



Smithsonian Folkways Recordings

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Pete Seeger

AMERICAN FAVORITE BALLADS

vol. **3**



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INTRODUCTION

GUY LOGSDON AND JEFF PLACE, 2004

The 1960s and '70s were turbulent years in this nation as well as throughout the world; cultural and political changes were occurring in many countries. They were years in which social protest was encouraged by many to bring attention to problems they believed needed to be solved and to changes that needed to be made. They also were dangerous years, for some individuals and organizations considered violence to be necessary to suppress the voices of dissension and protest and to protect ways of life they did not want changed. Civil-rights advocates were killed; demonstrating students opposed to the Vietnam War were killed.

Protesters, or those who practiced *freedom of speech*, were often the targets of violence, but that did not stop Pete and Toshi Seeger from standing firm and voicing their beliefs about fighting greed, prejudice, bigotry, and violence, and voicing their beliefs in fighting for a better society and a more loving, forgiving world. Fortunately, some of the negative opinions about protesters and their reasons for protesting were changing within the populace in the United States. In the late 1960s, Pete and Toshi became involved with environmental efforts to clean the Hudson River, and disapproving attitudes, particularly in their hometown, started changing.

Pete and Toshi were concerned about the slow and deadly destruction of the Hudson's water quality, for swimming, fishing, and most water-related activities had become unsafe. As the historically important and beautiful river became nastier and uglier, their anguish over its shameless degradation increased; something had to be done to bring attention to the disaster. Pete decided that if a sloop were built, it could sail up and down the Hudson to show individuals the condition of the

river. Many friends and critics thought the cost would be prohibitive, but Pete, with help from Toshi and many folks who shared his quest to clean the Hudson, eventually raised \$100,000. They built the sloop, and since their goal was to clean the river, they named the sloop *Clearwater*. Pete and a crew of musicians, not sailors, made their maiden voyage on the Hudson River in late June 1969.

They embarked on a Hudson River concert tour that started in Portland, Maine, and stopped at communities down the river until they reached New York City, thirty-seven days later. They sang and held small community festivals along the way, and raised \$37,000 to help pay for the *Clearwater*. The sloop, numerous concerned citizens, and many friends led by Pete brought international attention to the lack of Hudson water quality; Pete was quoted in the *New York Times* saying, "The price of liberty is eternal publicity. And we're getting it." Their protests and pressure persuaded the government and the polluting companies to launch methods to "clear" the water; both criticism and support for Pete and the *Clearwater* came from conservative critics and liberal friends. Throughout the time devoted to the sloop and the Hudson River, Pete remained concerned about the violence and death being experienced by antiwar demonstrators; he stood by his Puritan background and continued to write and sing supporting his pacifism (Dunaway 1981:279-305).

In 1975, a series titled "The Consent of the Governed: A Myth or Reality 200 Years After Independence" was funded by the Oklahoma Humanities Foundation and the National Endowment for the Humanities in cooperation with the University of Tulsa, where, on 12 November 1975, Pete opened the series with song and dialog using the title, "The Sounds of Protest: An Unalienable Right." He used "Unalienable" in his title instead of "Inalienable," for "Unalienable" was in the Declaration of Independence before evolving into "Inalienable." No matter how it was or is spelled, the Founding Fathers' guarantee remains the same: each citizen has the *right to protest* without governmental threats or punishment, or simply stated, "freedom of speech." While this Smithsonian Folkways series, *American Favorite Ballads*, is not about Pete's social and political concerns, but a reflection of his love and loyalty for this country, some of his statements about protest songs shed insight into Pete Seeger, his steadfast commitment to his beliefs, and his knowledge of history in songs. Many of our folksongs and rhymes have distinct origins, and many started as political statements. In the era before newspapers, television, and mass media, the news of the day and editorials were distributed through

small, one-page ballads, called "broad-sides." Pete explained to the audience the origin of some well-known children's rhymes. His program at the University of Tulsa was more dialog than music, and the audience, mostly students, was invited to ask questions. Pete sang a song and then spoke:

Songs of protest have been around for thousands of years. On the walls of an Egyptian tomb is the poem that a peasant wrote that the taxes were too high. During the history of most every country, there have been poems and songs that were both proestablishment and antiestablishment. Of course, the anti's had to be careful where they opened their mouths. Back in the [*sic*] 17th-century England, and the 16th, it was quiet common to make up satirical or political rhymes; in fact, many of our Mother Goose rhymes descend from these. Have you ever heard:

Robin the bobbin, the big-bellied Ben,
Ate more meat than three-score men;
Swallowed the church, swallowed the steeple,
Swallowed the priest, and all of the people;
Still his belly wasn't full.

It was directed at potbellied King Henry the Eighth; he had taken over the Church of England, wanted all of that wealth for himself, and was going to run things. These rhymes could be for or against various individuals or factions. I once read a collection of political songs of 13th-century England; they went on and on—thirty or forty verses. . . . The minstrels that went to the baronial hall were expected to have a fine new ballad in support of their sponsor and against the present enemy, whoever it was in the feudal war.

Here's another one:

Little Jack Horner sat in a corner
Eating his Christmas pie.
He stuck in his thumb, pulled out a plum,
And said, "What a good boy am I!"

The Horner family in England was a well-known titled family, and they put out a bowdlerized version of the origin, saying that Jack Horner was delivering some deeds to property in a pie to King

Henry the Eighth. He lifted up the crust, saw the paper and took out a title for himself. It happened long ago, but a friend of mine read a stack of books and convinced me that it is a *true story*. The Abbot of Glastonbury was an old man named, I think, Richard Whiting, a stately old man about eighty years old; he was resisting King Henry's attempts to take over the abbey. One of the decrees of the king was that every abbey had to declare all of their wealth, how much gold and silver and everything else they had. A young man named John Horner, who had been raised as an orphan, and the old abbot was his guardian, informed the king that the accounting had not been correct—there must have [been] some gold or silver stashed away in the attic that had not been reported. This was all the excuse the king needed; he sent down his soldiers, and they arrested the old abbot and tortured him.

There was a trial held at Christmastime. The main evidence against the abbot was turned in by young John Horner, who turned evidence against his guardian—the old abbot. The abbot's body was hung, drawn, and quartered—drawn behind horses around the county as an example, and his head hung on a post as the fashion of the day, to show others not to go against the king. John Horner got a big slice of church property as his reward. So evidently, some local rhymester wrote, "Little Jack Horner sat in the corner eating his Christmas pie; he stuck in his thumb and pulled out a plum, saying 'What a good boy am I!'"

In the 17th century, as you know, there were star-chamber proceedings where people were hauled up in an inquisition-type thing: are you a member of this? did you ever attend that? do you know so and so? There was reaction against it in England, so that by the time 1776 came along it was possible in England for there to be songs lamenting the wars in America, a song saying:

"Oh, God send us the day
When there will be no more fighting over in Ameri-cay."

Along the Atlantic Coast, you would hear songs for King George and songs against King George. I guess every time a crisis comes along there will be a flurry of political songs. This happens when there's a strike, like the labor industry of the 19th century. When the shoemakers first organized, they had songs, but they sang them in private. If you sang them in public, you would be arrested and put in jail, for unions were considered to be a conspiracy and highly illegal.

Political songs do tend to come and go: "Yankee Doodle" is the exception that proves the rule;

“John Brown’s Body” is the exception that proves the rule. George Bernard Shaw once said, “The cultural landscape is littered with magnificent fossils.” He means that some works of art are so good that long after the ideology that created it is long gone—a great temple, a public building and a song, too.

I’ll sing a few songs from different periods of American history—songs that just came along. But before I do, I should tell you my own biases; everybody has got them. Anybody who says he is objective is just fooling himself.

Pete’s lecture demonstrates his deep knowledge of the background of folksongs and folk rhymes. He has recorded hundreds and hundreds of songs, including the more than 100 classic American songs on this *American Favorite Ballads* series.

The 1970s also saw Pete write about his experiences in the folk-music world; in the introduction to his book *The Incomplete Folksinger*, Pete wrote: “I CALL THEM LOVE SONGS. They tell of love between man and woman, and parents and children, love of country, freedom, beauty, mankind, the world, love of searching for truth and other unknowns. But, of course, love alone is not enough.”

His narratives are statements about his times with Lead Belly, Woody Guthrie, Moe Asch, and many more individuals with whom he exchanged songs and from whom he learned new songs and old songs. His opening section, “OLD SONGS AND NEW PEOPLE,” establishes the foundation for his continued life in the folk-music world and his abilities to combine the old with the new. One of his primary talents is his ability to inspire his audience to sing with him, but in the appendix, he states that “Too Many People Listen to Me—and Not to the People I Learned From.” He had and still has the desire to share his sources with others; he does not have the ego to demand personal credit for his knowledge of music. It does not bother him to acknowledge his sources, so he listed the individuals, groups, and recordings from which he learned songs, along with books, magazines, and films. The smile that is usually seen on his face indicates, indeed, that his songs are truly “love songs.”

Pete Seeger’s life and career will be continued in volumes to follow.

THE SONGS

GUY LOGSDON AND JEFF PLACE

1. GYPSY DAVY

Pete Seeger, vocal and banjo (Also known as “Raggle-Taggle Gypsies,” “The Gypsy Laddie,” “Whistling Gypsy,” “Black Jack Davy [Davie],” and many more titles; Child Ballad No. 200, traditional; from Folkways 2319, 1957)

Woody Guthrie recorded this ballad for Moe Asch in 1944 under the title “Gypsy Davy” (Smithsonian Folkways 40100), and as early as 1941 at the Library of Congress, but the title used in Pete’s recording in 1957 was “Black Jack Davy,” with “Gypsy Davy” in parentheses. The accompanying text indicates that Pete did not learn the song from Woody, but learned the melody and three verses “from a man in upstate New York, a mechanic in the American Locomotive works,” who had learned it from his mother. Additional verses came “from other sources.” Pete’s melody is slightly different from that heard in earlier recordings; the lyrics are much longer, telling a more complete story, and there is a refrain. Gypsies were mistrusted migrants; Pete’s story tells how Gypsy Davy lured a wife

away from her husband and baby, but later she regrets her decision. The first documented recording was “Black Jack David, Pts. 1 & 2” for Paramount Records on 26 October 1929, sung by Mr. & Mrs. I. G. Greer (vocal duet and dulcimer); ten years later, Cliff Carlisle and His Buckle Busters recorded it, and in 1940 possibly the earliest popular recording was by the Carter Family. Francis James Child wrote that it was originally a ballad from Scotland, possibly first printed in 1740. See Brunnings 1981:117; Child 200 (8):61–74; Coffin 1963:119–22; Leach 1955: 539–544; Meade 2002:3–4.

2. DEEP BLUE SEA

Pete Seeger, vocal and banjo (from Folkways 2043, 1954)

The origin of this American folksong remains unknown; however, Pete speculated that, “Like many an American song, this seems to have been built out of a fragment of an old English ballad or sea song.” Later, he indicated that he

believed that it might have "been influenced by or passed through West Indian musical idioms." It is an easily remembered and sung song. Guthrie T. Meade believed that it was related to "The Sailor Boy" (Laws K12). See Brunnings 1981:71; Meade 2002:530; Seeger 1961:76; *Sing Out* reprints 1990:197.

3. NEW RIVER TRAIN

Pete Seeger, vocal and banjo (Also known as "Darlin'," "I'll Be on That New Road Someday," "Green River Train," "Riding on That New River Train," and others; from Folkways 2322, 1959)

The first documented recording of "New River Train" was on 26 February 1924 by Henry Whitter, vocal, guitar, and harmonica, for Okeh Records. By 1936, it had been recorded twenty-two times; the popular recording artist Vernon Dalhart recorded it seven times in 1925. The New River train ran through Virginia into the scenic New River Gorge in southern West Virginia, following the riverbanks. Henry Whitter was from Galax, but the composer of this song is not known. However, copyright documents indicate that by 1936 at least three individuals and/or companies had filed copyright documents. The first five lyrics that Pete plays and sings are almost the same as those in *American Ballads and Folk Songs*, lyrics that John and Alan Lomax received from a man in Indiana; Pete sings more verses, and his foot-tapping to the rhythm can be heard in this recording. It is a foot-tapping song, about which Pete wrote,

"Don't treat this song too gently; tear up the floor with it, and see how much fun it is." See Brunnings 1981:217; Lomax and Lomax 1934: 158-59; Meade, 2002:528; Seeger 1961:74.

4. ST. JAMES HOSPITAL

Pete Seeger, vocal and banjo (Also known as "The Unfortunate Rake," "St. James Infirmary," "Gambler's Blues," "Streets of Laredo," and others; from Folkways 2319, 1957)

In a 1957 issue of *Sing Out!*, Irwin Silber wrote the essay "Case History of a Folk Song," in which he traced the relationship of the cowboy song "Streets of Laredo" to "St. James Infirmary." His opening statement was: "The family of folksong is a large one—and who can say that all of its varied and complex inter-relationships have been unearthed or explored?" The two related songs, "Streets of Laredo" (also known as "Cowboy's Lament" and "The Dying Cowboy") and "St. James Infirmary" (also known as "Gambler's Blues"), are excellent examples of complex folksong interrelationships. The title of the song used to connect the kinship was "St. James Hospital," which has a cowboy theme and a lament with lyrics akin to "James Infirmary." Many folksong students believe that the songs are descended from "The Unfortunate Rake" or "The Irish Rake," a broadside ballad of Irish origin from approximately 1790. It is the story of an unwise soldier dying from syphilis. There is an entire album of variants of the "Unfortunate Rake" (Folkways 3805), which was released by Folkways in 1960.

As it traveled through time and countries, it became "The Bad Girl's Lament" as the protagonist changed sex, occupation, and location. The liner notes of Pete's 1957 recording state: "This song is one from a large family. . . . It traveled to the new world, where the rake became a sailor, a lumberjack, a miner, a cowboy, as each ballad singer reshaped the story to suit a local situation." Pete's version was recorded in Texas in 1934, by John A. Lomax from an African-American convict, James "Iron Head" Baker. "Gambler's Blues" was recorded as early as 16 January 1928 by Buell Kazee. See Brunnings 1981:270, 324; A. L. Lloyd, "Back Ground to St. James Infirmary Blues," *Keynote* 2(1):10-14; Meade 2002:15-16; *Sing Out!* 7(3):21-24; "Streets of Laredo" (Laws B1).

5. E-R-I-E CANAL 3:21

Pete Seeger, vocal and banjo (Also known as "Erie Canal," "The E-rie Was Rising," "The Canal Boat Song," and others; from Folkways 5003, 1954)

The Erie Canal is an artificial river that connects the Hudson River to Lake Erie; it runs from Albany to Buffalo, New York, approximately 350 miles long. It took many years to sell the idea; debate started in 1810, but the War of 1812 temporarily killed it. The bill to construct it was finally passed by the New York legislature in 1817, and construction was completed in 1825. The canalmen who worked the waterway were canallers or "ca-naw-lers," and came from around the nation at that time. Many were Irish, and

Carl Sandburg wrote that, like many laborers of that time, "they took to drink and song." Many songs about their work emerged (see track 27 in this collection). Pete wrote:

"New York State's finest claim to fame, this song is a classic of the old canal days, with mules towing the barges through. It has a hundred verses, ribald and rowdy, and may we all be as lighthearted as the fellows who first sang it".

See Brunnings 1981:86; Lomax and Lomax 1934:453-474; Lomax and Lomax 1947:131-32, 146-147; Sandburg 1927:189; Seeger 1961:87.

6. ST. LOUIS BLUES

Pete Seeger, vocal and banjo (from Folkways 2322, 1959)

First published as "The Saint Louis Blues" by W. C. Handy in 1914 by the Pace & Handy Music Company, it became Handy's most famous song. James J. Fuld wrote that the chorus was from an earlier Handy song, "The Jogo Blues," and the opening line, "I hate to see de ev'nin' sun go down," came from Handy's "hungry and cold days in St. Louis[,] when he was unemployed and, as the sun went down, he had to find a cobble [sic] stoned Mississippi levee on which to sleep." By 1941, it had been recorded not just by bluesmen and big bands, but by many others including Jim & Bob "The Genial Hawaiians," Bob Wills and His Texas Playboys, the Hoosier Hot Shots, and others. See Brunnings 1981:270; Fuld 2000:527; Meade 2002:547.

7. BOLL WEEVIL

Pete Seeger, vocal and 12-stringed guitar (Also known as "Boll Weevil Song," "Boll Weevil Blues," "Mississippi Boweavil Blues," "Boll Weevil and Farmer," "Looking for a Home," and many others; Laws 117; from Folkways 2323, 1961)

The cotton boll weevil is an insect that migrated across the Rio Grande into Texas from Mexico in approximately 1892 and quickly spread throughout the South. It is about one-fourth of an inch long; the adult is black and lays eggs in a hole it makes in the developing bolls. Carl Sandburg wrote that a boll weevil couple that arrives in the springtime will have more than twelve million descendants by the fall to carry on "family traditions." The larvae feed on the fiber and destroy the usefulness of the cotton; it has ruined millions of dollars' worth of cotton farmers' crops.

John A. Lomax collected the words of the song from Texas and Mississippi and the tune in Texas in 1909; he and his son, Alan, included it in the "Negro Bad Men" section of *American Ballads and Folk Songs* (1934), and it has appeared in numerous folk collections through the years. Alan Lomax included it in his 1960 collections under the title "The Boll Weevil Holler." The first documented recording was by Fiddlin' John Carson under the title "Dixie Boll Weevil" in March 1924 for Okeh Records. There are hundreds of verses sung to the basic melody, and the Archive of Folk Culture at the Library of Congress has many field recordings dating back to 1934. Woody Guthrie even adapted the lyrics into a farmer's lament for his financial problems

during the Great Depression. See Brunnings 1981:20, 34; Laws 1964:92, 255; Lomax and Lomax 1934:112-117; Lomax and Lomax 1947:225-26, 236-37; Lomax 1960:519, 535-536; Meade 2002:68; Sandburg 1927:8-10.

8. THE GIRL I LEFT BEHIND

Pete Seeger, banjo instrumental (Also known as "Brighton Camp," "Regimental Song of the 7th Infantry," "The Gal I Left Behind Me," "That Pretty Little Gal," and many, many more; from Folkways 2322, 1959)

This tune dates back centuries in the musical lore of England, Scotland, and Ireland, but when and where it originated are not known. It has been speculated that manuscripts of the tune date back to 1758, and James J. Fuld has documented the date of the first printing of the melody to be 1810 in England. It was brought to this country before the American Revolution, perhaps as early as 1650, and has been widely used as a military march tune in this country and England, as well as a play-party medley and a square-dance tune. The first documented recording as an instrumental medley was on 24 November 1923 by Jasper Bisbee, violin and piano, in New York City for the Edison company. The melody also became popular to support lyrics written in many parts of this country and about many occupations. As a song, it is classified as Laws P1A. See Botkin 1937:49 and additional entries; Brunnings 1981:107; Laws 1957:248-249; Lomax and Lomax 1934:280-283; Lomax 1960:307, 318-320; Meade 2002:152-153 and additional entries.

9. WHEN I FIRST CAME TO THIS LAND

Pete Seeger, vocal and banjo (English words by Oscar Brand; from Folkways 2322, 1959)

Oscar Brand is a veteran in the folk-music world, and has been an author, a singer, a recording artist, and a participant in almost all genres of creative expression. Born in Canada, he eventually made his way to New York City, where he started hosting the show "Folksong Festival" on radio station WNYC in 1945. It was a popular show, which had interviews as well as live performances and stayed on the air for more than thirty years, and he has many recordings covering a wide range of topics. Since this country was settled by immigrants from many countries, their songs were those they brought with them, with many languages and traditions represented. Pete wrote that the tune "is a famous melody known in every country in Europe," and he credits Brand with translating "this old Pennsylvania Dutch song." See Seeger 1961:13; Brunnings 1981:339; the collected reprints from *Sing Out!*, vols. 1-6, 1959-1964, 1990:104-105.

10. THE TITANIC

Pete Seeger, vocal and banjo (Also known as "When That Great Ship Went Down," "The Sinking of the Titanic," "The Great Titanic," and others; Laws D24; from Folkways 2319, 1957)

The *Titanic* was a ship thought to be unsinkable; however, on 14-15 April 1912, carrying approximately 2200 passengers, it hit an iceberg and sank; 1513 passengers lost their lives, which

made it one of the most famous maritime disasters. One of the primary problems was that they were trying to prove that the *Titanic* was the fastest ship on the seas. There were not enough lifeboats, and the rich refused to be with the poor; therefore, the poor were in the lower levels of the ship and the first to die. A disaster such as this always stimulates the creative juices of many individuals; through the years, there have been additional songs, folktales, books, a movie, a stage play, and much television coverage. African-American street singers made up many interpretations of the event, and Lead Belly said that it was the first song for which he played the 12-stringed guitar while singing. The first documented recording was by Ernest V. Stoneman in September 1924 for Okeh Records. See Brunnings 1981:315; Laws 1964:172-173; the collected reprints from *Sing Out!*, vols. 1-6, 1959-1964, 1990:88-89; Meade 2002:70.

11. EL-A-NOY

Pete Seeger, vocal and banjo (Also known as "Illinois," "The Plains of Illinois," "The State of Illinois," and "State of El-a-noy"; traditional; previously unreleased; from Smithsonian acetate 511)

As the United States grew and the frontier moved westward, many hardworking individuals and families sought fertile land that was either free or at least cheap, and as Alan Lomax wrote, "Every American pioneer had a touch of the real estate agent in him." They wanted to have other people in the region, and if they had enough land

or just wanted to make money, they would tell any story to entice others to the region. Thus, if "Adam passed over it, He'd think that it was the garden, He'd played in when a boy." Carl Sandburg wrote that one early magazine in Chicago had the declaration that "It is here [the West] that the great problem of human destiny will be worked out"; unfortunately, many found their land uninhabitable and returned to their previous home areas. Carl Sandburg found this song, and most versions seem to come from his collection. See Brunnings 1981:85; Lomax 1960: 76, 87–88; Sandburg 1927:162–163.

12. LADY OF CARLYSLE

Pete Seeger, vocal and banjo (Also known as "In Carlysle There Lived a Lady," "The Bold Lieutenant," "Down in Carlisle," and others; Laws O25; from Folkways 2319, 1957)

A ballad should tell a story, and this love ballad certainly does, for a lady wants a husband who is of "honor and high degree" and is willing to die for her. A "brave lieutenant" and a "brave sea-captain" seek her love and approval; in some versions, they are brothers. She takes them to a lion's den to test them, and throws her fan into the den, wanting to see which one will retrieve it for her. The lieutenant decides that he is not willing to die for her; the sea-captain is, and brings it to her and wins her as the "prize." The lion's den suggests that the basic theme of this ballad goes back to Roman times. Pete sings a version that comes from a recording in the Archive of Folk

Culture in the Library of Congress; it is a recording made in 1937 of Basil May singing in Salyersville, Kentucky. See Brunnings 1981:171; Laws 1957:237–238; Lomax and Lomax 1941: 162–164.

13. MY GOOD MAN

Pete Seeger, vocal and banjo (Also known as "My Good Old Man," "Three Nights Drunk," "Four Nights Drunk," "Seven Nights Drunk," "Our Goodman," "Drunkard's Special," and many more; Child 274; from Folkways 2322, 1959).

This is a ballad that has been sung in numerous European languages for centuries. It is a humorous ballad that puts infidelity on the wife instead of the husband; however, the husband, while telling the tale of discovering infidelity, usually discloses that he is an alcoholic. Some variants tell that it required another male, often of high political or social status, to participate in infidelity, and the plot lends itself to the singer's imagination, which can be rather bawdy. In different historical times, the stories vary, including the identity of the male, but the theme remains the same. The first documented recording was on 20 April 1926 by Gid Tanner and Fate Norris under the title "Three Nights Experience." There are numerous variants in the United States, and serious musicological research produced a master's thesis at Indiana University by Joe Hickerson, former head of the Archive of Folk Culture (Library of Congress). The song appears in many forms: it can be found in country music, and it has become an Irish bar standard, with the title

varying as to how many nights drunk the husband is (the more nights, the bawdier the song). It can be even be found in New Orleans and the Caribbean, under the title "Cabbage Head." See Brunnings 1981:100; Child 1894 (9):88–95; Coffin 1963:143–145; Leach 1955:653–57; Meade 2002:4; *Sing Out!* 1958(8, 2):14–17.

14. GOLDEN VANITY

Pete Seeger, vocal and banjo (Also known as "The Lowlands Low," "The Lonesome Sea Ballad," "The Sweet Trinity," and many more; Child 286; from Folkways 2319, 1957).

This is another broadside ballad expressing that those with power do not always live up to their promises. When the *Golden Vanity* is in danger from the Turkish *Revelee*, the captain promises 5,000 pounds and his daughter as a bride to the man who would sink the Turkish ship. The cabin boy jumped overboard, swam to the Turkish ship, drilled holes in the side, and sank the ship; but when he returned, the captain would not pick him up. The cabin boy said that if he did not love and respect the crew, he would sink the *Golden Vanity*; instead, with honor, he decides to sink into the "lonesome sea," rather than kill his shipmates. There are many variants of this ballad in the United States; they are based on the story of a ship that Sir Walter Raleigh built, *The Sweet Trinity*, which was taken by another country, and the captain wanted it destroyed. The first documented recording was by Welby Toomey on 30 September 1925 under the title

"The Golden Willow Tree" (Gennett Records). See Brunnings 1981:111; Child IX, 1894:135–142; Leach 1955:667–670; Meade 2002:5.

15. AIN'T IT A SHAME

Pete Seeger, vocal and banjo (Also known as "Ain't Dat a Shame," "Bill Bailey, Ain't That a Shame," and others; traditional; from Folkways 2445, 1962)

This is a traditional song about which little has been written. The first documented recording was by Uncle Dave Macon on 8 September 1926 for Vocalion Records; he used the title "Ain't It a Shame to Keep Your Honey in the Rain." Lead Belly in *Lead Belly's Last Sessions* (Smithsonian Folkways 40068/71) recorded it under the title "Ain't It a Shame to Go Fishing on a Sunday." It has been reported that in Sidney Dyer's book *Songs and Ballads* (1857) there is a song "Ain't It a Sin to Steal on Sunday"; however, that song does not appear in early collections of spirituals or other songbooks. By definition, shame is "a painful emotion caused by consciousness of guilt," and since blue laws kept businesses and activities other than those that were church-related closed and inactive on Sundays, it is logical that a song about doing anything on Sunday other than worship would be created and sung as a "sin." The verse "Ain't it a shame to beat your wife on a Sunday" is true for all other days, months, and years; it is a shame and sin. See Brunnings 1981:6; Meade 2002:489.

16. SWANEE RIVER

Pete Seeger, vocal and banjo (Also known as "Old Folks at Home" and "Way Down upon the Swanee River"; Stephen C. Foster; from *Folkways* 2322, 1959)

This song was copyrighted on 1 October 1851, at which time it was printed as sheet music with no mention of its composer; instead, it gave E. P. Christy credit as the lyricist and composer, for Foster had sold the rights to Christy. It was an "Ethiopian melody," to be performed by Christy's Minstrels. Pete wrote that "Stephen Foster's sentimental songs were typical of mid-19th-century America. But shorn of their minstrel show dialect and considered simply as melodies, it is no wonder they spread around the world. He had a genius for fitting syllables to tunes." Foster never visited Florida, but chose the Swanee River because the two-syllable cadence fit the music. In 1935, it became the official state song of Florida, even though the correct spelling for the river is *Suwannee*. The first documented recording was on 12 September 1924 by Riley Puckett for Columbia Records. See Brunnings 1981:231, 299; Fuld, 2000:407-408; Howard 1943 (numerous entries); Meade 2002:342; Seeger 1961:83.

17. SOMETIMES I FEEL LIKE A MOTHERLESS CHILD

Pete Seeger, vocal and guitar (Also known as "Motherless Child"; from *Folkways* 2322, 1959)

According to James J. Fuld, "the first known appearance in print" of this song was in *Old Plantation Hymns* by William E. Barton, pub-

lished in 1899; the title was "Motherless Child." Pete wrote: "Perhaps the inhumanity of slavery can be first grasped by sensing the events behind a Negro Spiritual such as this. It was common practice to sell the children of slaves away from their parents." John A. and Alan Lomax wrote that in white spirituals "the fight is against sin. . . [and for] release from the struggle against Satan," but in "a Negro spiritual there is a direct reliving of the battles and the physical conflict of the prophets, not against sin, but against real enemies." They quote a son of slaves: "Who I is, how old I is[,] and where I is born, I don't know"; indeed, "Sometimes I feel like a motherless child, a long ways from home" was a direct emotional and physical experience. See Brunnings 1981: 288; Fuld 2000:514; Lomax and Lomax 1947: 339-341, 368-369; Seeger 1961:49.

18. THE BOYS FROM COUNTY MAYO

Pete Seeger, vocal and banjo (Also known as "Shamrock"; from *Folkways* 5801, 1960)

This song reflects why thousands of Irish folks immigrated to the "new" country, for, as with the Great Depression of the 1930s in the United States, the Irish potato famine of the 1840s drove hundreds of thousands of people from their homes and loved ones. They did not want to leave, but "homes were destroyed" and fields "confiscated"; they had to go to new fields of work and where mere subsistence was available. Many Irish immigrated to America. County Mayo is in

the western part of Ireland. The shamrock is a plant with three leaves, and legend says that Saint Patrick used it to explain the Trinity; it is the emblem of Ireland. The song is an Irish protest song of encouragement, telling Irishmen to stick together, for they are "true-hearted men from the County Mayo." Pete recorded it under the title "Shamrock," and it has appeared in Irish social protest-song collections. See Brunnings 1981:748.

19. NO IRISH NEED APPLY

Pete Seeger, vocal and banjo (From *Folkways* 5003, 1954)

About this song, Pete recalls: "Researching in the Library of Congress in 1947, I finally located two songs popular in the 1860s—'No Irish Wanted Here' and 'No Irish Need Apply.' Tacking the chorus of one onto the verses of the other resulted in this song."

There are many who believe that Pete's rendering of this ballad is the traditional statement expressed in the song during the 1860s and later; but while the theme and the message remain true, Pete slightly changed it into a more memorable statement about prejudice when he fused two songs into one statement about historic discrimination along with Irish pride to provide "a beating" when "you write, 'No Irish need apply.'" The song was originally written by John F. Poole and published by H. De Marsan Publishers in 1862. See Seeger 1964:86-87.

20. PADDY WORKS ON THE RAILROAD

Pete Seeger, vocal and banjo (Also known as "Fillimeeooreay," "Pat Works on the Railway," "Paddy Works on the Railway," "Paddy on the Railway," "Paddy Works on the Erie," and others; from *Folkways* 5003, 1954)

Norm Cohen provides an excellent history of this song and provides a comparison of different versions. Pete's version indicates that trouble started in 1841 when "I put my cord'roy. . . To work upon the railway," but dates in other versions vary up to 1861; thus, Cohen openly speculates that it was written in the 1850s, but the first mention of it appeared in 1864. During the 1840 potato famine in Ireland, many Irishmen came to America as entertainers, but the majority came as workers in industrial construction, particularly in railroad building. Therefore, there have been discussions about the song's origin and its two melodies; it might have been a sea chantey, a minstrel song, or a genuine railroad worker's song. Pete used the title "Fillimeeooreay" and wrote that it was: "A popular song of 19th-century Irish immigrants. I learned it from Alan Lomax. I don't know where he learned it."

However, John A. and Alan Lomax used the title "Paddy Works on the Erie," even though the lyrics are about a railroad worker's troubles, not about a canal worker. See Brunnings 1981:241; Cohen 1981:547-552; Lomax and Lomax 1947: 250-251, 270-271.

21. ARKANSAS TRAVELER

Pete Seeger, vocal and banjo (Also known as "Arkansas Traveler," "The Original Arkansas Traveler," and others; from Folkways 5003, 1954)

This is a humorous song for fiddlers and banjo pickers; it has a repetitive melody that backs a dialog limited only by the musician's imagination. According to James J. Fuld, it was first printed as a melody, with no dialogue, in 1847 under the title "The Arkansas Traveller and Rackinsac Waltz"; "Rackinsac" was and still is a word used for humor by a few instead of saying "Arkansas." The origin of the melody has long been in debate; some believe it to be of Irish origin, while others believe that it was composed as a minstrel-show tune. The dialogue has a long history of growth, apparently starting around 1858 in printed sheet music. It is a melody and/or a song that most old-time fiddlers learned early in their musical lives, and it has been placed in different song genres: minstrel music, humorous songs, country reel tunes, and fiddle contest music. It was released on Edison cylinders circa 1912 by Eugene Jaudas, on fiddle, with orchestral backing, and it was recorded or used in a recorded medley at least sixty times before the early 1940s, by legendary musicians such as Henry Gilliland and Eck Robertson, Gid Tanner and Riley Puckett, and many, many more. See Brunnings 1981:13; Fuld 2000:107-108; Lomax and Lomax 1934:267-271; Meade 2002:438-439, 759-761, 704, 738.

22. WHEN I WAS SINGLE

Pete Seeger, vocal and banjo (Also known as "When I Was Single, My Pockets Would Jingle," "I Wish I Was Single Again," "I Wish I Was a Single Girl Again," "Single Girl," "The Drunkard's Wife," and many, more; from Folkways 5003, 1954)

This traditional song has numerous variants, those proclaiming the female attitude about the desire to be single again and those expressing the male desire for single life. Obviously, opinions from both sides are important, so Pete in fairness gives the female's reasons for wanting to be "single again." The male outlook is often in print; however, it is possible that the female versions were more popular, for women probably had more valid reasons to want to be single. In 1927, Carl Sandburg wrote "half the time when divorced men marry again they pick the same kind of a wrong woman a second time"; the same statement can be said about women. Sandburg also stated that it was a minstrel "ditty that spread to mountains and prairies." John A. and Alan Lomax used both male and female versions in their 1934 compilation and placed it in the "Songs from the Mountains" category. In 1960, Alan Lomax included a female version in his "Southern Mountains and Backwoods: Across the Blue Ridge" section and wrote that pioneer life in the mountains was extremely rough on women, for homes were not good and sound, meals had to be cooked, clothes had to be mended, numerous babies were often borne by a woman, and neighbors were far away. The first documented record-

ing was by Riley Puckett, vocal and guitar, on 15 June 1925, for Columbia Records. See Brunnings 1981:141, 340; Sandburg 1927:47; Lomax and Lomax 1934:154-158; Lomax 1960:159, 166; Meade 2002:143.

23. WOND'ROUS LOVE

Pete Seeger, vocal and limited banjo (traditional Shaker hymn, words by the Rev. Alex Means, tune "Captain Kidd"; from Folkways 5003, 1954)

Pete sings this hymn almost in the early unaccompanied tradition of shape-note singing; however, the limited banjo background puts it into a modest modern musical arrangement. It has been documented to have been a Shaker standard as early as 1835, but is generally considered to be a sacred harp song and/or a Southern gospel song. John A. and Alan Lomax wrote that early-day evangelists used songs that could be learned quickly for congregational singing. The spiritual words were usually of simple poetic structure, set to familiar folk tunes. They credit a Methodist minister from Oxford, Georgia, the Reverend Alex Means, with writing the poetic structure and setting it to "Captain Kidd," and they considered this spiritual to be "perhaps the most beautiful." However, they did not give their source for the Rev. Means story. In 1966, an excellent article by Sam Hinton, "Folk Songs of Faith," was published in *Sing Out!*; it included "Wondrous Love," which it called "one of the best songs to show some of the important principles of the white

spirituals," though its "authorship... is unknown." The magazine included a thin acetate recording that had "Wondrous Love" sung by the Old Harp Singers as the final selection, but the first documented recording was in August 1924 by the Georgia Sacred Harp Quartette for Okeh Records. See Brunnings 1981:350; Hinton 1966: 31-37; Lomax and Lomax 1947:331-330, 348-349; Meade 2002:617, 657.

24. GROUND HOG

Pete Seeger, vocal and banjo (Also "Groun' Hog," "Old Ground Hog," and also became known as "Road Hog"; from Folkways 5003, 1954 and Smithsonian Folkways 45039, 1998)

Pete plays and sings this song with the energy that an old-time fiddle and banjo breakdown requires. He sings fifteen verses, but the song has almost as many verses as there are groundhogs. A groundhog is a woodchuck, and many superstitions surround its behavior. It is a rodent about two feet long with a six-inch tail, and is usually found in the northern half of North America. It hibernates in the winter. Lore tells us that it leaves its burrow on 2 February, and if it sees its shadow, winter will last for six more weeks. Thus, we observe Ground Hog Day every 2 February. The song and/or tune is credited to the southern Appalachians; Pete referred to as a "favorite banjo piece" that some "dulcimer players like." It became a well-known children's song. The first documented recording, a vocal with banjo, was in Atlanta, Georgia, in March 1924 by Land Norris

for Okeh Records. See Botkin 1944:893–895; Brunning 1981:116; Lomax and Lomax 1934:271–74; Lomax and Lomax 1947:8, 26–27; Meade 2002:375; Seeger 1964:28; R. Seeger 1993:22–23.

25. OLD BLUE

Pete Seeger, vocal and banjo (Also known as “Go On, Blue,” “Old Dog Blue”; from Folkways 7611, 1955 and Smithsonian Folkways 45039, 1998)

Any person who loves dogs will appreciate this song; it reveals a man’s love for his companion—a companion that asks for nothing more than love and appreciation, even though the dog is not perfect, and it is the best American sentimental song about dogs. In decades past, hunting dogs were often essential for survival; they could find and/or tree other species necessary for food supplies or for the sport of hunting. Many males and females who do not hunt still love the emotion expressed, especially in “When I get to heaven, first thing I’ll do, I’ll take my horn and blow for Blue.” There were and are killings over dogs, for they become family members, even though they are usually left outside and often underfed. Ruth Crawford Seeger wrote that it was “a song most loved by our children—the song of the faithful possum-hunting dog, Old Blue”; it communicates with the innocence of childhood. Its popularity seems to have been in the Southern mountains and the Midwest, and Pete Seeger, Burl Ives, and a few other singers kept it alive. See Brunnings 1981:231; Lomax and Lomax 1947:7–8, 24–25; R. Seeger 1948:18–19.

26. SHE’LL BE COMIN’ ROUND THE MOUNTAIN

Pete Seeger, vocal and banjo (from Folkways FP 701, 1953 and Smithsonian Folkways 45056, 2000).

For generations of U.S. citizens, this is one of the most familiar of songs, for it has been sung in schools, at camps, among adult organizations, and almost everywhere. It is an unpretentious melody and story that remain in the memory of all who hear and sing it. Pete recorded it for an early album, *American Folk Songs for Children*, 1953; that album was intended for “parents and teachers,” and under the heading “Why Folk Music for Children” it quoted the following from Ruth Crawford Seeger’s book *American Folk Songs for Children*: “This kind of traditional or folk music is thoroughly identified with the kind of people who made America as we know it. They made it and are still making it. If it is one of the aims of education to induct the child into the realities of the culture in which he will live, . . . [this music] should occupy a familiar place in the child’s daily life.”

In the Smithsonian Folkways 45046 reissue of the album, Pete is quoted with a “personal note” in 1999: “These recordings were made a half-century ago, when I was not as conscious as I am now of the need to make our country more truly democratic for women as well as men, for people of diverse ethnic backgrounds, whether they arrived on these shores recently or thousands of years ago. I hope that young people who

hear this recording will continue to use the folk process to change some of the words.”

This song, as with many others, is an example of the “folk process,” for the melody has been identified with a late-19th-century African-American hymn, “When the Chariot Comes,” which, with word changes, was made into a railroad worksong around 1899. The first printing of the lyrics was in Carl Sandburg’s *The American Songbag*; the first documented recording was by Henry Whitter (vocal with harmonica and guitar) on 26 February 1924 for Okeh Records. During the next eight years, it was recorded fifteen more times. See Brunnings 1981:278; Fuld 000:496–497; Lomax 1960:406, 414; Meade 2002:535; Sandburg 1927:372–373; R. Seeger 1948:47, 90–91.

27. ERIE CANAL

Pete Seeger, vocal and banjo (Also known as “My Gal Sal,” “Low Bridge, Everybody Down,” “Fifteen Miles on the Erie Canal,” and “Fifteen Years on the Erie Canal”; from Folkways 2323, 1961)

This song about the Erie Canal is, indeed, a traditional song, but it did not come from the folks who built and worked the canal. It was written in 1905 by Thomas S. Allen and published in 1913 as a Tin-Pan-Alley song. It became a popular song among college glee-club singers and became a romanticized “Ca-naw-lers” song, somewhat like cowboy songs, for it did become, in the minds of many, a song identified with working folks. Unlike a horse, a mule is an intelligent, inde-

pendent work animal with limited loyalty for humans, and unlike the romanticized horse-cowboy loyalty and friendship, the mule did its work and went its own way. There are a few, but very few, romanticized songs about a mule. See #5 in this collection; Brunnings 1981:86; Lomax and Lomax 1934:453–471; Sandburg 1927:171–173.

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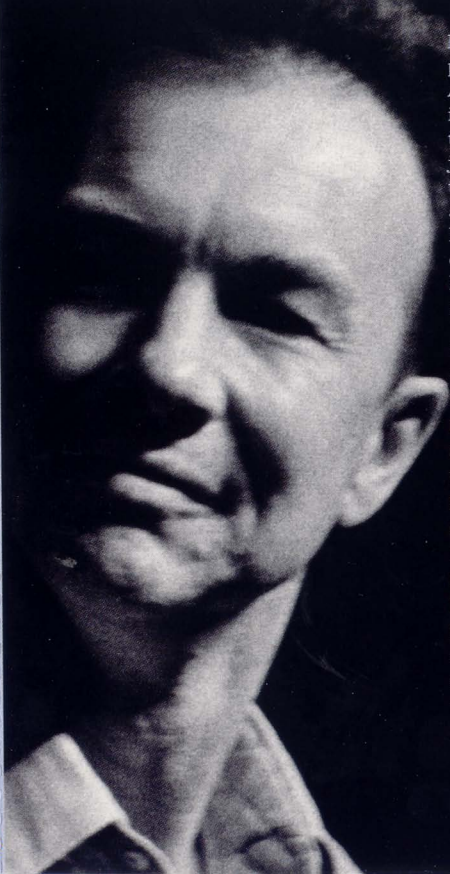
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