

# THE PHIPPS FAMILY

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# THE PHIPPS FAMILY

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DESCRIPTIVE NOTES ARE INSIDE POCKET

Just Another Broken Heart  
Away Over in the Promised Land  
The Great Titanic  
Foresaken Lover  
The Red Jacket Mine Explosion  
I Never Will Marry  
Gonna Row My Boat  
The Old Pine Tree  
Sinking of the Merry Golden Tree  
The Unclouded Day  
Charles Guiteau  
My Home Among the Hills  
Pearl Bryan



# The Phipps Family

## *Faith, Love and Tragedy*

One of the more interesting aspects of the 1964 Newport Folk Festival was the appearance of the fine old-time family singing group from Kentucky, A.L. Phipps and The Phipps Family. Playing and singing in a style based primarily on that of the legendary Carter Family, they perform traditional mountain music in a sturdy, down-to-earth manner, featuring guitar and autoharp.

In this, their first Folkways LP, they have chosen eleven traditional songs, and two original numbers, one composed by A.L. Phipps, the other by his wife, Kathleen Phipps. Many of the songs were originally learned from old phonograph records by the Carter Family, although some of these songs can be traced a good deal farther back than the Carter Family recordings. Merry Golden Tree, for instance, is a variant of Child Ballad #286, while Unclouded Day is an old country hymn that has been sung in The Phipps Family for several generations.

Perhaps the most interesting song in this LP is "The Red Jacket Mine Explosion," a song written by A.L. Phipps which commemorates an actual explosion at the Red Jacket Mine on the night of Friday, April 22, 1938; the mine was located on Keen Mountain in Hanger, Virginia. The force of this dust explosion was sufficient to blast several miners and a great deal of mining equipment and machinery from the depth of the mine all the way out its entrance, causing much of the machinery to roll down the side of the mountain. In all, forty-five miners were killed in the blast, making it one of the worst mining disasters in this country's history.

Another song dealing with an actual event is "Charles Guiteau", which discusses the murder in 1881, of President James A. Garfield, by Mr. Guiteau, who had also sought election. A.L. Phipps has been singing this song for more than forty years, he and his elder brother having learned it from their parents. A goodly number of the songs that the Phipps Family sing have been learned in this fashion, for all of Mr. Phipps' relatives and recent ancestors have been musically inclined. One relative, Ernest Phipps, recorded for RCA Victor in 1928, and another, Charlie Phipps, recorded for Capitol in the 1950s. In addition, other members of his family have been prominent in local church choirs and singing groups.

The Phipps Family consists of A.L. Phipps, who plays lead guitar and sings baritone, his wife Kathleen, who plays autoharp and sings soprano, and two of their twelve children, daughter Helen, who plays second autoharp and sings alto, and son Leemon, who plays guitar and sings bass in quartet numbers. In this album, there are two religious songs, Gonna Row My Boat and Way Over In The Promised Land, where A.L. sings the verses and then joins in the quartet to sing the high harmony part.

There are, of course, many similarities in the music of The Phipps Family and that of The Carter Family. The Phipps Family have long been admirers of the music of The Carter Family, and this profound respect and appreciation has led to a sincere effort to play in the same earthy, old-time style. The trio singing, the autoharp and guitar playing have all derived directly from the old Carter Family style, and much of their material has been learned from The Carter Family. The song "Forsaken Lover", the words of which were written by Kathleen Phipps, uses the melody of the standard "Wildwood Flower", and might almost be said to be a variant of it. All of the instruments used by The Phipps Family are tuned well below standard pitch, which lends to their sound the rich bass quality which The Phipps Family has found to be so much a part of the original Carter Family sound.

Ironically, it was their similarity to The Carter Family which probably led to their first few long-play records (for another label); these records tended to mention The Carter Family in large type, and the then little-known Phipps Family in rather smaller lettering - one of these records even has a picture of The Carter Family on its front cover, listing the actual performing artists underneath, and in letters smaller than, the titles of the songs contained in the album. Regrettably as this may have been, it served to bring the music of The Phipps Family to many more people than might have heard it otherwise (one 50,000-watt radio station played their record of "Little Poplar Log House", almost every night for six months); to anyone who gave a second listen, it became clear that the Phipps Family had gone far beyond mere imitation for its own sake. They have absorbed the elements of The Carter Family style so thoroughly into their own style of singing and playing that what has emerged is a thoroughly personal perpetuation of a fine old mountain style of singing and playing. (It should also be noted that in this, and all their other albums, there are many sacred and religious songs, which reflect the strongly religious outlook that The Phipps Family have on life.)

At the present time, it is possible to hear The Phipps Family on radio stations throughout the country; their specially-prepared fifteen-minute programs are featured on such powerful country music stations as KXEL in Waterloo Iowa and XERF, the Del Rio Texas station whose transmitter, located in Mexico, is one of the most powerful in the world. Thus, the unvarnished, down-to-earth mountain music sung and played by The Phipps Family of Barbourville Kentucky is heard and enjoyed by many thousands every day. In this album, Folkways presents a representative sampling of this kind of music, in the hope of bringing this music to an even wider country and folk music audience.

---BILL VERNON



THE SONGS:

SIDE I, Band 1: ANOTHER BROKEN HEART  
(Arr: A.L. Phipps)

They stood on the beach one evening  
Out in the moonlight fair  
Was a boy in the prime of manhood  
And a girl in beauty rare

I never thought that you loved me  
An innocent look of surprise  
Peer out from between her lashes  
And into those deep brown eyes

CHORUS:

Oh sir, I was only flirting  
Only a-playing a part  
Just another boy's life ruined,  
Just another broken heart

Sir I'm to be married this winter  
Farewell and she gave me her hand  
And drawing her robe around her  
She left me alone on the sand

He goes with a crowd of passers  
Always bitter and cold  
Just another boy grown weary  
Just another boy grown old

(CHORUS)

SIDE I, Band 2: AWAY OVER IN THE PROMISED LAND  
(Arr: A.L. Phipps)

I've got a father in the promised land (repeat)  
I hope some day we'll all get there  
Away over in the promised land

CHORUS:

Away over the promised land (repeat)  
I hope some day we'll all get there  
Away over in the promised land

I've got a mother in the promised land (repeat)  
I hope some day we'll all get there  
Away over in the promised land

(CHORUS)

I've got a brother in the promised land  
I hope someday we'll all get there  
Away over in the promised land

(CHORUS)

Sister is a-waiting in the promised land (repeat)  
I hope someday we'll all get there  
Away over in the promised land

(CHORUS)

Gonna see my saviour in the promised land (repeat)  
I hope some day we'll all get there  
Away over in the promised land

(CHORUS)

SIDE I, Band 3: THE GREAT TITANIC  
(Arr: A.L. Phipps)

It was on a Monday morning, about one o'clock  
The great Titanic began to reel and rock  
People began to scream and cry  
Saying lord we're goin' to die  
It was sad when that great ship went down

CHORUS:

It was sad when that great ship went down  
It was sad when that great ship went down  
There were husbands and wives  
Little children lost their lives  
It was sad when that great ship went down

When they built the great Titanic, they said what  
could they do  
We'll build a ship that water cannot go through  
But God with his might hand, showed the world that  
it could not stand  
It was sad when that great ship went down

(CHORUS)

When they heard the signal ring they were headed  
for the shore  
The rich folks declared they wouldn't ride with  
the poor  
So they sent the poor below; they were the first  
that had to go,  
It was sad when that great ship went down

(CHORUS)

When the people on the ship were a long ways from  
home  
With people all around them, didn't know their  
time had come  
But death came riding by, sixteen hundred had to  
die  
It was sad when that great ship went down

(CHORUS)

SIDE I, Band 4: FORSAKEN LOVER  
(Comp: Kathleen Phipps  
Arr: A.L. Phipps)

All the roses are blooming where we used to meet  
And the dew on the lilacs are still fresh and sweet  
I wonder if ever his face I will see  
He's gone away forever, another's love to be

There we wandered together and talked of our love  
As we strolled through the garden beneath the  
stars above  
Now he's gone and neglected the one that he loves  
No one e'er so lonely, not even a dove

Through this cold world I'll wander, no lover for  
me

He has taken another his lover to be  
How my heart is now breaking no one will ever know  
I'll wear a smile forever, wherever I go

SIDE I, Band 5: THE RED JACKET MINE EXPLOSION  
(Comp. & Arr. by A.L. Phipps)

Why did the camp seem so lonely  
And why were they feeling so strange  
It seems every person was restless  
But why had there come such a change?

That evening the men lingered longer  
But at last they did start for the mine  
For they felt that their duty had summoned  
And their duty required them on time

It seemed every nerve was at tension  
Such an unusual silence around  
Then the silence was suddenly broken  
By a shock from in under the ground

What could have brought such disturbance  
Oh what could have caused such a fright  
In terror they cried "an explosion!"  
What a scene on that sad Friday night

The machines had rolled down the mountain  
There were screams and cries filled the air  
In this terror all filled with excitement  
Everyone seemed to whisper a prayer



All the camp people rushed to the mountain  
To inquire for their loved ones and friends  
Oh how sad, for the smoke was a-rollin'  
And the mines was a-burnin' within.

Forty-five miners killed in a moment  
Many burned in their beauty and prime  
May we all be at peace with our maker  
We may answer our call anytime

Red Jacket's camp's famous beauty  
Now looks not the same as before  
You can see now that something is missing  
That can never return anymore

SIDE I, Band 6: I NEVER WILL MARRY  
(Arr: A.L. Phipps)

One morning as I rambled  
All round the seashore  
The wind it did whistle  
And the waters did roar

I heard a fair damsel  
Make a pitiful sound  
It sounded so lonesome  
In the waters around

I never will marry  
Nor be no man's wife  
I expect to live single  
All the days of my life

The shells in the ocean  
Shall be my deathbed  
The fish in deep waters  
Swims over my head

She plunged her fair body  
In the water so deep  
She closed her blue eyes  
In the waters to sleep

My love's gone and left me  
The one I adore  
She's gone where I never  
Will see her anymore

(Repeat verses 3 and 4)

SIDE I, Band 7: GONNA ROW MY BOAT  
(Arr: A.L. Phipps)

Gonna row my boat at the Lord's command  
While I trust my soul to his guiding hand  
Gonna drift along on the sacred breeze  
Gonna row my boat any time I please

CHORUS:

Gonna row my boat on the crystal sea  
And the Lord will row right along with me  
Gonna shout and sing, gonna rock and roll  
Gonna row my boat, just to please my soul

Gonna row my boat on the gentle swell  
While the angels play on the golden bell  
Gonna anchor safe on the golden shore  
Gonna rest awhile, gonna row some more

(CHORUS - repeat)

SIDE II, Band 1: THE OLD PINE TREE  
(Arr: A.L. Phipps)

Stop awhile And Listen To My Story  
I just came down from the hills  
I went there to find my childhood sweetheart  
'Neath the roses and the whippoorwhills

I stopped to look for the old pine tree  
That haunted my memory so  
It was there she said she'd be waiting for me  
When we vowed our hearts long ago

CHORUS:

But they cut down the old pine tree  
And they hauled it away to the mill  
To make a coffin of pine for that sweetheart  
of mine  
So they cut down the old pine tree

All day long I'm thinking of my darling  
At night I see her in my dreams  
The twilight brings me sadness as I wander  
Where they cut down the old pine tree

(CHORUS)

But she's not alone in her grave tonight  
For that's where my heart will always be  
Though we drifted apart when they cut down my  
heart  
And they cut down the old pine tree

SIDE II, Band 2: MERRY GOLDEN TREE  
(Arr: A.L. Phipps)

There was a little ship  
And it sailed upon the sea  
And she went by the name  
Of the Merry Golden Tree  
And she sailed upon the low and lonesome, low  
And she sailed upon the lonesome sea

There was a little sailor  
And unto his captain said  
O, captain, captain,  
What'll you give to me  
If I sink 'em in that low and lonesome low  
If I sink 'em in the lonesome sea

Two hundred dollars  
I will give unto thee  
And my oldest daughter  
I'll wed unto you  
If you'll sink 'em in the low and lonesome, low  
If you'll sink 'em in the lonesome sea

He bowed upon his breast  
And down swam he  
Till he came to the ship  
Of the Turkish Reveille  
As he sailed upon the low and lonesome, low  
As he sailed upon the lonesome sea

If it wasn't for the love  
Of your daughter and your men  
I would do unto you  
As I did unto them  
I would sink you in the low and lonesome, low  
I would sink you in the lonesome sea

He bowed his head  
And down sank he  
Farewell, Farewell  
To the Merry Golden Tree  
For I'm sinking in the low and lonesome, low  
I'm sinking in the lonesome sea.

SIDE II, Band 3: UNCLOUDED DAY  
(Arr: A.L. Phipps)

O they tell me of a home  
Far beyond the sky  
O they tell me of a land far away  
And they tell me of a land  
Where no storm clouds rise  
O, they tell me of an unclouded day



CHORUS:

O the land of cloudless day  
O the land of an unclouded sky  
O they tell me of a home  
Where no storm clouds rise  
O they tell me of an unclouded day.

O they tell me of a home  
Where my friends have gone  
O they tell me of that land far away  
Where the tree of life  
In eternal bloom  
Sheds its fragrance through the unclouded day

(CHORUS)

O they tell me that he smiles  
On his children there  
And they tell me that my eyes shall behold  
Where he sits on his throne  
That is whiter than snow  
In that city that is made of gold

(CHORUS)

SIDE II, Band 4: CHARLES GUTTEAU  
(Arr: A.L. Phipps)

Come all you good people  
Wherever you may be  
And please pay attention  
To these few words from me

It was down at the depot  
I tried to get away  
But providence was against me  
I found it was too late

I tried to play off insane  
But I found that would not do  
The people was against me  
And followed my pursuit

The judge passed the sentence  
The clerk he wrote it down  
And on the thirtieth day of June  
To die I am condemned

My name is Charles Guiteau  
My name I can't deny  
For the murder of James A. Garfield  
I am condemned to die

Little did I think  
While in my youthful bloom  
I'd be carried to the scaffold  
To meet my fatal doom

My sister came to prison  
To bid her last farewell  
She threw her arms around me  
And wept most bitterly

Saying Charles, Charles  
Today you must die  
For the murder of James A. Garfield  
Upon the scaffold high

And now I'm on the scaffold  
I bid you all adieu  
The hangman now is waiting  
It's a quarter after two

Black cap's o'er my forehead  
No longer shall I see  
But when I'm dead and buried  
You'll all remember me

SIDE II, Band 5: MY HOME AMONG THE HILLS  
(Arr: A.L. Phipps)

Got a home in the hills  
In Virginia I love still  
And it stands near a lonesome pine  
How I long to go back  
To that vine-covered shack  
Where I left that old mother of mine

I can still see her there  
In her old rocking chair  
In my home among the hills  
How I long to see her face  
In that old familiar place  
In my home among the hills

The pine tree stands alone  
In my old Virginia home  
And that silver haired mother of mine  
I can see her smiling face  
In that old familiar place  
In my home among the hills

I'm leaving here today  
I'm going back to stay  
In my home among the hills  
How happy we will be  
Near the lonesome pine tree  
In my home among the hills

SIDE II, Band 6: PEARL BRYAN  
(Arr: A.L. Phipps)

Now people if you'll listen  
A story I'll relate  
That happened near Fort Thomas  
In old Kentucky state

Was late in January  
This awful deed was done  
By Wollen and by Jackson  
How cold their blood did run

How bold these cruel villains  
To do this awful deed  
To ride away Pearl Bryan  
When she to them did plead

A driver tells the story  
How poor Pearl Bryan did mourn  
As he drove from Cincinnati  
To the place where the deed was done

The driver was the only one  
To tell her awful fate  
Of how they murdered Pearl Bryan  
In old Kentucky state

A farmer passing by next day  
Her lifeless form he found  
Lying on a cold dark spot  
Where blood had stained the ground

The message was brought back to her home  
That poor Pearl Bryan was dead  
Killed by Wollen and Jackson  
And they took away her head

Then in came poor Pearl's mother  
And turning to Jackson said  
You have killed my daughter  
Please tell me where's her head

Please tell me where's her head (repeat)  
Pearl Bryan's dead, can't find her head  
Wollen and Jackson's hung