FOLKWAYS FH 5723

THE COWBOY

Descriptive Notes are inside pocket

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THE COWBOY: HIS SONGS, BALLADS & BRAG TALK FOLKWAYS FH 5723

HARRY JACKSON
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HIS SONGS, BALLADS & BRAG TALK

Edited and Annotated by Kenneth S. Goldstein

FOLKWAYS RECORDS FH 5723

Cover design by Ronald Clyne

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HARRY JACKSON

Born in Chicago, Illinois, on April 18, 1924, Harry Jackson was the only child in his family. As a young boy, Jackson was frequently taken by a Negro maid to visit the horse grooms and see the horses at the 124th Field Artillery, located near his home. Harry began to ride at an early age, and this was the beginning of one of the two major interests which he has retained to this day, the other being painting. As a result, Harry spent considerable time at the stables, painting and riding, and rarely attending school.

His first contact with cowboy songs came through his acquaintence with a one-time cowpuncher who was then working at handling horses in the Chicago Stock yards. From him he first learned "When the Works All Done this Fall", "Cowboy Jack", "Zebra Dun", "Strawberry Roan", "As I Was Walking One Morning for Pleasure", "Jack O' Diamonds", and "Chisholm Trail" among others, though the versions of these songs that he sings today have undergone considerable change in the intervening years when he had numerous opportunities to hear them sung by cowboys and horsemen at rodeos, and on the ranges where he later worked.

At 13 he got his first job working around broken down race horses at a stable near DeKalb, Illinois. The owner of the stable, a Mr. Level, was married to a West Virginia woman who knew a lot of southern mountain songs, and from whom, together with her father, Harry learned many folksongs. From a Negro groom who also worked the stable, Harry first learned "Old Blue Was a Gray Horse", and many other songs.

As a result of his frequent absences, Harry was finally thrown out of high school in his first year, and, being threatened with reform school for his frequent attempts at running away from home, he left for Wyoming. Directly as a result of an article he had read in Life Magazine called "Winter Comes to Wyoming", Harry wanted to work on the Pitchfork ranch where the many photos in the article had been taken. He was later to realize his dream.

When he got to Wyoming he lived for a while with Clayton and Trude Burke, and their daughter Kaye and her husband Sam Decker, with whom he still visits whenever he returns to Wyoming. While working for the Burkes and Deckers, he learned a large part of his cowboy repertoire including "I Ride an Old Paint", "The Streets of Loredo" and "I Ain't Got No Use for the Women".

For a while he worked for Earl Martin on the Lazy Rocking A Ranch on the North Fork of the Shoshone River, and then moved around to several ranches, finally ending up at the Pitchfork Ranch where he went to work punching cattle. The Pitchfork is one of the largest cattle ranches in Wyoming, and, until the end of World War II, still operated in the traditional manner, using a chuck wagon and trailing from one branding ground to the next. During the summer they would drive the herd high up into the mountains where they would pasture until the first snow fall, and would then be driven down and rounded up for the beef shipment.

About the same time, he took various cattle jobs on other ranches, and while working on the River Ranch on Wood River, and the Whitt Ranch on Rawhide Creek, he had the opportunity to work with Ed Marshbank, a 50 year old cowboy. They spent a lot of time together building corrals, and Jackson learned many songs from the older man, including "Clayton Boone", "The Gal I Left Behind", "Iron Pants Pete", and "Strawberry Roan" among others.

Whenever there was a rodeo in the area, Harry would attend it, both as a spectator and participant, and it was while he hung around these rodeos that he learned such songs as "Windy Bill", "The Round-up Cook", "Blood On the Saddle" and his own personal favorite, "Utah Carroll", together with such odds and ends as "Morning Grub Holler", Cowboy Talking To a Bucking Horse", and all kinds of cowboy 'brag' talk.

In the Fall of 1942, when he was 18 years old, he joined the Marines, in which he served until October, 1945. He saw action with the 2nd and 4th Divisions at Tarawa, Roi Namur Kwajelein and Saipan, was twice wounded and returned to the States in September, 1944. Throughout his young life he had maintained his interest in art and painting and while in service was appointed an official Combat Artist.

Upon his discharge, he came to New York to study painting, and through the years frequently returned to Wyoming to go elk hunting, riding, and attending rodeos. He claims to have quit riding for good since breaking his arm while riding in the Meeteetse Rodeo in September, 1956, and presently devotes almost all his time to his artwork.

In the July 9, 1956 issue of Life Magazine, Harry was given an 8 page spread devoted to his painting career and his ranch background. He was referred to by a top American art critic as "probably the most talented young painter in America." In 1957 he made his second trip to Europe, this time on an Italian Government grant. Though much of his earlier work was in abstract art, for which he received tremendous praise, Harry has recently turned to a more representational form and is now painting and producing bronzes which express the experiences stemming from his early life in Wyoming. His cowboy bronzes are the only ones by a living artist included in the new Whitney Gallery of Western Art in Cody, Wyoming, where they may be seen together with Western bronzes and paintings by such renowned artists as Catlin, Remington, and Russell.

Now an artist of international reputation, Jackson still likes to take time out to sing the many songs he learned throughout his checkered career. He writes: "I don't sing a hell of a lot anymore, so my memory is not what it would be back in Wyoming where not a week goes by but that there's an occasion to sing a great many of these songs." Despite his disclaimor for a flagging memory, Harry's repertory consists of well over a hundred songs. He doesn't claim to be a cowboy singer, or, indeed, a cowboy, for that matter, and says: "Though I earned my wages like that for a good number of years, I'm not a cowboy in the real sense of the word, for a 'good hand' has to spend his life at it and not just 'pass through' like I was lucky enough to be able to do." Despite his apologies, Harry Jackson must be looked upon as one of the great American cowboy singers.

The songs in this album were all learned from traditional singers, and, wherever possible, the place and source of each of these songs has been noted in the above commentary. Of those songs for which no specific source has been given, Jackson writes: "There could not be a more difficult and even close to impossible question to answer. I crossed these songs under so many different circumstances that I just can't unravel a lot of them. It's almost impossible to try and talk of things as obscure and long set aside as where one first heard a song which he has been singing and forgetting and remembering again for 15 or 20 years or more."

K.S.G.

AN INTRODUCTORY NOTE

Much has been written about cowboys and their songs. The names of those who have contributed to our knowledge of this fascinating slice of native Americana include such giants among collectors and scholars as John Lomax and Frank Dobie. But reading these songs out of books and listening to the erudite commentary of its major chroniclers still leave one groping for the essence of these songs: what did they sound like when sung by the cowboy himself?

This recording is an attempt at bringing the authentic cowboy singer into your living room. Reserve your critical commentary and analysis until you have heard the entire album. Any other approach may well lead you up a blind alley of confusion and contradition.

Reading cowboy songs out of collections, has, in recent years become a favorite pastime of literary scholars. Many folklorists, themselves trained in the discipline of English or comparative literature, approach the subject matter as literary critics and dissect the poetry of these songs with knives sharpened on the honing stone of 'art' literature. It is not surprising, therefore, that we come across such a typical remark about these songs as that made by the fine ballad scholar G. Malcolm Laws: "Artistically, they have relatively little to recommend them...." But by what standards has this evaluation been made? Shall we compare these rough hewn boulders to the smooth, gleaming nuggets of fine poets? Or, for that matter, should they be compared to the great British ballads which have been in the polishing furnace of tradition for several centuries? By such standards, cowboy poetry and song are, indeed, dross. Their rhythms, rhymes and meters, the essence of poetic form, are poor, second-rate and uninspired for the most part. But then, too, so is the poetry of all native American folksongs when such standards are applied to them.

"Artistically, they have relatively little to recommend them..." But artistry is not the cold, calculating mass of matter which the objective, removed, impersonal critic evaluates in terms of culturally inappropriate esthetic criteria. It must be viewed on an entirely different plain, if we are to explain its very existence, and to understand its meaning and function in the lives of those who place such a high value on it.

An old traditional singer in Western North Carolina once sang more than 50 ballads and songs to me in a joyous afternoon of recording some years ago. When asked for an explanation of his amazing memory powers, he answered: "It don't require no memory; these old songs just sing themselves." When asked to explain his cryptic (to me) remark, he said: "These songs are so full of the way we live and the way we think and speak, that it don't take no fancy mind work to make it come out right. Give me a pretty air and a subject and all the remembering I have to do is back to some little happening when I was boy or a growed man. These old songs got something to do with our living, and, after the first word comes out, these memories of living sing the rest of the words to us." Maybe the words of this gnarled sexagenerian can give us a clue to a set of criteria that should be used in evaluating traditional native American folk compositions.

A good song to this old man was one which expressed living, and which was, to him, itself the essence of life. The fabric of life was the material of his songs. A good song, then, must tell of life, in a manner consistent with the structure and realities of the lives of the people who sing it. It must also be consistent with the way they think and speak. The values expressed in it must be their values, and the language of its lines must contain their own idioms, phrases and folk speech.

Thus far we are talking only about the contents of a 'good' song. But a song contains more than just poetry which is consistent with the way people live, think and speak. This poetic matter is wedded to a tune, and only in the marriage state is the song a whole thing. An old New England woman who had just buried her third husband and was about to embark on a new marriage once told me: "If you're going to live life as God meant it to be, it doesn't much matter who you're married to, as long as you're married." The same can certainly be said for the text and tune of a folksong. Another of the North Carolina singers from whom I had collected songs frequently over a period of five years, on different occasions sang approximately the same set of words to three different tunes. When asked to explain this seeming inconsistency, he answered: "Hell, a man don't always ride the same horse. It's the same with a song. All a man asks for is a good tune, 'cause a good tune, like a good horse, will get you where you're going. And the Lord knows there are at least as many good tunes as there are good horses." The important thing, obviously, is that the text be wedded to a 'good' tune, otherwise the song may not be a good one when applying the standards of the folk themselves.

There is still another matter to be considered when arriving at a set of culturally appropriate criteria for the criticism of folksong. Such songs are sung and not merely spoken or read. In their reading they may indeed be 'bad' poetry, when utilizing the standards of fine poetry. But rhyme, meter and phrase take on a new light when sung well to an appropriate tune. But how does one determine when a song is 'sung well'. Again let us turn to the folk themselves for a definition of a good singer. Anyone who has collected in the field will, in the course of his collecting, often hear some remark akin to: "He ain't got much of a voice, but he sure can sing!" (as one Adirondack singer commented to me some years ago.) When asked to explain what he meant by this remark, the 74 year old man replied: "Well, he don't make pretty sounds like these record and radio men do, but you know just what he's singing about. The whole story's as plain as the nose on your face. If it's a story song (a ballad), he tells you all the details and you can read the rest between the lines. If its a ditty (any non-ballad) you know when he's laughing and when he's crying, and you laugh and cry with him." Two things are implied in this quotation. The ballad singer gives you all the pertinent details. He may leave out an occasional detail, but these are only of secondary importance to the song. A good singer knows the outline of his song thoroughly, so, despite the fact that he never sings the song exactly the same way in various performances, he always gives you the 'whole' song. Of equal importance to this problem of 'good' singing, is that the singer be emotionally expressive of the material which he is performing. This is especially important in non-narrative song, for the quality of such songs are based on the subjective interpretation of the singer. The laughter or melancholy of a voice raises the frequently nondescript text to a level of meaning not existent in the words alone. And, in the experience of this collector, ballad singers utilize this same emotionality, though to a lesser degree than is found in the performance of non-narrative materials. Nineteenth century collectors, generally, and some modernday collectors have stressed the seeming detachment and impersonality of the singing performance of a ballad singer. Such reporting may be the result of romanticizing the situation, poor perception, or, possibly, a factor which indeeds exists in terms of cultural habit variation from people to people. In my own experience in collecting in New England and the Southern mountain region, I have never found such a performance styles. That the ballad singer uses less emotionality, letting the narrative line and poetic form supply some of the emotional expression is indeed true, but no singer from whom I have

collected ballads could be called a detached or impersonal performer.

The above, then, are the major criteria which the folk themselves utilize in talking about good songs and good singers. The modern urban folk enthusiast, and, for that matter, the folklore scholar as well, are asked to keep these culturally appropriate esthetic criteria in mind when listening to a folksong performance by a traditional singer. They may, at the same time, apply any other standards consistent with their own mode of living or expression, but the full appreciation of folksong and folk singing is directly dependent upon the reader or listener's understanding of how the folk themselves view and evaluate these things.

Let us now approach the present album with the points raised above kept in mind.

The subject matter of cowboy songs are the everyday realities, existent and potential, of the cowboy's life. He sings of the range cook, the all-important man who feeds him; of riding the range, herding cattle, breaking broncs, the occurrences by which he earns his living and spends the greatest part of his time; of sudden death in a violent manner, at the feet of a stampeding herd or at the end of a bullet's swift journey, always an ever-present potentiality for the quick demise of the peaceful cowboy; of job-hunting, a very real problem on occasion; of love and women, true and untrue; of drinking and good times after a long herding trip; and of meditation, a look at the meaning of his life and at that great unknown, the hereafter. This is the fabric of the cowboy's life... and of his songs. Fiction, fantasy and the supernatural are almost non-existent in cowboy songs, and when utilized, as in tall-tale songs and ballads, there is an element of bragging, boastfulness and exaggeration which can be found in all of his humor; but never are these subjects treated on a serious level. So much of his songlore deals with the highly specialized nature of his occupation that it is not at all surprising that so few of his songs and ballads have commended themselves to folksingers from other areas and walks of life.

His value system is found scattered liberally throughout his songs. To be courteous and generous to friend and stranger alike, to turn in a hard day's work, to be king to strays and orphans, to admire courage and bravery, and, when the occasion arises, to be brave and courageous himself, to dislike braggarts unless or until they prove they've got something to boast about, to admire true love and admonish false love, to recognize genuine skill and ability in others, and to praise it highly, to be able to hold your liquor if you're going to drink at all, to be a winner when you can, but more important to be a good and appreciative loser when you have to; all these and much more form the code by which the cowboy lives. And all of these are expressed in the best of his songs.

The language of cowboy songs is the same language which the cowboy uses when just talking. But it is a highly specialized language, full of technical terms and jargon which are all but incomprehensible to the outsider. Ramon F. Adams, compiler of two of the best books on cowboy speech, "Cowboy Lingo" and "Western Words", describes the cowboy's range vernacular as "distinctive, picturesque, pungent...Like other men of the soil, he created similes and metaphors, salty and unrefined, but sparkling with stimulating vigor... Within the cowman's figures of speech lie the rich field of his subtle humor and strength - unique, original, full flavored. With his usually limited education he squeezes juice from language, molds it to suit his needs, and is a genius at making a verb out of anything."

Of frontiersmen (of which cowboys are the last remaining example) Edward Dale once said in a speech: "He saw every detail and in speaking of something he did not describe it. Rather he painted a picture in a single apt phrase - a picture so clear and colorful that description was unnecessary. He did not tell the listener - he preferred to show him - and show him he did with one pungent, salty phrase that often meant more than could long and detailed explanation." The language of his songs is this same graphic verbalization.

The tunes to which he sets his texts have been tested by time and tradition...and not only his own time and tradition. They are borrowed wholesale from older folksongs, and he'd just as soon set a sad song to the tune of some bawdy ballad he knows, as to set a drinking song to a folk hymn tune. But the setting is always appropriate. A change in tempo or of a few notes and the song fits. Many, if not most, of his song melodies can be traced straight back to their Irish ancestors. Some were played by Irish harpers centuries ago, some are of more recent vintage. But they're all 'good' tunes.

Cowboy singers, like most traditional singers, have no voice worth talking about. They're just everyday people with average vocal qualities. But the great cowboy singers, like Harry Jackson on this recording, can sing all day and night with a bad case of laryngitis and still hold his audience spellbound. He never sings any song the same way twice, dropping stanzas here, adding others there, reversing their order on occasion, or combining several of them, but always the story he sings is a complete one. No oral degeneration or fragmentation from this singer! And when he sings you know just how he feels about the song and its subject matter. Inside of him, one senses, he's living the whole incident as if it were happening to him. When he wants you to laugh, his voice breaks into a big smile, and when he wants you to cry, his lacrymal tones let you know it. When you listen to Harry Jackson, you're listening to a great cowboy singer performing great songs; if you really want to make sure of it ask any cowboy you may be fortunate enough to know to listen to Jackson's singing. He'll let you know in no uncertain terms before you've finished playing the first side of the first record in this album.

Before closing out this introductory note, it seems appropriate to comment on the cultural settings for cowboy songs, so that those who wish, can, in thei mind's eye, transport themselves to the bunkhouse, the range, or the rodeo. If you have the time for such leisurely listening and speculation, it will add considerably to your enjoyment of these songs.

It is almost impossible to classify cowboy songs, as some writers have tried, into hard and fast categories. Basically, there are two kinds of cowboy songs, those which may, for convenience sake only, be called work songs, and others which would be termed bunkhouse or rodeo songs. Cowboy work songs, unlike the work songs of the old sailors or the still existent Negro prison gangs, are neither group songs nor do they aid the cowboy by setting a tempo or rhythm for the work which he performs. Rather they are songs sung when he is at work, out on the range on horseback. The songs keep pace with the gentle rhythm of the horse's hooves. They help the cowboy through the long lonesome nights of riding herd. But their most important use was to quiet the restless steers who might be frightened into stampeding by wolves howling or any ontoward sound. Frank Dobie writes: "Singing, whistling, chanting, humming seemed to have a soothing effect on the toughest old Longhorns. Most of all, the sounds - supposed to be harmonious - prevented any sudden noise from startling the cattle." For such purpose almost any song could be slowed down to a walk. Thus songs which on other occasions would be bunkhouse or rodeo favorites, could be trotted out to be used as herding songs. Bawdy ballads, religious songs, bruncbustin' songs, dance tunes all served their time in the service of lulling nervous cattle.

Bunkhouse and rodeo songs, on the other hand, served the prime function of entertainment. Informal singing matches might start up after the evening meal, whether at ranch or on the range, and the cowboy hands would compete to see who could sing the most and the longest. Or they would just swap songs. Whenever a group of cowboys got together in leisure moments was as good a time as any for singing, and sing they did. Dramatic themes shared the stage with humorous and bawdy songs, and the whole gamut of a cowboy's repertory could be run on such occasions. At rodeos, men from different outfits could get together and swap songs and compete in a friendly manner. Here the cowboy picked up new stanzas for old songs. And traded songs made up by his co-workers for similarly conceived songs from other ranges and outfits.

Not all songs were learned from oral sources, however. Cowboy verses were frequently clipped out of newspapers and magazines, set to tunes and started on the round of oral circulation from print. And in the 1920s and '30s, and on up to this day, cowboy folios, poetry books and phonograph recordings all contributed to the cowboy's repertoire. But the cowboy was selective and critical, and such materials had to come up to his standards. And if he could think of a good tune to which to set such texts, they became songs and were sent winging on their way in oral circulation. If the tune to which a song was sung on a recording didn't please the singer, he found a better one for it; or if the set of words didn't ring true, but the subject matter was popular, it would be rewritten in the cowboy's own vernacular. Such is the course of the popular traditions of the American cowboy.

KENNETH S. GOLDSTEIN

A BIBLIOGRAPHY OF COWBOY SONG REFERENCE BOOKS

In the footnotes to the songs and ballads included in this album will be found selected references to other texts and data on the songs which are given in various standard collections of cowboy songs, in regional collections and some of the better known general anthologies of folk song. References to texts appearing in Cowboy Song folios are also given in some cases, for it is the belief of the editor of this album, that all too little attention has been paid to this important source of traditional song materials. In a very real sense, these folios are a continuation of the songster publications of the 18th and 19th centuries. These modern-day songsters have played no small part in placing songs and ballads into the stream of oral tradition, and have also served to refresh flagging memories of traditional cowboy singers, much as did the songsters and 'ballet' books of yesteryear.

In the left-hand column, the reader will find the short reference designation for each of the books in this bibliography, which are described in detail in the right hand column.

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Notes by KENNETH S. GOLDSTEIN

SIDE I, Band 1: MORNING GRUB HOLLER

The round-up or camp cook served the double function in the morning of waking the sleeping cowboys and preparing their first meal of the day. Usually his invitation to breakfast consisted of a few words shouted at the top of his voice: "Roll out, roll out while she's hot!", or, if the dough-wrangler was a religious man, "Roll out, boys, praise God and get it while there's still some left." A more poetic cook would probably come up with something like the "Get up holler and grub call" given here.

For additional references see: Lomax I, p. 3 and p. 63; Lomax II, p. 375. See also Ramon F. Adams, Cowboy Lingo (Boston, 1936), pp. 151-152.

MORNING GRUB HOLLER

Get up, Jacob, days a breakin',
Old coffee's a-cookin' and there's bread a-bakin'

Roll out, cowboy, come and get it,
Get it while she's hot
Or I'll throw her out
And spit in the skillet.

SIDE I, Band 2: THE ROUND-UP COOK

Though most cowboy songs are by unknown authors, a fair number have been successfully traced to one or another cowboy poet. Of these, perhaps the most widely known are H.H. Knibbs, N. Howard Thorp, C. Badger Clark, Larry Chittenden and Phil LeNoir, all of whom have published among their several books of cowboy verses, songs which later passed into an oral tradition. One of these, "The Round-Up Cook" as sung here, is a fragmentary traditional version of Henry Herbert Knibbs' song originally published under the title "Punchin' the Dough".

For full texts of the original Knibbs poem, see: Allen, p. 99 (with music, as recorded on Victor Records by Jules Verne Allen); Thorp, p. 131.

THE ROUND-UP COOK

Well, come all you cowboys,
I'll sing you a song,
Stay back from the wagon,
Stay where you belong.

You think you're right handy
With gun and with rope,
But I notice you're bashful
When handlin' the soap.

When rolling the Bull[1]
For your brown cigareet,
I'm rolling the dough
For them biscuits you eat.

When you're cuttin' stock,[2]
Then I'm cutting steak;
When you're wranglin'[3] horses
And I'm wranglin' cake.

When you're hazin'[4] dogies[5]
And batting your eyes,
I'm a-hazing dried apples
That aim to be pies.

SIDE I, Band 3: THE DALLY ROPER'S SONG

Listener's will immediately recognize this song as a version of the widely known "Chisholm Trail" song. Of it Lomax writes: "This song in its entirety would give all the possible experiences of a group of cowboys driving a herd of cattle from Texas to Dodge City, Kansas. ...Of all songs, the most universally sung by the cowboys". To prove his point, Lomax prints more than 70 stanzas gathered from various sources. Rarely, however, will two cowboys sing the same stanzas.

For additional texts and information see: Allen, p. 129; ACS, p. 42; Botkin I, p. 851; CAHU, p. 26; Hull, p. 38; Larkin, p. 2; Lee, p. 48; Lomax, I, p. 28; Lomax II, p. 367; Luther, p. 194; Morris, p. 38; Randolph, p. 179; Sandburg, p. 266; SEC, p. 6; Sires, p. 32; SRR, p. 49; SS, p. 45; TFLS, Vol. VII, p. 150 and p. 179; Thorp, p. 109; TCCS, p. 6.

THE DALLY ROPER'S SONG

Well, I'm a damn good hand and a ropin' foll,
And a-taking the dallies,[6] that's my rule.

CHORUS:
Cum a ti yi yipi yipi ay,
Cum a ti yi yipi ay.

Well, I take my wraps[7] and I snubs her down
And I give her head if she takes for town.

I seen an old cow and I catch her on the fly,
I broke my rule 'cause I makes a hard tie.[8]

When she hit the end of my grass rope,[9]
My horse found a hole like a damn old shoat.

Well, I flew to the Lord up in the sky,
and he says: "Slim, don't never tie.

"For when you get a steer that's on the prod,
Just take your dallies and pray to God.

"Just make your wraps like a damn good man
And that old steer she'll hoolihan.[10]

"Well, catch him 'round the horns and take out the slack,
Lay that critter right on his back.

"And if he breaks his neck, just pull out your knife,
And we'll have fresh beef for once in our life."

Well the Lord would make a darn good hand
For he takes his wraps like a Mexican.

Well, of Texas style[11] I'm mighty shy,
'Cause I reckon I am too young to die.

Well, a Texas man with a forty foot rope
Has to keep his pony on the lope.

Well, the greaser[12] is a savvy cuss,[13]
With his sixty foot he gets there first.

Well, I caught a cow by her hind heel,
I thought she's a-doin' the chicken reel.

Well, there is more verses, but I can't sing,
'Cause my mouth is full of piging string.[14]

SIDE I, Band 4: I RIDE AN OLD PAINT

Margaret Larkin writes about this song: "This is a typical riding song -- it lopes along gently to the rhythm of the horse." Carl Sandburg bestowes high praise on it, and writes: "The song smells of saddle leather, sketches ponies and landscapes, and varies in theme from a realistic presentation of the drab Bill Jones and his violent wife to an ethereal prayer and a cry of phantom tone. There is rich poetry in the image of the rider so loving a horse he begs when he dies his pones shall be tied to his horse and the two of them sent wandering with their faces turned west."

The song was frequently used to calm down the cattle and keep them from stampeding, and the chorus seems to have been specifically designed for this operation.

For additional texts and information see: Botkin II, p. 857; CAHU, p. 37; Larkin, p. 17; Sandburg, p. 12; SS, p. 18.

OLD PAINT

I ride an old paint,[15] I'm a-leading old Dan
I'm going to Montan' for to throw the hoolihan.

CHORUS:
Ride around, little doggies, ride around kind-a slow
For the firey and the snuffy[16] they're a-raring to go.

Well, they feed in the coulees[17] and they waters in the draw,[18]
Their tails are all matted and their backs are all raw.

Well, old Bill Jones had him two daughters and a song,
One went to Denver and t'other went wrong;
Old Bill got shot in a pool-room fight,
And now he keeps a-singing most all o' the night.

Well, when I die take my saddle from the wall,
Put it onto my tophorse,[19] lead him out of the stall;
Tie my bones to his back, turn our heads to the west,
And we'll range the country that we know the best.

SIDE I, Band 5: SOME COWBOY BRAG TALK

It took a good man to do the man's job that was a a cowboy's. And the cowboy was the last one to let you forget it. He could blow off more steam about his strength and his size than a dozen men in other occupations. Eventually this boasting took on a structured brag form of rather decided proportions. In style and language it is closely related to the boastings of a Davy Crockett; its content frequently dwarfs the dimensions of a Paul Bunyan.

For additional information and texts of other brags,

see: Botkin I, p. 59; TFLS, Vol. VI, p. 149; Lomax I, p. 64 and p. 135.

SOME COWBOY BRAG TALK

"I was born full-growed with nine rows of jaw teeth and holes bored for more. There was spurs on my feet and a rawhide quirt in my hand, and when they opens the chute I come out a-riding a panther and a-roping the long-horned whales. I've rode everything with hair on it .... and I've rode a few things that was too rough to grow any hair.

"I've rode bull moose on the prod, she grizzlies and long bolts of lightning. Mountain lions are my playmates and when I feels cold and lonesome, I sleeps in a den of rattlesnakes 'cause they always makes me nice and warm.

"To keep alive I eat stick dynamite and cactus. The Grand Canyon ain't nothing but my bean hole. When I get thirsty I drink cyanide cut with Alkali. When I go to sleep I pillow my head on the Big Horn mountains, I lay my boots in Colorada and my hat in Montana. I can stretch out my arms clean out from the Crazy Woman Fork plumb over to the Upper Grey Bull River. My bed tarp covers half of Texas and all of old Mexico.

"But there's one thing for sure and certain, and if you boys wants to know, I'll tell you that I'm still a long way short of being the daddy of 'em all ... cause he's full growed and as any man that really knows can see - well, boys, I ain't nothing but a young 'un."

SIDE I, Band 6: LITTLE JOE THE WRANGLER

Dangerous occupations frequently give birth to ballads which describe in specific detail death received in the course of duty. Songs of lumbermen and cowboys are especially numerous on this score. "Little Joe the Wrangler" is one of the best of the cowboy ballads on such a theme.

N. Howard Thorp claims he wrote the ballad while trail-herding cattle from Chimney Lake, New Mexico, to Higgins, Texas, in 1898, and printed it in the first published collection of cowboy songs in 1908. The tune is a popular 19th century stage creation, which has seen frequent duty by various occupational groups and western pioneers. Among the latter, it is best known as the tune of "The Little Old Sod Shanty".

For additional texts and information, see: Allen, p. 65; Larkin, p. 120; LNAB (B5), p. 134; Lee, p. 40; Lomax I, p. 91; Randolph, p. 234; Sires, p. 48; SRR, p. 27; Thorp, p. 96.

It was little Joe the wrangler, he'll wrangle never more,
His days with the cavvy[20] they are done,
'Twas a year ago last summer he rode up to the herd,
Just a little Texas stray and all alone.

Well, it was long late in the evening when he rode up to the herd
On a little brown pony he called Chaw,
With his brogan shoes and overalls, a tougher lookin' kid
Well, I never in my life had seen before.

His saddle was a Southern kack[21] built many years ago
And an O.K. spur from one foot idley hung,
While the hot roll[22] in the cotton sack was loosely tied behind
And a canteen from the saddle horn was slung.

He left his home in Texas, his ma had married twice,
And his old man beat him every day or two,
So he saddled up old Chaw one night and lit a chuck[23] this way,
Thought he'd try and paddle now his own canoe.

Well, he was looking for a job
But he didn't know straight up about no cow,
But the boss kind of liked the kid and cuts him out a mount,
'Cause he sort-a liked that little stray some how.

Taught him how to herd the horses and to know them all by name
And to get 'em in by daylight if he could,
And to load the chuck wagon[24] and to always hitch the team
And to help the oldccookie[25] rustle[26] wood.

We was camped down in Red River and the weather she was fine,
We was settin' on the south side in a bend,
When a norther commenced blowin' and we all doubles up our guard
'Cause it took all hands to hold them cattle then.

Well, little Joe the wrangler was called out with the rest
And hardly had that kid got to that herd
When them devils they stampeded like a hail storm long they flew
And all of us was ridin' for the lead.

'Tween the streaks of lightnin' we could see that horse there out ahead,
It was little Joe the wrangler in the lead,
He was ridin' old Blue Rocket with his slicker for a blind[27]
A-tryin' to check them lead cows in their speed.

Well, we got them kind a-millin'[28] and sort-a quieted down
And the extra guard back to the camp did go,
But one of them was missin' and we all saw at a glance
'Twas our little lost horse herder, wrangler Joe

Next mornin' just at sun-up we found where Rocket fell
Down in a washout forty feet below,
Beneath his horse smashed to a pulp his spurs had rung the knell
For our little lost horse herder, wrangler Joe.

SIDE I, Band 7: UTAH CARROLL

This is another of the many popular cowboy ballads about death on the plains. In this one, however, the main motif is one in which the bosses daughter is saved from death in front of a stampeding herd, only to see her rescuer himself killed by them. More than likely the ballad was inspired by an actual tragedy.

It's authorship remains in question, though Lomax writes: "J.T. Shirley of San Angelo, Texas, says that a cowboy on the Curve T Ranch in Schleicher County wrote this song."

For additional texts and information see: Allen, p. 96; ACS, p. 86; Fife, p. 333; Hudson, p. 224; Larkin, p. 116; LNAB (B4), p. 133; Lee, p. 50; Lomax I, p. 125; Randolph, p. 239, SEC, p. 76; Sires, p. 6; TCCS, p. 34.

And if, kind friends, you ask me what makes me sad and so still
And why my brow is furrowed like clouds upon the hill,
Ride in your ponies closer and I'll tell you the tale
Of Utah Carroll, my partner, and his last ride on the trail.

Mid cactus and the thorn bush of Mexico's fair land,
Where the cattle roam by thousands with many a mark and brand,
There is a grave with neither head stone, neither date nor name,
And there lays my partner in the land from whence I came.

Oh, we rode the range together a-ropin' and a-burnin' the brand,
Through the long and stormy darkness we made the night herd stand.
Long we had rode together, we rode it side by side,
I loved him like a brother and I wept when Utah died.

We was roundin' her up one morning, our gather[29] was almost done,
When the right hand cows they starts up on a mad and fearless run;
Our bossman's little daughter was ridin' on that side,
Starts in to turn them critters, it was there that Utah died.

While a-racing on her pony trying them cattle to right
Her saddle blanket slipped under and gives them critters a fright,
And while leanin' out of her saddle that blanket to displace
She fell in front of them cattle on their mad and deadly race.

When Utah sees her falling down next to her blanket of red,
"Lie still, Lenore, I'll get you," was the words my partner said;
Twas just in one split moment that he comes a-ridin' past,
But little did my brave partner think that that ride would be his last.

Many times from out of the saddle he had caught hold of the trailin' rope,
And to catch her now at full speed 'twas the child's only hope;
He leans from out of his saddle and raises her up in his arms,
And he thought he had been successful and saved the girl from harm.

But the weight upon them cinches[30] she had never been felt there before,
So the latigoes they bust assunder and he lays beside Lenore;
Then Utah picks up that blanket and a-waving it over his head
And a-runnin' across the brandin' ground, "Lie still, Lenore," he says.

When Utah grabbed that blanket every cowboy gives a cry
For they knew though he had saved her that he was bound to die,
But he was bound to die fightin' as all brave cowboys do,
So quickly from out of his scabbard, Utah Carroll, his pistol he drew.

That hand gun flashed like lightnin', the report rang loud and clear,
And though them cows was on him he dropped the lead-most steer;
I rode into the circle and I knew his life she was o'er,
But still I hears him a-crying, "Lay still, I'll get you, Lenore."

When we buries his body neath the spot where he was slain,
He was covered in the red robe that had saved his little friend;
Now every man upon the cow range who knew how Utah died
Will think on him in silence and speak his name with pride.

SIDE I, Band 8: OLD IRON PANTS PETE

This humorous cowboy ballad is a tall tale in song. It is unreported in standard cowboy song collections. Harry Jackson reports that the song was originally known as "Yavipi Pete", but that he and Ed Marshbank amused themselves "by changing it to "Iron Pants Pete", replacing all the Arizona names with local ones from around our own range."

Old Iron Pants Pete was a cowpuncher neat
From Big Horn County's fair clime;
He lived in the saddle and punched all the cattle
From here to the Wind River line.

His riding was sassy, his ropin' was classy,
He liked to mix mingle with mall;[32]
T'weren't much of a thinker, was more of a drinker,
Could uphold his end in a brawl.

Had him a head like a hatchet, a face made to match it,
A nose like a pelican's beak.
His legs was all bowed and he was pigeon toed,
With a chin that was plumb mild and meek.

Well, he lived in the weather, his hide was like leather,
His hands was all horny and rough;
You could tell by his stride he was just made to ride,
And no critter for him was too tough.

Well, a mighty good hand with a whole lot of sand
And a voice like a bellerin' bull,
Very much on the brag and at chewin' the rag,
He was a whole corral full.

Cause he once told a tale of hitting the trail,
A-hunting new ranges to ride,
They hung up a bounty in Big Horn County
For whoever could bring in his hide.

Well he rode to a ranch and he asked if by chance
They needed a good buckeroo;[33]
They said he was rough, but he weren't tough enough
As a bronc peeler[34] he wouldn't do.

So he rode o'er a rise and battin' his eyes
And a-looking down there in the swail,
He'd come to the lair of a she-grizzly bear,
And, by Lord, she was holdin' the trail.

So he took a long strand of barbed wire in hand,
And a-crawlin' along on the ground,
He made a big scoop with that barbed wire loop
And they both went around and around.

Then he mounted that bear with a hand full of hair,
For a quirt used a live rattle snake,
And then they did rush out through the buck brush,
A-swearin' that beast he would break.

To the ranch he did go where Pete hollered "Whoa,"
And asks the boss what he'd pay.
"My mount is docile for I've rode her a mile
And I'm hunting a job today."

Well, the boss calls his stack,[35] says come to the shack,
You look like you might be alright;
That growlin' old bear you're a-ridin' right there
Ate up my old range boss last nite.

SIDE II, Band 1: THE SADDLE BUM

The cowboy tramp is a little known figure in American literature. In this previously unreported song, we get a magnificent picture of the one time cowboy who sings his way around from camp to camp, finding a welcome wherever he goes. The cowboy bum, like the

sailor, has "a girl in every port", but when he settles down for winter with his little Neta, she can be sure he'll be true to her...until he leaves again.

They call me Scum, the saddle bum, ever since the day
I quit the strife of cowboy life out to travel, sing and play,
A saddle tramp from ranch to camp, just ridin' near and far,
A horseback bum to sing and strum on a Mexican guitar.

I used to work but now I shirk and never more will hire
To mark an ear, to turn no steer nor tend no brandin' fire;
The pie and cake is mine to take, the best of everything,
I lay my head on the softest bed if I'll blow up harp and sing.

Oh, here or there or anywhere that I may choose to roam,
Me they'll feed and my saddle steed will always find a home;
I'll tell you that my horse is fat and I do want you to know,
It's mighty fine to ride grub line[36] and I'm welcome wherever I go.

I stay a while to sing and smile, but when there comes a rift
And things get cool, I ain't no fool, I fork my bronc[37] and drift,
I ramble down to a little town as winter comes along,
To little Neta, my señoreta, and sing for her my song.

When white snow flies from the wintery skies on the mantles, the hills and plains,
I'm coming back to that little shack and love you, dear, again.
My Spanish Neta, sweet señoreta, again I'll come to you,
So don't you grieve until I leave; while here I will be true.

SIDE II, Band 2: STRAWBERRY ROAN

Next to ballads about death on the plains, those concerning the activities of bad horses and bronc busters are surely the most popular with cowboys. Frequently reported from tradition in the past 30 years, this song originally started the rounds in the 1920s as a poem by Curley W. Fletcher, who finally got around to publishing it in his "Songs of the Sage" in 1931.

The version sung by Harry Jackson is probably the longest yet reported from tradition; its length is directly attributable to the fact that Jackson kept adding stanzas from others versions he heard around rodeos which he attended from time to time. Jackson reports that the song "kept changing itself when I'd go around to the rodeos with the bronc riders...I never once ever sat down to give a moments thought to changing it or to making up a new verse. All I did was keep singing it and it just changed itself."

For additional texts and information, see: Botkin, II, p. 757; Fowke, p. 98; Lee, p. 6; Morris, p. 39; Randolph, p. 232.

Well I'm standin' around town, I'm a-wasting my time,
I'm out of a job and I ain't got a dime,
When this old boy steps up and he says: "I suppose
That you're a bronc twister[38] by the rig[39] of your clothes."

Well he guesses me right, that's my middle name,
"Have you got any bad ones you're aimin' to tame,
'Cause the horse never lived nor never drew breath
That I couldn't ride till he starved plumb to death."

Well, he says: "I've got one, she's a bad one to buck,
At a-losin' good riders he's had lots of luck."
So I gets all excited and I says: "What do you pay
If I ride that old horse for a couple of days?"

He says: "I'll pay ten." and I says: "I'm your man,
'Cause there ain't a bronc in this world I can't fan."[40]
He says: "Get your outfit, I'll give you a chance."
We steps in the buckboard and builds to the ranch.[41]

It's early next morning and right after chuck,[42]
I'm hankerin' to see how this bad horse can buck;
It's out in the horse corral standin' alone
Was a little old horse, just a strawberry roan.[43]

Well, he's yew necked and old with a long lower jaw,
You could tell at one glance he's a real outlaw;
He had little pin ears that touch at the tip,
And a big 'Lazy D' stamped on his right hip.

I puts on my hooks[44] and I fix up my twine,[45]
I stick on my hat and I'm sure feelin fine;
I throw a loop on him and it's well I know then
That before I get aboard him I'll sure earn my ten.

Well, next comes the blinds[46] and there sure was a fight,
On goes my saddle and I screws her down tight,
Then I steps aboard him and I pulls off the blinds
And I takes a deep seat just to watch him unwind.

He goes up in the East, he comes down in the West,
To stay in his middle I'm doin' my best;
He sure is frog-walkin',[47] he heaves a big sigh,
He only lacks wings for to be on the fly.

I figure I'm ridin' the hurricane deck
Of a cyclone and tornado havin' a wreck;
He's the worst bucker I've seen on the range,
He'll land on a nickel and give you the change.

His back-bone's like a mountain, his legs stiff as poles,
When he hits the ground, boys, he leaves ten foot holes;
It's right at the top of each stiff-legged buck
That he sucks himself back and you're ridin' on luck.

Well he downs his old head back right betwixt his hind feet,
He kicks up his heels and he turns on the heat;
He flips his old belly right up to the sun,
He sure is a sun-fishing[48] son-of-a-gun.

He burns his old tail right up against the old sun,
He says: "Hang on cowboy, I'll show you some fun."
Well, he makes a big jump and he spins at the top,
I asks him politely: "Oh, horse won't you stop."

He shoots right straight up and he don't turn around
Like he's done give up life way down there on the ground;
He heads for the North Pole and he ends at the South,
He's swappin' ends[49] fast and his tails in his mouth.

My reins is all broke and the bits hangin' loose,
My saddle is slippin' back on his caboose;
Then he turns inside out and he swallows his hide,
And that was the end, boys, of my ten dollar ride.

He left me up higher than the birds in the sky,
But it's down on the ground, boys, that I want to die,
Well, it's first I goes North and then I goes West,
Just huntin' a place where I can sure rest.

Well, I turns over twice and I comes back to earth,
And I sets there a-cussin' the day of his birth.
But I says there's some horses that I cannot ride,
There's some of them livin', boys, they haven't all died.

SIDE II, Band 3: I AIN'T GOT NO USE FOR THE WOMEN

Wherever you find men who, by nature of their work, are separated from women for extended periods of time you also find songs about their women, true and false. "I Ain't Got No Use for the Women" is the story of one poor cowboy who took to evil ways "account of a girl named Lou", and who ended up dead for his troubles. The moral is written all through its 11 stanzas.

Though reported rarely from tradition, the song has been printed rather frequently in cowboy song folios, suggesting its possible origin in such publications.

For additional texts and information, see: CAHU, p. 42; Kincaid, p. 24; Lee, p. 54; Hull, p. 50.

I ain't got no use for the women,
A good one can never be found,
They'll stay by a man who's got money
And laugh in his face when he's down.

They're all alike at the bottom,
Selfish and graspin' for all,
Stay by a man when he's winnin'
And split the blanket[50] at his fall.

My pal was an honest young puncher,
He was honest and upright and true,
But he turned to a hard shootin' gunman
Account of a girl named Lou.

He took in with evil companions,
The kind that are better off dead,
When a gambler insulted her picture
He loaded that boy with lead.

Well, all through the long nite they trailed him
Through the mesquite and thick chaparral;
I couldn't help think of that woman
When I seen him pitch and fall.

Well, death's sharp sting did not trouble,
His chances for life were too slim,
But where they'd lay his body
Was all that worried him.

He raised his head on his elbow,
The blood from his wounds flowed red,
Looks at the boys around him
And this to them he said:

"Bill, you take my saddle,
Jack, you take my gun,
Slim, you take my lariat rope
When my last ride is done.

"Then wrap me up in my blanket
And bury me down in the ground,
And cover me over with the boulders
Of granite, gray and round."

Oh, we wrapped him up in his blanket,
We buried him down in the ground,
We covered him over with the boulders
Of the granite, gray and round.

And now, when some lonesome old cowboy
Rides past that pile of stone
He thinks of some similar woman, boys,
And envies that boy's moulderin' bones.

SIDE II, Band 4: BLOOD ON THE SADDLE

The ability to laugh at tragedy (in the abstract, never in the specific) is a world-wide trait. And in "Blood on the Saddle", the cowboy gives his own version of an unhappy episode in humorous fashion. As Edith Fowke has commented on the song: "Seldom have so few words painted such a gory picture with so much relish."

Authorities are divided in their opinions concerning the song. Robert W. Gordon, first director of the Folk Song Archives of the Library of Congress, believed that it did not quite ring true as a genuine cowboy song. The song has been reported from tradition several times, however, and is certainly a folk song on that score. Equally confusing are the contradictory statements on its origin. Both Fowke and Lomax credit Tex Ritter with citing information of its composition. In Lomax, Everett Chatham of Taos, New Mexico is claimed as its author, while Fowke reports Ritter as saying that "it was written by two Arizona cowboys to describe a rodeo accident." Fowke indicates, however, that it is not a modern song, and states that "Dr. E.A.Corbett remembers a cowboy called Oklahoma Pete singing it on the Cochrane Ranch west of Calgary back in 1905."

For additional texts and information, see: Fowke, p. 101; Gardner, p. 253; Hull, p. 46; Lomax, p. 288.

There was blood on the saddle,
There was blood on the ground,
Big pools of blood
Layin' there on the ground.

The cowboy lay in it
His head was all red,
That poor boy lay in it,
That cowboy was dead.

SIDE II, Band 5: THE RIDGE RUNNING ROAN

Though this magnificent buckeroo ballad has not previously been reported in print, it deserves to be better known. It belongs to the same family of horse-hero ballads as does "Strawberry Roan", and there is indeed much in common between these two ballads. So much so, that at least in those stanzas describing the bronc rider's losing battle with the inconquerable horse, neither song would suffer by a free exchange of stanzas. It should also be noted that these two ballads are the longest in the album, perhaps an indication of the ease and pleasure with which the traditional cowboy singer embroiders details with the use of standard commonplace expressions.

It was up in the badlands I was ranging alone,
I first heard of this cayuse,[51] the ridge running roan,
He was as fleet as a deer and as tough as a mule,
Pretty as a picture and nobody's fool.

He was high-headed and leggy, he was just built for speed,
The cowboy that roped him could have that there steed;
I figures the reason this bronc was still free
Was he never had crossed no mustanger[52] like me.

So I goes right to work and I catch up a pair
Of the best saddle horses that ever wore hair,
I hunts that old mustang and I take to his trail,
When he hits for the ridges, boys, he was a-packin' the mail.

Well, I never does head him or turn him about,
I aims to just trail him till I wear him plumb out;
Then for five or six days I gain not an inch,
He was wearing no crutches, boy, and that was a cinch.

I trail him till dark and at dawn I'd begin
Till I gets pretty weak and my horses get thin;
I follows them tracks till I get stiff and sore,
But he stays right in front, boys, and keeps making more.

He goes short for water with no time to graze,
And I stays on his trail for seventeen days;
Then he gets awful gaunt, he is wearing out fast,
Till he looks like a ridge running ghost at the last.

He was placing his feet like he's walking on tacks,
Till I sees he's a-leaving fresh blood in his tracks;

So I starts in to crowd him and turn him around,
He quits them rough ridges and he hunts him soft ground.

I shook out a loop when he got to the flat,
I throw that old lariat right there on his hat;
He sure gives up quick when I jerks in the slack,
Then I notice old saddle marks there on that boy's back.

I done myself proud and I feels like a champ
When I gets him all haltered and headed for camp,
He's striking and kicking and plumb fighting mad,
I could see he was spoiled, boys, and sure enough bad.

Well I gets him at home and into the corral,
I feeds him some hay and some oats for a spell,
When he gets fat I give him the news,
I hogtie him down and I puts on some shoes.

Then I puts on the bridle and fixes her to fit,
It weren't the first time he'd seen the damn bit;
I throws on my saddle and I cinch her right down,
Then I crawls his old carcass and we heads out to town.

I drag out my quirt 'cause to me he looked tame,
Like a twenty-two pistol on a forty-five frame;
I catch a deep seat and I freeze to the candle,[53]
I jabs in my meat hooks[54] right up to the handle.

He lets out a bawl and he goes from that spot
Like the ground where he'd stood, boys, has sudden got hot,
He tops out the first jump with a shimmy and shake
Like a-poppin' the head from a live rattlesnake.

Then he goes to sun-fishing, he sure was a peach,
And I turned from a wildcat into a leech,
He was mad as a hornet and I guess he saw red,
He was a-handy afoot, boys, and them feet they weren't lead.

I thought I was up on the hurricane deck
Of an earthquake and cyclone a-havin' a wreck;
I was doin' my best but I was just gettin' by,
And he was doin' better with blood in his eye.

He was duckin' and dodgin' and a-walkin' the dog,[55]
He had me so dizzy I was lost in the fog,
And then he gets busy and the things that he did
Was like a volcano that blew off its lid.

He was a-bawlin' and gruntin' and humpin' the jump,
He turns wrong side out, boys, with every new jump,
At ridin' bad horses now I'm no crippled squaw
But he learned me some tricks, boys, that I never had saw.

With a gyrating jump he goes over the gate,
Then I grab for the horn,[56] but I sure was too late;
He hits with a jar that most shed my old hair,
It busted me loose and I quits him right there.

Well of all the bad horses that I ever rode,
Now none was just like him, he seems to explode,
He busted me up and I'm still still and sore,
That ridge runnin' outlaw is a dirty damn whore.

The last time I seen him he's crossin' the bridge,
He was high-tailin' back to a favorite ridge;
I borrowed an outfit, I've none of my own,
My riggin'[57] run off that ridge runnin' roan.

SIDE II, Band 6: ROLL ON, LITTLE DOGIES

Known variously as "The Cowboy's Dream" and "The Cowboy's Meditation", this song is a favorite night-herding song. Alone on the range at night, the cowboy would occasionally meditate about his own future, and, as often as not, turn his mind to the hereafter and his own demise.

The origin of this song is in dispute, with Throp ascribing authorship to the father of Captain Roberts, of the Texas Rangers, and Lomax indicating that it may have been written by one Charlie Hart in 1873, while riding incognito on the Black Ranch in Clay County, Texas. Listeners will readily recognize the melody as that of "My Bonny Lies Over the Ocean".

For additional texts and information, see: Allen, p. 91; ACS, p. 84; CAHU, p. 20; Finger, p. 101; Larkin, p. 100; Lomax I, p. 44; Lomax II, p. 410; Luther, p. 201; Randolph, p. 187; SEC, p. 56; Sires, p. 24; SRR, p. 41 (parody entitled "The Cowgirl's Dream"); SS, p. 43; TCS, p. 38; Thorp, p. 40.

Last night as I lay on my pillow
And looked at the stars in the sky,
I wondered if ever a cowboy
Will drift to the home in the sky.

Roll on, oh roll on,
Roll on, little dogies, roll on, roll on,
Roll on, oh roll on,
Roll on, little dogies, roll on.

When I think of the last great round-up
On the eve of eternity's dawn,
I think of the host of cowboys
That have been here and rode on.

Well, I wonder if any will greet me
When finally I reach that far shore
With a hearty, God welcome, old cowboy,
That I've met so many times before.

Well, I often look upward and wonder
If the green fields will seem half so fair,
If any the wrong trail have taken
And will fail to turn up right there.

Well, the trail that leads to perdition
Is posted and blazed all the way,
But the one that leads up to heaven
Is a dim narrow trail, so they say.

Roll on, oh roll on,
Roll on, little dogies, roll on, roll on,
Roll on, oh roll on,
Roll along there, little dogies, roll on.

SIDE II, Band 7: THE HANGMAN'S SONG

This interesting version of the "The Maid Freed from the Gallows" (Child #95) is rather unique in its ending. Usually the person being hung is finally freed when the lover rides up with the gold and fee. In this version, the lover is rather macabre in bringing the gold and fee just "to make sure" the hanging takes place.

The ballad is widely known in English-speaking countries, and is known in a more complicated narrative plot in foreign analogues.

For a listing of numerous American texts, see Coffin, p. 96.

Slack your rope, hangman,
Oh, slack it for awhile,
I see my father ridin',
Ridin' many a mile.
  Father have you brought me gold,
  Or have you paid my fee
  Or have you come to see me hangin'
  From the gallows tree?
    Well, I've not brought you gold,
    And I've not paid your fee,
    And I've come to see you hangin'
    From the highest tree.

Well, slack your rope, hangman,
Slack it once more,
I see my true love ridin',
I see my true love once more.
  Oh, true love have you brought me told,
  Or have you paid my fee,
  Or have you come to see me hangin'
  From the gallows tree.
    Well, I have brought you gold,
    And I have paid your fee,
    And I have done these very things
    To make sure you're on the tree.

SIDE III, Band 1: BOASTIN' COWBOY

Cowboy brag talk, as the specific type of humor that it is, is not part of the common speech habit of the cowboy. Rather, it is reserved for special occasions. Most commonly at the present time it can be heard around rodeos, or, more generally, whenever a group of cowboys are placed on competing terms with each other. Then the brag takes on the element of competition itself, with several cowboys trying to outbrag each other. It may, of course, become part of the cowboy's speech pattern when he's on a drunk -- perhaps, as Lomax suggests, to keep up his courage.

"I was born on Powder River, mothered by an alligator and sired by a lion.

"I'm big and I'm bold. I was big and bold, boys, when I was but nine days old. I got my head made out of cast iron, backbone made out of barbed wire, and my tail was put on with screws.

"I ain't rough and I ain't tough, but I'll tell you boys, I'm just rough enough."

SIDE III, Band 2: TYING A KNOT IN THE DEVIL'S TAIL

On his day off, or after a long trip on the trail, the cowboy would venture into town and make his rounds. And in the process of "oiling up his insides" he frequently over-imbibed. The result could well be the incidents sung about in this wonderfully humorous and obviously fictional cowboy ballad.

The color and imagination of cowboy expressions has been commented upon frequently and in depth. Perhaps the best of his expressions, and one which could compete with the most colorful language created in any segment of American life, is the term "cowbiography" or "cowpography", which simply means working with cattle.

For additional texts and information, see: Larkin, p. 66; LNAB (B17), p. 141; Lee, p. 12; Lomax II, p. 407.

Well, way up high in the Sierra Peaks
Where the yellow pines grow tall,
Old Sandy Bob and Buster Jiggs
Had a round-up camp one fall.

They took their horses and their runnin' irons,[58]
And maybe a dog or two,
And they 'loved they'd brand all the long eared calves
That come within their view.

Well, many a long eared dogie
That didn't stay hide by day
Had his long ears whittled and his old hide scorched
In a most artistic way.

Well one fine day, says Buster Jiggs,
As he throws his seago[59] down,
"I'm tired of cowbiography[60]
And I 'lows I'm a-goin' to town."

So they saddles them up and they hits them a lope
For it weren't no sight of a ride,
And them was the days when a good cow punch
Could oil up his insides.

They starts her in at the Kentucky Bar,
At the head of whiskey row,
And they ends her up at the station house
Some forty drinks below.

Well they sets her up and they turns her around,
And then goes her the other way,
And to tell the God forsaken truth
Them boys got drunk that day.

When they were on their way to camp
A-packin' a pretty good load,
Now who should they meet but the Devil his self
Come a-rackin' down the road.

Says he: "You ornery cowboy skunks,
You better go hunt you a hole,
'Cause I've come up from Hell's rim rock
To gather in your souls."

Says Buster Jiggs: "The Devil be damned,
We boys is kind of tight,
And you don't gather any cowboy souls
Unless you want a fight."

So he punches a hole in his old seago,
And he throws her straight and true,
And he lays her around that Devil's horns
And takes his wrappies too.

Old Sandy Bob was a reata[61] man
With his gut line[62] coiled up neat,
And he shakes her out and he builds him a loop
And he laces the Devil's hind feet.

Well they stretches him out and they tails him down,
And while their irons was a-gettin' hot,
They crops[63] and swallow forks[64] his ears
And branded him up a hell of a lot.

They prunes him up with a de-horning saw,
And they knots his tail for a joke,
And then they rides off and leaves him there
Snub[65] to a stout jack oak.

Now when you're high in the Sierra Peaks
And you hear one hell of a wail,
She's only the Devil a-bellerin' about
Them knots tied in his tail.

SIDE III, Band 3: CLAYTON BOONE

Here's an old world ballad dressed up in cowboy rigging. Commonly known as "The Gypsy Laddie" (Child #200), this ballad in its early English and Scottish variants tells the story of the gypsy leader, Johnny Faa, who sings at the gate of an absent lord, enticing the lady to come down. The gypsies bewitch her and she goes off with them. Upon his return the lord learns of his lady's defection, and sets out to bring her back. In some versions he succeeds, and the gypsies die for their crime.

American versions, as in the cowboy text given here, usually end with the gypsy and lover triumphant over the wicked old lord. In its western setting, the ballad scene is somewhere on the Mexican border, the bosses horse is a black stripped dun, his saddle is silver, and the gypsy hero is a sweet-singing mandolin player.

For an interesting comparison with another cowboy version of this ballad, hear Woody Guthrie's rendition on the Library of Congress recording, AAFS L1.

For additional texts and information, see: Botkin II, p. 785 (Guthrie's Library of Congress version); also see Coffin, p. 120 for a listing of numerous American texts.

'Twas way out in New Mexico,
Along the Spanish Line,

I was workin' for old Clayton Boone,
A man well past his prime.

Well he rides in and asks of me,
"What's happened to my lady?"
I says to him: "She's quit your range
And run with the handsome Davy."

"Go Saddle for me that proud cut dun[66]
With the coal black mane and tail,
Point out to me their fresh laid tracks
And after them I'll trail."

I'll bridle on my leather chaps[67]
I'll tie my pistol o'er,
I'll step aboard that black striped dun
And ride this whole world over.

I rode upon a saddle fine,
A saddle made of silver,
My bridle rein of beaten gold,
Not of your common leather.

I rode until the midnight sun,
Till I seen their campfire burnin',
And I heard the sweetest mandolin
And the voice of young Dave singin'.

"Come home with me to your own sweet bed,
The sheets turned down so gayly,
Do not forget my silver and gold
And your darlin' baby."

"Well, I'll not come home to my own sweet bed,
The sheets turned down so gayly,
And I'll forget your silver and gold,
And all for the love of Davey,
But I can't forget my baby.

"Last night I slept with a mean old man
In golden rooms so stately,
Tonight I sleep on the hard, cold ground
By the warm side of my Davey,
And I'll ride along with Dave."

SIDE III, Band 4: OLD BLUE WAS A GRAY HORSE

In its original old world form (Irish), this ballad told of a race between a horse named Sku-ball and a mare, Miss Portly, on the Kildare track in the early 19th century. In America, the song has been most popular in the Negro south, where the winning horse is known variously as Stewball or Kimbell; there is also a related ballad about an actual race which took place in Louisville, Kentucky, on July 4, 1878, between the horse Ten Broeck and the mare Miss Mollie McCarthy, which appears to have borrowed heavily from the older ballad.

In the version sung here, as learned by Jackson from an old Negro groom on a horse farm near DeKalb, Illinois, the winning horse has changed from a'skewbald' (a horse with a coat marked with blotches of bay on a white ground) to a 'blue' (one with an evenly dispersed mixture of black and white hairs).

For additional texts and information, see: Brown, p. 371; LABBB (Q22), p. 283; Lomax II, p. 68; NGMS, p. 172. For information and texts of the "Ten Broeck and Mollie" ballad, see D.K. Wilgus' article in Kentucky Folklore Record, Vol. II, Number 3 (July-September, 1956), pp. 77-89.

Old Blue was a grey horse
And Dan was a brown,
Old Blue beat old Dan
On that last go round.

Get up in the saddle,
Take my ribbons[68] in my hand,
Good mornin', young lady,
Good evenin', young man.

Old Dan was a race horse,
And that ain't no lie,
How the proud ladies love
To see him run by.

He had him a small head
And he held it so trim
That the gold wagered on him
Was always to win.

Now Blue had a dish nose[69]
And his off-eye[70] was walled;[71]
He'll whip Dan today
And he'll whip him next fall.

His saddle was of silver,
His bridle of the gold,
The price of his outfit
She ne'er can be told.

Get up in the saddle,
Take my ribbon in my hand,
Good mornin', young lady,
Good evenin', young man.

Old Blue was a race horse,
Old Dan was a clown,
Old Blue beat that trim head
On that last go round.

'Twas old Blue was a grey horse,
And Dan was a brown,
Old Blue was a snake
At coverin' the ground.

SIDE III, Band 5: LITTLE JOE THE WRANGLER'S SISTER NELL

Obviously working on the idea that you can't get too much of a good thing, some cowboy or hillbilly songwriter wrote a sequel to the beloved cowboy ballad of "Little Joe the Wrangler" (See Side One, Band 6). This newer ballad is here reported from tradition for only the second time.

She rode up to the wagon as the sun was goin' down,
A slender little figure dressed in grey.
We asked her to get down awhile and pull up to the fire
And red hot chuck would soon be on its way.

An old slouch hat with a hole on top was perched upon her head
And a pair of bull hide chaps, well greased and worn,
And an old twin rig all scratched and scarred from working in the brush,
And a slick maguey[72] tied to her saddle horn.

She said she rode from Lyano, four hundred miles away,
Her pony was so tired he could hardly go;
She asked if she could stay a day and kind of rest him up,
Then maybe she could find her brother Joe.

We could see that she'd been ridin', her little face was sad,
When she talked her upper lip it trembled so;
She was the livin' image, we all saw at a glance
Of our little lost horse herder, Wrangler Joe.

We asked where Joe was ridin', if she knew the outfit's brand,
"Yes, his letter said it was the Circle Bar;
It was mailed from Amarillo about four months ago
From a trail herd headed north to Cinnabar."

Well, I looks at Jim, he looks at Tom and then looks back at me,
There was something in our hearts we couldn't speak;
She said she got kind of worried when she heard no more of Joe,
And her new paw was getting meaner by the week.

"You see, our Dad got shot one night 'fore Joe and I was born;
(Joe and her was twins her story run,)
So Maw she ups and marries and we gets another Paw,
And then it was our troubles all begin.

"He beats us and abused us, and he starves us most the time,
He never did have young'uns of his own;
Nothing Joe or I could do would ever be just right,
And then Joe high-tails and quits his home.

Well, I give the kid my bed roll and I bunked in with Jim,
We talks and plans and schemes the whole night through
As to which of us would tell her the way that Joe was killed
And break the news as easy as we knew.

"I'll wrangle in the morning, boys," she says as she turns in,
"I'll have the horses at the wagon before it's day."
As the morning star was rising, I hears the kid roll out,
Saddle up the old night horse and ride away.

Soon we hear the horses coming, a-heading into camp,
It weren't light but we could plainly hear the bell,
And then someone a-crying a-come-on behind,
It was little Joe the wrangler's sister Nell.

We couldn't quite console her, she had seen the outfit's brand
Stamped on some steers by the river bank below;
From the looks upon our faces she didn't have to ask
If she'd ever see her little brother Joe.

SIDE III, Band 6: THE GAL I LEFT BEHIND

Here an old British broadside ballad has been made over into a cowboy's tale about a gal who done him dirty. In the English and Scottish versions, our hero sets out to cross the 'main' or ocean to Amerikay, and after getting the bad news about the 'gal he left behind', he ends up marrying another lass. In Western American versions, he rides over the plains, gets the bad news, takes to gamblin' and ramblin', and ends with as poetic a warning as can be found in any cowboy ballad: "If ever you court a pretty girl just mark her while you can, 'cause when you'll go to the northern range she'll wear another man's brand."

As is rather common in American adaptations of old world ballads, the geographical setting has been localized, in the case of this version to Wyoming.

For additional texts and information, see: (LABBB (PlB), p. 248; Lomax I, pp. 187-189 and pp. 192-194; Thorp, p. 134.

There was a rich old farmer who lived in the country by,
And he had him an only daughter on whom I cast my eye,
She was so tall and handsome, so delicate and so fair,
No other girl in the country side with her there could compare.

I asked her if it made any difference if I rode over the plains,
She said it made no difference if I'd come home again;
We kissed, shook hands and departed and I left my gal behind,
That dear little girl, that Texas pearl, that child that's on my mind.

Straight way to old Wyoming to the northern range I'm bound,
And 'twas in the Big Horn valley, boys, I stopped to look around,
I goes to work for Calvin Todd who burns the Pitchfork brand,
The chuck was beans and jerky meat and he drove us with a hard hand.

Well, I ups and quits that old boy flat and to Meeteetse Town did go,
Where the money and women was plentiful and the whiskey she did flow,
Where the whiskey and money was plentiful and the girls all treated you fine,
But I ne'er forgot for one last moment the gal that was left behind.

One day as I was out walking along the broad main street,
The mail coach had arrived, she run but twicet a week;
They handed me a letter that give me to understand
That gal that I left behind me was wed to another man.

I advanced a few steps forward full knowing them words to be true,
My mind being set on ramblin' I didn't know what to do;
Oh, hard work I have given over, it's gamblin' I've designed,
I'll ramble this wide world over for the gal I left behind.

Come all you reckless Texas boys, listen to my song,
If it ain't done you any good, it ain't done you one bit of wrong;
If ever you court a pretty girl just mark her while you can,
'Cause when you'll go to the northern range she'll wear another man's brand.

SIDE III, Band 7: ZEBRA DUN

Here's a buckeroo ballad with a different twist. Cowboys like the idea of enjoying a practical joke at the expense of a greenhorn, and herein lies the beginning of our story. The overtalkative newcomer proves himself more than just a talker, however, and by the time our tale winds up his awesome antics draw appreciative applause from his cowboy compatriots.

Lomax indicates that the ballad "is said to have been composed by Jake, the Negro camp cook for a ranch on the Pecos River...", but the ballad sounds more like a white cowboy composition.

For additional texts and information, see: Allen, p. 159; ACS, p. 62; Larkin, p. 35; LNAB (B16), p. 140; Lee, p. 32; Lomax I, p. 78; Randolph, p. 244; Thorp, p. 171; TCCS, p. 45.

We was camped on the plains at the head of Cimmarron,
When along comes a stranger, and stops to argue some;
Well he looks so very foolish, we begins to look around,
And we thinks he is a greenhorn and just escaped from town.

We asks if he had had a feed, he hadn't had a smear,
So we opens up the chuck box and forks him out a share;

He took a cup of coffee, some biscuit and some
beans,
And then begins to settle down and talk of
foreign kings and queens.

And all about the Spanish War, and a-fighting
on the seas,
With pistols big as muley steers, and rifles
big as trees,
And about old Paul Jones, that mean, fightin'
son-of-a-gun;
He says he was the rankest cuss that ever pulled
a gun.

Such an educated fellow, his thoughts just come
in herds,
And every livin' sentence, boys, had ten jaw
breaking words;
He just keeps on a-talking, boys, till he makes us
all damn sick,
And we begins to look around just how to play a
trick.

He said that he had lost his job upon the Sante Fe,
And he's a-goin' across the plains to strike
the old F.D.;
He didn't say how come it, some trouble with the
boss,
And asks if he can borrow a nice fat saddle
horse.

This tickles all the boys to death, they laughs
right up their sleeves,
We'll lend you a horse just as fresh and fat as
you please;
Well, Shorty grabs the lariat and he ropes the
zebra dun,[73]
And the boys they all gathers 'round and a-waitin'
for the fun.

Well, old dunny was a rocky outlaw that had growed
so awful wild,
That he could paw the moon every jump there for
a mile;
Old dunny stood right still, as if he did not
know,
Until we gets him saddled up and ready for the show.

When the stranger hits the saddle, well old dunny
quits the earth,
He travels right traight up for all that he was
worth;
A-pitchin' and a-squealin' and a-havin' wall-eyed
fits,
His hind feet perpendicular, his front feet in the
bits.

We could see them snowy mountain tops under dunny
every jump,
But that slicker he was growed there just like the
camel's hump;
The stranger he just perched there and curled his
black mustache,
Just like some summer boarder, boys, a-waitin'
for his hash.

He thumps him in the shoulders and he spurs him when
he whirls,
To show us earthbound punchers that he was the top
wolf of the world;
When the stranger had dismounted once more upon
the ground,
We knowed he was the salty dog[74] and not no boy
from town.

The boss, who was a-standin' 'round and a-watchin'
of the show,
Walks right up to the stranger and says: "You need
not go.
If you can use the catch rope like you rode old
zebra dun,
You're the hand I'm lookin' for since the year
of One."

Well, he sure could use the catch rope and he didn't
do it slow,
He sure could forefoot[75] 'em ten times there in
a row;
And when the herd stampeded he was always on the
spot
And he sets them critters millin' like the boilin'
of a pot.

There is one thing and a sure thing
That I have learned since I've been born,
Every educated fellow, boys,
Ain't no damn plumb greenhorn.

SIDE III, Band 8: WHEN THE WORK'S ALL DONE THIS FALL

Still another of the many cowboy ballads on the theme of death at the feet of a stampeding herd. Here the story is tempered by a cowboy's dream about his aged mother who he plans to see "when the work's all done this Fall." It doesn't take much imagination to realize that for this poor cowboy there'll never be another Fall.

For additional texts and information, see: Allen, p. 154; ACS, p. 72; Brown, p. 264; CAHU, p. 7; Henry, p. 351; LNAB (B3), p. 132; Lomax I, p. 74; Luther, p. 205; Sandburg, p. 260; SEC, p. 54; SRR, p. 62; SS, p. 40; TCCS, p. 10.

A group of jolly cowboys discussing plans at ease,
Says one, "I'll tell you something, boys, if you
will listen please;
I am an old cow-puncher, and here I'm dressed in
rags,
I used to be a good one, boys, and go on them
great jags.

"Well, I have got a home, boys, a good one you
all know,
Although I have not seen it since long, long ago;
And I have got a mother who's waiting for me,
that's all,
And I shall see my mother when the work's all done
this fall."

That very night this cowboy went out to stand his
guard,
The night was very dreary and stormin' very hard;
Them cattle they got frightened and rushed in wild
stampede,
And he was a-tryin' to head them and turn them at
full speed.

While ridin' in the darkness, and givin' the cattle
call,
His saddle horse did stumble, boys, and on him he
did fall;
Next mornin' we did find him, no hat upon his
head.
We picked him up so gently, we thought the poor
boy dead.

We carried him to the wagon and put him on his
bed,
He opened wide his blue eyes, and this is what he
said:
"I'll ne'er again go ridin', nor give the cattle
call,
And I'll not go see my mother when the work's all
done this fall.

SIDE IV, Band 1: THE POT WRASSLER

There are lots of names by which the cowboy cooks are known, including the very colorful expressions 'cookie', 'belly-cheater', 'dough-puncher', 'grub spoiler', 'pot hooks', 'sourdough', and 'pot wrassler' (or rustler) among many others. In a 1934 editorial in the publication Cattleman, John M. Hendrix described the round-up cook as follows:

"If ever there was an uncrowned king, it is the old time range cook. He had to be good to qualify as a wagon cook because he had to be both versatile and resourceful. He was the most important individual in camp, and even the boss paid him homage. He was conscious of his autocratic powers, and his crankiness is still traditional. ....He has many duties to perform. He is stakeholder when bets are made, arbiter to settle quarrels, and doctor for both man and beast, concocting some sort of dosage from his assortment of bottles. He acts as father-confessor and listens to complaints; he is banker for those who have loose change that might slip out of their pockets during rough cow work.....If he keeps the coffee on a bed of hot coals so that any hand can help himself at all times, his shortcomings, if any, are overlooked. He has to be a good packer in order to stow things in his wagon so that they stay tied down; he has to be able to repair his wagon to keep it rolling; and he is first to grab a shovel in case of a tragedy...Though the boys kid him and cuss his crankiness, they certainly will not concede this privilege to an outsider. If he is clean, they will tolerate the poor quality of his bread."

Though he was cantankerous and cranky, he was as free with the food he doled out as he was with the loose talk that flowed from his frequently toothless gums. This previously unreported song, sounding as it does like the work of one or another of the better known cowboy poets, gives a pretty good description of the easy talk, complaining nature, and open-handed hospitality of the one-time cowboy turned range 'cookie'.

THE POT WRASSLER

How are you there, cowboy, I hope you are well,
Just light from your saddle and rest for a spell;
Here are the makings, so roll you a smoke,
You're just out of town and I bet you are broke.

You look like old hunger was ridin' you hard,
So sit down and eat, boy, you're welcome old pard;
I put a lot of years in a-riding the range,
But now I'm a-wrassling the pots for a change.

Now I ain't no chef like old Delmonico,
But I savvies the mixing of old sour dough,
I sorts all the big rocks right out of the beans,
And I don't wipe the frying pans off on my jeans.

My chuck is all right and the wagon keeps neat,
If you don't like the cookin' you don't have to eat;
Now I'm the pot wrassler but I ain't no dub,
I'm close to my bed, boys, I'm close to the grub.

I'm a little bit old and I don't want no truck[77]
With the horn-hooking cattle nor horses that buck;
I rode a long time and my legs is all bowed,
I've got to the age where I'm easily throwed.

I got the rheumatics, my hands is all burned,
My joints is all stiff and my belly's all churned;
Now I'm the pot wrassler, you're a-hearing me shout,
So come on and get it 'fore I throw it out.

You fellows rope steers to down 'em and tie 'em,
Then I come along to skin 'em and fry 'em;
I get forty a month and the cookin' to do,
So I'm all through a-bein' a wild buckeroo.

When you punchers is out in the blizzard and storm,
I'm close to the fire where I keep myself warm;
So do your old riding, you wild galoots,
And I'll wrassle the pots you can bet your damn boots.

SIDE IV, Band 2: STREETS OF LOREDO

This ballad is the best known of a long line of ballads which ultimately derive from the British broadside of "The Unfortunate Rake". In an early 19th century broadside text, a soldier, dying of syphillis, requests a military funeral, saying:

"Muffle your drums, play your pipes merrily,
Play the dead march as you go along,
And fire your guns right over my coffin,
There goes an unfortunate lad to his home."

All later versions of the ballad have continued to use some variant of this "deadmarch" theme and it is the single most familiar item in all related pieces.

Versions have been frequently collected in the 20th century in which various occupational groups have made their own adaptations; cowboys, lumberjacks, soldiers, sailors, gamblers, longshoremen, etc. have all had a hand in claiming the song as their own. There are also various versions in which the sex of the dying dissipant is changed, and the song becomes a "Bad Girl's Lament".
For additional texts and information, see: Allen, p. 118; ACS, p. 55; Brown, p. 614; Botkin II, p. 766; CAHU, p. 12; Gardner, p. 252; Hull, p. 48; Kincaid, p. 40; Lee, p. 82; Larkin, p. 14; LNAB (B1), p. 131; LABBB (Q26), p. 285; Lomax, I, p. 417; Luther, p. 207; McDowell, p. 84; Morris, p. 41; Randolph, p. 179; Sandburg, p. 263; Scarborough, p. 353; Sires, p. 4; SRR, p. 42; SS, p. 27; TFLS, Volume VII, p. 49.

As I walked out in the streets of Loredo,
As I walked out into old Loredo town,
I spied a poor cowboy all wrapped in white linen,
All wrapped in white linen for they had gunned him
down.

Oh, I see by your outfit you are a cowpuncher,
This poor boy said from his lips of flame red;
They done gunned me down, boys, and run off and
left me
Here in the back street just like I was dead.

Oh, I see by your outfit you are a cowpuncher,
This poor boy says as I boldly steps by,
Come sit down beside me, my story I'll tell you,
'Cause I'm a poor cowboy and I'm going to die.

Well, I was born in southeast Texas
Where the jimson weed and the lilac does bloom,
I want to go live there for to go far a-ranging,
And I've trailed from Canady down to old Mexico.

'Twas once in the saddle I used to go dashing,
'Twas once in the saddle I used to go gay,
'Twas first down to the dram house and then down to
Maisie's,
I'se shot in the breast and I'm dying today.

Well, go write a letter to my grey haired mother,
Go pen me a note to my siter, so dear,
But there is another more dear than a mother,
Who'll bitterly weep when she knows that I'm hurt.

Get sixteen cowboys to carry my coffin,
Get sixteen pretty ladies to bear up my pall,
Put roses all over the top of my coffin,
To deaden the smell as they bear me along.

Oh, swing the rope slowly and ring your spurs lowly,
And play the dead march as you bear me along;
Take me to the green valley, there lay the sod o'er
me,
'Cause I'm a poor cowboy and I know I've done
wrong.

SIDE IV, Band 3: WINDY BILL

This is the story of a proud and boastful cowpuncher who learned the hard way that the Texas way of doing

things isn't always the best. The ballad serves as a valuable argument favoring those who believe the catch rope should be kept free in the cowboy's hand instead of being tied hard and fast to his saddle horn. California law (free hand roping) seems a preferred method for catching an outlaw steer.

For additional texts and information, see: Allen, p. 140; ACS, p. 74; Larkin, p. 58; Lee, p. 34; Lomax I, p. 133; SEC, p. 74; Sires, p. 28; Thorp. p. 168; TCCS, p. 46.

Well, Windy Bill was a Texas man and he could rope you bet,
And the steer that boy hadn't tied, he had not met him yet,
But the boys they jawwed[78] of an old black steer, kind of an old outlaw,
That run down in the bottoms at the foot of a rocky draw.

Well, this old black steer had stood his ground with punchers[79] from everywhere,
And they bets old Bill at two to one that he couldn't quite get there,
So Bill ropes out his old top horse, his withers and back was raw,
And prepared to tackle that little black brute that runs down in the draw.

With his Sam Stack tree[80] and his Brazos bits,[81] and his chaps and taps[82] to boot,
And his old maguey tied hard and fast, Bill goes to tackle the brute;
The old rope horse saunters around him and the steer begins to paw,
Then he lights his tail right in the air and lights down in the draw.

Well, the old rope horse flew at him like he'd been eatin' corn,
And Bill he sets that old maguey right around that black steer's horns,
The old rope horse he stood stomp still and the cinches broke like straw,
And the old maguey and the Sam Stack tree goes driftin' down the draw.

Well, Bill he lights in a big rock pike, his face and hands was scratched,
He says he always could tie his steer, but he guessed he'd met his match;
He pays his bets like a little man without no bit of jaw,
And he 'lows old black steer was the boss of anything in that draw.

Well, the moral of this story is plain for to see,
When goin' out to tie a steer don't tie hard your maguey,
But take your dally welters[83] 'cording to the California law,[84]
And you'll never see your old rim fires go a-driftin' down the draw.

SIDE IV, Band 4: COWBOY TALKING TO A BUCKING HORSE

This piece is closely related to the cowboy brags, though, in this case, the remarks are directed at the horse in an effort to spur him into rougher tactics. Bronc riding contests are judged on two counts: the roughness of the horse, and the competence of the rider. The more the cowboy is able to goad the horse into greater activity (assuming, of course, that he is still able to stay aboard him), the greater will be the cowboy's final score. At the same time, the rider expresses his feeling of superiority with a great deal of bravado, the content of his remarks intended for the benefit of his spectators, and the yells and general noise of his vocal antics directed at the bronc.

For additional examples, see Lomax I, p. 64; Lomax II, p. 381-382.

COWBOY TALKING TO A BUCKING HORSE

Buck high, old horse,
Buck on, boy;
High as you go,
She's too low for me.

Hook 'er, cowboy!
Just watch my dust, boys;
She's a bear cat
And a wild bitch kitty,
And I'm a-growed to her back
And I'm a-fitting her pretty.

SIDE IV, Band 5: AS I WENT WALKING ONE MORNING FOR PLEASURE

An examination of the text alone would suggest that this piece is obviously a native American creation. Remarkably enough, this song is a western adaptation of an old Irish cradle song, both textually and melodically related to a song known variously as "The Old Man Rocking the Cradle" (Ireland), "The Wee One" (Australia) and "Aidal O' Boy" (Canada). The Irish original is the complaint of an old man rocking the cradle of a child given birth to by his younger philandering wife. The first stanza and refrain of this song are as follows:

As I was walking one evening for pleasure,
Down by the still river I joggled along,
I met an old man making sad lamentation
And rocking the cradle, the child not his own.

CHORUS:
Eee-i-o, my laddie lie easy,
It's my misfortune and none of your own
That she leaves me here weeping and rocking the cradle
And nursing a baby that's none of me own.

The western adaptation is a clear one when matched up against this older song. Interestingly enough only a few variants of the Irish original have been collected in North America, though the western adaptation has turned up frequently in tradition. (For an example of the Irish song in American tradition, see Lomax's Our Singing Country, (New York, 1941) p. 240.)

For additional texts of the cowboy adaptation, see: Allen, p. 94; ACS, p. 20; Botkin I, p. 853; CAHU, p. 25; Hull, p. 41; Larkin, p. 92; Lomax I, p. 4; Lee, p. 52; Luther, p. 263; Morris, p. 43; Randolph, p. 174; Sandburg, p. 268; SEC, p. 3; Sires, p. 44; SRR, p. 63; SS, p. 36; TFLS, Vol. VII, p. 149; Thorp, p. 70; TCCS, p. 2.

As I went walkin' one mornin' for the pleasure
I spied a cowpuncher a-riding along,
His hat was throwed back and his spurs was a-jingling
And as I approached the boy he was singin' this song

CHORUS:
Yippie ti-yi yo, get along little dogies,
She's your misfortune, ain't none of my own,
Yippie ti-yi yo, get along little dogies,
You know that Wyomin' 'twill be your new home.

Well, early in the spring time, we round up the dogies,
We mark 'em and brand 'em and bob off their tails,
We load the chuck wagon and round up the cavvy,
Then throw them critters down there on the long trail.

Well, you was raised way down in Texas,
Where the jimson weed and the sandburro grows,
We'll fatten your bellies on prickly pear and cholla
And ship you off to Idaho.

Well, some boys go up the trail for pleasure,
But that's where they get us decidedly wrong,
'Cause they don't know the trouble they causes
As we go trailing them dogies along.

Well if I must marry 'twill be to a widow
With a great big ranch and a ten story home,
If I must marry 'twill be to a widow
With seventeen children not one of my own.

SIDE IV, Band 6: COWBOY JACK

Thematically this ballad is related to various old world ballads about a traveling lover who returns home to his sweetheart only to find that she died before his arrival. Included among these are Lord Lovel (Child #75), Charming Beauty Bright (Laws M3), and A Gay Spanish Maid (Laws K16). The cowboy ballad, however, to a degree not found in the older British pieces, is extremely sentimental. It has nevertheless remained quite popular with cowboy singers. Its rather doleful tune was sometimes used for waltzes at cowboy dances.

For additional texts and information, see: CAHU, p. 161; Lomax I, p. 230; Sires, p. 12.

Jack was a lonesome cowboy
And his heart so good and true,
And he learned to love a maiden
With eyes of heaven's own blue.

They learned to love each other
And had named their wedding day,
When a quarrel came between them
And Jack, he rode away.

He joined a bunch of cowboys
And tried to forget her name,
But out on the lonesome prairie, Jack,
She dreams of you the same.

Your sweetheart thinks of you, Jack,
Your sweetheart thinks of you,
Out on the lonesome prairie
Where the skies are always blue.

At last when the work was over
And the long trail drive was o'er,
He turned his head towards Texas
To the one he'd known before.

He crossed the old Red River,
And he headed right into town,
But he found when he had got there
They had laid his true love down.

He rode out to the graveyard,
His heart was true and brave,
And when he had arrived there
He found her fresh-made grave.

Your sweetheart thinks of you, Jack,
Your sweetheart thinks of you,
Out on the lonesome prairies
Where the skies are heaven's own blue.

SIDE IV, Band 7: JACK O' DIAMONDS

This song is known throughout the entire South and has frequently been reported from Western tradition as well. It consists of an endless string of verses, and any good singer can make up as many verses as he wishes on the spot, though usually a handful of folk commonplaces with simple changes can be employed over and over again. Occasionally stanzas more commonly associated with other songs find their way into this piece, the most common of which may be found in Chisholm Trail and Clinch Mountain.

For additional texts, see: Allen, p. 86; ACS, p. 30; CAHU, p. 38; Lomax I, pp. 163 and 253; Sandburg, p. 284; SEC, p. 30; TFLS, Vol. VII, p. 153; TCCS, p. 44.

Oh, Molly, oh, Molly,
For your sake alone,
I left my poor parents
My house and my home.

Oh, Molly, oh, Molly,
You caused me to roam,
I'm a poor driftin' cowboy,
Wyomin's my home.

Jack o' Diamonds, Jack o' Diamonds,
I know you of old,
You robbed my poor pockets
Of silver and gold.

For the work I'm too lazy
And beggin's too low,
Train robbin's too dangerous
So to gamblin' I'll go.

My foots in my stirrup,
My bridle in my hand,
Farewell redhead Molly,
Your the damnedest in the land.

Your parents don't like me,
They say I'm too poor,
They say I'm unworthy
To enter your door.

They say I drinks whiskey,
My money's my own,
And them that don't like me
Can leave me alone.

I eat when I'm hungry,
I drink when I'm dry,
And when I get thirsty
I lays down and cry.

I'll drink my own whiskey,
I'll make my own stew,
And if I get drunk, lady,
It's nothin' to you.

There's snakes on Clinch Mountains,
There's eels in the sea,
'Twas a red headed Molly
Made a damn fool of me.

Oh, go build me a pallet,
Don't put it on the floor,
Just put it outside,
By the backhouse door.

Oh, I love the red liquor,
I love the whiskey,
You killed my old father,
Now, Johnny, try me.

For ten thousand bottles
I've killed in my time,
Usually it's whiskey,
But sometimes Red Wine.

Well, if the ocean was whiskey
And I was a duck,
I'd dive to the bottom
And never come up.

But the ocean ain't whiskey
And I ain't no duck,
So I'll play Jack o' Diamonds
And then will get drunk.

Well, boast of your knowledge
And talk of your sense,
'Twill all be forgotten
A hundred years hence.

Well, my head in the saddle,
My seat in the sky,

If whiskey don't kill me
I'll live a long time.

If whiskey don't kill me
And take all I own,
I'm a poor driftin' cowboy.
Wyomin's my home.

SIDE IV, Band 8: I'M GONNA LEAVE OLD TEXAS NOW

This song has only rarely been recorded from tradition, though it must surely rate as one of the finest of all cowboy productions. The fencing of Texas ranges was first undertaken in the 1880s, and, judging from the sentiments of the first verse, this song was probably composed not too long afterwards. Unfenced land in the west is pretty rare nowadays, and the song today has even greater meaning than at the time of its composition, probably around the turn of the century.

For a similar text, see: Lomax I, p. 57.

I'm gonna leave old Texas now,
'Cause there ain't no use for the longhorn cow,
They've plowed and fenced my cattle range,
And the people there are all so strange.

So I'll take my horse and I'll take my rope,
And I'll hit the trail into old Mexico;
And the hard, hard ground shall be my bed,
And the saddle seat will hold my head...

And when I wake from my heavenly dreams,
I'll eat my bread and my sardines;
And when my ride on earth is done,
I'll take my chance with the Holy One.

And I'll tell St. Peter that I know
A cowboy's soul ain't white as snow,
But sometimes in this far-off land
He's apt to act most like a man.

A GLOSSARY OF WESTERN TERMS

1. Bull - a reference to cigarette tobacco.
2. cuttin' stock - separating a group of cattle from the main herd.
3. wranglin' - herding saddle horses
4. hazin' - leading or driving a group of cattle
5. dogies - young cattle (calves)
6. dallies - talking.a short hitch around the saddle horn with a rope after a catch is made, the loose and being held in the roper's hand. From the Spanish phrase dar la vuelta.
7. wraps - same as dallies (see #6)
8. hard tie - keeping the free end of the rope tied to the saddle horn.
9. grass rope - lariat rope made of hemp or maguey.
10. Hoolihan - after roping an animal, the cowboy's saddle horse stops abruptly causing the roped animal to be thrown to the ground.
11. Texas style - same as hard tie (see #8).
12. greaser - Mexican
13. savvy cuss - smart fellow
14. pigging string - a short rope used for hog-tieing. Usually carried in the mouth or tucked in the belt.
15. paint - a horse with irregular patterns of white and colored areas.
16. firey and snuffy - spirited or wild cattle.
17. coulees - dry creeks
18. draw - a shallow drain for rainfall
19. tophorse - best or favorite horse
20. cavvy - band of saddle horses.
21. kack - slang for saddle
22. hot roll - bed roll
23. lit a chuck - left in a hurry
24. chuck wagon - mess wagon
25. cookie - cook
26. rustle - gather
27. slicker for a blind - covering the horse's head with one's rain jacket thus blinding the animal to the dangers of riding into the stampeding herd.
28. milling - the marching of cattle in a compact circle, resorted to in stopping stampedes.
29. gather - cattle brought together in the round-up.
30. clinches - a broad short band which together with the latigo is used to fasten the saddle upon the horses back.
31. latigoes - a long leather strap passed through the cinch ring.
32. mix mingle with mall - to "mix it up", or fight.
33. buckeroo - a cowboy, or bronc buster, originating in the Northwest.
34. bronc peeler - a horse breaker
35. calls his stack - from card playing, to call one's bluff.
36. ride grub line - visiting from one camp to another.
37. fork a bronc - mount a horse
38. bronc twister - another term for bronc buster
39. rig - cowboy's outfit or clothes
40. fan - swinging the legs forward and backward while riding a bucking bronc in order to spur him in the shoulders and flanks. A sign of a good rider.
41. builds to the ranch - head for the ranch
42. chuck - food
43. strawberry roan - a horse whose coloration is made of more or less evenly dispersed mixture of red and white hairs.
44. hooks - spurs
45. twine - rope
46. blinds - difficult horses are often blindfolded until the rider has mounted.
47. frog walking - straight, high jumps
48. sun-fishing - a bucking movement in which the horse twists his body into a crescent, alternately to the right and to the left.
49. swapping ends - a bronc quickly reversing his position, making a complete half-circle in the air.
50. split the blanket - share their bed with someone else.
51. cayuse - wild horse of the Northwest, named after the Cayuse Indian tribe.
52. mustanger - a horse catcher
53. candle - actually cantle, the raised back of the saddle.
54. meat hooks - spurs
55. walkin' the dog - turning in all directions.
56. horn - saddle horn
57. rigging - used here to refer to the saddle
58. running iron - a branding iron made in the form of a straight poker.
59. seago - a rope used for lassoing purposes
60. cowbiography - working with cattle
61. reata - a rope, particularly one made of braided leather or rawhide
62. gut line - rope made of braided rawhide
63. crops - an earmark made by cutting off one half of the ear off smoothly straight from the upper side.
64. swallow fork - making a forked notch in the ear
65. snub - tied close up or short
66. dun - a horse of a dull, dark brown color; sometimes generalized as the name for an old horse.
67. chaps - leather breeches worn primarily as armor to protect a rider's legs against any of the dangers inherent in riding a mount.
68. ribbons - bridle reins
69. dish nose - flat or shallow nose
70. off-eye - right eye. The cowboy mounts his horse from the left side, the other side being known as the off side.
71. walled - used when referring to a horse with glass, blue or 'china' eyes with an irregular glaze to them.
72. maguey - a four strand rope or lariat made from the Maguey plant fibers.
73. zebra dun - a dun colored horse with a prominent black stripe along his entire backbone, and sometimes zebra stripes on the legs.
74. salty dog - named applied to anyone especially good or a master at his work.
75. forefoot (verb) - roping an animal by the forefeet.
76. savvies - understand (from the Spanish saber)
77. no truck - have nothing to do with ....
78. jawed - spoke
79. punchers - short for cowpunchers, men who work with cattle.
80. Sam Stack tree - a famous make of saddles
81. bit - a metal bar which fits into the horse's mouth, used in guiding the horse.
82. taps - wedge-shaped leather guard fitting over the stirrups to protect the feet. From the Spanish tapaderas.
83. dally welters - same as dallies (see #6)
84. California law - free hand roping, so that the rope can be let in and out as needed. As opposed to Texas style roping, California law is advantageous when a sudden movement of the roped cattle or horse will only result in the loss of the rope, rather than the busting of the saddle cinches. See also dallies, #6, wraps, #7.

For further readings in the matter of cowboy vocabulary the listener should look into Ramon F.Adams' two fine works on the subject: COWBOY LINGO (Houghton Mifflin, Boston, 1936) and WESTERN WORDS (Univ. of Oklahoma Press, Norman, Oklahoma, 1944.)

The music of these songs is annotated by Herbert Haufrecht.

Cover design by Ronald Clyne
Bronze sculpture by Harry Jackson
(Courtesy Whitney Museum of Western Art Cody, Wyoming.)
Production director, Moses Asch.

ADDENDA TO THE NOTES:

Shortly after the booklet of notes accompanying this album went to press, I was able to locate a copy of Curley W. Fletcher's SONGS OF THE SAGE (Frontier Publ. Co., Los Angeles, 1931) which I had not seen for many years, but which I had once noted as containing the earliest published copy of "The Strawberry Roan" (see Side 2, Band 2). Four other ballads recorded for this album, all of which Harry Jackson had learned from traditional sources, are also included in Fletcher's book as his own poetry compositions. These include: "Yavapai Pete" (see Side 1, Band 8: "Old Iron Pants Pete"): "The Pot Wrassler" (Side 4, Band 1); "The Saddle Tramp" (Side 2, Band 1: "The Saddle Bum"); and "The Ridge Running Roan" (Side 2, Band 5). Several collectors of early 'hillbilly' recordings have brought to my attention the fact that at least the latter two numbers were recorded in the middle 1930s by Tex Fletcher (I have been unable to determine his relationship to Curley Fletcher), and perhaps others of these ballads as well.

Dr. D.K.Wilgus, of Western Kentucky State College, brought to my attention the fact that two other songs included in this album are also the work of known cowboypoets. In the cowboy song folio THE HAPPY COWBOY SINGS AND PLAYS SONGS OF PIONEER DAYS (edited by Kenneth S. Clark, Paull-Pioneer Publishing Co., New York, 1934), N. Howard "Jack" Thorp is credited as author of "Little Joe the Wrangler's Sister Nell" (Side 3, Band 5); this was obviously produced by Thorp as a sequel to his own long-popular cowboy ballad "Little Joe the Wrangler" (Side 1, Band 6). In John White's critical biography, D.J.O'Malley "COWBOY POET" (Eau Claire, Wisc., 1934), the author reprints the song "After the Roundup" (see Side 3, Band 8: "When the Work's All Done This Fall") as published in the STOCKGROWER'S JOURNAL (Miles Coty, Montana, October 6, 1886) and signed "D.J.White"; O'Malley is known to have used his stepfather's surname, 'White', as a pseudonymn when publishing some of his cowboy songs.

This added information further supports the contention that a rather considerable portion of cowboy songs reported from traditional sources in the 20th century are the work of known cowboy poets, and that many of these songs started their way into tradition via poetry books, poetry columns in western publications, early recordings, and cowboy song folios. See my introductory remarks in this booklet for further commentary on this point.

- Kenneth S. Goldstein

LITHO IN U.S.A.