earth.

And travelled right straight upward for all that he was worth,

A-pitching and a-squealing and a-throwing wall-eyed fits,

His hind feet perpendicular, his front feet in the bits.

You could see the tops of the mountains under Dunny every jump,

But the stranger he was glued there just like a camel's humo.

The stranger sat upon him and twirled his black mustache.

Just like a summer boarder a-waiting for the hash.

Now the boss had been standing there a-watching of the show,

Walked over to the stranger and said, "You needn't go, If you can use a lasso like you rode the Zebra Dun, You're the man I've been looking for since the year

Now, there's one thing and a sure thing I've learned since I have been born,
Every educated fellow's not a plumb greenhorn.

## SIDE 1, Band 5: SWEET WILLIAM DIED

Ballad commonplaces, such as the rose-and-briar ending to "Lord Thomas and Fair Eleanor" and "Barbry Allen," have long been the butt of jokes made by young collegians all over the United States. One form of humor at the expense of these commonplaces are the numerous parodies on the ballad form.

Miss O'Bryant learned this "rose-and-briar" parody ending to "Barbara Allen" from two students in her class on American Folklore at The University of Wichita.

Sweet William died for love, for love,
And Barbry died for sorrow, for sorrow,
They buried them there in the church yard,
In grave both deep and narrow, and narrow.

And out of her heart grew a red rose,
And out of his'n a briar, a briar;
They clumb and they clumb round the church tower
Till they couldn't clumb any higher, any higher.

They twined and they twined round the church tower,
And then they tied in a true love's knot,
a true love's knot.

## SIDE 1, Band 6: LORD BATESMAN (Child #53)

This is one of the most popular of the Child ballads and has circulated widely in England, Scotland and America. In Scotland, the here's name is usually Beichan, in England and America, Bateman, or some variant thereof. Part of its popularity is undoubtedly due to the frequency with which it appeared on broadcides and in songsters of the 19th century.

Attempts have been made to indicate that the ballad tale is derived from the legend of Gilbert a Becket, father of St. Thomas of Canterbury, who was supposed to have had an adventure similar to that which occurred to the ballad hero. This theory has been largely discarded, though there is no doubt that the ballad has been affected by the legend.

This version was obtained from an old "ballet" book which belonged to the grandmother of one of the students in Miss O'Bryant's freshman English class. According to the student, the book had been in the family for many years and was brought to Kansas from Arkansas.

Lord Batesman was a noble lord,
He felt himself of a high degree He would not rest or be contented
Till he had sailed across the sea.

Oh, he sailed east and he sailed to the westward,
And he sailed all around to the Turkish shore,
Where he got caught and put in prison
Never to be released anymore.

Now the Turk he had a brisk young daughter, And she was fair as she could be; She stole the keys to her father's prison, and declared Lord Batesman she'd go see.

Oh, have you house and have you land, sir,
And are you a lord of high degree,
And what would you give to the Turkish lady
If out of prison she'll set you free?"

"Oh, I have house and I have land, love,
Half of Northumberland belongs to me;
I'd give it all to the Turkish lady
If out of prison she'd set me free."

They made a vow, they made a promise,

For seven long years they made it stand;

He vowed he'd marry no other woman,

She vowed she'd marry no other man.

Now seven long years have rolled around,
Seven years, and they seemed like twenty-nine,
And she's put on all of her gay clothing,
And declared Lord Batesman she'd go find.

Oh, she sailed east, and she sailed to the westward,
And she sailed around to the England shore,
And she rode right up to Lord Batesman's castle,
And rung a porter right down to the door.

"Is this Lord Batesman's fine castle,
And is his Lordship not within?"
"Oh, yes, oh, yes," cried the proud young porter,
"He is just now bringing his new bride in."

"What news, what news, my proud young porter,
What news, what news have you brung to me?"
"There is a fair lady outside your castle,
And she is the fairest that I ever did see."

"She is go; a gold ring on every finger,
And on one finger she has got three,
And enough gay gold all around her midlle
To buy Northumberland from thee."

"She bids you remember a piece of bread,
She bids you remember a glass of wine,
And not to forget the Turkish lady
Who freed you from your close confine."

Then up and spoke that new bride's mother,
She never was known to speak so free,
Saying, "What's to become of my only daughter,
She's just been made a bride to be."

"Oh, I've done no harm to your only daughter,
And she is none of the worst for me;
She came to me on a horse and saddle,
And she shall go home in a coach and three."

The glass of wine all in his fingers,
Down onto the floor, he's broke it in three;
Saying, "I'll forsake all for the Turkish lady,
She has crossed that salt, salt sea for me."

## SIDE II, Bend 1: KANSAS BOYS

Regional satire concerning manners and customs of people in neighboring areas was extremely popular in frontier communities. Numerous songs on this subject are to be found scattered throughout the United States. The texts of this song are varied. but are in fact all modifications on one basic song. In the Southern mountains they sing of Virginia or West Virginia boys; in Missouri of Arkansas boys; in Wyoming of Chevenne Boys. This version is unusual in that it was collected in kansas, but made fun of the state's own boys. This is perhaps explainable in that Miss O'Bryant learned the version from her grandmother, originally from Indiana, who settled in western Kansas as a girl, where she may have heard the song sung by people originally from the bordering states of Colorado or Nebraska.

Come along girls and listen to my noise, Don'tcha never marry no Kansas boys; If you do your portion it'll be Hoecakes, hominy, sassafrass tea.

They'll take you out on a blackjack hill, Leave you there against your will, Leave you there to starve on the plains, For that is the way with the Kansas range.

When they milk they milk in a gourd,
Throw it in a corner and cover it with a board;
Some gets little and some gets none,
That is the way with the Kansas run.

Then they go a-courtin', the clothes that they wear, Old brown coat, all picked and bare, Old straw hat, more brim than crown, And dirty cotton socks they were the year around.

So come along girls and listen to my noise, Don'tcha never marry no Kansas boys; If you do your portion it'll be Hoecakes, hominy, sassafrass tea.

## SIDE II, Band 2: OLD LIMPY

This song probably dates from the reconstruction period after the Civil War. Miss O'Bryant collected the song from Merrill Ellis in Pittsburg, Kansas, in 1956. Mr. Ellis reported that his informant told him that the song was common in the South after the Civil War, and that the bitterness of southerners over the reconstruction is evidenced by their making Jeff Davis a scapegoat in songs such as this. An inspection of the text, however, leads one to believe that the song may well have been a satire in song made up by some anti-slavery writer who intended old Limpy to be an allegorical cow representing the southern or proslavery cause. Such surmise must remain in the realm of theory, however, for the song has not previously been reported from either Northern or Southern sources.

Come all you people near and far,
a story you must know,

Jeff Davis had the poorest cow that ever
you saw grow.

REFRAIN: Yoodileeding, yoodileedido,
Yoodileeding, yoodileeday

Right down in you ten acre patch,
Old Limpy lost her life;
She willed her hide and tallow to
Jeff Davis and his wife.

The children they were out at play,
they heard her dying groans;
They asked their father if they might
make soap out of her bones.

And now Old Limpy's barbecued and on
the table spread,
Jeff Davis was the oldest,
so we put him at the head.

His knife and fork all in his hands, he then began to play, And from the tail up to the head Jeff Davis ate his way.

And now old mother Davis is dead,
her heart was very brave,
We wrapt her up in a feather bed
and laid her in her grave.

And now old father Davis is dead,
we know he's gone to hell;
When he got there, around his neck
they hung Old Limpy's bell.

## SIDE II, Band 3: IN KANSAS

Here is another excellent example of regional satire in song. In Missouri, they sing about the people "In Arkansas," but in Kansas they make fun at their own expense. The song is obviously a local variant of the song "Over There." Theory has it that the song originated during the potato blight and famine in Ireland in 1848; however, a sheet music print dated 1844 was published in New York and would seem to discredit this theory. As a parodied adaptation for regional satire it is certainly indigenous to America. This version was learned from Miss O'Bryant's grandmother.

Oh, the girls they grow tall in Kansas, The girls they grow tall in Kansas, The girls they grow tall, The boys love 'em all, Marry them in the Fall, in Kansas.

Now potatoes they grow small in Kansas, Potatoes they grow small in Kansas, Potatoes they grow small, They dig 'em in the Fall, They eat 'em hide and all, in Kansas.

Now they say to drink's a sin in Kansas, They say to drink's a sin in Kansas, They say to drink's a sin, So they guzzle all they can, Oh, the drys are voted in, in Kansas. Now they chaw tobacco thin in Kansas, They chaw tobacco thin in Kansas, They chaw tobacco thin, They spit it on their chin, And lap it up again, in Kansas.

So come all who want to roam to Kansas,
Come all who want to roam to Kansas,
Come all who want to roam
And seek a prairie home,
But be happy with your doom, in Kansas.

## SIDE II, Band 4: MOLLY BANN

This hauntingly beautiful ballad with its overtones of the supernatural is probably derived from ancient mythology, though its earliest appearance in print was at the end of the 18th century. In 1799, Robert Jamieson included a reference to the piece, which he termed "a silly ditty," in a printed circular letter of his. In 1806, after having procured a copy of the ballad, Jamieson wrote even more severely of the ballad, describing it as "one of the very lowest descriptions of vulgar modern English ballads which are sung about the streets in country towns, and sold, four or five for a halfpenny, to maidservants and children." Though correct in his description of the ballad as being popular in broadside form, his criticism of it as ballad poetry appears to have been unjustified. In any case, the folk have certainly considered it worthy of perpetuation for it is still known in both the British Isles and America.

Miss O'Bryant collected this fine version from a Mrs. Chancellor, the mother of a student at Kansas State Teacher's College in Pittsburg, Kansas. For comparison with other interesting variants, see the following Folkways albums: FP 23/2, Ohio Valley Ballads, (where it appears under the title "Molly Bonder"), FP 47/2, Bay State Ballads (where it appears as "Polly Van"), and FP 917, English Folk Songs (a Norfolk version entitled "Polly Vaughan".)

Molly Bann went walking, Walking alone, Molly Bann went walking When the showers come on.

She got under some bushes,
The showers to shun,
With her apron pinned around her,
I shot her for a fawn.

Come all you young hunters
Who hunt with a gun,
Beware of your hunting
By the light of the moon.

I ran up to her When I saw that she was dead, And over her bosom Many a tear I did shed.

I killed a fair maiden, The joy of my life, I always had intended For to make her my wife. Then up spoke my father, His locks were turning grey, Saying, "Jimmy, oh, Jimmy, Do not run away.

"Stay here in your country Till your trial comes on, You never will hang For the shooting of Molly Bann."

The day of my trial, Molly's ghost did appear, Saying, "Gentlemen of the jury, Let my true love go clear."

Then all of the city girls
Was put there in a row,
Molly Benn shone up among them
Like a mountain of snow.

## SIDE II, Band 5: QUANTRILL

William Clark Quantrill was often called "the bloodiest man in American history," and not without sufficient reason. This former teacher and superintendent of a small Bible school was credited with murder, arson, horse-stealing, butchery and untold other crimes before he was killed by Federal troops in 1865. Also to his credit (if we may call it that) was his tutorship in crime of the James' Boys and the Youngers, all of whom had been part of Quantrill's huge guerilla band in Missouri during the Civil War. But for all of this, the folk have made him out to be another "Robin Hood" type character. The Lawrence burning and massacre described in this ballad took place on August 21, 1863. Miss O'Bryant learned this version from Bill Koch, a folklorist and professor of English at Kansas State College in Manhattan, Kansas.

Come all you bold robbers and open your ears, Of Quantrill the lion-heart you quickly will hear; With his band of bold robbers in double quick time, They came to burn Lawrence just over the line.

## REFRATN

All routing and shouting and giving the yell, Like so many demons just raised up from hell, The boys they were drunken with powder and wine, They came to burn Lawrence, just over the line.

They came to burn Lawrence, they came not to stay, They rode in one morning at breaking of day, Their arms were a-waving, their horses a-foam, Quantrill was riding his famous grey roan.

They came to burn Lawrence, they came not to stay, Jim Lane he was up at the break of the day; He saw them a-coming, and got in a fright, Crawled in a corn-crib to get out of sight.

Oh, Quantrill's a fighter, a bold hearted boy, A brave man or woman he'd never annoy; He'd take from the wealthy and give to the poor, For brave men there's never a bolt on his door.

## SIDE II, Band 6: OLD BLUE

This song is found throughout the southern states and in the Ozarks where it is an enduring favorite. Newman White reported a version of the song as sung by Negro construction workers in Alabama, but believed it to "have too much form and unity to be quite convincing as of Negro popular origin." Other versions have a more "folksy" quality, and whether of Negro or white origin, it contains commonplaces found in the folksongs of both races.

Miss O'Bryant has collected four versions in Kansas from various counties. This version was learned in Wichita from Adgie Lou Williams, originally from Little Rock, Arkansas, and is almost identical with a version collected by Vance Randolph in Eureka Springs, Arkansas (See Ozark Folksongs, Volume II, pp. 382-383).

I had a little dog, his name was Blue, I'd like to tell you what Blue could do. Old Blue, old Blue.

Every evening, along about dark, You'd hear old Blue begin to bark. Old Blue, old Blue.

I lights a lantern and goes to see, Elue's got a possum up a simmon tree. Old Blue, old Blue.

I climbs the tree and fetch him down, I bakes that possum so nice and brown. Old Blue, old Blue.

Early one mornin' old Blue took sick, I called the doctor to come real quick. Old Blue, old Blue.

The doctor come and he come on the run, He say, "Old Blue, your hunting's done." Old Blue, old Blue.

When old Blue died he died so hard, He dug little holes all over the yard. Old Blue, old Blue.

I dug his grave with a silver spade, I let him down with a long gold chain. Old Blue, old Blue.

I put a snow-white dove at the foot of his grave, And at the head put a possum face. Old Blue, old Blue.

I cross my heart and clasp my hands, And pray to meet Blue in the promised land. Old Blue, old Blue.



AND SERVICE CORP., 701 7th Ave., N.Y.C. Long Playing Non-Breakable Micro Groove 331/3 Copyright © 1957 by Folkways Records & Service Corp., NYC., USA.

## FOLK SONGS and BALLADS of KANSAS Sung by JOAN O'BRYANT accompanying herself on guitar



Band 5. SWEET WILLIAM DIED

Band 6. LORD BATESMAN

