

Pete Seeger

AMERICAN FAVORITE BALLADS

vol. **5**



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For song lyrics and discography, go to the Smithsonian Folkways Recordings Web site at www.folkways.si.edu

PETE SEEGER AND FOLKWAYS RECORDS

JEFF PLACE, 2007

The 1950s and early 1960s were a prolific time of recording for Pete Seeger and Folkways Records. Seeger recorded and released 38 albums for Folkways between 1950 and 1964. His five-record series *American Favorite Ballads* (1957–1962) became a cornerstone in his work with Folkways and presented great American songs known by children growing up in America during the 20th century—songs sung in schools and around campfires, many having roots in the 19th century. The series was accompanied by the publication of the sheet music for most of the songs by Oak Publications (now owned by Music Sales Inc.) in 1961.

Issued during the height of the folk revival, this series was essential for students to learn folk-songs and expand their repertoire. As the 21st century begins, we are reissuing the complete series for current generations of folksong enthusiasts. This release is the fifth and final issue in the series, which now has all the *American Favorite Ballads*, with selections from other Seeger material on Folkways, like *Frontier Ballads* (1954) and *American Ballads* (1957). The five volumes in this series do not reissue exactly the five volumes released on LP, but instead take full advantage of the longer length of compact discs to draw from the original series and expand it with additional material. This fifth volume contains primarily cowboy and Western songs, mainly from the two-record *Frontier Ballads* collection and the original *Volume 5* (FW 2445, 1962); a few come from other recordings in the series.

INTRODUCTION

GUY LOGSDON AND JEFF PLACE, MARCH 2007

In an article in *The Nation*, Studs Terkel wrote that Pete Seeger in the magazine *Down Beat* had been referred to as “America’s tuning fork,” and that Pete, Woody Guthrie, and Lead Belly had “stirred up the American folk-song revival in the late 1940s and early 1950s” (Terkel 2005b). In the book *And They All Sang*, Terkel wrote, “Whenever you see a young folksinger, banjo chest-high, Adam’s apple bobbing, you know that Pete Seeger—the legendary folksinger and songwriter . . . has been here. . . . I know of no singer who has influenced more young people singing or at least attempting to sing folk music” (Terkel 2005a:213). Pete’s series of *American Favorite Ballads* played a major role in inspiring the revival of folksinging among all ages, not just the young, and he supplied songs that were often reintroduced and made popular by his personal appearances and his *American Favorite Ballads*. His life and music have been statements of faith in the United States, and, indeed, he has been the tuning fork of the nation.

Through the years, Pete is one who truly believes in the Bill of Rights, especially freedom of speech. As a great defender of the United States of America in both private and military life, he has sung, written, and spoken his belief in and dedication to *United*, the keyword that describes his life of creativity and sharing, for he has devoted his life to encouraging citizens to join together in forgiveness, love, peace, and unity. When he encourages his audiences to sing along with him, he pitches his voice in harmonic tones inviting not only melodic harmony, but also life lived in harmony with others. He has shared his desire for unity with audiences around the world, and his music contains the melodies and harmonies of many countries and cultures. He has served his country and the cause of freedom valiantly and bravely.

Music has been Pete's strategy of offense and defense, the foundation for his creativity and sharing. Alongside a life of singing and playing, he has written articles, essays, and books expressing his musical spirit. In 1954, he started his "Applesseeds" column in *Sing Out!* and has shared his ideas, opinions, and philosophies in it throughout the years. He once wrote in it, "What do I most wish I could do as a musician? Put a song on people's lips, instead of just in their ear" (Seeger 1992a).

Pete has fulfilled that wish, earning generations of admirers and followers. His friends and fans seeking his acceptance and approval for their songs and/or recordings have sent him untold numbers of songs and recordings. In *Sing Out!* he confessed his relationship with music, its role in his life, and why he could usually not respond when recordings had been sent to him:

A personal confession. I'm a bookaholic, a magazinaholic. In a plane, a train, a waiting room. Before sleeping. On the toilet. But I've got some block about listening to recorded music. Rarely listen to discs or tapes. People give them to me, send them to me; I accept them politely, but they almost always go into a box unlistened to. I can't think, hold a conversation, concentrate on any work, or drive safely with music in my ears. Good or bad, it distracts me; I'll start playing along with it (Seeger 1992b).

Sharing music and creating harmony are the motivating influences and inspirations in Pete's life. Pete may not listen to all that has been or is extended to him, but through his *American Favorite Ballads*, other recordings, and personal appearances he has returned tenfold to those throughout the world who trust, love, and admire him. However, his quest for world peace, harmony, and social equity did not go unchallenged. He experienced much criticism, censorship, and hatred from those who did not and do not believe in the Bill of Rights and the Constitution as he did and does, but these challenges did not prevent him from expressing his beliefs and hopes through performances, recordings, and writings. Fortunately, during the 1980s, the critics started diminishing in number and credibility, his popularity and influence continued to expand, and awards expressing appreciation were initiated.

Interviewed by Will Schmid for an article that appeared in the February 1980 issue of *Music Educators Journal*, Pete said, "We're recognizing that the traditions of creating songs are just as important as the traditions of preserving songs." He has had an unparalleled influence on ballad writing and the writing of songs in the folksong format, and he gave credit to Woody Guthrie as his

influence: "This is the tradition that Woody Guthrie passed on to us, and I think his contribution in my life was more important than any other single person." In reference to being blacklisted he said, "I was blacklisted from respectable endeavors and therefore began to sing to some of the most creative audiences in the country, namely students, the peaceniks, the left wing, and the civil rights people" (Schmid 1980:42–46, 78–80). It is doubtful that a positive interview with Pete in the early 1970s would have been printed in most periodicals, but times were changing in the 1980s.

The Cold War was ending, and the legacy of Joseph McCarthy's anticommunism, known as the "Red Scare," was weakening. Pete's influence was strengthening, and during most of his programs he continued to spread the legend and songs of Woody Guthrie. He did programs and occasionally toured with Arlo Guthrie, and he recorded with Arlo and his family; their annual fall show at Carnegie Hall, New York City, became one of the most popular folk-music programs. Pete continued to sing and write protest songs and sing many of the songs from his *American Favorite Ballads* series.

For years in his youth, Pete supported communism, not as a political movement, but as a social-economic philosophy. When Joseph Stalin's evils and atrocities were made public by Russian authorities, Pete and many others reevaluated their positions. Much later, Pete said to this writer, "With what we know now about Stalin, what would Woody say? Why did we support them as long as we did?"—but his left-wing reputation has stayed with him. The evening of 4 December 1994 at the Kennedy Center, in Washington, D.C., President Bill Clinton awarded him and four other artists a Presidential Medal of the Arts, the nation's highest award for artistic activities. President Clinton said that Pete is "a social activist and war protester, . . . an inconvenient artist, who dared to sing things as he saw them. He was attacked for his beliefs, and he was banned from television—now that's a badge of honor" (Clinton 1994). That morning, the "Sunday Arts" section of the *Washington Post* featured Pete and his honor in an article titled "America's Best Loved Commie: Even a Radical Can Become a National Treasure, Just Ask Pete Seeger." It was a positive article about him. It reflected the tremendous respect that Pete had and has earned by living a life that reflects and supports his faith and belief in the Constitution, even though his stance brought harsh condemnation from critics.

Pete's awards and expressions of appreciation started with the president's recognition, and they have continued. The Tennessee Association of School Librarians offers the Volunteer State Book Award, in which students read and vote for their favorite book; the 1989–1990 award from grades K–3 went to Pete's *Abiyoyo* (Macmillan 1986). He was honored with a Grammy Association Lifetime Achieve-

ment Award in 1993, and in 1997 was awarded a Grammy award for the best traditional folk recording of 1996. In 1995, Pete received a lifetime achievement award from the Folk Alliance. He was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, Cleveland, Ohio, on 17 January 1996 in recognition of his contributions to our musical heritage and influence on thousands of musicians. In 2000, during its bicentennial year, the Library of Congress established its Living Legends award for individuals in a wide range of occupations and activities who have made significant contributions to U.S. national culture: one of the first to be recognized as a living legend, Pete received the award in April 2000.

During the 1990s, Pete was in his seventies, but aging hardly slowed him down: he continued touring, performing, leading protest singers, and writing. His grandson Tao Rodriguez-Seeger, a guitarist who also sings, often traveled and appeared with him and continues to work with his grandfather while touring and recording with his own group, the Mammals. On 10 February 1998, Pete gave a talk before singing to the National Press Club, in Washington, D.C., stating an important motivating philosophy, “I like small business. . . . I’m really a big fan of small organizations—small churches, small scientific groups, small political groups. And the reason is that power-hungry people just seem to gravitate towards big organizations, whether government or corporations or big anything” (FNS 1998).

Pete was still going strong as he entered the 21st century. The American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress on 15–16 November 2001 presented programs to honor the 100th birthday of Benjamin A. Botkin, head of the Archive of American Folk Song during the early 1940s and author of many folklore books. Pete, Mike, and Peggy Seeger, with other well-known folksingers and folklorists, entertained and educated numerous folks from across the nation. Late in the afternoon on the 16th, the final session was a community sing with Pete, Oscar Brand, and others; the group of participants was not large, and there was not a riser on which to stand, nor was there a microphone. At the age of 82, the tall, slender Pete Seeger pulled a small chair over and with banjo in hand jumped up on it and led the group in singing; it was an amazing and informal statement about his desire to put a song in everyone’s ear.

In the summer 2004 issue of *Sing Out!* at the age of 85, Pete wrote:

Friends, it looks like this is my last “Appleseeds” column. Doctors and pills have failed to bring my memory back. I can’t remember names, words. But, I feel more optimistic about my country and the world as I see women and men in thousands of communities working with young people

to solve some local problem. . . . Any last words? Keep on learning from people like Woody Guthrie, Malvina Reynolds and others like them throughout the world. People who keep a sense of humor in spite of all the crazy things going on (Seeger 2004).

It was not his last column, for in the winter 2006 issue he wrote that in the previous winter Jean King, a lady from Hawaii, had requested permission to have a songfest “from Hawaii to Boston” to sing his songs across the country celebrating his 86th birthday. He continued:

It occurred to me that instead of just singing my songs, it would be more creative if folks sang and swapped old or new songs made up by all kinds of people, songs that circled around the subject of what kind of a world we’d like our children and grandchildren to see, and what needs to be done to create that world (Seeger 2006).

Age may have dimmed Pete’s memory, but not his lifelong desire for harmony throughout the world. That column and the “retirement” column should be read by all who seek harmony in life and need some of Pete’s optimism; on 3 May 2005, Pete enjoyed and celebrated his 86th birthday, but not alone. Starting on 29 April and going through 15 May, there were concerts, songfests, and radio tributes in approximately thirty-four cities paying tribute to Pete in appreciation for his inspiration to millions of citizens worldwide; they were often called the “Seegerfest,” and on the internet there are about 100 entries under that title. While Pete has received attention and appreciation, his lovely and loving wife, Toshi, has been by his side through the years and as his life’s partner earning and receiving the same appreciation; she has traveled with him as he has sung around the world, and all tributes include her.

Pete’s longtime friend, agent, manager, defender, and promoter, Harold Leventhal, was only three weeks younger than Pete. In November 2003, during the weekend that Pete and Arlo Guthrie had been performing each year at Carnegie Hall, Arlo put together a tribute for him. Pete and his grandson, Tao, with Arlo, Tom Paxton, Judy Collins, Peter, Paul, and Mary, and others whom Leventhal had managed gave tribute to a sold-out Carnegie Hall gathering of appreciative folk-music fans. Harold Leventhal died on 4 October 2005, a few months after he celebrated his 86th birthday.

Pete continued to draw praise and appreciation, and articles continue to be written about him and Toshi. In the summer of 2005, after Pete celebrated his 86th birthday, *Sing Out!* published an

article (Alarik 2005) that began by acknowledging that Pete no longer had the strength of voice and banjo picking that he had once had, but maintaining that Pete's personality was still as forceful as always. In 2006, the *Folklife Center News* published an article about the Pete and Toshi Seeger Film Collection in the American Folklife Center; based on an interview with Pete and Toshi, it told about the years when Pete and Toshi had filmed folk musicians and events (Harvey and Winick 2006). An article in *The New Yorker* covered Pete's courage and optimism while facing his critics (Wilkinson 2006). Also in 2006, singer Bruce Springsteen honored Pete by recording a Pete Seeger tribute, *We Shall Overcome: The Seeger Sessions*, which received a Grammy award for best traditional folk album. The internet has more than a million Pete Seeger entries, and Jim Capaldi has amazing coverage of Pete's life and activities at *The Pete Seeger Appreciation Page* (www.peteseeger.net).

Pete's creativity continues, for on 22 January 2007 the American Library Association announced the winners of the Schneider Family Book Award to honor an author or illustrator "for the artistic expression of the disability experience for child and adolescent audiences." The award for ages up to ten went to *The Deaf Musicians* by Pete Seeger and Paul Dubois Jacobs and illustrated by R. Gregory Christie (2006); for young beginning readers, it is about a musician who loses his hearing but in a school for the deaf learns sign language and with other deaf musicians learns to sign songs. It teaches "that there is more than one way to do everything, to never give up on your dreams and that music can be enjoyed by all" (on the internet, see the American Library Association Schneider Family Book Award).

Another expression of appreciation for Pete's talent and his family was made by the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress, on 15–16 March 2007, when it presented the Seeger Concert and Symposium. Pete, Mike, and Peggy, and the memory of Charles and Ruth Crawford Seeger, were honored by friends, scholars, and musicians for "their impact on American music and cultural life." Pete celebrated his 88th birthday on 3 May 2007.

Pete and Toshi Seeger have provided the world with harmony, optimism, and songs for the lips, the eyes, and the heart, not just to be heard, and Smithsonian Folkways Recordings through the reissue of *American Favorite Ballads* has contributed greatly to the perpetuation of the beautiful life and beliefs that Pete has shared with the world.

THE SONGS

GUY LOGSDON AND JEFF PLACE

1. TRAIL TO MEXICO

Pete Seeger, vocal and banjo (Also known as "Following the Cow Trail"; traditional; Laws B13; from Folkways 5003, 1954)

This is a traditional song that tells of a wild, adventurous young man who leaves a loving young maiden to seek adventure and/or fortune; she promises to be true until he returns, but marries another while he is gone. There are a variety of occupations in which this happens; a young cowboy's experience was no different from that of many other young men. The version that John A. Lomax included in his first edition of *Cowboy Songs and Other Frontier Ballads* (1910) had fourteen verses, with each followed by "Who-o-a-who-o-a-who-o-a-who-o," apparently representative of a yodel; in 1938, he wrote that he had thirteen versions of the song—which indicates that it was popular among cowboys. Pete's version is much shorter, but some verses are similar to the Lomax verses. In *Folk-Songs of the South*, John Harrington Cox (1925) wrote that "Early in the Spring" was submitted by a man

from West Virginia, who related that it had been handed down in his family; Cox added that it had been "transformed into a cowboy song." Variants of it and its origin range from melancholy, to tragedy, and to humor.

J. Stinson hired the cowboy; Stinson was the cattleman who first drove cattle into Arizona Territory. With his name in the song it became a more believable story to many early day cowboys. It was first recorded under the title "Following the Cow Trail" by Carl T. Sprague on 5 August 1925. In the notes to *Frontier Ballads* (Folkways 5003, 1954) Moses Asch wrote that the cowboy who drove cattle up the cow trails "was a[t] least temporarily homeless, and saw little of women, a fact which 'invested home and womanhood with glamour and romance.'" See Brunnings 1981:318; Cox [1925] 1963:358–361; Larkin 1931:49–51; Lomax 1910:132–135; Lomax and Lomax [1938] 1986:52–56; Sandburg 1927: 285–286; and many more.

2. RED RIVER VALLEY

Pete Seeger, vocal and banjo (Traditional; from Folkways 2445, 1962)

This is one of the most popular and widely recorded cowboy songs and one of the most popular folksongs in the United States. It was known as “The Bright Mohawk Valley” in New York and “Sherman Valley,” or “Bright Sherman Valley” in some Southern mountain regions; it was printed in 1896 as “The Bright Mohawk Valley” with words and music credited to James J. Kerrigan. However, it is believed to have been sung as early as 1869 in Canada, for it does not refer to the Red River that separates Texas and Oklahoma, but rather to the Red River in Manitoba, Canada. Cowboys were quick to move the song to the region with which they were familiar.

The Montana cowboy poet D. J. O’Malley wrote a poem in the 1880s that was sung to “Red River Valley,” and there were reports that the song was known in Iowa long before the publication in 1896 in New York. The song apparently made its way southward into Texas. For a more detailed study of it, see Tinsley 1981:210–211.

The first issued recording of the song was “Sherman Valley,” by Bascom and Blackwell Lunsford, in 1925; the same year, the Texas cowboy singer Carl T. Sprague recorded it as “The Cowboy’s Love Song.” The first to record it under the “Red River Valley” title was the hillbilly duo of Hugh Cross and Riley Puckett,

in 1927. Between the first recording and 1936, more than thirty-five recordings were issued, and most carried the “Red River Valley” title. See Brunnings 1981:259; Guthrie and Houston (SFW 40103); Lomax and Lomax 1947:199, 218–219; Meade 2002:164–166; and many more.

3. OLD JOE CLARK

Pete Seeger, vocal and banjo (Also known as “Joe Clarke,” “Old Joe Clark,” “Round and Round,” and others; traditional; from Folkways 5003, 1954)

“Old Joe Clark” was and is a popular fiddle tune played for dances, fiddle competitions, entertainment, and other events and reasons. It is played as a fiddle instrumental, a light lyrical song, and as a ballad. The song has an interesting background: as a fiddle tune, it has age and popularity; as a ballad, it tells a story. It is played in various musical genres and on various musical instruments, and historically the lyrics have equal variation.

Pete wrote that it is “a classic banjo tune. . . . Joe Clark was an actual person, a veteran of the War of 1812” (Seeger 1961: 35)

There was a Joe Clark, for in Sextons Creek, Kentucky, there is a State Historical Marker (#1382) stating, “Old ‘Joe Clark’ Ballad, Mountain ballad, about 90 stanzas, sung during World War I and later wars by soldiers from eastern Kentucky” and according to Lisa Clark’s genealogical research, Joseph Clark was from Clay County, Kentucky, born there in 1839. He was

small in stature, a farmer, a man who married as a teenager, and an early Civil War volunteer, who was discharged early. Upon returning to Clay County, he continued to farm and lived in a log house built by family pioneers. His wife left him; he had other female friends and fathered children with some. He lived in an area where an old breakdown fiddle tune was popular; soon his friends were singing rhymes about him to that tune, and the fiddle tune became a ballad. Stories about his wild farmer’s life followed for many years—living with different women, becoming a moonshiner, and being killed by the “friend” of a woman with whom he had been living. Old Joe Clark became a folksong legend, with hundreds of stanzas added through the years; contemporary lyricists can easily add lyrics to the tune (Clark 2007).

An article “‘Old Joe Clark’—The Song and the Man” in *Sing Out!* (Fishwick 1960: 14–16) states that Joe Clark fathered two dozen children.

“Old Joe Clark” was first recorded by Fiddlin’ John Carson in late 1923 (Okeh 40038) as a fiddle/vocal song. By 1939, it had been recorded approximately twenty times under the title “Old Joe Clark.” With the other members of the Almanac Singers, Seeger adapted the melody to a new set of lyrics, “Round and Round Hitler’s Grave,” a patriotic song they sang on the radio during World War II. See Brunnings 1981:232; Clark 2007; Lomax and Lomax 1947:76, 86–87;

Meade 2002:517–518; Seeger 1961:35; and many more.

4. ST. JAMES INFIRMARY

Pete Seeger, vocal and banjo (Also known as “The Unfortunate Rake,” “St. James Hospital,” “Gambler’s Blues,” “Those Gambler’s Blues”; traditional; from Folkways 2445, 1962)

This song has been recorded by numerous musicians from many musical genres—folk, blues, pop, jazz, and others. Usually considered to be a distant relative of “The Unfortunate Rake,” it, according to Kenneth Goldstein, does not date earlier than 1910. First recorded in the 1920s as “The Gambler’s Blues,” it has similarities to “The Unfortunate Rake” only in the funeral-request verses. For an excellent study of the “Rake” cycle, see *The Unfortunate Rake: A Study in the Evolution of a Ballad* (Goldstein 1960).

As with most folksongs and other traditional songs, there is no standard text, and while the tunes are similar, there is no standard melody. A. L. Lloyd (1947) makes comparisons with similar folksongs, such as “The Unfortunate Rake,” “The Cowboy’s Lament (Streets of Laredo),” and others, and suggests that “The Unfortunate Rake” seems to be the background for “St. James Infirmary” and the other songs, and that it was being sung before 1850, possibly as early as the late 1700s. He and other authorities point out that there are St. James Infirmaries and similarly named hospitals in England and Ireland, thus placing the origin of

“St. James Infirmary” in those countries and not in the United States, as is often implied. See Blood-Patterson 1988:103; Brunnings 1981:270; and many others.

5. GREER COUNTY BACHELOR

Pete Seeger, vocal and banjo (Also known as “Starving to Death on My Government Claim” and “Lane County Bachelor”; traditional; sung to the tune of “The Irish Washerwoman,” from Folkways 5003, 1954)

Before and during the Civil War, many immigrants looking for work and a new home entered the United States. Some were from England and Scotland, but most came from Ireland. The Homestead Act, passed in 1862, was a method of expanding settlement into the Great Plains. According to Daniel J. Boorstin (1973), American farm families often lived lonely, isolated lives. With more settlement, farmers would have neighbors. The act provided one-hundred and sixty acres of land to anyone twenty-one years of age or older who paid a fee of eighteen dollars and agreed to live on the land for five years. The home could be a hole in the ground with a cover; many settlers made bricklike blocks out of dirt and built sod cabins. Some homes had dirt roofs, on which grass or other plants grew, and animals grazed on them. There was drastic weather, including blizzards, droughts, dust storms, and tornados—and as stated in the song, Frank Bolar was confronted with insects and other critters supplied by nature. It was a rough life, and some settlers did not survive.

Lane County, from which Frank Bolar fled, was and is in Kansas; it was formed in 1873. The song is “a popular poem” in the area, but it does not carry the negatives of the departure; instead, it says:

*I'll sing loud her praises and boast
of her fame,
While starving to death on my
government claim.*

John A. Lomax collected a version in Oklahoma while gathering cowboy songs. His informant was a cowboy and settler, Tom Hight, who had made a claim in Oklahoma Territory days. Starting in April 1889, land runs were held in Oklahoma Territory similar to requirements of the Homestead Act, except that a claim had to be staked with a marker. Lomax obtained his copy of the song from “Tom Hight’s scrapbook in Oklahoma City, 1909.” The starving claimholder became Tom Hight in the Lomax version, and there is a Greer County in Oklahoma. See Boorstin 1973:118; Brunnings 1981:116, 294; Lomax and Lomax 1938:407–408; Lomax and Lomax 1947:226–227, 238–239; Rydjord 1972:332–333.

6. OX DRIVER’S SONG

Pete Seeger, vocal and banjo (Also known as “Ox Driving Song—Pop My Whip”; traditional; from Folkways 5003, 1954)

This song expresses a working man’s attitude during the days when oxen were used for most

hauling. One of John A. Lomax’s contributors in 1939 said he believed that his father had known the song before he had gone to Texas in 1855. Lomax wrote, “This quietly bloodthirsty song . . . typifies the contrast between Northern and Southern folk music.” He believed that Northern folk music did not have the “dark brooding imagination” of some songs from the South. *Chorus* See Brunnings 1981:241; Lomax and Lomax 1941:233–234.

7. BUFFALO GALS

Pete Seeger, vocal and banjo (Traditional; from Folkways 2320, 1957)

This song, like many old-time dance tunes, had numerous titles, and the “gal” was from where the song was sung—“Alabama Gal,” “New York Gal,” “Buffalo Gal,” “Bowery Gal,” and many more. The identity was localized by the singer, and the song was popular nationwide. It also is known as “Dance by the Light of the Moon,” “Round Town Girls,” “Ain’-Ya Comin’ Out Tonight,” and during World War II “Dance with a Dolly with a Hole in Her Stocking” by the Andrew Sisters; but “Buffalo Gals” became the most commonly used title and has been published in many songbooks.

The song dates back to the 1840s in the United States, but may have been a traditional play-party song before then. John A. Lomax and Alan Lomax collected it as a play-party song titled “Louisiana Gals”; however, Pete wrote that it was a “folk descendant of a popular 19th-

century minstrel song.” The first recording seems to have been by Gid Tanner and Riley Puckett, who recorded it on 3 August 1924 as “Alabama Gal”; by 1940, more than thirty-five others had recorded it, under different titles. See Brunnings 1981:41; Guthrie and Houston (SFW 40103); Lomax and Lomax 1934:288–289; Lomax and Lomax 1947:82, 104–105; Meade 2002:754–755; Seeger 1961:34.

8. JOE BOWERS

Pete Seeger, vocal and banjo (Also known as “The Disappointment of Joe Bowers” and “When I Struck Muskoka”; traditional; Laws B14; from Folkways 5003, 1954)

The story in this humorous song may very well have happened. It is about a man who, during the gold rush of 1849, treks to California to find enough gold to satisfy his promised one back in Missouri, but after he leaves, she marries a red-haired butcher. This event was not limited to forty-niners, for it still happens—but not always involving a butcher, or a man with red hair.

The song was collected by John A. Lomax for his 1910 cowboy and frontier songbook; in the 1938 revised edition, he wrote that it was a popular song sung by Confederate soldiers during the Civil War. In her *Folk Songs of the Southern Appalachians*, Jean Ritchie tells about a relative who “in the late 1800’s, took a ramble through Arkansas, Missouri and Texas . . . learned several songs about gold rushes, cowboy life, etc., that have nothing to do with our own tradition.”

He brought back “Joe Bowers” to Kentucky; her narrative is a good example of how folksongs traveled. See Brunnings 1981:158; Laws 1964: 139–140; Lomax 1910:15–17; Lomax and Lomax 1938:375–377; Ritchie 1965:69; Seeger 1961:47.

9. TEXIAN BOYS

Pete Seeger, vocal, unaccompanied (Traditional; from Folkways 5003, 1954)

Pete sings this song the way cowboys sang—unaccompanied. He wrote that this song is “a Missouri version of one of America’s most famous songs. I’ve heard versions of it from the Atlantic to the Pacific. It must have followed the frontier west.” John A. Lomax in the 1938 revised *Cowboy Songs and Other Frontier Ballads* quoted his Texas informant telling him, “I learned this song in ’68 when the beef trail was between Texas and the Mississippi River. The old Acadian who taught it to me said he learned from his ‘pap,’ and his father told him it originated in the days of the Texas Republic.” It has “Louisiana girls” instead of “Missouri girls”; it is doubtful that it was composed in Texas. John A. Lomax and Alan Lomax in *Folk Song U. S. A.* (1947) included “The Texian Boys” as Version II of “When You Go A-Courtin’.” The song is an adaptation of a minstrel song from the 1840s. See Brunnings 1981:304; Lomax and Lomax 1938:338–342; Lomax and Lomax 1947:32–33, 44–45; Seeger 1964:30.

10. MY SWEETHEART IS A MULE IN THE MINES

Pete Seeger, vocal and banjo (Traditional; from Folkways 5003, 1954)

A few years after Pete recorded this song, he wrote that it was known all across the country and was “an elegant memorial to the old days.” Those days were the early days of the United States and the mining industry, when thousands of mules were used to haul equipment into and out of mines. Mules are stronger and smarter than horses, and miners often became fond of well-trained and reliable mules. The mining industry utilized much child labor, and boys were often the mule drivers and became attached to their animals. George Korson tells about the song, mules, and mining in *Minstrels of the Mine Patch: Songs and Stories of the Anthracite Industry* ([1938] 1964). See Brunnings 1981:214; Lomax 1960:123, 131; Seeger 1964:38.

11. JOHNNY GRAY

Pete Seeger, vocal and banjo (Also known as “Peter Gray,” “Ballad of Peter Gray,” and “Blow Ye Winds of Morning”; traditional; from Folkways 5003, 1954)

This comic song is one of many variants of “Blow Ye Winds”; in Pete’s version, Johnny Gray goes West after being denied the hand of Louisa in marriage and is killed by Indians, and Louisa mourns herself to death. Where Pete learned it is not stated in the liner notes, but John A. Lomax and Alan Lomax placed their version titled “Peter Gray” in the “Cowboy Song” section of *Our*

Singing Country (1941). No doubt being scalped by Indians makes it a cowboy song. Their version is similar to Pete’s; it was collected in 1939, and the informant said he had learned it from his father in Kansas approximately thirty years earlier. They indicated that it might have been popularized by stage presentations. See Brunnings 1981:246; Lomax and Lomax 1941:252–253.

12. COWBOY YODEL

Pete Seeger, yodel, unaccompanied (Traditional; from Folkways 5003, 1954)

Pete’s yodel is plaintive in sound. He does no vocal gymnastics as many yodelers do; they move their pitch from chest to head and back with rapid vocal movement and vocal breaks. It is a form of vocalization that has roots in the Swiss Alps, but is popular in many musical traditions. There is no evidence that cowboys yodeled in the Swiss style; if they did, they would probably have started a stampede. Early in his radio career, Gene Autry was billed as Oklahoma’s Yodeling Cowboy, but he was not a cowboy: he was a relief railroad telegrapher, influenced by Jimmie Rogers’s singing style; Hollywood, Gene, and early radio had much to do with creating the image of cowboys who yodeled.

13. SIOUX INDIANS

Pete Seeger, vocal and banjo (Traditional; Laws B11; from Folkways 5003, 1954)

As stated in the opening verse, the desire to roam across the mountains and deserts was a

motivating factor in the Western movement and settlement. The added desire to find a new home and possibly find wealth added fuel to the movement. The narrator of the trek and battle mentions no year or time, but since the destination was Oregon, it must have been during the Oregon Trail era, which started in the late 1830s. G. Malcolm Laws Jr. called it an old Mormon ballad, and Olive Woolley Burt collected it in Utah from an elderly Mormon man who believed it to be a true story. John A. Lomax and Alan Lomax included it in the 1938 edition of *Cowboy Songs and Other Frontier Ballads*; it is a much longer variant, with twelve verses sent to them by a student at Baylor University, in Waco, Texas. A ten-verse variant in B. A. Botkin’s *A Treasury of Western Folklore* was sung by an Oklahoman in 1951; the narrator says his group was hunting, fishing, and looking for gold. In each variant, the white travelers defeat the Indians. See Brunnings 1981:282; Botkin 1951: 743–744; Burt 1958:142–143; Laws 1964:17, 138; Lomax and Lomax 1938:344–346.

14. IDA RED

Pete Seeger, vocal and banjo (Traditional; from Folkways 2445, 1962)

The verses and versions are as widespread as the folks who play and/or sing this song, and most singers cast humor at an overweight woman named Ida Red. Vance Randolph wrote: “This is not really a song at all, say the serious ballad-

singers, but just ‘idlesome words’ set to an old fiddle-tune, still popular at backwoods hoedowns and kitchen-sweats” (1946–1950:3:197). In Galax, Virginia, in 1939, Pete with Alan Lomax collected the tune played by Wade Ward on the fiddle; Alan Lomax had collected it four years earlier, sung by Aunt Molly Jackson. These variants, with seven others collected by Lomax or sent to him from all across the continent, from Virginia to California, were entered into the Archive of American Folk Song by 1940. In the Woody Guthrie section of the Moses and Frances Asch Collection, Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage, Smithsonian Institution, Woody typed eighteen verses and the chorus, with many verses reflecting his support of migratory workers and his humor. The last verse—humor, deliberately bad grammar, and misspellings—is genuine Woody: “Ida Red. Got babptized. Her an’ th’ preacher got capcized”. In *American Ballads and Folk Songs*, John A. Lomax and Alan Lomax included a variant in which a black thief regrets his actions, for they will keep him from his Ida Red, but G. Malcolm Laws Jr. considered that variant to be of “doubtful currency in tradition.” Pete sings his own version. See Brunnings 1981:142; Guthrie and Houston (SFW 40101); Laws 1964:275; Alan Lomax 1941: 181; Lomax and Lomax 1934:110–111; Randolph 1946–1950:3:197.

15. HOLLER

Pete Seeger, vocal, unaccompanied (Traditional; from Folkways 5003, 1954)

There are differing definitions of *holler*; the word means ‘to shout, to cry out’, or denotes other ways to get attention, but musically it is a work-song in a style of African-American origin. Peter Bartis in *American Folklore: An Encyclopedia* defines it as “A brief melodic phrase characterized by highly stylized vocal techniques including yodel-like glottal snaps, falsetto, staccato, blues notes (in African-American tradition), and various other techniques employing a wide tonal compass” (Bartis 1996:372). The “holler” performed by Pete has the disparity of an early-day African-American worksong with the words “I wish to God I had never (Great God Almighty!) never been born.” See Bartis 1996:372–373; Brunnings 1981:130.

16. CUMBERLAND GAP

Pete Seeger, vocal and banjo (Traditional; from Folkways 5003, 1954)

The place that inspired the creation of this song was concisely described by Pete: “An historic location, where some of the first pioneers crossed the mountains, Cumberland Gap is at the southwestern tip of Virginia, bordering Kentucky and Tennessee.” It was in the lands of the Cherokee Indians, who had used it for foot traffic before its discovery by Dr. Thomas Walker in 1750; it became the Wilderness Road into Kentucky and early-day westward travel. “Cumberland Gap” is

a fiddle tune, recorded many times, and a song with numerous verses; the ones sung by Pete are the most common, but more are found in the works of John A. Lomax and Alan Lomax. See Brunnings 1981:66; Lomax and Lomax 1934: 274–276; Alan Lomax 1960:156–157; Meade 2002:773–774; Seeger 1961:67.

17. WAKE UP, JACOB

Pete Seeger, vocal (Also known as “Cowboy’s Gettin’-Up Holler” and “Morning Grub Holler”; traditional; from Folkways 5003, 1954)

This “holler” differs from the previous one, for the early-morning wakeup call is associated with the cowboy world, and is much shorter than a work-related holler. Trail-drives had a camp cook, whose responsibility was to wake the cowboys each morning and to fix their breakfast. Though there were wagon trains and other mass movements in and across the wilderness, it was in the cow camps where the cook became legendary. See Brunnings 1981:63, 329; A. Lomax 1960:353, 366; Lomax and Lomax 1934:375; Lomax and Lomax 1938:3.

18. SWEET BETSY FROM PIKE

Pete Seeger, vocal and banjo (Also known as “Betsy from Pike”; traditional; Laws B9; from Folkways 2323, 1961)

Sweet Betsy was from Pike County, Missouri, and Ike probably was too. Like thousands of others who in 1849 heard about gold in California, they headed west. Some variants say “two yoke of cattle,” while others say “oxen.” The “two yoke

of oxen” is closer to the original time of the song, for cattle were generally not used to pull wagons. The song tells of problems forty-niners and other Western travelers had; some of their recreational diversions created problems. After Sweet Betsy and Ike were married, jealousy ended their marriage.

The man who claimed authorship of “Sweet Betsy from Pike” was John A. Stone (a.k.a. “Old Put”), who wrote *Put’s Golden Songster* (1858:50–52); the song is sung to the traditional English ballad “Villikens and His Dinah.” In 1928, Carl Sandburg wrote that it was “droll and don’t-care, bleary and leering, as slippery and lackadaisical. . . . It was a good wagon song.” John A. Lomax and Alan Lomax in 1938 considered it “A California Immigrant Song of the Fifties.” It was recorded by the hobo singer Harry McClintock in 1928, by the Hollywood cowboy star Ken Maynard two years later, and by Burl Ives and many more singers, and there are thousands of citations for it on the internet. See Brunnings 1981:299; Ives 1953: 256–257; Laws 1964:137; A. Lomax 1960:327–228, 335–336; Lomax and Lomax 1934:424:26; Lomax and Lomax 1938:388–391; Meade 2002: 23–24; Sandburg 1927:107–109.

19. BUFFALO SKINNERS

Pete Seeger, vocal and guitar (Also known as “The Buffalo Range,” “The Range of the Buffalo,” “Boggy Creek,” and many more; traditional; Laws B10; from Folkways 5251, 1956; Smithsonian Folkways 40058, 1992)

In 1961, Pete wrote: “Woody Guthrie’s version of a classic cowboy ballad. One D minor chord throughout is usually best for accompaniment.” Pete’s version is not an exact rendition of Woody’s, who obtained his version from John A. Lomax and Alan Lomax’s *American Ballads* (1934) or their *Cowboy Ballads* (1938).

The song first appeared as a cowboy song under the title “Buffalo Range” in N. Howard “Jack” Thorp’s *Songs of the Cowboys* (1908) two years before John A. Lomax included it in *Cowboy Songs* (1910) under the title “Buffalo Skinners.” The Thorp version contains the words *buffalo hunters*, but the Lomax version makes no mention of buffalo hunters or buffalo skinners. Thorp did not include melody lines; very few melody lines were published in *Cowboy Songs*, but the melody, modified very little by Pete, Woody Guthrie, and others, was printed under the title “Range of the Buffalo.”

The song is in Carl Sandburg’s *The American Songbag* with the same basic melody, and he credits Lomax with his version. Margaret Larkin in *Singing Cowboy* wrote that she heard Carl Sandburg sing it: “He dropped his head over his guitar, peered out from behind his drooping wing of hair, and uttered ‘the range of the buffalo’ in deep sinister tones that conveyed and multiplied the perils of buffalo skinning.” Many versions have been printed under different titles, and the melody and basic theme, of dishonest owners or bosses and their fate, is found in songs of miners,

lumberjacks, railroad men, and other workers. See Brunnings 1981:41; Guthrie (SFW 40103); Laws 1964:75, 137–138; Larkin 1931:83–86; A. Lomax 1960:359–360; J. Lomax 1910:158–163; Lomax and Lomax 1934:390–392; Lomax and Lomax 1938:41–42; Lomax and Lomax 1947: 159–160, 174–175; Lomax, Guthrie, and Seeger 1967:100–101; Meade 2002:24; Sandburg 1927: 270–272; Seeger *Sing Out!* 6 (Summer 1956) 3:12–13; Seeger 1961:63; Thorp 1908:31–33.

20. WHISKEY, RYE WHISKEY

Pete Seeger, vocal and banjo (Also known as “Rye Whiskey,” “Jack o’ Diamonds,” “Clinch Mountain,” and others; traditional; from Folkways 5003, 1954)

Pete wrote that this song is a “famous late-at-night howler,” and, indeed, his vocalization portrays one who does cry for rye whiskey. He credits John A. Lomax for it. In *Cowboy Songs* (1910), Lomax had the “Jack O’ Diamonds” version. The lyrics differ greatly from Pete’s version; however, they are found with many more verses in the Lomax and Lomax *American Ballads* in the chapter titled “Cocaine and Whiskey” and under the title “Rye Whiskey.” In *Cowboy Ballads*, Lomax and Lomax have two versions and many, many interchangeable verses.

This song has been considered a cowboy song, for the trail-driving cowboys, dusty and dry after a long trail-drive, were known to imbibe rather freely. In their *Folk Song: U. S. A.*, Lomax and Lomax gave advice about how to sing the song: “The drunken refrain, tacked on as the

tail end of the tune, should sound like a combination of an Indian war-whoop, a panther scream, and a drunk just going into the d. t’s.” Workers in other strenuous occupations also had reputations for strong drink.

The most popular country-western versions were recorded by Tex Ritter starting in 1932; he recorded it many times for different labels, and many older fans associate the song with him. See Brunnings 1981:269; Lomax 1910:292–296; Lomax and Lomax 1934:170–173; Lomax and Lomax 1938:163–167; Lomax and Lomax 1947: 198–199, 218–219; Meade 2002:380–381.

21. STEWBALL

Pete Seeger, vocal and banjo (Also known as “Skewball,” “Molly and Tenbrooks,” “Stuball,” and others; Laws Q22; traditional; previously unissued; from archive reel FW-1348, 1964)

This is an American ballad from a British broadside, but in Britain the horse is Skewball, not Stewball. In *American Balladry*, G. Malcolm Laws Jr. tells us that “on the plains of Kildare,” Ireland, Skewball and a gray mare are to race. The favorite is the gray mare; during the race, Skewball tells his rider that he will beat the mare and win much money, and he does. He and his rider drink a victory toast. Laws has it in his “Humorous and Miscellaneous Ballads” chapter. Skewball was a famous racehorse, born in 1741 in England, but the race in this song took place in Ireland.

Pete sings verses from *American Ballads*, in

which Lomax and Lomax explain that in the United States slaves sang it “in the prisons of Louisiana, Texas, Mississippi, and Tennessee,” and it was “the most widely known of the chain-gang songs in the states we visited.” The voices heard singing the “unh-hunh” with Pete present the emotional sounds of a chain-gang worksong. The race is placed in different places, depending on where it is sung.

The popular folk-group Peter, Paul, and Mary recorded the song in 1963. It is now best known in bluegrass circles, owing to its adaptation by Bill Monroe as “Molly and Tenbrooks.” See Brunnings 1981:295; Guthrie (SFW 40103); Laws 1957:25, 283–284; Lomax and Lomax 1934:68–71; *Sing Out!* 11 (Summer 1961) 3:3.

22. WHOOPIE TI-YI-YO, GET

ALONG, LITTLE DOGIES

Pete Seeger, vocal and banjo (Also known as “Git Along, Little Dogies” and others; traditional; from Folkways 2003, 1950)

This is one of our best-known cowboy songs. It dates back to the early trail-drive days, and is a variant of the Irish ballad “The Old Man Rocking the Cradle.” The opening line, “As I walked out one morning . . .,” is the introduction to many English-Scottish-Irish ballads. The earliest mention of this cowboy variant is found in the 1893 journal of Owen Wister, author of the classic Western novel, *The Virginian*. Since Wyoming was the destination, it is presumed to

have been composed after 1870–1871, when Texans first herded cattle northward into Wyoming Territory. Some cowboys sang of Montana as the destination; others mentioned no final destination, and merely described the problems of rounding up and driving cattle.

There are many versions of this song. The first commercial recording of the standard version was made by Harry “Mac” McClintock on 1 March 1928. By 1939, eleven different artists had recorded it. In 1932, the playwright Lynn Riggs, who grew up on a ranch in Oklahoma, used it with other cowboy songs in the popular Broadway production *Green Grow the Lilacs*. See Brunnings 1981:345; Guthrie and Houston (SFW 40103); Larkin 1931:91–97; A. Lomax 1960: 356–358, 372–374; J. Lomax 1910:xxiii, 87–91; Lomax and Lomax 1934:385–389; Lomax and Lomax 1938:4–7; Meade 2002:399. For a thorough discussion of the history of this song, see White 1975:16–26.

23. STRAWBERRY ROAN

Pete Seeger, vocal and banjo (Words by Curley Fletcher; music by unknown; traditional; Laws B18; previously unissued; from Smithsonian acetate 530)

This is another cowboy song that has been sung by numerous individuals in and out of the cowboy world. Among working cowboys, it is a favorite, for it reminds cowboys of a horse that has thrown them. It has the humor they enjoy, for a bragging cowboy meets the horse that can

throw him. It was written by the cowboy poet Curley Fletcher, who grew up in Bishop, California, and became a cowboy and poet. He wrote it in 1914 under the title “The Outlaw Bronco,” and it was published in the *Globe*, Arizona, newspaper *Arizona Record* on 16 December 1915. In 1917, he included it in his small, privately printed collection, *Rhymes of the Roundup*, and again in 1931 in *Songs of the Sage*. 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.

The song was being sung by many people, and Fletcher was getting no credit or money, so he filed for copyright, which was denied because the song was already in oral tradition. He then collaborated with two Hollywood songwriters, Nat Vincent and Fred Howard, to publish it as sheet music (1931). When it came off the press, they had made changes and added a chorus; Pete sings the 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 motivated by his anger.

The song was first recorded by Paul Hamblin on 21 March 1930, and within two years at least seven more recordings (usually including the chorus) had been released on approximately twenty labels. Two movies were made using the song as their title and story. See Botkin 1951:757–58; Brunnings 1981:296;

Fletcher 1931:23–26; Houston (SFW 40059); Laws 1964:141; Logsdon 1989:86–96 [bawdy version]; White, 1975:137–147.

24. JAY GOULD’S DAUGHTER

(Also known as “Kassie Jones”; traditional; Laws I 25; from Folkways 2319, 1957)

G. Malcolm Laws Jr. wrote that this is “a confused railroad narrative related to the Negro versions of ‘Casey Jones’” (1964:276). Jay Gould (1836–1892) was an American financier, who became a railroad builder in the 1880s. Carl Sandburg noted that daughters of Jay Gould and Cornelius Vanderbilt, both railroad magnates, made it into the songs of railroad hobos and other railroad songs (1927:364). Gould fathered two daughters, Helen and Anna; which daughter wanted it fixed “so the bums can’t ride” is not indicated, but as far as hobos were concerned, the daughter was selfish, self-centered, and pious. Pete and Sandburg both credited John A. Lomax with collecting this song. See Brunnings 1981; *Classic Railroad Songs* (SFW 40192); Laws 1964:276; Sandburg 1927:364–365; Seeger 1964:34.

25. PLAY-PARTY

Pete Seeger, vocal and rhythm, unaccompanied (Traditional; from Folkways 5003, 1954)

A play-party was and is a game played without musical instruments—or, more accurately described, it is folk dancing without instrumentation. There were and are religious people who

did and do not believe in the use of musical instruments; the fiddle was the “devil’s instrument,” and dancing was a sin. Their need for relaxation and socialization created the play-party, in which swing games were played and chanting or singing lyrics with rhythmic stamping kept the game moving. There was no close contact between males and females; instead, swinging was by hand or elbow. The lyrics often implied what movements to make, and the constant movement did not allow a couple to stay together long during the game. B. A. Botkin made an excellent study of the play-party in *The American Play-Party Song* ([1937] 1963). Pete’s rendition is a perfect example of a play-party song. See Cunningham 1996:562–564.

26. I NEVER WILL MARRY

Pete Seeger, vocal and banjo (Also known as “The Damsel’s Lament,” “Down by the Sea-Shore,” “One Day as I Rambled,” and others; traditional; Laws K17; arranged by Texas Gladden; previously unissued; from archive reel 1348, recorded in 1964)

This was a British broadside titled “Down by the Sea-Shore.” In *The Bells of Rhymney and Other Songs and Stories from the Singing of Pete Seeger*, Pete wrote: “I look upon this song as a classic of some sort. A lonesome solo, or a warm community sing. The Carter Family recorded it . . . , but I think this version was by Mrs. Texas Gladden, ballad singer of Virginia” (1964:25). Earlier, he had written: “I wish I had more verses! You can string it out longer by

singing the chorus halfway through the 2nd verse, as well as at the end” (1961:29).

The Carter Family recorded the song in 1933. It has been reissued on many different labels, and Pete’s version is that of Texas Gladden. Alan Lomax learned his version in 1940 from a Carter Family recording. He wrote that the 18th-century “broadside ran to hard-to-sing stanzas” (1960:203), and the three centuries of movement had made it much easier to sing; in his credits, he quotes the broadside title as “The Sorrowful Ladie’s [sic] Complaint.” See Brunnings 1981:139; Laws 1957:148–149; A. Lomax 1960:203, 222; Meade 2002:7; Seeger 1961:29; Seeger 1964:25.

27. RIFLEMEN OF BENNINGTON

Pete Seeger, vocal and banjo (also known as “The Bennington Riflemen” and others; from Folkways 2445, 1962)

In *Sing Out!* in August 1950 (1(4):12), the following was written:

This is a real topical song. It concerns a small, colonial country invaded by the army of an imperial power. Most military experts didn't give the colonials much of a chance. In population and resources, they were far inferior to the invaders. But they did have one supreme advantage: They knew why they were fighting. . . . The words, of unknown origin, are set to a melody by the collector, Copyright, 1940 by John Allison.

Burl Ives used the title “The Riflemen’s Song at Bennington” and wrote that during the American Revolution, one of General Burgoyne’s detachments “was surrounded, killed, or captured by 800 ill-armed villagers who rallied in a driving rain.” The “villagers” were farmers and other working folks from Bennington, Vermont. See Brunnings 1981:261; Ives 1953, 101–103.

28. KINGDOM COMING

Pete Seeger, vocal and banjo (also known as “The Year of Jubilo,” “Jubilo,” and “Lincoln’s Gunboats”; from Folkways 5717, 1960)

The publisher of this song gave the first performance rights to Christy’s Minstrels, and it quickly became popular. Though it contains diction stereotypically associated with Southern blacks, it was sung by whites and blacks as the Civil War ended, and supposedly Federal soldiers of African-American heritage sang it as they victoriously entered Richmond in 1865. It was popular in the South as well as the North, and remained popular in the South after the Civil War ended.

It was composed in 1862 by Henry Clay Work, born in 1832 in Middletown, Connecticut, to parents who were abolitionists; his father was imprisoned for working with the Underground Railroad helping slaves escape to freedom. Work became a printer and self-taught musician. In addition to this song, he composed “Marching Through Georgia,” “My Grandfather’s Clock,” “Come Home, Father,” “The Ship That Never

Returned,” and many more. The “Jubilo” was synonymous with freedom.

The song was popular because of its humor, but it does not appear in many songbooks. Pete does not sing in the derogatory dialect in which it was written. See Brunnings 1981:166; Dolph 1942:353–355; Morse 1963:111–112; there are numerous internet entries under the title and composer.

29. CUMBERLAND MOUNTAIN

BEAR CHASE

Pete Seeger, vocal and banjo (Also known as “Bear Hunt” and “Bear Chase”; traditional; from Folkways 7611, 1955)

Pete first heard “The Cumberland Mountain Deer Race” on a record by the legendary banjo picker and singer Uncle Dave Macon. After singing it for a few years, he added the narrative and made it a song for young and old. In the third edition of his banjo instruction book, he wrote: “I once met in Los Angeles a woman who listened to the song and said, ‘Why, when I was a child in Czechoslovakia we used to sing that tune. But we had different words.’ How the tune ever got to Tennessee I couldn’t say, but obviously our songs, like our people, come from everywhere” (1962:33–34). Her comments inspired Pete to add the story. He included it on his *Birds, Beasts, Bugs and Fishes* children’s album (SFW CD 45039). See Brunnings 1981:66; Macon (FW RF51); Seeger 1962:33–35..

Lyrics for these songs can be found at the Smithsonian Folkways website, www.folkways.si.edu.

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