

FOLKWAYS RECORDS FS 5203

DOWN JERSEY



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Songs and Stories of
Southern New Jersey

Jim Albertson

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"I have this friend that I have worked with for quite sometime. He is one of the people that can carry on the tradition of preserving history in music and stories. He works mainly in schools and libraries in New Jersey and other places as well. He is sincere and works hard and I am sure an album of this nature would be entertaining and educational not only to people in New Jersey but elsewhere too."

Ola Belle Reed

Jim Albertson has been singing songs and telling stories of his native New Jersey for many years. In 1980-82 he served as the first president of the New Jersey Folklore Society and was presented with the Second Annual Award of the New Jersey Folk Festival at Rutgers University for Distinguished Contribution to Folk Music in New Jersey.

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DESCRIPTIVE NOTES ARE INSIDE POCKET

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DOWN JERSEY — JIM ALBERTSON



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DOWN JERSEY

I was born and raised in the beautiful rolling mountains ... of Atlantic City, New Jersey. Storytelling has always seemed to be a part of my life from holiday family gatherings anticipating the arrival of Uncle Harry Hatch with his assortment of jokes and scarry stories for the kids, to joke sessions and re-telling of favorite Twilight Zone episodes with high school buddies, to formal studies in oral interpretation at college, to present day travels to schools and libraries and other places performing songs and stories for other people of all ages.

The so-called "Folk Craze or boom or revival or scare" of the 60's caught my attention and I was interested especially in the popular singer songwriters of that time. They referred to traditional styles and people who had taught them in places like the Ozarks, the Appalachians and New England. It came as a surprise to me that there existed a whole body of wonderful songs and stories Down Jersey in southern New Jersey where I have spent most of my life ... so far.

I began to learn some of this material from other people and from written sources as well and have tried to stay true to Jersey roots as much as possible in passing it on to other people.

During the early 1980's, I became involved in the re-formation of a Folklore Society in New Jersey and served as its first president. The New Jersey Folk Festival held every year at Douglass College of Rutgers, the State University, has presented New Jersey Folklore and Folklife for over a decade now and continues to roll on. It has been a privilege and honor to serve on the festival staff for most of those years.

Here's hoping you enjoy the songs and stories on this recording and that you might be able to pass some of your own recollections of old songs and stories along the way.

Thanks,
Jim Albertson

SIDE I, BAND 1: MOUNT HOLLY JAIL (2:50)

I first heard "Mt. Holly Jail" during my high school years when I visited my best childhood friend, Johnny Reilly, who's father had been assigned to Ft. Dix Army Base. We stopped by the recreation center and heard a young soldier from Mt. Holly singing to a buddy about the old Mt. Holly jail. It was not until years later that I ran into the song again. For ten cents, I purchased, at an antique store in Pennsylvania, an old copy of B.A. Botkin's "A Treasury of American Folklore". Therein was "Hard Times in the Mt. Holly Jail". At a symposium on New Jersey Folklore held at Rutgers University, I had the rare opportunity to hear the great pioneer collector of N.J. Pine Barrens folklore, Dr. Herbert Halpert, sing his version of the song. Like all children at heart the "worms" and the "bugs" especially appeal to me and this song has remained as one of my favorites.

When you go to Mount Holly, It's there you will find,
An old stone jail house, leave all joy behind.

(Chorus)
It's hard times in the Mount Holly Jail,
It's hard times in the Mount Holly Jail.

The soup that they serve you is not very sweet,
It's full of little worms crawling through moldy meat.
(Chorus)

That's the way they serve soup at the Mount Holly Jail,
They serve it to you in a big garbage pail.
(Chorus)

There's bugs, there's bugs as big as fat quail,
You'll sure go buggy in the Mount Holly Jail.
(Chorus)

There's old Sherriif Townsend, I almost forgot,
He's the biggest old joker in the whole doggone lot.
(Chorus)

Your pockets he'll pick, your clothes he will sell,
He'll spend all your money at his family's hotel.
(Chorus)

There's one other fellow I'd like you to know,
Every Sunday morning we get Preacher Joe.
(Chorus)

He'll stand up real straight and the truth he will tell,
To save all the prisoners from going to ... Atlantic City.
(repeat Chorus twice)

(spoken) Do not pass go. Do not collect two hundred dollars.

SIDE I, BAND 2: SAMMY GIBERSON (6:30)

Sammy Giberson was a legendary character who lived in the Pine Barrens of New Jersey. This story is the New Jersey version of the fiddle contest with the Devil, similar to "The Devil Went Down to Georgia" and other themes in which a mortal saves his soul by outwitting the best known of fiddlers, himself. Herbert Halpert explores this legend fully in his thesis and Bill McMahon has popularized it in his "Pine Barrens, Legends, Lore, and Lies".

Talk about your fiddling, Sammy Giberson could do it. He was known as "Fiddling Sammy Buck", the legendary fiddler of the pines. Sammy made a pretty good living traveling through the Pine Barrens playing for dances, picnics, parties and other celebrations. He could be seen on many occasions, walking through the woods, carrying that old fiddle of his in a leather sack slung over his shoulder.

Sammy Buck could do amazing tricks with that fiddle of his. He could fiddle up a thunderstorm on a bright and sunny day, fiddle a stream to a dead stop and fiddle down the dust on the edge of the road. With that fiddle of his, he could imitate the sound of any barnyard animal, or make it sound like a swarm of bees landing on a tree.

But he saved his best tricks for the Saturday night dances down at the old dance hall. To start off the dance, he took off his shoes and socks, set the fiddle on the floor, stuck the bow between his toes and played a fast reel with his feet. Then, he'd take the strings off the fiddle one by one, playing all the while, 'til he was down to one string, and the tune still played on. His dance step was so light, he could dance on a looking glass without cracking it.

Now, Sammy's very best trick was performed at the end of the evening. He set a full glass of water on top of his head, played the fiddle and turned a complete back flip in mid air without missing a note or spilling a drop.

But, one night, Sammy got to drinking a little too much "Jersey Lightning" and he got to bragging, saying, "I'm the best fiddler and dancer there is. I can even beat the Devil."

Late that night after the dance had ended, Sammy Giberson packed up his fiddle and slung the old leather sack over his shoulder and headed for home.

through the woods, just like he did every Saturday night. But this night would be very different indeed.

Just as Sammy got down to the bridge that crosses the creek, a strange thing happened. Everything got real quiet. The skeeters stopped buzzing and the crickets stopped cricking. A big grey cloud covered over the moon. Then the wind came up and it seemed to be talking to old Sammy Buck.

"Sammy, Sammy Buck, I hear tell you can beat the Devil."

Sammy's knees began to knock and he broke out in a cold sweat. He figured he better get out of that place fast.

He had just started to make his way across the bridge over the creek when suddenly, there was a big clap of thunder. A lightning bolt struck the middle of the bridge and standing right there in a big cloud of smoke was a stranger all dressed in black with a hat pulled down so you couldn't see his face.

Sammy pointed at the stranger and said, "Who are you?" The stranger said, "Sammy, Sammy Buck, I hear tell you can beat the Devil. Well, I'm going to give you a chance to prove it." The stranger reached out from under his coat with long green boney fingers and he snapped his fingers three times and a fiddle appeared in his hands, and he played that fiddle so fast and so lively that fire and smoke shot out from the fiddle and burned off the tops of the pine trees. That's why to this day, you won't find tall pines in the Pine Barrens; just little scrub pines.

The stranger played "The Devil's Dream" and "The Devil's Hornpipe" and Sammy's feet wriggled and rustled on the ground. He couldn't keep still. He had to dance and he danced so fast and so lively that he kicked up a big cloud of sand that went up in the air and spread out and fell all over the Pine Barrens. And, uh! That's why to this day, the soil in the Pine Barrens is so sandy.

Then it was Sammy's turn to play the fiddle while the stranger danced. Sammy knew who he was up against and he knew he had to come up with a tune the Devil never heard before or else the Devil would take Sammy down where it's real hot.

Sammy was trying to think up a tune when he looked up in the air and what do you know? Some kind soul sent him a fiddle tune floating right through the air. Sammy just reached out and grabbed the front end of that tune as it came floating by and he pulled it out of the air and set it on his fiddle. Then he played the tune and the Devil scowled and the Devil scoffed 'cause he never heard the tune before.

Sammy played fast and lively and the Devil looked down on the ground. He couldn't keep still. He had to dance and he danced so fast and so lively that he kicked up a big cloud of dirt and he whirled and he twirled and he said, "You win, Sammy Buck, I'll not claim you tonight." and he disappeared in a big cloud of smoke.

Fiddling Sammy Buck made it home that night to tell this tale many times to his friends. But from that time on, Sammy Giberson never played music on Sunday. And he always ended the Saturday night dance at midnight by playing his "Air Tune", the tune he pulled right out of the air that night in the Pine Barrens when Sammy Buck beat the Devil.

SIDE I, BAND 3: CAPTAIN KIDD (2:40)

Port Norris historian, Margaret Louise Mints, tells how Captain Kidd's men came ashore at Money Island on the Delaware Bay to buy some cattle from a farmer. They took the farmer aboard ship to Captain Kidd's cabin where he was instructed by the captain himself to remove from the table piled high with gold coins, the fair value of the cattle. Upon removing two coins, the pirates released this honest man. Up Barnegat way, they even tell of Captain Kidd meeting a young lady from around Toms River. They were going to settle down and he was going to become a gentleman farmer and give up the life of the sea, but he was betrayed in the end by one of his own crew, who felt he did not receive a fair cut of the treasure. Bill McMahon writes about Captain Kidd in his book about the old Village of Smithville. I put together bits and pieces and glued them to the traditional song about Captain Kidd and came up with the following:

Me name is Captain Kidd as I sailed, as I sailed.
Oh me name is Captain Kidd as I sailed.
Me Name is Captain Kidd and the laws I did forbid,
And much wickedness I did as I sailed, as I sailed.

I sailed from sound to sound ...
And there's many a ship I found,
But most of them went down ...

On the docks at Oyster Creek ...
The rich folk I did seek,
For to help the poor and weak...

To London I must go ...
The Redcoats have me all in tow,
But I'll meet them down below...

Near old Smithville town ...
My treasure can be found,
If you looks below the ground...

(repeat first verse)

SIDE I, BAND 4: MOLLY BANNON (4:20)

Several versions of this beautiful ballad are known Down Jersey. In some Old World ballads about Molly Von, she is able to change form to a swan and follow her true love off to the battlefield to watch over him and protect him. The troops are hunting in the fog one morning and shoot a swan. When they approach the swan, a mist rises from the ground and she returns to human form. One of the soldiers breaks down upon recognizing his true love lying dead before him. In the New Jersey "Molly Bannon", she has no magical power, but is merely the innocent victim of a storm and circumstance. I use the melody which I heard sung by the great Scottish ballad singer, Norman Kennedy, in a concert at Atlantic Community College.

Jimmy Randall was fowling one evening of late,
When he shot Molly Bannon, her beauty was great,
She was going to her Uncle's when a storm it did come on,
She ran 'neath a pine tree the shower for to shun,
With her white apron pulled about her, he 'took her for a swan,
And it's sobbin' and weepin' it was she Molly Bannon.

He ran quickly to her and he saw that she was dead,
A fountain of tears in her apron he shed,
He ran straightway to his father with his gun in his right hand,
Crying, "Father, Oh! dearest Father, I have shot Molly Bannon."
Up stepped Jimmy's father with his hair all so grey,
"Stay at home Jimmy Randall and do not run away,
"Stay at home Jimmy Randall til your trial is at hand,
"You'll not be convicted Down Jersey land."

The night before Molly's funeral her ghost it did appear,
Crying, "Mother, Oh! dearest Mother, my Jimmy Randall he is clear,
For I was going to my Uncle's when a storm it did come on,
I ran 'neath a pine tree, the shower for to shun,
With my white apron pulled about me, he 'took me for a swan,
Please tell him he's forgiven by his own dear Molly Bannon."

So come all you bold heroes that follow the gun,
And be aware of your ramblin' at the setting of the sun,
And be aware of this tragedy that happened of late,
To young Molly Bannon and thus was her fate.

SIDE I, BAND 5: CAPE MAY LIGHT (2:23)

At the Sea Festival of the Wetlands Institute in Stone Harbor, I performed a program of sea shanties. After the program, a Coast Guardsman stationed at the Cape May Base asked if I knew a song about the Cape May Lighthouse. To the best of his memory, he was able to do two verses and a chorus for me. He also related how officers take young, green recruits up to the top of the lighthouse and order them to walk halfway out on the beam of light then turn around and walk back. Most of the recruits are not fooled. They know that once they get halfway out on the beam of light, the officers will probably turn it off. I added a third verse to the song to give it a little more meat.

The wind it blew from Sou' Sou' East, it blew a mighty breeze,
The man up on the lookout cried, "A light upon our lee."
They reported to the captain, these words he did say,
"Cheer up me jolly sailor lads, it's the light on old Cape May."

(Chorus)
It's watch her, it's catch her, it's up from down below,
It's brace your yards and give her sheet, the boys'll pull her thru,
For the wind it was howling, blowing wild and free,
On our passage home from Liverpool to Philadelphieeee.

The pilots then they boarded her, they boarded her in time,
Saying, "Keep her off to Nor' Nor' West to clear the Brandywine."
We cleared the rocks of Cape May Point, "Hoorah!" the boys did say,
And then they gave their thanks to God and the light on old Cape May.
(Chorus)

We sailed on up the Delaware, we sailed into the night,
We reached our destination by early morning light,
We dreamed of friends and loved ones and merry lads were we,
On our passage home from Liverpool to Philadelphieeee.
(Chorus) (repeat twice) (repeat last line)

SIDE II, BAND 1: PINELANDS TRAVELER (6:15)

Years ago, before the "Big Break-up", Ma Bell sent around an interesting little pamphlet along with her monthly phone bill. One of the interesting little historical and often hysterical tid-bits in these pamphlets was the story of the Pinelands Traveler, a circuit preacher named Rev. Lorenzo Dow, who traveled the Jersey Pines preaching and spreading news and gossip from place to place. "The Arkansaw Traveler". being a well-known piece in the tune bag of any Jersey fiddler worth his salt (including Sammy Giberson), I figured a combination of the two with a sprinkling of mosquito anecdotes that were told to me by Bill Estell of Halexville, all stirred up together might make a pretty good soup.

(song)
Once upon a time near a pine tree small,
An old man sat by his little cabin wall
and he fiddled at a tune that he liked to hear,
a jolly old tune that he fiddled by ear,
Raining hard, the man didn't care,
he fiddled away at the popular air,
His roof it leaked like a waterfall,
Didn't seem to bother the man at all.

Stranger: Pardon me there, Old Timer, but uh! I seem to be lost.

Old Timer: Yep! You sure do look lost.

Str. I am lost. I wonder if you might be able to help me?
How far is it from here to Philadelphia?

O.T. Oh! 'bout fifty thousand miles ... in the direction you're
headed ... and you're going to get your wheels pretty wet.

Str. No! You don't seem to understand. I am lost and I wonder ...
that road over there. Does that road go in to Philadelphia?

O.T. Nope! Every morning I get up at sunrise and I look out my window
at that road. There it sets. It don't go nowhere.

Str. No! No! Look, you don't understand. What I mean is ...
Can I take that road to Philadelphia?

O.T. What for? Don't they have a road? Besides! If the folks around
here found that road missing, you'd be in plenty of trouble.

Str. This is ridiculous! If you're not going to help me,
how far is it to the nearest house?

O.T. I don't know. They ain't never invited me over there.

Str. Look! This is really ridiculous. It's getting late. I'm getting
cold and tired and hungry. Can I stay here tonight?

O.T. Nope! It's been raining for three days and my roof leaks.

Str. Wait a minute! It's not raining today.
Why don't you get up there and fix your roof?

O.T. My roof don't leak when it ain't raining.

Str. Look! I don't want to stay here anyway. This place is a mess.
It's a pig pen. It's a buffalo hollar. In fact,
I'll bet you have bed bugs.

O.T. Hold on there, Stranger. We don't have a single bed bug
around here.

Str. Well, that's good to know. (ouch-hoo-o-o-o-hey!)
I thought you said you don't have a single bed bug around here.

O.T. That's right. We don't have a single bed bug.
They's all married and has large families.

Str. This is ridiculous. Hey! Wait a minute! Hey! There's something
flying around in here. What is that thing?

O.T. Oh! Don't worry none about that thing. Why, that's just the
official state bird of New Jersey ... the mosquito.

Str. Mosquito? That's a pretty big bird.

O.T. That's nothing. One night I heard a strange noise and I woke up
and there, standing on either side of my bed, was two mosquitoes
wearing overalls with horse shoes on chains hanging around their
necks. One said to the other, "Should we eat him here or take
him home?" The other said, "Let's not take him home. The big
ones might get us."

Str. How long have they been around here?

O.T. Uh! As long as anyone can remember. My grandfather was painting
his boat in dry dock one day when he heard a thunderous roaring
sound. He looked up and a huge cloud of mosquitoes swarmed down
on him. He quick jumped under the boat to hide. But soon he heard
a loud racket. They was drilling their beaks through the boat.
Grandpa opened his tool box and took out his hammer and bent all
the beaks over. A few minutes later, they flew away, carrying the
boat with them.

Str. Well, they don't seem to bother you.

O.T. Oh! I'm just use to them by now. Besides, they know me and
each year they just come back and stick their beaks in the old
holes. Besides, New Jersey mosquitoes don't bite.

Str. They don't?

O.T. Nope! They smoke these little tiny cigarettes and they put them
out on your skin.

Str. Well! Why don't you put screens up at your windows?

O.T. Screens? Listen here, Stranger. I owe my long life to breathing
clean, fresh, Pine Barrens air. I ain't going to start breathing
strained air for nobody.

Str. You know something? There is not much separating you from a fool.

O.T. I know. Just that fence there in front of you.

Str. Well! What I mean to say is, you are the closest thing to a fool I've ever met.

O.T. That's right, but if you keep your mouth shut, I don't think anybody'll notice.

Str. What I really mean to say is ... You are, without a doubt, the biggest fool I have ever met in all my born days.

O.T. Well! That may be true, but I do know one thing.

Str. Oh yeah! What's that?

O.T. I ain't lost. (repeat song part)

SIDE II, BAND 2: STRETCH GARRISON (3:15)

The best audience for my jokes and stories was the former postmaster of Mauricetown, Robert Reeves. If he liked a story he would turn red and gasp for breath from laughing so hard. He topped my whopper one day with a story about a farmer who hitched up a giant rooster to the plow. Robert couldn't remember the man's name. My friend, Skip Arey, who was serving as pastor of the Mauricetown United Methodist Church at the time, told me a story about a farmer up on Buckshutem Road who's mule came down with a case of the colic and ran off the old bridge. In order to get the spring planting done, the farmer hitched up his wife to the plow hoping she wouldn't come down with colic. I then ran into a story in "Upstate, Downstate" by M. Jagendorf about a giant plowing rooster. It could be these farmers were all Stretch Garrison.

Down Jersey they tell about a farmer, Stretch Garrison by name, who was proud of his good green growing fields. Stretch was a hard working man, up with the sun each day attending to his farm.

One day, right in the middle of the spring planting, his old plow horse pulled up lame and Stretch was worried about coming up with the money to buy a new horse. The worry was working on his mind later that morning as he was feeding his prize rooster, Big Boy. Not paying attention to the job at hand, Stretch put the pan of feed up on a box, just out of reach of that old rooster. Well, Don't you know, Big Boy just stretched his legs and stretched his neck 'til he was able to reach that feed.

When Stretch Garrison saw what happened, he got an idea that just might solve his plowing problem. He put the pan of feed on a barrel. The rooster stretched again. Then he put the pan of feed up on a fence rail, and the rooster stretched some more. Each time Stretch Garrison placed the feed pan higher, that rooster stretched out some more until he stretched himself as big as a horse. Then Stretch just hitched Big Boy up to the plow and set to work in his field again.

The only problem was, Big Boy was now, not only big as a horse but he ate like a horse too, and Stretch knew that feeding a rooster that big was going to be an expensive proposition.

So Stretch started to stretch out the rooster feed by adding a little gravel to the mix and Big Boy didn't seem to mind the taste at all. Then Stretch stretched out the feed a little bit more by adding some sand. Big Boy ate that too and seemed to like it. Then Stretch stretched out the feed a little bit further by adding some cement mix. Big Boy ate that too and really enjoyed it.

But later on that night, he got real thirsty and drank up a whole lot of water. Poor Stretch Garrison. Next day when he went out to the barn to hitch up Big Boy to the plow, all he found was a big concrete rooster statue.

Stretch sure was sorry to lose his plowing rooster horse but things turned out all right for the town. Stretch gave Big Boy to the local volunteer fire company and they put him up on the roof and wired him up for lights and sound. Now, every time there's a fire, picnic, party, or parade or a Fourth of July celebration, why you can hear Big Boy crrrrrrroooooooooowing for miles around.

SIDE II, BAND 3: LURE OF THE SEA (5:53)

Carolyn Bacon of Mauricetown has saved notes of recollections of her father's life at sea as a sea captain and later as proprietor of a ship's store in Bivalve. "The Lure of the Sea" is my brief summation of the spirit of Captain Alonzo T. Bacon sung to the tune of the Scottish traditional song "The Broom of the Cowdenknowes". I had the honor of debuting the song for Miss Bacon and my neighbors at our 250th Mauricetown Anniversary Celebration.

(words-© Jim Albertson, tune-traditional)

When I was young and thought about my life,
I wondered what the times they owed to me,
My Mother's love showed me what I would learn,
Take no more than what my merit earned.

(Chorus)
Oh the lure, the lure-a-lure-a-lure,
The lure and the calling of the sea,
Well would I be on the shoreline with thee,
Tending of me own chandlery.

In my town the choices they were three:
The oysterin', the farmin' and the sea,
The land for me it spoke of hardship and strife,
And so I chose the bold seafarin' life.
I left for sea with silver pieces three,
They slipped into the water from my hands,
The first mate said he, "Just make your mark upon the bow
And we'll fetch'em out when we return to land."
(Chorus)

I studied hard, the captain taught me true,
No need to seek attractions on the shoreline,
The hours they were long and the work it was hard,
But I was captain by the age of twenty-one.
(Chorus)

Storms, disease and many lives were lost,
Our anchor dropped at many ports of calling,
Some tides ran smooth and high was the cost,
But five and twenty years were worth it all.
Now as I look back and I think of many friends,
How was it I escaped from Neptune's graveyard?
When beacon's glow I could no longer sight,
Was then I quit the bold seafarin' life.
(Chorus)

SIDE II, BAND 4: THE JERSEY DEVIL (2:30)

Uncle Harry Hatch was the real story teller in my family. When I was just a pre-schooler, I remember looking forward to holiday dinners at my grandmother's apartment next to the Absecon lighthouse in Atlantic City because Uncle Harry kept the kids regaled with all sorts of jokes and stories. The Jersey Devil was introduced to us in the quiet waning hours of one of those family gatherings. Through the years I have read newspaper accounts about the Jersey Devil, heard scouts tell of remedies to keep him away, seen his face on posters, T-shirts, and beer mugs, and read about him in various books, journals, and pamphlets. What started out as a Piney belief has become anything and everything to anybody and everybody. He was even made the official state monster of New Jersey. I still look back fondly on Uncle Harry Hatch's stories and hope I do justice in passing on my version of the tales of the Jersey Devil.

Some night when it's very dark, listen to the wind as it blows through the trees. It seems to carry strange sounds, probably even someone's name ... Old Mother Leeds.

Old Mother Leeds lived Down Jersey on the edge of a great swamp. All the folks who lived nearby claimed she was a witch. She had twelve children. They say she got tired of raising all those children, so when it came time for the thirteenth child, she cast an ancient curse upon it, and the child was born with the head of a horse with big horns growing out the side. The child had long sharp pointed fangs for teeth and great big round bug-eyes shining like two big burning coals. On the ends of its paws there were long sharp pointed claws. The child had feet just like a goat and growing out of the child's back were two great big pointed wings just like a giant bat.

On the night he was born, Mother Leeds' Thirteenth Child let out a horrible blood curdling scream and flew up the chimney and disappeared into the woods.

Many people have seen this critter late at night when the lamp light flickers and all the skeeters stop buzzing and the clouds cover the moon.

Some people have claimed their cows have been scared by something late at night and the next day the milk turns sour. Tool sheds and out buildings have been turned upside down. Places in the forest have been scorched and strange footprints have been found round about.

Have you seen Mother Leeds' Thirteenth Child? Next time you roam through the woods late at night ... take care. When you hear the leaves begin to rustle ... Beware. When the wind blows in off the ocean ... Beware of the Jersey Devil.

SIDE II, BAND 5: MOORE AND JACOBY (2:40)

An envelope arrived one day from Nick Anastor, president of the Vineland Historical Society. He thought I might be interested in the enclosed newspaper clipping from around the turn of the century that told about a song concerning a racing rivalry between two South Jersey oyster boats that once sailed the Delaware Bay. Since the tune was not included, I found the words suggested a tune from "Strike the Bell, Second Mate". This is how I have sung the song ever since.

Clyde Phillips and Walt Hinson of Mauricetown put me in touch with Seth Henderson of Newport, New Jersey, who knew the original and remembered the song being sung in his family, (his grandfather is one of the little boys mentioned in the song) and Captain Cornelius Campbell, also of Newport who knew the history of the boats (his uncle was the cook), and took me to Money Island to see the last remains and final resting place of the Samuel Jacoby. I was pleased to record the song for the New Jersey Public Television documentary film, "Schooners on the Bay".

While I relate my story you oystermen give ear,
Jacoby's fading glory you presently shall hear,
Give me your attention and you will plainly see
That the Eloisa Moore can beat the Samuel Jacoby.

(Chorus)
Ring, ring your bells at the dawning of the day,
The Moore's the fastest boat around to sail the Delaware Bay,
Oystermen ring your fog bells to let the people see
That the Eloisa Moore can beat the Samuel Jacoby.

Here comes old Sam Spencer, he's always hanging 'round,
It's nothing but the Jacoby whenever he's in town,
He goes into the chandlery and sets upon a stool,
It's enough to make the people think that he's a perfect fool.
(Chorus)

We were sailing up the Delaware as though we had no wind,
When the Eloisa Moore had to take her topsail in,
We arrived at Philadelphia, we harbored there all night,
But the Samuel Jacoby arrived at first daylight.

William Peterson was our captain, Willie Newcomb was the mate,
Will Ladlow was our pot wrestler, he cooked us what we ate,
Dave Robbins and Harry Gates were the men before the mast,
The whole crews' heart just swelled with pride as we went sailing past.
(Chorus)

Here comes Seth and Billy, they jam in but a word,
I think it would be better now if they were seen not heard,
With this I'll end me song and I hope it wasn't long,
But we can beat the Samuel Jacoby each time she comes along.
(Chorus - repeat twice)

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The New Jersey Folk Festival
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