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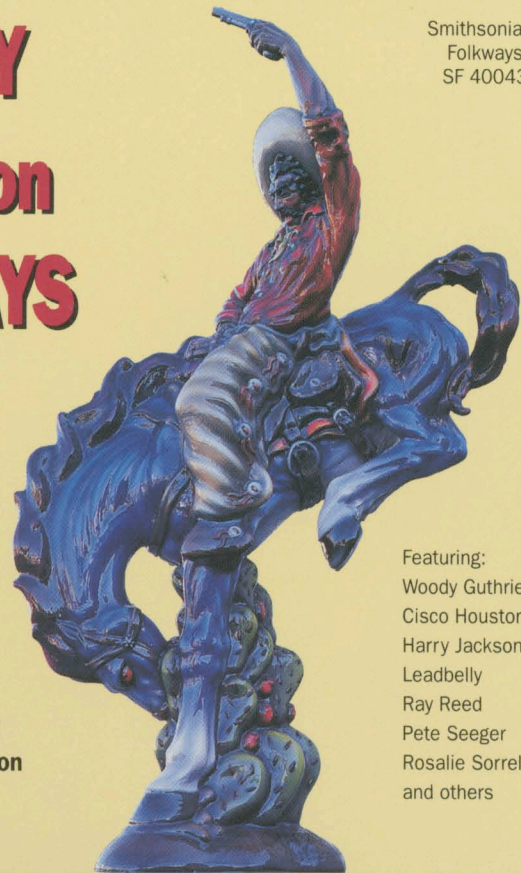
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COWBOY SONGS on FOLKWAYS

Compiled from the
Folkways Collection and
annotated by Guy Logsdon



Smithsonian/
Folkways
SF 40043

Featuring:
Woody Guthrie
Cisco Houston
Harry Jackson
Leadbelly
Ray Reed
Pete Seeger
Rosalie Sorrels
and others

COWBOY SONGS ON FOLKWAYS

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1. **Morning Grub Holler** Harry Jackson 0:16
2. **Round-up Cook** Harry Jackson 0:46
3. **Chisholm Trail** Tex-I-An Boys 2:58
4. **Whoopie-Ti-Yi-Yo, Get Along Little Dogies**
Woody Guthrie & Cisco Houston 2:59
5. **Little Joe, the Wrangler** Cisco Houston 2:36
6. **Little Joe the Wrangler's Sister Nell** Harry Jackson 3:25
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11. **Buffalo Skinners** Woody Guthrie 3:12
12. **Zebra Dun** Ray Reed 3:49
13. **Some Cowboy Brag Talk** Harry Jackson 1:33
14. **Horse Wrangler** Roger Welsch 3:05
15. **Strawberry Roan** Harry Jackson 4:53
16. **Texian Boys** John A. Lomax, Jr. 1:50
17. **Cow Cow Yicky Yicky Yea** Leadbelly 1:31
18. **Jesse James (Leadbelly's Version)** Woody Guthrie 2:58
19. **Home on the Range** Pete Seeger 1:50
20. **(There's an) Empty Cot in the Bunkhouse Tonight**
Rosalie Sorrels 2:10
21. **(When It's) Springtime in the Rockies** Leadbelly 3:03
22. **Lone Star Trail** Dave Fredrickson 2:52
23. **Rodeo Hand** Peter LaFarge 1:45
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25. **The Dying Cowboy** Cisco Houston 2:59
26. **The Devil Made Texas** Hermes Nye 2:08



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Fifteen performers sing, brag, and recite poetry that reveals both the life of hard-working cowboys and the images that have grown up about them. This anthology, selected from Folkways records and previously unissued recordings, includes men and women from different cultural backgrounds and a variety of styles. Complemented by extensive liner notes and bibliography, this is an indispensable collection for all those interested in the history and music of the Western United States.

Descriptive notes enclosed



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Cowboy Songs on Folkways

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(words: Brewster Higley, music: Daniel Kelley)
20. **(There's an) Empty Cot in the Bunkhouse**
Tonight Rosalie Sorrels 2:10
(Words and music: Gene Autry/Duchess Music Corporation, BMI)
21. **(When It's) Springtime in the Rockies**
Leadbelly 3:03
(words: Mary Hale Woolsey, music: Robert Sauer/CBS Catalogue Partnership, ASCAP)
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(poem: Peter LaFarge)
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& Cisco Houston 2:29
(words: Woody Guthrie/Woody Guthrie Publications, BMI)
25. **The Dying Cowboy** Cisco Houston 2:59
26. **The Devil Made Texas** Hermes Nye 2:08

Credits

Compiled and annotated by Guy Logsdon

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COWBOY SONGS ON FOLKWAYS

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Cowboy Songs on Folkways

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Cowboy Songs on Folkways Compiled and Annotated by Guy Logsdon

If the cowboy is the mythical hero of this nation, then the singing cowboy is the myth of the mythical hero. For over a century the American public has been steeped in the image of the singing cowboy: singing to prevent stampedes, singing to stop stampedes, singing as he rides, singing to the rhythm of the horse's gait, and on and on. Even when motion pictures were silent, the cowboy was filmed singing, and with the advent of sound, Ken Maynard became the first movie cowboy to be heard singing. In 1935 a new movie genre, starring singing cowboys and called the "horse opera," was created for Gene Autry. The growing radio and recording industries also employed the talents of "singing cowboys," some of whom would not have known a horse from a cow. The belief in the image of the singing cowboy is deeply imbedded in the national culture of the United States.

Quite distinct from these commercially spread images, there have always been working cowboys. A cowboy is a person who makes his living tending or caring for cattle and/or horses, but the popular cowboy image came from those cowboys who trail herded cattle north out of Texas after the Civil War. Historically cowboys have been a diverse bunch whose backgrounds have contributed a number of different traditions—men of Hispanic descent whose cattle-tending experience in the Southwest provided much of the material culture for this occupation; Anglos and African-Americans moving out of the South seeking new ways to exist; American Indians turning to a new economic basis for their lives; Hawaiians herding cattle on tropical islands; immigrants learning new skills in a foreign land.

Being a cowboy is hard, dirty, dangerous, unromantic work, but many of those who choose to be cowboys would not live any other life. As in many professions cowboys developed their own occupation-based folk traditions. When those traditions were interpreted by the media, the work sounded romantic but lost touch with the working cowboy's experience.

Working cowboys sang and still sing for recreation. Since their work is non-rhythmic, they did not and still don't sing much while they work. The legendary cowboy poet and songwriter, Curley Fletcher, believed that a good cowboy song had to be in three-quarter time, and many are. This is not a standard work rhythm, nor is it the gait of a horse. In the open range, trail driving days, however, they did sing, hum, whistle, and use other sounds to prevent sudden noises from stampeding the herds and probably to cover their own fear. Although they didn't sing in most other situations, they are often portrayed in a singing occupation, see: Logsdon (1989), pp. 281-345.

Working cowboys are the original figures that produced images enacted by the Marlboro Man, Gene Autry, Roy Rogers, and John Wayne, and are the ancestors of the cowboy images created by journalists, folklorists, and historians. And, inevitably, the cowboys are also influenced by those images.

The relation between the mythical hero and the myth of the mythical hero is complex and interactive—the heroes learn the myths about themselves and make fun of them or build on them. Cowboys, like most of the rest of the population, read cowboy literature, watch movies, buy recordings, and learn new songs, and these commercial images of cowboy life have been constantly reintroduced into cowboy life itself. Nowhere is this clearer than music and other oral traditions. Some songs have come from cowboy folklore, been radically changed by the commercial music industry, and returned transformed to the range. Many songs from range life were collected by John A. Lomax and published as *Cowboy Songs and Other Frontier Ballads* in 1910. Since then cowboys have been singing those texts along with other printed texts. Other popular songs are adapted to suit the specifics of a given region or a specific local character and become cowboy songs. The relationship is cyclical, with folklorists and commercial performers playing important roles in forging the mythical model for the cowboy.

The songs in this collection bear witness to the complexity of the relationship between the experiences and expressions of working cowboys and the myths built up around them. Some of the songs are probably quite old, deal directly with the daily experiences of many working cowboys, and are performed with regional variations over a wide area. Others were learned directly from film and bear little relation to most cowboys' experiences. The songs treat a variety of topics and are performed in a wide range of styles.

In selecting from the hundreds of songs about cowboys in the Folkways Collection, I looked for songs that show the diversity of cultures within the cowboys' world. I wanted songs that would paint a musical collage of the drama of cowboy life, so I had to balance tragedy with humor. I looked for the uncommon and for newer songs to blend in with the well known cowboy classics. I did not include "Streets of Laredo," for it is a song with a well documented history that can be heard on *The Unfortunate Rake*, Folkways Records (FS 3805) edited by Kenneth S. Goldstein. Since cowboy culture and songs have permeated our national culture, image, and imagination, I sought a diversity of performers, including working cowboys, who sing songs about cowboys.

The singers reflect a wide range of backgrounds. Only a few actually worked at cowboying: Ray Reed, Peter Hurd, Harry Jackson, and Peter LaFarge, who was a rodeo cowboy. The others took the songs because they liked the images, the melody, or had a particular interpretation of the myth itself. Harry Jackson and John A. Lomax, Jr. are the ones who sing in the traditional style, which is with no guitar or musical accompaniment. Ray Reed does sing many songs unaccompanied, but on this recording uses the guitar.

A cowboy crooning as he strums his guitar is part of the myth and image. It is an image created by Hollywood, but during the past sixty years, cowboys have been living the image.

Out among working cowboys, traditional singing can still be found, but it slowly has been giving way to the strum of a guitar. Rarely would a guitar have been found in the cow camps of trail herding, during the open range days. If a musical instrument could have been found, it would have been a fiddle or occasionally a four string banjo as used in minstrel shows. The harmonica is another instrument often identified with the cowboy, but no evidence exists to indicate that it was popular among cowboys prior to the turn of the century. In fact, I know only a few contemporary cowboys who even attempt to play a harmonica, but guitar pickers are abundant. That Jackson and Lomax are the only ones in this selection who sing unaccompanied is not odd, for Folkways albums were issued from New York City studio recordings, from previously issued recordings, and from recordings sent by singers and folklorists from around the world. No attempt was made to send folklorists out among cowboys to record their traditional sounds.

Moses Asch, the founder of Folkways Records, was attracted to American folk culture in the early 1920s, while in France. In Paris he found a copy of John A. Lomax's *Cowboy Ballads* and read the introduction in which Theodore Roosevelt wrote that cowboy culture was the true American culture. The Lomax book inspired Asch to seek and preserve the sounds of American folk music. He maintained an interest in cowboy songs throughout his record production career and often returned to Lomax's *Cowboy Songs* to renew his faith in folk culture. He produced many records that include at least one cowboy song, and in 1951 he intended to produce an anthology of cowboy songs similar to this one. He did not complete the project.

This anthology complements Asch's unfulfilled plan and presents a small portion of the broad array of topics and recordings in the Folkways Collection.

The Singers (and the songs they sing):

Dave Fredrickson: (b. 1927) Born in Berkeley, California, Fredrickson started his folk singing career with the Burl Ives influence. He discovered Woody Guthrie and hillbilly/cowboy records and learned his songs from those sources. He is an archeologist at Sonoma State University in California and continues to perform in the Berkeley area. ("Lone Star Trail")

Woody Guthrie: (1912-1967) A native of Okemah, Oklahoma, Guthrie traveled the Southwest as a teenager. He started writing songs while living in Pampa, Texas and eventually became America's best known writer of "folk" and protest songs. Guthrie's interest in cowboy music came from his childhood when he heard his father sing songs and tell of experiences while working as a cowboy in Texas and Indian Territory. Guthrie not only knew many cowboy songs, but also wrote cowboy songs. ("Whoopie-Ti-Yi-Yo, Get Along Little Dogies," "Buffalo Skinners," "Jesse James," "Philadelphia Lawyer")

Cisco Houston: (1918-1961) Houston was born in Delaware but grew up in Houston and had experience in theatre before turning to music. As a close friend of Woody Guthrie, Houston traveled with him and seconded him vocally and on the guitar. Because of his singing ability, Moe Asch talked him into recording

solo. He learned cowboy songs from cowboys as well as from books. ("Little Joe, the Wrangler," "The Dying Cowboy," and the Woody Guthrie songs)

Peter Hurd: (1904-1984) Born and reared in the Hondo Valley area of southern New Mexico, Hurd lived in cattle country, became fluent in Spanish, and learned his songs from Hispanics on both sides of the border. He studied art under N. C. Wyeth and became a well-known western artist. ("Las Chapparreras")

Harry Jackson: (b. 1924) Born in Chicago, Jackson left home at the age of fourteen to work as a cowboy in Wyoming. He doesn't claim to be a cowboy because "a good hand has to spend his life at it." After World War II, he studied art and became a cowboy artist and sculptor with studios in Italy and the United States. Jackson learned his songs from cowboys with whom he lived and worked. ("Morning Grub Holler," "Round-up Cook," "Little Joe the Wrangler's Sister Nell," "Some Cowboy Brag Talk," "Strawberry Roun")

Peter LaFarge: (1931-1965) As the son of the writer Oliver LaFarge and of American Indian descent, LaFarge carried a love of the West throughout his short life. His parents were divorced, so he grew up on his stepfather's ranch in Colorado where he learned songs from cowboys. LaFarge competed in rodeos for a few years and wrote poems, songs, and plays about rodeo people and American Indians. He wrote "The Ballad of Ira Hayes" and "As Long As the Grass Shall Grow." ("Trail to Mexico," "Rodeo Hand")

Leadbelly: (1889-1949) Born in Louisiana as Huddie Leadbetter, Leadbelly learned to play his first instrument, the Cajun accordion, at the age of five, and eventually became the king of the twelve string guitar. In and out of prisons in Texas and Louisiana, he was recorded in the Louisiana State Penitentiary by John A. Lomax, who worked for his release based on Leadbelly's knowledge of songs and singing ability. He became one of America's most widely acclaimed and influential folk and blues singers. ("Cow Cow Yicky Yicky Yea," "Springtime in the Rockies")

John A. Lomax, Jr.: (1907-1974) Born and reared as a Texan, John A. Lomax, Jr. followed in his father's footsteps as a collector and singer of folksongs. Educated as an accountant, he ultimately settled in Houston working with a land company. Sincerely loved by members of Texas folk music circles, Lomax preferred to sing unaccompanied, the way songs "were originally sung." His voice was a rough, strong instrument of song. ("Texian Boys," "Chisholm Trail")

Harry K. "Haywire Mac" McClintock: (1882-1957) "Haywire Mac" is one of the most colorful figures in American folk music. He hoboed, worked, and sang himself throughout the nation and around the world; his singing ranged from the church house to hobo camps to I. W. W. strikes to his own radio show with his "Haywire Orchestra." McClintock recorded many cowboy songs for Victor. ("Utah Carl")

Hermes Nye: (1908-1981) Born in Chicago to Canadian parents (his father was a railroad rate man), Nye grew up in Kansas. After college graduation, he practiced law in Dallas, where he became interested in folk music through the influence of Burl Ives' records. After World War II, he worked for a The Whittle Music Company in Dallas and became a well known folk singer in Texas. ("The Devil Made Texas")

Ray Reed: (b. 1915) Reed grew up in New Mexico and is a real working cowboy and former rodeo cowboy, who learned many of his songs from his father. He worked as ranch foreman for the Mesalero Apache tribe and sings many of their songs as well as cowboy songs. Reed still lives in New Mexico where he

sings, writes, and produces cowboy poetry gatherings. ("Zebra Dun")

Pete Seeger: (b. 1919) Born into a legendary musical family, Seeger's entire life has been devoted to folk and topical music. As a young man, he heard the sounds of the Southern style banjo; since then, he has been singing and playing, studying, collecting, and writing America's music. He believes that music can change the world, and can be heard on more Folkways records than any other musician. ("Home on the Range")

Rosalie Sorrels: (b. 1933) Utah and Idaho have been home to Sorrels. She came from a singing family and learned songs from her family as well as friends. She is a popular figure at folk festivals and has recorded seventeen albums of her own songs and folk songs for a variety of labels. ("Empty Cot in the Bunkhouse Tonight")

The Tex-I-An Boys: During the early 1960s the Tex-I-An Boys was a popular aggregation that came out of the Houston Folklore Group: John A. Lomax, Jr., Pete Rose, Ed Badeaux, Jim McConnell, and Howard Porper. They originally planned to record a collection of popular Texas songs for a big commercial label, but decided to record songs that actually represented Texas culture. Folkways was the outlet for that type of selection. ("Chisholm Trail," "Put Your Little Foot")

Roger Welsh: (b. 1936) A native Nebraskan, Welsh is a free-lance folklorist in Nebraska, who as a former university teacher of German and folklore now writes, performs, and produces television shows. He drew his songs from the vast lore of Nebraska. ("Horse Wrangler")

Notes on the Songs

(Compiler's note: Session dates for most Folkways records are not available in the Folkways Collection; session information is given where documents support at least a conjecture. Following each discussion of a song, references for recommended readings are listed; complete bibliographic information appears at the end of the notes.)

1. "Morning Grub Holler" Harry Jackson
From *The Cowboy: His Songs, Ballads & Brag Talk* (FH 5723), originally released 1957, edited and annotated by Kenneth S. Goldstein (recorded 1957 in Harry Jackson's apartment, New York City, by Diane Hamilton).

In roundup camps, past and present, the cowboy's day starts early and ends late, and it is the camp cook's responsibility to roust the cowboys out of their beds. The method used depends upon the cook's imagination, which varies from unimaginative loud banging noise to poetic verse or song delivered with devilish energy. The cook's personality and attitude are the determining factors, but whatever the method, the cook lets them know that time is short and the slow ones will miss their morning "grub pie." In this "gettin'-up holler," Harry Jackson tells them that breakfast is over when he "spits in the skillet."

For additional texts see: A. Lomax (1960), pp. 353, 366; Lomax & Lomax (1934), p. 375 and (1938, 1986), p. 3; Silber (1967), p. 178.

2. "Round-up Cook" Harry Jackson
From *The Cowboy: His Songs, Ballads & Brag Talk* (FH 5723).

Cow camp cooks have been called many things and known by a variety of names: cocinero, biscuit shooter, cookie, grub robber, old woman, Sallie, etc. Even though often insulted by a name, the cook was and is essential to a successful and peaceful camp. The old-time cook not only had to provide food, and plenty of it, but also was mother, father, confessor, nurse, and any other role that was needed. The cook has never had the romantic image enjoyed by the man on horseback, but a few poems have been written about him.

The most widely recited and sung poem is "Punchin' Dough" written by western poet/writer Henry Herbert Knibbs. This short song by Jackson is an abridged version of Knibbs' poem. When it was set to music and who set it are not known, but a commercial recording was issued under the title "Punching the Dough," recorded by Jules Verne Allen, 27 April 1929 (Victor V40263).

For the original and complete text see: Henry Herbert Knibbs, *Saddle Songs and Other Verse* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1922), pp. 19-20.

3. "Chisholm Trail" Tex-I-An Boys
From *Songs of Texas* (FH 5328), originally released 1962, notes by Ed Badeaux (recorded at the University of Houston, December-January 1961-1962).

This is the granddaddy of cowboy songs, deriving its title from the granddaddy of post-Civil War cattle trails, the Chisholm Trail. Jesse Chisholm was a mixed-blood Cherokee Indian who ranched in Indian Territory (now Oklahoma) and blazed a wagon trail from his ranch to a trading post on the North Fork of the Canadian River, then on to the Washita River. The trail that started below San Antonio, Texas, and terminated in Abilene, Kansas, took the name of the man who had developed the wagon road. Other trails were soon opened, but none surpassed the Chisholm Trail in legend and song.

"The Old Chisholm Trail," as collected and re-written by John A. Lomax, probably has appeared in more school music texts and song books than any other cowboy song. This version by the Tex-I-An Boys (vocal by John A. Lomax, Jr.) varies from the usual performance, which is a moderate 2/4 rhythm; the Tex-I-An Boys start with a hard driving rhythm, then stop and go into a slow dramatic rhythm. Their performance makes it a different song from other renditions.

The more familiar variant was first recorded by Harry "Mac" McClintock & His Haywire Orchestra, 22 March 1928 (Victor 21421).

For additional texts and information see: Logsdon ["Jimmie Tucker" bawdy versions] (1989), pp. 60-69; A. Lomax (1960), pp. 355-56, 370-71; Lomax & Lomax (1934), pp. 376-79 and (1938), pp. 28-29; Silber (1967), pp. 164-68; Tinsley (1981), pp. 22-27.

4. "Whoopee-Ti-Yi-Yo, Get Along Little Dogies" Woody Guthrie & Cisco Houston
From *Struggle* (SF 40025), reissued 1990 by Smithsonian/Folkways Records, original LP released 1976, (FA 2485); also on Woody Guthrie *Sings Folkways, Vol. 2* (FA 2484), originally released 1964 (recorded 1 March 1945).

The opening line, "As I walked out one morning..." is the introduction to many English-Scottish-Irish ballads, and this cowboy song that dates back to the early trail drive days is a variant of the Irish ballad, "The Old Man Rocking the Cradle." The earliest notation of this song is found in the 1893 journal of Owen Wister, author of the classic western novel *The Virginian*. Since Wyoming was their destination, it is presumed to have been composed after 1870-71, when Texans first herded cattle northward into Wyoming Territory.

Woody Guthrie and Cisco Houston recorded this for the *Documentary #1 Struggle* album issued by Asch Records in 1946. However, it was not included in the original album, but was added to the long play album issued in 1976. The album is a documentary portraying the struggles of the working people in this country. In contrast to the original song that emphasized the struggles confronting the dogies, Woody rewrote portions of the song to reflect the struggles that cowboys had on the trail drives.

The first commercial recording of the standard version was made by Harry "Mac" McClintock, 1 March 1928 (Victor V40016). For a thorough discussion of the history of this song, see: White (1975), pp. 16-26; for

additional texts see: A. Lomax (1960), pp. 356-58, 372-74; Lomax & Lomax (1934), pp. 385-89 and (1938, 1986), pp. 4-7; Silber (1967), pp. 173-76; Tinsley (1981), pp. 40-45.

5. "Little Joe, the Wrangler" Cisco Houston
From *Cowboy Ballads* (FA 2022), originally released 1952, reissued 1960, notes by J. D. Robb.

The horse wrangler was the lowest position in the cow camp, and was usually held by a young boy or a tenderfoot. It was the beginner's job, and it is where many top cowhands started their career. The wrangler cared for the remuda (horse herd). Each cowboy had six or seven horses assigned to him, for a horse was used only half of each day and then was rested for two days. The wrangler drove them to water and to graze and had to corral them; he had to get up early and drive them to camp and care for the horses all day. It was not a romantic or easy task.

The tragedy of Little Joe's death is that he was killed while trying to do a "man's" job. N. Howard "Jack" Thorp wrote this ballad in 1898 while trailing a herd of cattle from Chimney Lake, New Mexico, to Higgins, Texas. One evening by campfire and using a pencil stub, he wrote the words to the tune of "Little Old Log Cabin in the Lane" on a paper bag. It quickly spread among the cowboys and remains one of the most popular cowboy ballads. Most versions are basically the same as written by Thorp.

The first commercial recording was made by Marc "The Cowboy Crooner" Williams, 22 March 1928 (Brunswick 269). For the original text see: Thorp & Fife (1966), pp. 28-37; for additional texts see: Logsdon (1989), pp. 32-37; Silber and Lomax (1938, 1986), pp. 91-93; Silber (1967), pp. 206-8; Tinsley (1981), pp. 84-87.

6. "Little Joe the Wrangler's Sister Nell" Harry Jackson
From *Cowboy: His Songs, Ballads & Brag Talk* (FH 5723).

This sequel to "Little Joe" has not enjoyed widespread acceptance among cowboys, but a few cowboys do sing it. Harry Jackson apparently learned it from a cowboy, for his version varies from the original printed text. The printed text has Little Joe's twin sister, "Sister Nell," telling the same story as did Joe, i. e., their stepmother was mean and drove them away. In Jackson's version, it was a stepfather.

"Sister Nell" also was written by N. Howard "Jack" Thorp who sent it to Kenneth S. Clark to be included in one of his cowboy song folios published in the 1930s. There is no evidence to prove that "Sister Nell" was known or sung before the 1934 publication date.

For the first published text see: Kenneth S. Clark, *The Happy Cowboy and His Songs of Pioneer Days* (New York: Pault-Pioneer Music Corp., 1934), pp. 20-21; see also: Logsdon (1989), pp. 34, 37; Ohrlin (1973), pp. 169-71, 275.

7. "Utah Carl" Harry K. McClintock
From *"Haywire Mac"* (FD 5272), originally released 1972, edited by Archie Green (recorded 3 February 1951 in San Pedro, California, by Sam Eskin).

Death on the trail or during the roundup is a popular theme in cowboy songs, for death was and is a constant threat when working cattle on horseback. Today cowboys do not have the threat of death from a stampede confronting him, but they do face death from a variety of perils involved in working cattle. So the theme remains popular as do the older songs that tell of a romantic heroic death.

"Utah Carl," also "Utah Carol" and "Utah Carroll" died saving the boss's daughter, and the narrator of the incident still mourns the loss of his friend. This selection by "Haywire Mac" McClintock has only the first verse. It is included because of the melody and the conversation about how he learned it. Most versions are sung in a major key, but McClintock sings it in a minor key with a

hauntingly beautiful melody. It is probable that it was originally sung unaccompanied in a minor key, but when singers started using the guitar as an accompanying instrument, they changed it to a major key. Harry Jackson (FH 5723) sings a melody similar to McClintock's.

The first commercial recording was by Charles Nabell, circa July 1925 (Okoh 7009).

For complete texts see: Lomax & Lomax (1938, 1986), pp. 125-28; Ohrlin (1973), pp. 153-55, 273; Tinsley (1981), pp. 92-95, 234.

8. "Put Your Little Foot (Varsouvianna)" Tex-I-An Boys From *Songs of Texas "Texas Dance Tunes"* (FH 5328).

Dancing was and is as traditional among cowboys as is singing, and when there were no women with whom to dance, they danced with one another. The dances that were all men were often called stag dances, and the men who danced the female role tied ribbons around their arms.

In many western states where cowboy dances are popular, the "Varsouvianna" or "Put Your Little Foot" remains as popular as it was a century ago, and a dance without dancing it a few times during the evening is not a good dance. However, the Varsouvianna is a generic dance type in three-quarter time that originated in Warsaw, Poland sometime in the 1850s, and "Put Your Little Foot" is just one of many Varsouvianna dances.

For additional information and instructions for various Varsouvianna steps see: Betty Casey, *Dance Across Texas* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1985), pp. 97-103; Lloyd Shaw, *Cowboy Dances* (Caldwell, Idaho: Caxton Printers, 1939), pp. 78-90 and *The Round Dance Book* (Caldwell, Idaho: Caxton Printers, 1949), pp. 245-269.

9. "Trail to Mexico" Peter LaFarge From *Peter LaFarge Songs of the Cowboys* (FN 2533), originally released 1963.

There are many folk songs that tell of wild and adventurous young men who seek excitement or fortune in a distant land with the promise of a young maiden to remain true until they return. Upon returning home they learn that their true love hasn't been true. The cowboy experience was no different. In this song the young cowboy trails a herd to Mexico and loses his girl. This version is shortened and emphasizes the lost love theme.

The longer version expresses cowboy humor. He is given an old horse with "set-fasts" (saddle sores) on his back that falls when he mounts him, and the next horse is just as bad. He humorously complains of suffering in sleet and snow, but to a working cowboy, it is genuine humor when another loses his girlfriend to a wealthy man. In most versions A. J. Stinson is the rancher who hires him; Stinson was a Texas rancher and was the man who first herded Texas cattle into Arizona Territory. By using his name, the singer of the song is more believable to those who knew or know Stinson's role in the cattle industry.

This song was first recorded under the title, "Following the Cow Trail," by Carl T. Sprague, 5 August 1925 (Victor 20067).

For additional texts see: Lomax & Lomax (1938, 1986), pp. 52-56; Ohrlin (1973), pp. 148-52, 271-73; Silber (1967), pp. 187-91; Tinsley (1981), pp. 36-39.

10. "Las Chappareras" Peter Hurd From *Spanish Folk Songs of New Mexico* (FA 2204), originally released 1957.

Introduction and notes by J. D. Robb (recorded circa May 1949, by J. D. Robb in New Mexico). All aspects of the cowboy occupation, with the exception of one, were strongly influenced by the Spanish-Mexican culture. The exception is music; rarely can Hispanic sounds be heard in cowboy songs. However, some cowboys did and do learn Hispanic songs. Peter Hurd knew many Ranchera songs. In the original notes for this recording he is quoted: "By Ranchera songs I mean the earthy songs sung by mariachi bands and wandering singers of Mexico....The distinction between ranchera

songs and other types is for me one of feeling, not one of antiquity. The term includes such forms as the corridos, sones and huapangos. Although the verses are usually simple in structure they occasionally have an intense emotional impact. The rhythms also vary with the type of song and may be extremely complex. Subject matter runs a wide gamut: love, deceit, death, allegory, narratives of adventure, etc., often with a background of Mexican ranch life." Other than the rhythmic structure and vocal styles, ranchera songs do not differ from cowboy songs.

Chappareras (shortened to chaps, pronounced *shaps*) are leather protectors for the legs, worn when working cattle in rough brush country. They have become a significant part of the cowboy costume, particularly among rodeo cowboys where they are more decorative than utilitarian. In this song they are a symbol of "gallant appearance" that will attract girls. With his new *chappareras*, the cowboy in the song can return to the ranch and make love to brunette girls, for he doesn't like fair ones. And he brags that girls on his ranch know how to make love.

For additional information, see: John Donald Robb, *Hispanic Folk Music of New Mexico and the Southwest* (Norman: University of Oklahoma, 1980).

11. "Buffalo Skinners" Woody Guthrie From *Struggle* (SF 40025), reissued 1990 by Smithsonian/Folkways Records, original LP released 1976 (FA 2485); originally released as 78 rpm in 1946 *Documentary #1 Struggle* (Asch Records 360), (recorded circa March 1945).

Unlike many other occupations, cowboys sang very few protest songs. Mild complaints about working in adverse weather conditions, bad horses, or wild cattle occasionally were expressed, but usually through humor. Since cowboying was an occupation of choice, each man knew, as they know today, that not much money could be earned and that bad weather, *cropped off fingers*, broken bones, a few bad horses, crazy cattle, and possibly death were just part of the job. They did and do expect decent food and respect from their boss.

Woody Guthrie took the lyrics of this song from John A. and Alan Lomax's *Cowboy Songs* (1938) and set them to music. It is a cowboy version of "The Buffalo Skinners"; yet, in the Lomax version no mention is made of buffalo skinners. It tells about an unemployed cowboy who agrees to work on a cattle drive into New Mexico, and after successfully combating the drive problems and delivering the herd, he and the rest of the cowboys kill the drover when he tries to cheat them out of their pay. Woody left out one verse and changed "out in New Mexico" to "on the trail of the buffalo." It is a genuine cowboy protest song.

Lomax & Lomax (1938) use the title "Boggy Creek," and Alan Lomax (1960) titled it "On the Trail to Mexico." Jim Bob Tinsley (1981) calls it "The Hills of Mexico" and doesn't include the verse killing the drover.

A melody in a minor key and no guitar chord changes combined with Woody's singing style of holding a syllable for emphasis make this one of Woody's most forceful recordings. The guitar style sounds like that of Cisco Houston instead of Woody Guthrie.

For texts and additional information see: A. Lomax (1960), pp. 359-60; Lomax & Lomax (1938, 1986), pp. 41-42; Tinsley (1981), pp. 32-35.

12. "Zebra Dun" Ray Reed From *Sings Traditional Frontier and Cowboy Songs* (FD 5329), originally released 1977, notes by J. D. Robb (recorded circa 1951, by J. D. Robb in New Mexico).

Controversy among singers and song collectors has trailed this song for decades: should it be Z Bar Dun instead of Zebra Dun? Is there such a horse as a zebra dun? Among horsemen there is no controversy, for dun colored horses often have black zebra-like stripes above the knees and hocks and a strip over the shoulders. The zebra dun has more

intense stripes. For a more thorough discussion of this controversy, see: Logsdon (1989), pp. 77-85 and White (1975), pp. 148-152.

Practical jokes are common among working cowboys, and as seen in other songs, one of the most common jokes is to give a cocky cowboy or tenderfoot a spoiled or wild horse or an old worn out horse. The Zebra Dun was a horse that no one could ride until the talkative stranger stayed on board with ease. He turned the joke on the cowboys.

The first commercial recording of "Zebra Dun" was by Jules Verne Allen, 30 April 1928 (Victor 40022).

For additional references see: Logsdon (1989), pp. 77-85; Lomax & Lomax (1938, 1986), pp. 78-81; Ohrlin (1973), pp. 54-57, 257-58; Thorp & Fife (1966), pp. 135-47; Tinsley (1981), pp. 134-38; White (1975), pp. 148-52.

13. "Some Cowboy Brag Talk" Harry Jackson From *The Cowboy: His Songs, Ballads & Brag Talk* (FH 5723).

Brag talk is common among all occupations, and the cowboy did and does his share. To be a good cowboy required uncommon skills and daring; brag talk was a natural outgrowth of good cowboys doing an excellent job. Brag talk also was inherent in saloon conversation. This is a structured brag similar to Davy Crockett's brags and to the boasts of mountain men.

For additional brags see: Lomax and Lomax (1938, 1986), pp. 64, 135-36.

14. "Horse Wrangler" Roger Welsch From *Sweet Nebraska Land* (FH 5337), originally released 1965 (recorded 1965 in the KFMQ studios, Lincoln, Nebraska).

This humorous poem was written by the Montana cowboy, D. J. O'Malley, to be sung to "The Day I Played Baseball." It was first published in the Miles City (Montana) *Stock Growers Journal* on 3 February 1894. The setting was in Miles City, but as the song passed from one cowboy to another, the locale and the tune changed. Since many "a tenderfoot" had the same experience, it could be adapted to any cow town. The title also changed from "D-2 Horse Wrangler" to "The Tenderfoot" and "The Horse Wrangler."

O'Malley wrote other songs that became standard cowboy songs such as "After the Roundup" which is better known as "When the Wolf's All Done This Fall." For more information about this cowboy poet see: John I. White (1975), pp. 73-100.

This song was recorded as "The Tenderfoot" by Tex Fletcher, 8 November 1933, but it was not issued. Bill Bender recorded it six years later.

For the original text see: D. J. O'Malley & John I. White, *D. J. O'Malley "Cowboy Poet"* (Helena: Montana Folklife Project, 1986), p. 11; see also: Logsdon (1989), pp. 118-22; Lomax & Lomax (1938, 1986), pp. 119-22.

15. "Strawberry Roan" Harry Jackson From *The Cowboy: His Songs, Ballads & Brag Talk* (FH 5723).

Among working cowboys this song is one of their favorites. It reminds them of a horse that has thrown them, and it has the humor they enjoy. A bragging cowboy meets the horse that can throw him.

Jackson sings "The Strawberry Roan" the way its author, Curley Fletcher, wanted it sung. Fletcher wrote it in 1914, and it was published as "The Outlaw Broncho" in the *Globe Arizona Record* on 16 December 1915. And in 1917 he included it in his small privately printed collection, *Rhymes of the Roundup*. It was quickly absorbed into cowboy lore, and some unknown singer set it to music. The melody is thought to be an old Austrian folk tune.

It was being sung by many people and Fletcher was getting no credit or money. So he collaborated with two Hollywood song writers, Nat Vincent and Fred Howard, to publish it as sheet music. When it came off the press they had made changes and added a chorus. Fletcher was furious and demanded that they

print his original poem on the inside back cover for those who want to sing it the right way (and he wrote a bawdy version). Jackson does not sing the chorus. For more information about Fletcher see: White (1975), pp. 137-47, and Curley W. Fletcher, *Songs of the Sage: The Poetry of Curley Fletcher*, reprinted with a preface by Hal Cannon (Salt Lake City: Peregrine Smith, 1986).

It was first recorded by Paul Hamblin, 21 March 1930 (Victor V40260), and within two years there were at least seven more recordings (usually including the chorus) released on approximately twenty different labels. Two movies also were made using the song as their title and story.

For additional texts and information see: Logsdon (bawdy version) (1989), pp. 86-96; Lomax & Lomax (1938, 1986), pp. 99-102; Ohrlin (1973), pp. 73-75, 260-61; Tinsley (1981), pp. 130-33.

16. "Texian Boys" John A. Lomax, Jr. From *Sings American Folksongs* (FG 3508), originally released 1956 (recorded circa 1955 in Houston).

This courting song warns Louisiana girls about the problems they will face if they marry a Texas boy, and has been sung about boys in most of the western states as well as about Mormons. It is an adaptation of an 1840s minstrel song, "De Free Nigger," in which Virginia girls were warned against Carolina boys; it quickly spread throughout the blackface circuit and among other singers. It was sung along the cattle trails from South Texas through Louisiana into Mississippi prior to the Civil War.

For additional texts and variants see: Logsdon (1989), pp. 133-35; Lomax & Lomax (1938, 1986), pp. 338-42; Silber (1967), pp. 229-30.

17. "Cow Cow Yicky Yicky Yea" Leadbelly Previously unissued on Folkways Records. From an acetate in the archives of the Office of Folklife Programs. Another version appeared as 78 rpm (Disc 3002), (recorded New York City, July/August 1944).

This is not a typical cowboy song, but it shows how an imaginative blues singer can take a fragment of a song and build it into a powerful story. John A. and Alan Lomax found variants of it among South Texas African-Americans, and Alan Lomax believes they are composites of the folk songs "I'm Bound to Follow the Longhorn Cows" (also known as "The Lone Star Trail" see: Band 22) and "Our Goodman." He writes: "Leadbelly never worked on a ranch and the stanzas he added to this old Negro cowboy song are fantastic and unreal; nevertheless, the tune and the rhythm and the spirit are genuine, and the song stands for an important chapter in the history of western song, neglected by historians," see: A. Lomax (1960), pp. 360, 381.

There were many black cowboys in the development of the cattle industry. The ranching industry along the coastal area of East Texas still has a large population of black cowboys, and in spite of Lomax's admonition in 1960, there has been no study of songs sung by black cowboys either past or present.

Leadbelly recorded this song at least five times, and each version varied in content as well as by the title. He called it "When the Boys Were on the Western Plains," "Out on the Western Plains," "When I was a Cowboy," and "Cow Cow Yiki Yicky Yea." Moses Asch recorded this unaccompanied version, but never released it on any of Leadbelly's Folkways long playing albums.

In addition to Alan Lomax (1960), see: John A. and Alan Lomax, *Negro Folk Songs As Sung by Lead Belly* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1936), pp. 210-13, and *The Leadbelly Legend* (New York: TRO, Folkways Music, 1959, 1965), pp. 60-61.

18. "Jesse James (Leadbelly's Version)" Woody Guthrie Previously unissued on Folkways Records (probably recorded 25 April 1944).

Robbing from the rich and giving to the poor as well as seeking revenge against powerful and impersonal organizations and individuals have been popular folk themes. Betrayal and death by a trusted friend add to the mystique. Jesse James was the epitome of each theme, and with the help of dime novelists, and eventually the motion pictures, became the Robin Hood of the West. He also captured the imagination of song makers. However, he was not a cowboy; he was a farmer. But since outlaw songs are usually included in the larger body of cowboy songs, "Jesse James" is considered to be a cowboy song.

In 1951 Moses Asch planned to issue an anthology of cowboy songs, and even though he made a mock-up of the album and advertised it, it was never released. Woody Guthrie singing this song is on the mock-up, and the typed label reads, "Jesse James (Leadbelly's Version)." Yet there is no evidence that Leadbelly wrote it. Two verses and the refrain are from "When I Was a Cowboy," but it is sung to a different melody. It is probable that Woody wrote the other verses and set it to the different tune. It is a significant Jesse James song, for it does not romanticize him.

19. "Home on the Range" Pete Seeger

From *American Favorite Ballads, Vol. 1* (FA 2320), originally released 1957.

In the summer of 1908 John A. Lomax collected "Home on the Range" from Bill Jack Curry, a black saloon keeper in San Antonio, Texas. A few weeks later a blind teacher of music at the State School for the Blind in Austin, Texas, set it to music. Lomax included it in his *Cowboy Songs* (1910). The song did not attract much attention until sheet music was published by Oscar J. Fox in 1925, which was followed by a recording by Vernon Dalhart, 2 April 1927 (Brunswick 137). In 1932 when Franklin D. Roosevelt was first elected president, the story quickly spread that "Home on the Range" was his favorite song. In concert halls, on records, and over the radio, the song spread throughout the world, but suddenly it was pulled from air play, off of record racks, and out of repertoires. A couple in Arizona claimed to have written it and filed a half-million dollar lawsuit for infringement of copyright.

Music publishers hired an attorney, Samuel Moanfeldt, to trace the song's heritage. He terminated the search in Kansas where he found the poem had been published as early as 1873 in the newspaper, *Smith County Pioneer*. Further research revealed that it was written by Dr. Brewster Higley and set to music by Daniel E. Kelley, both early Kansas settlers. However, John A. Lomax went to his grave believing that it was being sung earlier than 1873. In 1947 Kansas named it as the official state song, and it is still widely sung throughout the world as a cowboy song.

For additional references see: Kirke Mechem, "Home on the Range," *Kansas Historical Quarterly* 17 (1949), pp. 313-39; John A. Lomax, "Half-Million Dollar Song," *Southwest Review* 32 (1945), pp. 1-8; Lomax & Lomax (1938, 1986), pp. 424-28; Silber (1967), pp. 221-23; Tinsley (1981), pp. 212-15; White (1975), pp. 153-66.

20. "(There's an) Empty Cot in the Bunkhouse Tonight" Rosalie Sorrels, vocal; Jim Sorrels, guitar

From *Folk Songs of Idaho and Utah* (FH 5343), originally released 1961, edited and annotated by Kenneth S. Goldstein (recorded circa 1957 in Salt Lake City, by Bill Jones in his studio).

Occasionally a Hollywood or Tin Pan Alley song captures the emotions of working cowboys, and it is absorbed into their culture. This song is one of them. Rosalie Sorrels sings a tender, compassionate interpretation, and reminds us that the singing of cowboy songs is not limited to male singers. She learned her version from friends in Cascade, Idaho.

It was written and recorded by Gene Autry in October 1933 and was copyrighted and released on at least three different labels in 1934.

For additional reference see: Tinsley (1981), pp. 102-6.

21. "(When It's) Springtime in the Rockies" Leadbelly

From *Leadbelly's Last Sessions* (FP 2942C) originally released in 1953 (recorded late September 1948 in New York City by Frederick Ramsey, Jr.)

Frederick Ramsey, Jr. wrote that "if you cared about music at all, you couldn't ignore Leadbelly" (*High Fidelity Magazine* Nov-Dec 1953, 1-3). According to Leadbelly's story recorded with this song, Gene Autry didn't ignore him. A few years after he and Autry visited, Leadbelly went to see Autry's movie, *Springtime in the Rockies* (1937) and learned this song apparently after hearing it one time. This feat of memory was not unusual among a few old-time singers; if they heard a song once, it was theirs, and they filled in the gaps with their own words.

The lyrics for "When It's Springtime in the Rockies" were written by Mary Hale Woolsey; the music was by Robert Sauer — both lived in Utah. The sheet music was published in 1923 under the pseudonym "T. Snow" as lyricist. At that time publishers of novels and music believed that a "western" would not sell if written by a woman, i. e., Bertha M. Bowers' highly successful novels were published under the name B. M. Bowers to disguise her gender. The same was done with this song, which is western in theme, but does not have a cowboy protagonist.

22. "Lone Star Trail" Dave Fredrickson

From *Songs of the West* (FH 5259), originally released 1961, notes by Roger Abrahams (recorded 1960 by Royal Recording Company, Radio Station KRE, Berkeley, California, Don Hamby engineer).

This is another song that dates back to the trail driving days. John A. Lomax included a longer version in his 1910 edition of *Cowboy Songs*, in which the narrator tells of going up the trail in 1883. Fredrickson's variant contains the central theme found in the longer version.

Fredrickson learned his version from a Ken Maynard recording, which has a different melody from the Lomax variant. Maynard had some cowboy experience before becoming the first singing cowboy in the movies. Known as "The American Boy's Favorite Cowboy," he sang this song in the Universal film, *The Wagon Master* and recorded it on 14 April 1930 (Columbia 23100; reissued on *American Folk Music, Vol. 3*, Folkways FA 2953).

For additional reference see: Lomax & Lomax (1938, 1986), pp. 19-22.

23. "Rodeo Hand" Peter LaFarge

From *Sings of the Cowboys* (FN 2533).

Cowboy poetry has enjoyed a growing popularity in recent years as the result of the annual "Cowboy Poetry Gathering" held in Elko, Nevada. Among cowboys the traditions of writing and of reciting poetry are as old and as prevalent as writing and singing songs. However, in past generations the image of a poetry reciting cowboy wasn't as romantic and masculine as that of a singing cowboy.

Peter LaFarge wrote this poem as a part of his one act play, *The Girl and the Unicorn*, produced off Broadway in New York City in 1961. In his liner notes he writes: "This poem is a tribute to the rodeo people and horses, gentle and rough, that I spent so many years with."

For more information about cowboy poetry see: Hal Cannon, ed., *Cowboy Poetry: A Gathering* (Salt Lake City: Peregrine Smith, 1985), and Guy Logsdon, "Cowboy Poets," in *Hoien: the Short Rows 42* (1987): 181-99 (publication of the Texas Folklore Society).

24. "Philadelphia Lawyer" Woody Guthrie & Cisco Houston

From *Folkways: The Original Vision* (SF 40001), originally issued 1988 (recorded 19 April 1944).

In the fall of 1937, Woody Guthrie and his cousin Jack Guthrie landed a radio show over KFVD, Hollywood, California. When Jack left the show, a young lady, "Lefty Lou" Crissman, became Woody's singing partner on the "Woody and Lefty Lou Show." She showed Woody a newspaper article about a jealous cowboy shooting a Philadelphia lawyer in Reno, Nevada; Woody thought it was funny — a cowboy shooting a lawyer. Originally calling it, "Reno Blues," he set the words to the folk song, "Jealous Lover of Lone Green Valley."

Woody and Jack Guthrie sang it in bars up and down the California coast, and Rose Maddox heard them and learned it from their singing. She and her brothers entertained and recorded as "The Maddox Brothers and Rose." It became a popular song when they recorded it with Rose doing the vocal (Four Star 1289, 1949).

25. "The Dying Cowboy" Cisco Houston

From *Cowboy Ballads* (FA 2022). Reverend Edwin H. Chapin, a Universalist clergyman, wrote the poem, "The Ocean Burial," published in the *Southern Literary Messenger* in 1839. A few years later George N. Allen composed music for it, and it became a popular sentimental parlor song. Sentimental songs appealed to cowboys, and an unknown cowboy poet, probably in the late 1870s, changed the sailor into a cowboy and the ocean into the prairie. It became one of the most enduring and popular of all cowboy songs, conveying the loneliness of life and death on the vast rolling prairie grasslands.

There are many variants to the text and tune. Cisco Houston's tune is similar to the tune used in Lomax and Lomax, *Cowboy Songs* (1938, 1986).

The first commercial recording was by Carl T. Sprague, 23 June 1926 (Victor 20122).

For additional texts see: Lomax & Lomax (1938, 1986), pp. 48-51; Silber (1967), pp. 200-2; Tinsley (1981), pp. 80-83

26. "The Devil Made Texas" Hermes Nye

From *Texas Folk Songs* (FA 2128), originally issued 1955.

This song is recited as often, possibly more often, as a poem than it is sung. John A. Lomax in the 1910 edition of *Cowboy Songs* used the title "Hell in Texas," and his copy was given to him by the proprietor of the famous Buckhorn Saloon in San Antonio, Texas. The proprietor had it printed as a broadside and told Lomax that he had given away more than 100,000 copies. The saloon owners continued into modern times to give it away as an advertising device.

N. Howard "Jack" Thorp wrote that it was originally "The Birth of New Mexico," and others claim it for Arizona or "The Devil in Oklahoma." It has been sung or recited throughout the nation as "an appropriate description" of the Southwest. Hermes Nye sings the version that he learned in Kansas to the tune of "The Irish Washerwoman."

For additional references see: Lomax & Lomax (1934), pp. 397-402 and (1938, 1986), pp. 317-19.

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