

NEGRO FOLK MUSIC OF ALABAMA

Game Songs and Others, Recorded in Alabama by Harold Courlander / Ethnic Folkways Library FE4474



NEGRO FOLK MUSIC OF ALABAMA / GAME SONGS AND OTHERS / FOLKWAYS FE 4474

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DESCRIPTIVE NOTES ARE INSIDE POCKET

SIDE A

RING GAMES, LINE GAMES AND PLAYPARTY

MARY MACK

BOB A NEEDLE

WATCH THAT LADY

OLD LADY SALLY WANTS TO JUMP

LOOP DE LOO (LOOBE LOO)

GREEN GREEN ROCKY ROAD

CHARLIE OVER THE OCEAN

ROSIE DARLING ROSIE

I MUST SEE (AMASEE)

MAY GO 'ROUND THE NEEDLE

STOOPING ON THE WINDOW

SIDE B

PLAY SONGS, WORK SONGS, CHAIN GANG SONGS

SESSION WITH CELINA

WATER ON THE WHEEL

GO PRAY YE (PREACH MY GOSPEL)

CAPTAIN HOLLER HURRY

JOHN HENRY

I'M GOING TO HAVE A TALK WITH THE CHIEF OF POLICE

MEET ME IN THE BOTTOMS

WHEN THE ROLL IS CALLED TO HEAVEN

I MOANED AND I MOANED

I'M STANDING IN A SAFETY ZONE

COVER DESIGN BY RONALD CLYNE

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NEGRO FOLK MUSIC OF ALABAMA

RECORDED BY HAROLD COURLANDER
 IN THE COURSE OF A FIELD TRIP
 SPONSORED BY THE WENNER-GREN
 FOUNDATION

ASSISTED BY RUBY PICKENS TARTT
 AND EMMA COURLANDER

VOLUME V: SPIRITUALS
 VOLUME VI: RING GAME SONGS AND
 OTHERS

INTRODUCTION, NOTES AND TEXTS
 BY HAROLD COURLANDER

These recordings were made in central and western Alabama in January and February, 1950. They are presented as study materials as well as music for good listening, and should contribute fresh documentation of what American Negro folk music really is.

The deformation that such music has undergone in the process of popularization at the hands of its friends and admirers is considerable. Spirituals, for example, in becoming art songs have lost much that is genuine and inspiring. Negro singing styles that have been incorporated into popular music have become, in many instances, caricature. The trend away from the old folk style is felt even in many Negro churches which today prefer trained choirs which can "read songs from the book" to the old style of participative singing.

These six albums do not attempt to cover the entire field of Negro folk music, but rather to present a number of facets of the musical life of a given area. Other recordings of American Negro folk music which contribute valuable study materials to the total picture have been gathered by John and Alan Lomax and others for the Library of Congress. And Frederick Ramsey, Jr., has documented certain aspects of Negro folk music of this general region in a series of recordings issued by Folkways Records in 1955.

The emphasis in these recordings from Alabama is upon musical content and style rather than performance. Selections have been made with a view to documentation. "Performances" have been sacrificed to make way for what seem to be more traditional folk styles. But the sheer music in many of these recordings is not easily excelled.

There are already so many writings on the subject of American Negro music that it would be superfluous to attempt to discuss the matter at length here. The controversy concerning African vs. European elements in the Negro music of the United States still goes on. It is hoped that these recordings will help to shed further light on the study of origins. While the importance of European influences on Negro singing is taken for granted, it may be interesting to note briefly some of the West African elements that appear to have played a part in the creation of American Negro music.

Handclapping as employed in church singing and children's ring games has a clear African precedent. Clapping in religious singing is common in West Africa and in the West Indies, and clapping in the children's game songs is almost universally practiced in West Africa.

Responsive singing of the kind observed in American Negro work songs, ring games, and religious meetings is also frequently in the African pattern. The existence of a singing leader and one or more "helpers" and the treatment in which the "helper's" lines sometimes overlap those of the leader, is African in conception. Many religious songs cannot be sung properly without this balance.

The rhythmic punctuation by the work gang's "hanh!" (timed to the blow of the pick or hammer), the preacher's "anh hanh!" or "my friends" in the delivery of poetic-prose sermons, and the "ah-hmm!" or "anh-hanh!" of the old field blues all derive from a style that is African rather than European.

The strong tradition for community singing of work songs is in itself African.

Older people in the South sometimes place a finger in one ear while singing, so as to better hear and thus control their own voices while participating in a group song, a practice that has been observed both in West and East Africa.

The counter-clockwise ring shout, notwithstanding all its proscriptions against "dancing", is a clear survival of the African circle dance. In a recording made of a ring shout some years ago by Alan Lomax in Texas for the Library of Congress, while the music is not African the general constellation of dancing, hand-clapping, singing, and shouting gives a rather sharp picture of the extent to which African motifs permeate the musical scene. 1

The conspicuous value placed upon use of the falsetto voice is also in the African tradition.

Among certain non-Baptist cults, such as The Church of God in Christ, the use of the tambourine and sometimes the guitar reflects a fusion of White revivalist and African practices.

The washtub and washboard, used by small secular musical groups, are adaptations of common West African musical devices, and some of the other musical ideas employed by the washboard bands appear to have African inspiration. 2

The humming style used in much Negro secular and religious singing is non-European. Frequently the last consonant of a word or phrase is changed to m or n for softening, producing a humming effect. Thus father is frequently heard as fathum, mother as mothum, angel as angen or angum, there as then, where as when, hammer as hammum, ark as arm, etc. This alteration of final consonants is particularly noteworthy during the singing of "moans", several of which are included in this collection. In ordinary speech this softening does not ordinarily take place, which points toward a clearly established musical principle or value in regard to the alteration. Many available recordings from West, Central and East Africa indicate similar attitudes towards word articulation in singing.

The persistence of songs of protest, recrimination, gossip, and ridicule in the secular music of the Negro has already been amply noted by such observers as Melville J. Herskovits³ as evidence of the scope of West African cultural influence. U.S. Negro song literature, both secular and religious, shares this African inheritance with other New World Negro cultures

1. LC 102, "Run Old Jeremiah."

2. See notes for "Salty Dog" in Vol. I of this issue. Curt Sachs, George Schweinfurth, and others have noted the presence of the prototype of the "tub" in East Africa, the Cameroons, the Congo, and Nigeria. A portable variant of the earth bow in Haiti, closely akin to the "tub" is described in Courlander, "Musical Instruments of Haiti", the Musical Quarterly, July, 1941. Also see Ethnic Folkways Library album P407, which contains an example of the Haitian instrument.

3. *The Myth of the Negro Past*, New York, 1941.

in Haiti, Jamaica, Trinidad, other West Indian islands, Surinam, Brazil and Venezuela. Looking only at one facet of U.S. Negro music, the Blues, one sees the extent and importance of this tradition. An overwhelming percentage of Blues songs is made up of songs of complaint (against an individual or the community), ridicule, gossip, or recrimination.

In religious traditions there also remain a number of disguised or diffused attitudes which are shared by other Negro communities in the West Indies, South America and West and Central Africa. Among these are to be mentioned such things as baptismal rites, which have a special non-European character, and ecstatic seizures. One perceives in possession of worshippers by the "spirit" certain unmistakable ties with West African concepts. While ecstatic seizures are universally known, the context of their appearance in U.S. Negro cult worship suggests a continuity of well-established tradition. From time to time this relationship with pre-Christian concept is projected in the words of songs such as "Lord I'm Waiting On You" (Vol. IV, Side II, Band 2).

Throughout West Africa, and among Negro communities in the West Indies and South America, one notes a widespread use of the repeated first line or first couplet of a song. This tradition is deeply rooted in U.S. Negro singing, whether it is in religious or secular surroundings. Many spirituals begin in this fashion, as do many Blues and worksongs.

People still alive in the South a decade or two ago have provided valuable documentation of the persistence of African musical and religious motifs well into the 19th Century. Some of this testimony is found in the book *Drums and Shadows*, compiled by the Georgia Writers' Project and published in 1940. One informant on St. Simons Island declared:

"We used to have big times for the harvest, and the first thing what growed we take to the church so as everybody could have a piece of it. We pray over it and shout. When we have a dance, we used to shout in a ring. We ain't have what you call a proper dance today." (p. 174)

The celebration referred to will be readily recognized as the yam harvest rites practiced over a large part of West Africa, and still found today in Haiti. The style of singing and dancing is clearly indicated to be of African pattern.

Another informant in the same region stated: "When we were young we used to have big frolic and dance in a ring and shout to (the) drum. Sometimes we have rattle made out of dry gourd and we rattle them and make good music." (p. 176)

The drum and the gourd-rattle referred to are, of course, the nucleus of African instrumentation. On the Island of Darien a woman described the traditional drum in a way that leaves no doubt of its West African ancestry:

"You kill a 'coon and you skin it and you tack the skin up side of the house to dry and you stretch it good till it's tight and smooth. Then you stretch it over the end of a hollow tree trunk...." She indicated that such drums were sometimes three feet high, and continued: "...It ain't good to use oak if you can help it. It too hard. You take a good cypress or cedar what eaten out on the inside, and you take it and scoop it out and stretch the skin over the end.... Alex, he make drum up to two years ago, and we sure have big time doing the dances while they beat the drums." (p. 148)

An informant on Darien described the drums coming in three different sizes, much as they are found in Dahomey and Haiti today. (p. 155)

Nor was the metal percussion instrument forgotten. Metal plates were beaten, along with drums and rattles, apparently in the style of the West African iron bell.

Documentation of this sort must be well considered in evaluating the various elements in Negro religious and secular music as we now hear it.

One interesting field of study, as yet relatively unexplored, is the persistence of old terminology in Negro music and its prevalence in the West Indies and elsewhere as well as in the United States. One form of U.S. Negro religious singing is referred to not as a "spiritual" but as a "moan", or sometimes as a "groan". Moaning or groaning does not imply pain or grief in the usual sense; it is a kind of blissful or ecstatic rendition of a song or prayer, often interlarded with humming and spontaneous melodic variation and improvisation. The song "When You Feel Like Moaning" (Vol. IV, Side I, Band 1) states:

"When you feel like moanin',
It ain't nothin' but love....
When you feel like groanin',
It ain't nothin' but love...."

One example of the "moan" or "groan" is found in Vol. IV, Side II, Band 1, "It's Getting Late In the Evening". Another is the prayer by Dock Reed and Vera Hall Ward in Vol. II, Side II, Band 4:

Of some significance is the fact that the term "groaning" is used also among some West Indian kunds for ecstatic religious activity of a differing kind, but relating directly to supplication.

The term "jumping", so commonplace in our Jazz lingo, is found among the so-called Pocomania cults of Jamaica to describe "laboring in the spirit." Another Jazz term, "mamma beat", used in reference to a hard left-hand beat on a drum, has explicit connections with drumming in the West Indies and West Africa. In Haiti, Cuba, Martinique, Guadeloupe and Trinidad, for example, certain drums that take the hard stick beats are called "mamma". The same terminology is heard in Dahomey and Nigeria.

Other terms associated with Negro religious and secular music may yet be found to derive out of an old tradition, rather than being spontaneous inventions.

The discussion of surviving non-European traits in American Negro singing is not intended to create the impression that this music is "African", however. A number of the songs that may be heard in Negro communities are delivered in an English style of some antiquity, and appear to be completely outside the realm of what is sometimes called "Afro-American" music. Some "Negro music" in Louisiana is basically French in character; elsewhere it is colored by regional tradition, the phonograph and radio, as is the case with folk music anywhere.

The notation of African atavisms is intended only to point out the complicated and composite nature of American Negro music.

In the end it has to be recognized that regardless of the sources of inheritance, in general the American Negro has produced over the years a music that is clearly his own. It is familiar to all of us, yet easily distinguishable from other musical trends in America. It has maintained its own identity and integrity in the midst of the nervous disorders with which our musical life has been afflicted. And it has deeply affected not only the development of Jazz and various styles of popular songs, but it has also influenced the White folk music in the South. Studies of American Indian musical culture indicate that African elements have infiltrated some Cherokee singing (Herzog) as well as that of other tribal groups.

While the musical relationship between Negro religious and non-religious songs is evident, there is a strong prejudice on the part of deeply religious people against singing secular or "sinful" songs. Many Negroes refuse to sing not only Blues, but worksongs, ballads, and lullabies as well. But the social need for singing has created some hybrid types. Railroad workers may sing a modified spiritual in work time, or invent a work song with familiar religious motifs. In a prison camp near Livingston, Alabama, when the prisoners were invited to sing, about a third of them would participate

only in religious songs. Some knew only secular songs, and others had no feeling against singing both types.

Many spirituals can be sung fast time or slow time...referred to as common meter and long meter. An example of common meter is to be found in "Move Members Move", Vol. II.

The pieces included in these six albums were selected from among several hundred recorded during a field trip sponsored by the Wenner-Gren Foundation. Preparation of the albums and the accompanying text was made during the course of a Guggenheim Fellowship. Special thanks are due to Ruby Pickens Tartt and Pratt Tartt of Livingston, Alabama, Thomas M. Campbell of Tuskegee, and S.W. Boynton of Selma, whose knowledge of the countryside and its people contributed immensely to the value of the field trip.

The song texts which appear in this article have been transcribed as closely as possible to conventional English, and wherever practical the suggestion of "dialect" has been avoided. It is felt that the colloquial aspects of Negro songs and speech have been overstressed in many documents. In actual fact, close listening tends to blur the seeming distinction between the dialect of the area and so-called standard English. Certainly there is no more logic in phonetic spelling of Negro speech of Alabama than in phonetic spelling of White speech of the region -- or, for that matter, of any other region. In the following transcriptions, missing vowel or consonant sounds occasionally have been indicated by apostrophes.

VOL. V, SPIRITUALS

Several examples of the singing of Dock Reed and Vera Hall Ward are to be found in Vols I and II of this series. Vol. V is devoted exclusively to spirituals voiced by these two singers. Dock Reed, a farmer of Livingston County, was approximately sixty years old when these recordings were made. He is deeply religious, and never sings secular or "sinful" songs. Because of his fine voice he is often called upon to lead songs or prayers in church or in the homes of his neighbors. His style of singing is simple and direct, without any indication of personal "interpretation". He was recorded some years ago by John Lomax for the Library of Congress, as was Vera Hall Ward, his cousin, who accompanies him in most of these songs. She was born on a farm near the town of Livingston, and in recent years has been a house worker and nursemaid in Tuscaloosa, where these recordings were made.

SIDE I, Band 1: I'M GOING HOME ON THE MORNING TRAIN. Sung by Dock Reed.

I'm going home on the morning train,
I'm going home on the morning train,
Ah I'm going home on the morning train,
If you don't see me you will hear me sing,
All of my sins been taken away, taken away.

Just about the time I thought oh Lord,
Ah just about the time I thought oh Lord,
Ah just about the time I thought oh Lord,
Don't you want.....
All of my sins been taken away, taken away.

Sister Mary wore three lengths of chain,
Sister Mary wore three lengths of chain,
Sister Mary wore three lengths of chain,
And every link was my Jesus' name,
All of my sins been taken away, taken away.

SIDE I, Band 2: MY GOD AIN'T NO LYING MAN. Sung by Dock Reed and Vera Hall Ward.

My God ain't no lying man,
Oh my God ain't no lying man,
Oh Jesus, Lord have mercy,
My God do just what he say.

My God promised me a home,
Oh my God promised me a home,

Oh Jesus, Lord have mercy,
My God promised me a home.

I got a home where the gambler can't go,
I got a home where the gambler can't go,
Oh Jesus, Lord have mercy,
I got a home where the gambler can't go.

My God do just what he say,
Oh my God do just what he say,
Oh Jesus, Lord have mercy,
My God do just what he say.

You lie sick and raise the dead,
Ah you lie sick and raise the dead,
Oh Jesus, Lord have mercy,
You lie sick and raise the dead.

SIDE I, Band 3: WHERE THE SUN WILL NEVER GO DOWN. Sung by Dock Reed.

Oh, the sun will never go down, go down,
Oh, the sun will never go down, go down,
The flowers are bloomin' forevermore,
Then the sun will never go down, go down,
Don't you feel like shouting sometimes,
sometimes,
Don't you feel like shouting sometimes,
sometimes,
The flowers are blooming forevermore.
Then the sun will never go down.

Don't you miss your mother sometimes,
sometimes,
Don't you miss your mother sometimes,
sometimes,
The flowers are blooming forevermore,
Then the sun will never go down.

SIDE I, Band 4: TROUBLED LORD I'M TROUBLED. Sung by Dock Reed and Vera Hall Ward.

Troubled, Lord, I'm troubled,
I'm troubled all about my soul,
No sooner than my feet strike Zion
I won't be troubled no more.

I'm wondering, Lord, I'm wondering,
I'm wondering about my soul,
Oh Lord
No sooner than my feet strike Zion
I won't be wondering any more.

I wonder where my mother,
I wonder where she's gone,
She's somewhere sitting in the kingdom
And she won't be troubled no more.

I'm grieving, Lord, I'm grieving,
I'm grieving about my soul,
No sooner than my feet strike Zion
I won't be grieving any more.

SIDE I, Band 5: LOOK HOW THEY DONE MY LORD. Sung by Vera Hall Ward and Dock Reed.

Look how they done my Lord,
Done my Lord, done my Lord,
Look how they done my Lord,
He never said a mumblin' word,
Not a word, not a word did he say.

Well they whupped him up Calvary,
Calvary, Calvary, Calvary,
They whupped him up Calvary,
He never said a mumblin' word,
Not a word, not a word did he say.

Well they planted him a thorny crown
Thorny crown, thorny crown, thorny crown,
They planted him a thorny crown,
He never said a mumblin' word,
Not a word, not a word did he say.

Well they placed it on his head,
On his head, on his head, on his head,
They placed it on his head,
He never said a mumblin' word,
Not a word, not a word did he say.

Well they speared him in the side,
In the side, in the side, in the side,
They speared him in the side,

He never said a mumblin' word,
Not a word, not a word did he say.

SIDE I, Band 6: JOB JOB. Sung by Dock Reed and Vera Hall Ward. Another version of Job Job is found in Vol. IV, Side II, band 3.

Ah Job Job, uh-hunh,
Ah what you reckon, uh-hunh,
Ah your oxen dead, uh-hunh,
Ah Job Job uh-hunh,
Ah what you reckon, uh-hunh,
Ah your daughter dead, uh-hunh,
Just listen that Job, uh-hunh,
What Job said, uh-hunh,
Ah blessed be, uh-hunh,
In the name of the Lord, uh-hunh,
The Lord he gave it, uh-hunh,
And the Lord take away, uh-hunh,
Then blessed be, uh-hunh,
The name of the Lord, uh-hunh.
Ah Rock Mt. Zion,
Rock Mt. Zion,
Rock Mt. Zion in that morning.
Oh swing low chariot,
Swing low chariot,
Ah swing low chariot in that morning.
Oh the son of man, uh-hunh,
Oh the son of man, uh-hunh,
Oh he prayed to God, uh-hunh,
To stop the sun, uh-hunh,
Oh the sun stopped steady, uh-hunh,
Right on the line, uh-hunh,
And the battle was firing, uh-hunh,
And seven times, uh-hunh,
Oh want to go to heaven,
Oh want to go to heaven,
Oh want to go to heaven in the morning.
Oh mourn on Mary,
Mourn on Mary,
Oh mourn on Mary in the morning
Oh weep on Marthy,
Weep on Marthy,
Oh weep on Marthy in the morning.

SIDE I, Band 7: WHAT MONTH WAS JESUS BORN IN. Sung by Vera Hall Ward.

What month was Jesus born in?
Last month in the year.
What month was Jesus born in?
Last month in the year.
Oh Lord, you got January, February,
March, oh Lord,
You got April, May and June Lord,
You got the July, August, September,
October and November,
You got twenty-fifth day of December,
It's the last month in the year.

He was born in an ox-stall manger,
Last month in the year,
He was born in an ox-stall manger,
Last month in the year.
Oh Lord you got January, February,
March, oh Lord,
You got April, May and June Lord.

You got the July, August, September,
October and November
You got twenty-fifth day of December,
It's the last month in the year.

I'm talking about Mary's baby,
Last month in the year.
I'm talking about Mary's baby,
Last month in the year.

Oh Lord you got January, February,
March, oh Lord,
You got April, May and June Lord
You got July, August, September,
October and November,
You got twenty-fifth day of December
It's the last month in the year.

SIDE I, Band 8: SOMEBODY'S TALKING ABOUT JESUS. Sung by Dock Reed and Vera Hall Ward.

Everywhere I go my Lord,
Everywhere I go,
Somebody's talking about Jesus.

I went down the hill,
Then all the day,
Somebody talking about Jesus.
Well sing it then,
Everywhere I go,
Everywhere I go my Lord,
Everywhere I go,
Somebody's talking about Jesus.
Well my knees been acquainted with the
hillside clay,
Somebody's talking about Jesus.
And my head's been wet with the midnight dew,
Somebody's talking about Jesus.
Ah sing it then,
Everywhere I go,
Everywhere I go my Lord,
Everywhere I go,
Somebody's talking about Jesus.

SIDE II, Band 1: DEATH IS AWFUL. Sung by Dock Reed and Vera Hall Ward. A variant of "Death Have Mercy", Vol. IV, Side I, Band 6.

Oh death is awful,
Oh death is awful,
Oh death is awful,
Spare me over another year.

If I was a flower in my bloom,
Make that cut me down so soon,
Oh death is awful,
Mmm death is awful,
Mmm death is awful,
Spare me over another year.

Oh what is this that I can't see,
Well call that the angel over me,
Oh death is awful,
Ahh death is awful,
Oh death is awful,
Spare me over another year.

This is the way that death begins,
You stretch your limbs and close your eyes,
Oh death is awful,
Mmm death is awful,
Mmm death, just spare me over another year.

SIDE II, Band 2: I'M CLIMBING UP THE HILLS OF MT. ZION. Sung by Dock Reed and Vera Hall Ward.

Praying at the hills of Mt. Zion,
Mourning at the hills of Mt. Zion,
Weeping at the hills of Mt. Zion,
Singing at the hills of Mt. Zion,
Good Lord I'm climbing up them hills of
Mt. Zion
Oh Lord with the glory in my soul.

Preaching at the hills of Mt. Zion,
Crying at the hills of Mt. Zion,
Toiling at the hills of Mt. Zion,
Good Lord I'm climbing up them hills of
Mt. Zion
Oh Lord with the glory in my soul.

Shouting at the hills of Mt. Zion,
Groaning at the hills of Mt. Zion,
Climbing at the hills of Mt. Zion,
Oh Lord I'm climbing up them hills of
Mt. Zion
With the glory in my soul.

SIDE II, Band 3: LOW DOWN THE CHARIOT AND LET ME RIDE. Sung by Dock Reed and Vera Hall Ward.

Let me ride, let me ride,
Oh let me ride, let me ride,
Oh let me ride, let me ride,
Oh low down the chariot and let me ride.

I'm humble to ride, oh let me ride,
I'm humble to ride, oh let me ride,
I'm humble to ride, let me ride,
Oh low down the chariot and let me ride.

Got a right to ride, oh let me ride,
Got a right to ride, let me ride,
Got a right to ride, let me ride,
Oh low down the chariot and let me ride.



-- DOCK REED

Got a ticket to ride, oh let me ride,
Got a ticket to ride, let me ride,
Got a ticket to ride, let me ride,
Oh low down the chariot and let me ride.

My mother done rid, oh let me ride,
My mother done rid, oh let me ride,
My mother done rid, let me ride,
Oh low down the chariot and let me ride.

Train coming, oh let me ride,
Train coming, let me ride,
Train coming, let me ride,
Oh low down the chariot and let me ride.

I'm a soldier, oh let me ride,
I'm a soldier, oh let me ride,
I'm a soldier, oh let me ride,
Oh low down the chariot and let me ride.

My father done rid, oh let me ride,
My father done rid, oh let me ride,
My father done rid, oh let me ride,
Oh low down the chariot and let me ride.

SIDE II, Band 4: THE BLOOD DONE SIGNED MY NAME. Sung by Dock Reed and Vera Hall Ward.

Ah the blood, ah the blood,
The blood done signed my name. } 3
Ah the blood done signed my name.

How you know, how you know,
Oh the blood done signed my name. } 3
Ah the blood done signed my name.

Jesus told me, Jesus told me,
Oh the blood done signed my name.
Jesus told me, Jesus told me,
On the hill of Mt. Calvary. } 2
Ah the blood done signed my name.

In the valley, in the valley,
Oh the blood done signed my name. } 3
Ah the blood done signed my name.

In my heart, in my heart,
Oh the blood done signed my name. } 3
Ah the blood done signed my name.

SIDE II, Band 5: EVERYBODY TALKIN' ABOUT HEAVEN AIN'T GOIN' THERE. Sung by Dock Reed and Vera Hall Ward.

Ah you got shoes, I got shoes,
All of God's children got shoes.
And when I get to Heaven goin' try on my shoes,
I'm goin' to shout all over God's Heaven.

Oh Heaven, Heaven,
Everybody talkin' about Heaven ain't goin' there,
Heaven, Heaven,
I'm goin' to shout all over God's Heaven.

Well you got a robe, I got a robe.
All of God's children got a robe,
And when I get to Heaven goin' try on my robe,
Goin' to shout all over God's Heaven.
Oh Heaven, Heaven, ... etc.

Well you got a crown, I got a crown,
All of God's children got a crown.
And when I get to Heaven goin' try on my crown,
Goin' to shout all over God's Heaven.
Oh Heaven, Heaven, ... etc.

Well you got a harp, I got a harp,
All of God's children got a harp,
Ah when I get to Heaven goin' to play on my harp,
I'm goin' to shout all over God's Heaven.
Oh Heaven, Heaven, ... etc.

SIDE II, Band 6: NOAH, NOAH. Sung by
Vera Hall Ward

Noah*, Noah, who built this ark**?
Noah, Noah, who built this ark?
Now who built this ark?

Noah, Noah, built this ark,
Built this ark out of hickory bark,
Oh Lord, who built this ark?
Noah, Noah, who built this ark?
Who built this ark?

Noah, Noah, built this ark,
Built this ark without hammers or nails,
Oh Lord, who built this ark?
Noah, Noah, who built this ark?
Who built this ark?

Called old Noah foolish man,
Building this ark on this dry land,
Oh Lord, who built this ark?
Noah, Noah, who built this ark?
Now who built this ark?
Noah, No'.

SIDE II, Band 7: PLUMB THE LINE. Sung by
Dock Reed and Vera Hall Ward.

Oh Lord, plumb the line,
Oh Lord, plumb the line,
Oh Lord, plumb the line,
(.....) in my Jesus, plumb the line..

'Taint no liar, plumb the line, (3)
(.....) in my Jesus, plumb the line.

Help me, Lord, plumb the line, (3)
(.....) in my Jesus, plumb the line.

Help me,, plumb the line, (3)
(.....) in my Jesus, plumb the line.

'Taint no gambler, plumb the line, (3)
(.....) in my Jesus, plumb the line.

'Taint no pretender, plumb the line, (3)
(.....) in my Jesus, plumb the line.

Oh Lord, plumb the line, (3)
(.....) in my Jesus, plumb the line.

SIDE II, Band 8: TRAVELLING SHOES. Sung
by Vera Hall Ward.

Death went out to the sinner's house,
Come and go with me
Sinner cried out, I'm not ready to go,
I ain't got no travellin' shoes.
Got no travellin' shoes, got no travellin' shoes.
Sinner cried out, I'm not ready to go,
I ain't got no travellin' shoes.

Death went down to the gambler's house,
Called him come and go with me.
The gambler cried out, I'm not ready to go,
I ain't got no travellin' shoes.
Got no travellin' shoes... etc.

Death went down to preacher's house,
Called him, come and go with me.
The preacher cried out, I'm a-ready to go,
I got my travellin' shoes.
Got my travellin' shoes, got my travellin' shoes.
The preacher cried out, I'm ready to go,
I've got my travellin' shoes.

VOL. VI, RING GAME SONGS AND OTHERS SIDE A -- RING GAMES, LINE GAMES AND PLAYPARTY SONGS

Three examples of game songs are included
in Vol. I of this series. Vol. III, Side I, is
devoted exclusively to children's songs of this
type. For detailed descriptions of the action
accompanying the songs, I am indebted to Ruby
Pickens Tartt.

As noted previously, games and songs of the
kind represented here are gradually disappearing
in southern United States. Rural schools, as well
as urban, are stressing "modern" forms of play.
Soft ball and basketball are more to be seen in the
school yards than the old-fashioned games, and
group singing of the "organized" and "directed"
type is emphasized. Nevertheless, the traditional
game songs hang on with a tough tenacity, and they
continue to be heard even in urban centers such as
Chicago, New York and other cities which have
been centers for migrations from the South. One
apparent reason for the survival of these songs
and games is that they belong to the children's
world rather than to the adult. While adults
find them outmoded, children do not, and they are
passed on from children to children, outside the
framework of changing adult cultural values.

Inasmuch as these songs and games are not
"taught" but simply "acquired", there are
considerable variations in the way they are sung
and played. Words differ from place to place,



and many of the words appear as nonsense
syllables whose precise meanings are not known
to the children. Nevertheless, there is a basic
continuity of traditional form. Most of the
games are played either in a ring or a line. In
the ring games, the children stand in a circle,
often holding hands, with the leader either out-
side or inside the circle performing some action.
In the line games, two lines of players are formed
with the leader between them or at the head of
one. Both ring and line games usually have a
formalized ending; a sequence of actions is
carried through until all the children have
participated. A game of the play-party type, on
the other hand, may continue indefinitely. Hand-
clapping is a component part of all these forms.

SIDE I, Band 1: MARY MACK. Recorded at
Lilly's Chapel School, York, Alabama

Oh Mary Mack, Mack, Mack,
All dressed in black, black, black,
With silver buttons, buttons, buttons,
Up and down her back, back, back.

And I love coffee, coffee, coffee,
And I love tea, tea, tea,
And the boys love me, me, me.

I went to the river, river, river,
And I couldn't get across, 'cross, 'cross,
And I paid five dollars, dollars, dollars,
For the old grey horse, horse, horse.

And the horse wouldn't pull, pull, pull,
I swapped him for a bull, bull, bull,
And the bull wouldn't holler, holler, holler,
I swapped him for a dollar, dollar, dollar.

And the dollar wouldn't spend, spend, spend,
I put it in the grass, grass, grass,
And the grass wouldn't grow, grow, grow,
I got my hoe, hoe, hoe.

And the hoe wouldn't chop, chop, chop,
I took it to the shop, shop, shop,
And the shop made money, money, money,
Like the bees made honey, honey, honey.

See that yonder, yonder, yonder,
In the jay-bird town, town, town,
Where the women gotta work, work, work,
Till the sun goes down, down, down.

Well, I eat my meat, meat, meat,
And I gnaw my bone, bone, bone,
Well, good-bye honey, honey, honey
I'm going on home.

Directions: The children usually stand in lines
facing each other. They all sing and clap their
partner's hands.

SIDE I, Band 2: BOB A NEEDLE (BOBBIN
NEEDLE). Recorded at Lilly's Chapel School,
York, Alabama.

Well oh bob a needle,
Bob a needle,
And oh bob a needle.

Bob a needle, is arunning,
Bob a needle, ain't arunning.
Bob a needle, is arunning,
Bob a needle, ain't arunning.

And oh bob a needle,
Bob a needle,
And oh bob a needle, bob a needle
You got bob a.

Bob a needle, is arunning.
You got bob a,
Bob a needle, is arunning.

And oh bob a needle,
Bob a needle,
And oh bob a needle, bob a needle
You got bob a.

Bob a needle, ain't arunning,
Bob a needle, is arunning,
Bob a needle, ain't arunning,
Bob a needle, is arunning.

* Pronounced Nora throughout.
** Pronounced arm throughout.

And oh bob a needle,
 Bob a needle,
 And oh bob a needle, bob a needle,
 You got bob a.

Directions: "Bob a Needle" (or "Bobbin Needle") is a hiding and finding ring game. The children form a ring with one child on the inside and the leader outside. The leader walks around and places any small object, which is the needle, in the hands of one of the children in the ring. Those in the ring keep their hands behind them and pass the "needle" from one to another; the child in the center attempts to find the "needle" while he may touch all hands, he cannot look behind anyone in the ring. The "needle" is passed when the leader sings "Bob a needle is arunning" and stops on "Bob a needle, ain't arunning" When the center child thinks he has found the "needle", he says "You got bob a". If he is correct, the child holding the "needle" goes to the center and the lively game continues.

SIDE I, Band 3: WATCH THAT LADY.
 Recorded at Lilly's Chapel School, York, Ala.

I been all around my last time, last time,
 last time,
 I been all around my last time,
 Young lady, hold the key.

Just watch that lady how she hold that key,
 Just watch that lady how she hold that key,
 Young lady, hold the key.

Been all around my last time, last time,
 last time,
 I been all around my last time,
 Young lady, hold the key.

Just watch that lady how she hold that key,
 Just watch that lady how she hold that key,
 Young lady, hold the key.

Been all around my last time, last time,
 last time,
 I been all around my last time,
 Young lady, hold the key.

Just watch that lady how she hold that key,
 Just watch that lady how she hold that key,
 Young lady hold the key.

Directions: This is played as a ring game with one child in the center of the circle pretending to "hold that key." All of the children sing. The one in the center makes various motions, such as combing her hair, kneeling, standing on one foot, or shaking her body, and those in the circle try to imitate her.

In this recording the children clap their hands. Other groups playing the same game sometimes hold their hands on their hips instead of clapping. Forms of this game are found in the West Indian islands of Jamaica, Trinidad and Martinique. In Haiti the game is known as "Theatre".

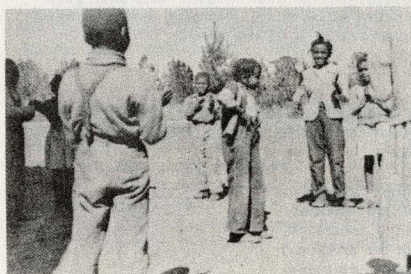
SIDE I, Band 4: OLD LADY SALLY WANTS TO JUMP. Recorded at Lilly's Chapel School, York, Alabama.

Old lady Sally want to jump-ty jump,
 Jump-ty jump, jump-ty jump.
 Old lady Sally want to jump-ty jump,
 And old lady Sally want to bow.

Throw that hook in the middle of the pond,
 Catch that girl with the red dress on.
 Go on, gal, ain't you shame?
 Shamed of what?
 Wearing your dress in the latest style.

Many fishes in the brook,
 Papa caught 'em with a hook.
 Mamma fried 'em in a pan,
 Baby eat 'em like a man.

Preacher in the pulpit,
 Preaching like a man,
 Trying to get to Heaven on a 'lectric fan.
 Do your best, papa, daddy do your best.



RING GAME: WATCH THAT LADY

Directions: The children stand in two lines facing one another. They all sing. Both rows jump back and forth, each child with his feet together. On the last line, "Old Lady Sally want to bow", the lines jump forward and each child bows to the one opposite him. This is all sung and acted out very rapidly. Ordinarily, as in the recording, the children clap their hands. In June, however, after a day of chopping cotton, jumping back and forth is quite enough.

Old Lady Sally is an old woman who is still trying to get a man. She goes "jump-ty jump" to appear young and wear a red dress in the latest style to catch one of the "many fishes in the brook." The children think that she should be ashamed of herself for not behaving as an old woman should.

The phrase "trying to get to Heaven on borrowed land" is an often heard one and is found in many Negro folk songs. These children use the variant "trying to get to Heaven on an electric fan."

SIDE I, Band 5: LOOP DE LOO (LOOBIE LOO)
 Recorded at Lilly's Chapel School, York, Ala.

Here we go loop de loo,
 Here we go loop de loo,
 Here we go loop de loo,
 All on a Saturday night.

I put my right hand in,
 I take my right hand out,
 I give my right hand a shake, shake, shake,
 And turn my body about.

Here we go loop de loo,
 Here we go loop de loo,
 Here we go loop de loo,
 All on a Saturday night.

I put my left hand in,
 I take my left hand out,
 I give my left hand a shake, shake, shake,
 And turn my body about.

(Chorus)

I put my right foot in,
 I take my right foot out,
 I give my right foot a shake, shake, shake
 And turn my body about.

(Chorus)

I put my left foot in,
 I take my left foot out,
 I give my left foot a shake, shake, shake,
 And turn my body about.

(Chorus)

I put my big head in,
 I take my big head out,
 I give my big head a shake, shake, shake,
 And turn my body about.

(Chorus)

I put my big self in,
 I take my big self out,
 I give my big self a shake, shake, shake,
 And turn my body about.

(Chorus)

Directions: The children form a circle, join hands and skip to the left as they sing the chorus. They stop as they sing "All on a Saturday night" and make appropriate gestures for each verse. For the first one all right hands are put in the circle, then drawn out, followed by three tremendous shakes. Each child turns himself about and the chorus follows.

This game represents the Saturday night bath. In this section of Alabama a small tin tub, also used for washing clothes, is used for bathing. All parts of the body go in, including "my big self", when the children step in and then out of the circle on the last verse. This game is one of the old favorites.

SIDE I, Band 6: GREEN GREEN ROCKY ROAD: Recorded at Lilly's Chapel School, York, Alabama.

Green, green, rocky road,
 Some lady's green, rocky road
 Tell me who you love? Rocky road,
 Tell me who you love? Rocky road.

Caller: Minnie Town

Dear Miss Minnie (name of child within circle)
 your name's been called,
 Come take a seat beside the wall.
 Give her a kiss and let her go,
 She'll never sit in that chair no more.

(Another version of this song, not recorded, is as follows:)

Green field, rocky road,
 Move up green rocky road,
 Some lady's green, rocky road,
 To marry me, rocky road.
 Call your true love, rocky road,
 Call him now, rocky road.
 Don't take time, rocky road,
 Yes or no, rocky road.

Directions: The children form a circle with the leader in the center. The group sings "Green, green" and the leader answers, "Rocky road," skipping around the ring. As the chorus is sung the leader is deciding which person to choose. As he picks one, the group sings the first line of the verse, naming the child selected. The leader brings his choice to the center and kisses her at the line, "Give her a kiss and let her go." The first leader takes a place in

the ring and the child selected becomes the new leader, picking another child at the appropriate time. Clapping of hands throughout the song provides the rhythmic background.

Originally, a chair probably stood in the center of the ring and the chosen one sat in it. However, in this section of Alabama, "Green Green, Rocky Road" is now played without one.

SIDE I, Band 7: ROSIE DARLING ROSIE.
Recorded at Brown's Chapel School, Livingston, Alabama,

(Chorus)

Rosie, darling Rosie,
Ha, ha, Rosie,
Rosie, darling Rosie,
Ha, ha, Rosie.

Way down yonder in Baltimore,
Ha, ha, Rosie.
Need no carpet on my floor,
Ha, ha, Rosie.

Grab your partner and follow me,
Ha, ha, Rosie.
Let's go down by Galilee,
Ha, ha, Rosie.

Rosie, darling, Rosie.
Ha, ha, Rosie.
Rosie, darling, hurry,
Ha, ha, Rosie.
If you don't mind you gonna get left,
Ha, ha, Rosie.

Way down yonder by Baltimore.
(etc.)

Grab your partner an' follow me,
(etc.)

Rosie, darling, Rosie,
Ha, ha, Rosie.
Rosie, darling hurry,
Ha, ha, Rosie.

(Last verse, no matter how many are sung:)
Stop right still and study yourself,
Ha, ha, Rosie
See that fool where she got left,
Ha, ha, Rosie.

There are many verses to "Rosie Darling Rosie" not included in this recording. The following verses are often sung:

Some folks say preachers won't steal,
Ha, ha, Rosie.
But I caught two in my cornfield,
Ha, ha, Rosie.

One had a bushel and one had a peck,
Ha, ha, Rosie.
The baby had a roasting ear 'round her neck,
Ha, ha, Rosie.

You steal my partner, you won't steal her no more,
Ha, ha, Rosie.
Better stay from 'round my door.
Ha, ha, Rosie.

Directions: This game is played by two concentric circles, usually formed by boys and girls facing each other, with the leader on the outside. The children in the circles clap their hands for rhythm and sing the chorus and refrain of "Ha, ha, Rosie." The leader sings the other lines and, at "Grab your partner and follow me," skips to the circles and chooses a partner of the opposite sex. The couple skips around the circles. The leader is replaced by the one whom he has chosen; he takes a place in the circle.

The song continues until all have been chosen to be leader. At the concluding verse and line of "Stop right still and study yourself, see that fool where she got left," all eyes are turned toward the child who has been left with no partner. Each child tries to be chosen early in the game to avoid the embarrassment of being the last one.

SIDE I, Band 8: I MUST SEE (AMASEE).
Recorded at Brown's Chapel School, Livingston, Alabama.

Take your partner down the line,
I must see, I must see.
Take your partner, down the line,
I must see, I must see.
Take your partner down the line,
I must see, I must see.
Swing your partner, swing again,
I must see, I must see.
Take your partner down the line,
I must see, I must see.
Take your partner down the line,
I must see, I must see.
Swing your partner, swing again,
I must see, I must see.
Swing your partner, swing again,
I must see, I must see.
Take your partner down the line,
I must see, I must see.
Take your partner down the line,
I must see, I must see.
Take your partner down the line,
I must see, I must see.

(The lines, "Swing your partner" and "Take your partner," are repeated from three to five times each, with the refrain of "I must see, I must see" after every line. This repeated line is actually pronounced "Amasee.")

Directions: The children face each other in two lines. The leader sings the lines "Take your partner" and "Swing your partner"; the other children sing the refrain and clap their hands. Beginning with the head couple, each pair goes down between the rows, swinging their partners on directions sung by the leader.

SIDE I, Band 9: BLUEBIRD BLUEBIRD.
Recorded at Pilgrim Church School, Livingston, Alabama.

Bluebird, bluebird,
Fly in the window.
Bluebird, bluebird,
Fly in the window.
Bluebird, bluebird,
Fly in the window.
Oh Johnnie, what a day!

Choose your partner,
Pat him on the shoulder.
Choose your partner,
Pat him on the shoulder.
Choose your partner,
Pat him on the shoulder.
Oh Johnnie, what a day!

Bluebird, bluebird,
Fly in the window,
Bluebird, bluebird,
Fly in the window,
Bluebird, bluebird,
Fly in the window,
Oh Johnnie, what a day!

Choose your partner,
Pat him on the shoulder.
Choose your partner,
Pat him on the shoulder.
Choose your partner,
Pat him on the shoulder.
Oh Johnnie, what a day!

Bluebird, bluebird,
Fly in the window,
Bluebird, bluebird,
Fly in the window.
Oh Johnnie, what a day!

Directions: All the children except the one who plays the bluebird form a circle with hands held high to make "windows". The bluebird flies in and out of these windows as they all sing together. As they sing "Choose your partner" the bluebird skips around the circle with the one he has chosen, returning to take his place in a "window". The one he has selected is the bluebird and the game continues until all the children have taken this part.

SIDE I, Band 10: MAY GO 'ROUND THE NEEDLE (MY GOLD-EYED NEEDLE).
Recorded at East York School, East York, Ala.

May go 'round the needle,
Shoo shoo.
My silver thimble,
Shoo, shoo.
Hey Dolores (each child's name in turn)
Shoo, shoo.
Fly way 'cross yonder,
Shoo, shoo.
And look this way,
Shoo, shoo.

This same verse is repeated over and over with a different child's name each time. The words "May go 'round the needle" appear to be a corruption of "my gold-eyed needle," as it is sometimes sung by other children. A variant heard by Ruby Pickens Tartt goes:

My gold eyed needle,
Surely do;
My silver thimble,
Surely do;
Hey Sally May
Surely do;
Fly way 'cross yonder,
Surely do;
An' look this way,
Surely do.

Directions: The children form two lines facing one another. The leader sings all of the song, while the others clap their hands and answer back the refrain of "Shoo shoo." When the leader calls a child's name and says "Fly way 'cross yonder and look this way," the child crosses to the opposite line and faces the one which he has left. The next child called is from the second line so that both lines stay their original size. The game continues until every child's name has been called. The children love to hear their names called out before the other players.

Another unrecorded version of "My Gold-Eyed Needle" observed by Ruby Pickens Tartt goes like this:

Young speckled lady,
Surely do;
Just from the country,
Surely do;
With a gold-eyed needle,
Surely do;
And a silver thimble,
Surely do.

Oh little girl,
Surely do;
Fly way 'cross yonder,
Surely do;
You, too, little girl,
Surely do;
You fly, too,
Surely do.

Directions: Unlike most variants of "Gold-Eyed Needle", this last one is played as a ring game. The children make a circle about the leader. At the line, "Oh little girl", the leader points to one child who flies across the center, exchanging places with the one to whom the leader has pointed on the "You, too, little girl" line.

SIDE I, Band 11: STOOPING ON THE WINDOW. Recorded at East York School, East York, Ala.

Stooping on the window,
Wind the ball!
Stooping on the window,
Wind the ball!
Stooping on the window,
Wind the ball!
Stooping on the window,
Wind the ball!
(etc.)

Let's wind this ball,
Again, again, again,
Let's wind this ball,
Again, again, again,

Let's wind this ball,
Again, again, again,
Let's wind this ball,
Again, again, again,

Unwind this ball,
Again, again, again,
Unwind this ball,
Again, again, again,
Unwind this ball,
Again, again, again,
Unwind this ball,
Again, again, again,
(etc.)

Directions: The children hold hands in a line, with the "ball" at one end and a pair at the other, their arms arched to form a "window". Led by the leader, the line goes under the arched hands. Usually the leader calls out the first line and is answered by the others with "Wind the ball" or "Again." Sometimes the children clap their hands instead of holding to one another. The leader takes the line down to the "ball" and goes around about him, "winding the ball". When all the children are tightly pressed together in a circle, the ball is unwound by the leader, who unwinds it from the center. At the end of the game the children are in a straight line.

Sometimes, instead of one arched "window", all the children hold their arms up and the leader takes them in and out down through these windows to the foot of the line and the "ball."

SIDE I, Band 12: CHARLIE OVER THE OCEAN. Recorded at East York School, East York, Alabama.

Leader - Charlie over the ocean,
Ring - Charlie over the ocean.
Leader - Charlie over the ocean,
Ring - Charlie over the ocean.
Leader - Charlie caught a blackbird,
Ring - Charlie caught a blackbird,
Leader - Might been me,
Ring - Might been me.

Leader - Charlie over the ocean,
Ring - Charlie over the ocean.
Leader - Charlie over the sea,
Ring - Charlie over the sea.
Leader - Charlie caught a black fish,
Ring - Charlie caught a black fish.
Leader - Can't catch me,
Ring - Can't catch me.

Leader - Charlie over the ocean,
Ring - Charlie over the ocean.
Leader - Charlie over the sea,
Ring - Charlie over the sea.
Leader - Charlie caught a blackbird,
Ring - Charlie caught a blackbird.
Leader - Can't catch me,
Ring - Can't catch me.
(etc.)

Directions: The children join hands in a ring and skip to their right. The leader, who is outside, skips in the opposite direction. He begins the song and the ring sings each line back to him. As the leader says "Charlie caught a blackbird" he touches one of those in the ring and begins to run around the ring. The child who was touched tries to catch him. If the leader can get around the ring to the empty place, the other child becomes the leader. If not, he remains on the outside. The song continues and all children take part as the leader.

This game is almost the same as the more familiar Drop the Handkerchief, but all the children take part, either by their singing or by the more active part of the ring. (In Drop the Handkerchief the circle does not move.)

Another way of playing this game is for the leader to be in the center of the circle, blindfolded. On the line "Charlie caught a blackbird," the circle squats, moving about from side to side, as the leader attempts to find one of the children.

SIDE B -- PLAY SONGS, WORK SONGS, CHAIN GANG SONGS AND OTHERS

SIDE II, Band 1: SESSION WITH CELINA LEWIS. Recorded in Livingston, Alabama at the home of Celina Lewis. The singer was an old woman when these songs were recorded. She had the reputation of having been a fine and spirited singer when she was young.

Peep squirrel, }
Yaddle daddle deedle dum, }2
Catch that squirrel, }
Yaddle daddle deedle dum, }2
Run squirrel, }
Yaddle daddle deedle dum, }4
Etc.

Now, that's enough of that...

(.....) Sangaree,
Says get on the road, Sangaree,
We're a sorry team, Sangaree,
Oh Lordy, Sangaree,
Oh Lordy, Sangaree,
Oh Lordy, Sangaree,
Oh Lord Lord, Sangaree.

Now that's enough of that... All you church folks looking right at me, and they call on me to praise... get up there!

Whoa, mule, can't get the saddle on, (2)
Stop that mule, I can't get the saddle on, (2)
Whoa mule, I can't get the saddle on, (2)
Run mule, I can't get the saddle on, (2)
Can't you catch that mule, can't get the saddle on,
Catch that mule, can't get the saddle on, (4)
Yon go that mule, can't get the saddle on,
Go that mule, can't get the saddle on.

Now... (In response to question, "You didn't sing that 'Litty Bitty Man Picking Up Sand', did you? That's to get children to sleep. What were some you used to sing to babies to put them to sleep?")... I rock 'em to sleep. (In response to further suggestions)... No, I used to sing about Papa goin' ahuntin', mamma goin' arunnin', catch a little rabbit, to rock the baby asleep in. Etc.

Rosie,
Rosie, Rosie Rosie gal,
Ho, oh Rosie,
Rosie gal and a Rosie gal,
Ho, oh Rosie,
Oh Rosie gal is a mighty pretty gal, }2
Ho, oh Rosie,
I'm talkin' about Rosie Rosie gal
Ho, oh Rosie
I'm talkin' about Rosie Rosie gal...

Now that's enough...

Bull frog jumped from the bottom of the well,
His mouth full...

Now it don't say now his jaw-bone swell, and I just won't say what it say. But anyhow...

The bull frog jumped from the bottom of the well,
His mouth full of butter and he... just goin' to hell...

How you like that? (In response to comments:) ... Well now, that's what it says!... Ho, ho, ho, ho... I just can't get them things right... Etc.

Bull frog jumped from the bottom of the well,
His mouth full of butter and his jaw-bone swell,
Ho ho ho-ah...

You git me off here on the record and they'll turn me out of the church!

Kushie Dye Yo,
Oh I do love you,
I wish I never had seed you,
I wish you'd never been born.

Oh Kushie Dye Yo,
Oh how I do love you,
I wish I had never seed you,
I wish you'd never been born.

How you like that? ... How'd you like "If I Had My Way... I'd Tear the Buildin' Down"? Now that sounds right, because if I had my way, I'd tear something down...

If I had-a my way, (I don't know much of it)
If I had-a my way,
If I had-a my way,
I'd tear the buildin' down.

Now I got-a my way,
Now I got-a my way,
Now I got-a my way, Lord,
I'm goin' to tear the buildin' down...

I told you I didn't know much of it.

SIDE II, Band 2: WATER ON THE WHEEL. Sung by Annie Grace Horn Dodson of Sumter County, Alabama. This is a "water boy" song, of which there are many in Negro folk music. Such songs originated, usually, in the open air--in the fields and sometimes among prisoner gangs. Many "water boy" songs are local and personal in character, often little more than field cries or hollers (examples of which are found in Vol. I of this series). The example heard here is one which the singer remembered from her childhood.

Water boy, water boy!
Water boy, water boy!
Water on the wheel,
How does the sun shine
That I feel,
Little water time, hey,
Little water boy,
Little water time, hey,
Little water boy
Water on the wheel
How does the sun shine
That I feel,
Little water boy.

--ANNIE GRACE HORN DODSON



SIDE II, Band 3: GO PRAY YE (PREACH MY GOSPEL), Annie Dodson. An Isaac Watts hymn.

Go preach
My gospel
Thus saith
The Lord
Bid the earth
My grace
Receive.

You shall be saved that trust my word,
 And be condemned who don't believe.
 You shall
 Be saved
 That trust
 My every word
 Condemned
 Who don't
 Believe in me.
 I'll make your great commission known,
 And you shall prove my gospel true.
 Etc.

SIDE II, Band 4: CAPTAIN HOLLER HURRY.
 Sung by Willie Turner near Livingston, Ala.
 This is what is sometimes referred to as a
 "chain gang" song -- a worksong sung by state
 prisoners as they work on the road or some
 other construction project. The songs sung by
 work gangs have a readily recognizable tempo
 and character of their own. Subject matter is
 varied, ranging from epics and ballad-like
 songs to simple topical comments. "Chain
 gang" songs fall within the broad tradition of
 work songs. Wherever and whenever southern
 Negro men work together in groups, music
 incentives are strong. As indicated in the notes
 for Vol. I of this series, however, the changing
 economic scene in Alabama has left few
 situations for this kind of singing, which is to be
 found mainly in the prison camps and on the
 railroad gang. This song, which the singer
 learned in a prison camp in Mississippi, is a
 wry comment on the hurry of the gang foreman.

The Captain holler hurry,
 Goin' to take my time.
 Say Captain holler hurry,
 Goin' to take my time.
 Say he makin' money
 And I'm tryin' to make time.
 Say he can lose his job
 But I can't lose mine.

I ain't got long to tarry,
 Just stop by here.
 Boys, if you got long
 You better move along.
 Say Captain holler hurry,
 I'm goin' to take my time.
 Say the Captain holler hurry,
 I'm goin' to take my time.
 Say he makin' money,
 And I'm tryin' to make time.

SIDE II, Band 5: JOHN HENRY. Sung by
 Willie Turner. A short version of the John
 Henry ballad, another variant of which is sung
 by Rich Amerson in Vol. III of the Alabama
 series.

John Henry went up on the mountain,
 And he looked down and heaved a sigh,
 Said the mountain was so big and wide,
 John Henry was so small,
 Until he fell on his knees and he cried and he
 cried,
 Said he fell on his knees and he cried.
 He said Captain, Captain, you don't know,
 But the last hammer that I had,
 Before I let this steel* carry me down,
 Says I'll die with this hammer in my hand,
 Says I'll die with my hammer** in my hand.
 Girl, who goin' to shoe your pretty little feet?
 Darlin', who goin' to glove your hand?
 Sugar, who goin' kiss your sweet little lips?
 Darlin', who goin' to be your man?
 Darlin', who goin' to be your man?
 Say Papa goin' to shoe my pretty little feet,
 Say Mother goin' to glove my hand,
 Say Sister goin' to kiss my sweet little lips,
 John Henry, I don't need no man,
 John Henry, I don't need no man.
 John Henry had a little baby,
 You could hold him in the pat of your hand.
 Before that baby was six months old
 He drive steel like a natural man, hanh!
 He drive steel like a natural man.

* Sung "steel" but probably it originally was
 "steam"

** Pronounced "hammun".

SIDE II, Band 6: I'M GOING TO HAVE A
 TALK WITH THE CHIEF OF POLICE. Sung
 by Peelee Hatchee (Emanuel Jones), a railroad
 worker living near Livingston, Alabama. This
 is a kind of railroad work blues.

I'm goin' uptown have a talk with the chief police,
 How my good girl in trouble and I cannot see
 no peace.
 Don't I love you baby, and I just can't take your
 place,
 Don't I love you baby, and I tell you what I do.
 I hope some day, baby, come to love me too,
 And I hope some day, baby, come to love me too.
 I went to the river and I looked up it, up and
 down,
 Thought I'd see my good girl when she walkin'
 cross the town.
 I tell my baby why she come back home,
 And I had no lovin', babe, since you been gone.
 I tell my woman, tell her Lord for me,
 Lord she can't quit me and it ain't no use of
 tryin'.
 But my baby caught the train and I swore
 (.....)
 Singin' to her that she can't quit me, Lord it
 ain't no use of tryin'.
 Oh I tear uptown in the mornin' have a talk
 with the chief police,
 'Cause Rena in trouble and I cannot see no peace.

SIDE II, Band 7: MEET ME IN THE BOTTOMS.
 Sung by Davie Lee at Marian, Mississippi.

Meet me in the bottom with my boots and shoes,
 Whoo Lordy mamma, great God a'mighty,
 Meet me in the bottom with my boots and shoes,
 Got to leave this town now,
 Got no time to lose.
 The woman I love she got to bring my boots and
 shoes,
 Whoo Lordy mamma, great God a'mighty.
 The woman I love, with my boots and shoes,
 Say the woman I loved by, see her every day,
 The woman I love, she got long black curly hair,
 Whoo Lordy mamma, great God a'mighty.
 The woman I love got long black curly hair,
 Say the woman I hate, I see her every day.
 Meet me in the bottom with my boots and shoes,
 Whoo Lordy mamma, great God a'mighty.
 Meet me in the bottom with my boots and shoes,
 Got to leave this town now,
 Got no time to lose.

SIDE II, Band 8: WHEN THE ROLE IS
 CALLED IN HEAVEN. Sung by Joe Brown,
 Harrison Ross and Willie John Strong near
 Livingston, Alabama. An example of the
 organized, rehearsed group singing which has
 become popular in relatively recent years.
 Singing of this kind is heard nowadays in many
 churches as well as in purely secular settings.

SIDE II, Band 9: I MOANED AND I MOANED.
 Sung by Joe Brown, Harrison Ross and Willie
 John Strong, as above. Another example of
 rehearsed singing in the new style.

SIDE II, Band 10: I'M STANDING IN A
 SAFETY ZONE. Sung by Rosie N. Winston at
 Brown's Chapel, Ala. This is an example of the
 composed song for religious settings, the so-
 called gospel song.

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