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# Pete Seeger

AMERICAN FAVORITE BALLADS



Smithsonian Folkways Recordings

# Pete Seeger

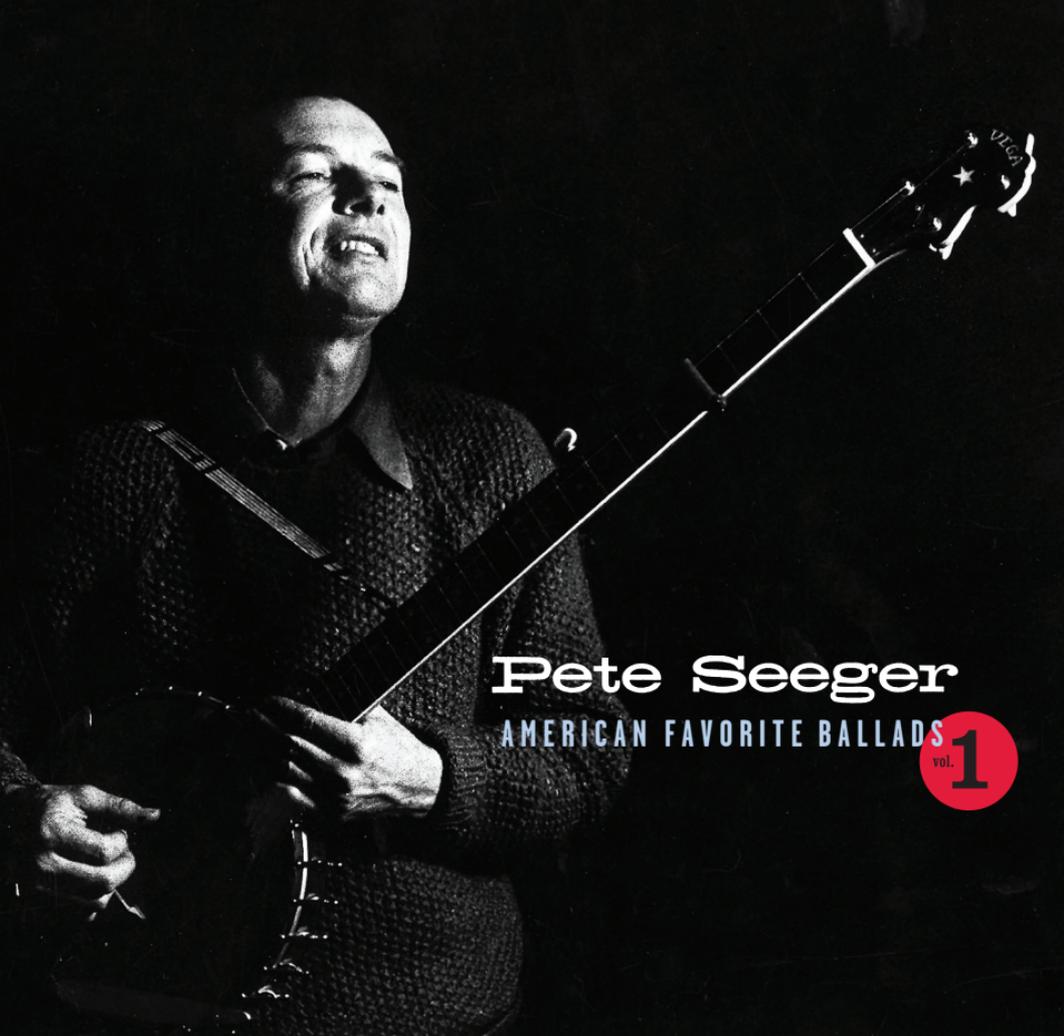
## AMERICAN FAVORITE BALLADS

Pete Seeger began singing, playing the banjo, and collecting folk music in the mid-1930s and has continued doing so into the 21st century. His life encompasses the social upheavals and transformations of much of the 20th century, while his peace anthems and songs of struggle and hope thread through our national soundtrack. They are as often sung by schoolchildren as by activists at peace and environmental rallies. Even in his late eighties, he inspires people across generations, cultures, and nations.

Moses Asch founded Folkways Records in 1948 to document folk music and other sounds from around the world. Considering these to be educational as well as entertaining, yet aware of their limited commercial appeal, he directed his sales towards libraries and schools. Pete Seeger's five-volume series *American Favorite Ballads* (recorded 1957–1962), comprised of classic songs from the American experience that adults and children could sing together, formed a cornerstone for Asch's primary audience. Pete Seeger recorded 38 albums for Folkways between 1950 and 1964.

The Smithsonian Institution acquired Folkways from the Asch estate in 1987; Asch's emphasis on the educational nature of Folkways recordings comported perfectly with the Institution's mandate, the "increase and diffusion of knowledge." The year 2008 marks the 60th anniversary of Folkways and the 20th anniversary of Smithsonian Folkways Recordings. We are pleased to honor Pete Seeger's life and legacy through this reissue, and continue our commitment to preserve and expand Asch's "encyclopedia of sound," thus keeping it available for current and future generations of listeners.





Pete Seeger

AMERICAN FAVORITE BALLADS

vol.

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vol.

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## PETE SEEGER AND FOLKWAYS RECORDS

JEFF PLACE

The 1950s and early 1960s were a prolific time of recording for Pete Seeger and Folkways Records. Seeger was to record and release 38 albums for Folkways between 1950 and 1964. One of the cornerstone series of albums among this vast collection of songs were his five-record *American Favorite Ballads* series (1957–1962), which presented the great American songs, the ones known by all children growing up in America during the 20th century. These were the songs sung in schools and around campfires, many having their roots in the mid and late 19th century. The series was accompanied by the publication of the sheet music for most of the songs by Oak Publications (now Music Sales Inc.) in 1961.

Issued during the height of the folk revival, these resources became essential for any student of folk song to learn from. As the 21st century begins, we have chosen to reissue all these songs in one series for current generations of folk-song enthusiasts. The reissue series is projected to include five recordings, which will have all of the *American Favorite Ballads* series along with selections from other like-minded Seeger Folkways projects of the time, like *Frontier Ballads* (1954) and *American Ballads* (1957).

## INTRODUCTION

GUY LOGSDON

Pete Seeger is probably the most modest musician to educate and entertain audiences around the world. When discussing this series, in retrospect, Pete stated that it was presumptuous to have called them "American Favorite," for musical tastes constantly change, and not all of the songs are ballads; a ballad tells a story, and Pete plays play-party songs and many other kinds of songs. If others are booked to perform during the same event, he insists that all names be listed alphabetically, which places his name down the line; he does not believe in being billed as the star. He has stated that particularly at festivals all performers should receive the same fee. Other beliefs and practices make Pete unique in the music-entertainment world, but no matter how unassuming and modest he may be, many of us around the world have been influenced by his dedication to the value of music in everyday life and believe that as long as we can sing, there is hope for the future and that Pete Seeger will be with us.

My respect and admiration for Pete started before I saw him in concert or met him. I grew up in a family of musicians, and when people came to our house, they came for music. Our father, a fiddler, always said he could play anything that had strings; he taught each of us to play an instrument. Music was our recreation and our life. Though we have extremely different personalities, music has kept us together as a family. I married a beautiful young girl from Okemah, Oklahoma, and when her family and friends learned about my love for traditional music, they introduced me to the writings of Woody Guthrie. Woody introduced me to Pete, for without Pete Seeger, Woody Guthrie's legacy would be limited. It was late 1956 or early 1957 when I heard and met Pete.

During the 1956–57 school year, I taught public school in Norwalk, California, a Los Angeles suburb.

We managed to save a few dollars to attend a Pete Seeger concert at the Wilshire Theater in Beverly Hills. I was fascinated by his charisma as soon as he walked onto the stage, and was amazed by his skill to get everyone to sing along with him only two minutes later. After the show, each person left happy and smiling. That Pete Seeger concert had a tremendous impact on this small-town Oklahoma boy, for I took a vow always to perform a few songs that the audience can sing with me during my own shows. Though I may not agree with Pete on all issues, I have respected him and his dedication to making music into a force that can influence people and make the world a better place for everyone.

I first subscribed to *Sing Out!* in 1957, and through the years have read Pete's "Appleseds" column, which for many years has included the statement: "Since 1954 Pete Seeger has used this column to spread ideas so that some of them can grow." That short philosophical line succinctly states Pete's life. Johnny Appleseed (Jonathan Chapman) was a historical figure admired by Pete, for if a few apple seeds could grow into massive productive trees to provide nourishment to millions, maybe a few songs and ideas could and can grow into social nourishment. A few years ago, Pete wrote an apologetic note about receiving so many recordings and songs that he could not listen to them all—he cannot listen to music and work at the same time.

Around 1957, I started corresponding with Pete and his lovely wife, Toshi. Here in 2002, I still have a mimeographed copy, dated 28 July 1956, of the thirteen-page directions about how to make a *Trinidad Steel Drum by Pete Seeger*. In my backyard I still have a 55-gallon steel barrel that I have owned and moved for years, thinking that someday I would cut the top of the barrel, build a fire, heat the metal, and hammer out the correct notes. I treasure the instructions from Pete far more than I do learning to play the steel drum, and I treasure the directions titled *How to Make a Chalil*. I sent twenty-five cents for those instructions. Pete Seeger taught me that music is for all people everywhere, if we just learn to sing together.

One morning during the Woody Guthrie Folk Festival, 2000, in Okemah, Oklahoma, Pete and I were visiting when he said with sincere concern, "Families don't sing together like they used to." At a gathering in Washington, D.C., in late 2001, Pete once again stated his philosophy: there must be a musical reunion of peoples. If we just learn to hear and respect each other's music and sing together, it will unite us as a human race.

Pete was born Peter R. Seeger, third son of Charles L. Seeger and Constance de Clyver Edson Seeger, on 3 May 1919 in New York City. Charles was a Harvard graduate and musicologist whose

family roots were deep in New England and puritan history and culture; Constance was a concert violinist who had been reared in Europe and New York City, where she studied and taught at what is now known as the Juilliard School of Music. Pete's Uncle Alan was a well-known poet, who went to Paris in 1912; as World War I started, he joined the French Foreign Legion and was killed in battle on 4 July 1916. His poem "I Have a Rendezvous with Death" (*Poems by Alan Seeger*, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1916) remains one of the greatest poems of that era. Pete grew up surrounded by music and creativity, with a strong element of New England individuality, social activism, and responsibility.

Following a rather unorthodox lifestyle for an important New York family, Charles moved to Berkeley, California, where at the age of twenty-five he served as the head of the music department at the university and taught the first course in musicology ever offered in the nation. He also became a political activist. A few years later, the family returned to New York. By 1927, Pete's parents had decided to divorce. Charles started a new family with musician and writer Ruth Crawford, and Mike Seeger and Peggy Seeger were born during that marriage.

Pete attended private school in Connecticut. At the age of sixteen, with his father, he attended a k festival held in Asheville, North Carolina, and was introduced to traditional music. He recalled in later years that his father had taught him the importance of "preserving folksongs" when he showed Pete the book *English Folk Songs from the Southern Appalachians* by Cecil Sharp; Pete slowly came to believe that the only way to preserve songs was through recordings, not the printed word on paper or in books. He entered Harvard on a scholarship as a journalism major. His two years at Harvard were not enjoyable, though attending meetings of left-wing student organizations reinforced his growing interest in political activism, so he left in the spring of 1938. Along the way, he had learned to play the ukulele and the four-string banjo that he played in a jazz band, and he learned to lead others in singing along with him. After leaving Harvard, he traveled around New England selling or trading paintings, for at that time he wanted to be an artist. He made a little money by performing for schools, and during this time he met Toshi Ohta, who would later become his wife.

From 1935 to 1938, Charles worked as a musical adviser for the Resettlement Administration; from 1938 to 1941 he was deputy director of the Works Progress Administration Federal Music Project. Through his friendship with John A. Lomax, an editor in the Federal Writers Project and since 1933 the honorary curator of the Archive of American Folk Song in the Library of Congress,

Charles helped Pete in 1939 get a job working in the archive for Alan Lomax, John's son, and the first hired staff member in the archive. Alan and his father had given the archive approximately two thousand songs, and Alan had been paid to field-record more. (For more about the Lomaxes, see Nolan Porterfield, *Last Cavalier: The Life and Times of John A. Lomax 1867-1948*, University of Illinois Press, 1996.) Pete accompanied Alan on field trips, and always gives him credit as being his mentor during those days (Pete would learn many of his songs from the collections published by the Lomaxes), when the five-string banjo became his favored instrument.

Through Alan's influence, Pete became interested in and acquainted with Lead Belly and the music of Aunt Molly Jackson, the militant labor movement advocate; however it was in New York City on 3 March 1940 when Pete and the modern folk-music movement gained their greatest inspiration and stimulus. A "Grapes of Wrath Concert" to raise money for migrant workers was held then, and it was there that Pete met Woody Guthrie. Woody was the hit of the evening, and Alan took him to Washington, where the now legendary Library of Congress recordings were made. Pete and Woody soon took a trip to see Woody's family in Texas. It was during that trip, while staying at the home of Bob and Ina Wood, local communist organizers in Oklahoma City, and performing for different labor groups, when Woody wrote the words to "Union Maid," sung to the tune of "Redwing." Pete has sung the song numerous times through the years, and has stated that Woody and that trip showed him that there was a world west of New England.

Back in New York City, Pete, Sis Cunningham, Lee Hays, Millard Lampell, Josh White, Woody, and others organized as the Almanac Singers, and Pete's first commercial-recording experience came in March 1941, when the Almanac Singers recorded *Songs for John Doe* for Keynote Records (102), a collection of songs opposed to intervention in the war in Europe. Shortly after the album was released, Hitler invaded Russia, breaking his pact with Stalin. The Almanac Singers were soon composing, singing, and recording anti-fascist songs and songs supporting the war against Hitler (see *That's Why We're Marching: World War II and the American Folk Song Movement*, Smithsonian Folkways SF 40021). In May 1941, Pete, Lee Hays, Pete Hawes, Bess Lomax, and Millard Lampell (The Almanac Singers) recorded *Talking Union and Other Union Songs* (Keynote 106; reissued in 1955 with additions and revisions as Folkways 5285). For General Records in July 1941, Pete (using the name Pete Bowers), Woody, Pete Hawes, Lee Hays, and Millard Lampell recorded an excellent collection of traditional songs, *Deep Sea Chanties and Whaling Ballads* (G-20) and *Sod Buster*

*Ballads* (G21). In February 1942, with America engaged in World War II, the Almanacs recorded *Dear Mr. President* (Keynote III) and gained national respect and popularity for "Reuben James" and anti-Hitler songs. In June 1942, Pete received his draft notice. Before leaving for the army, he joined Tom Glazer, Baldwin Hawes, and Bess Lomax Hawes to record *Songs of the Lincoln Brigade* (Asch Records 330, re-issued as *Songs of the Civil War, Vol. 1*, Folkways 5436); it was Pete's first recording session with Moses Asch. (For information about Asch, see the notes in *Woody Guthrie: The Asch Recordings, Vol. 1-4*, Smithsonian Folkways SFW 40112; and Peter D. Goldsmith, *Making People's Music: Moe Asch and Folkways Records*, Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1998.) Traveling around the country performing with the Almanac Singers, Pete occasionally had conflicts with the other members, for he was not interested in tobacco and alcohol.

In Greenwich Village, on 20 July 1943, following his basic training as a mechanic, Pete married Toshi. Pete was so financially strapped that Toshi paid for the marriage license and had to borrow a wedding ring. After being transferred to a variety of camps, he was shipped to the Pacific, where he entertained the troops; in later years, when asked what he did during the war, his answer would be, "I strummed my banjo." He collected songs from the troops, and produced typed letters, such as: "REPORT FROM THE MARIANAS - Number 11 / September 16, 1945 / Notes of an innocent bystander / Several friends have written and asked me what kind of soldier songs I have run into in the Army," which continues with eleven pages of lyrics, musical notations, and commentary.

Discharged in 1945, Pete returned to active duty as a performer in the folksong movement. In New York City on 30 December 1945, twenty-five singers and songwriters met and organized People's Songs, Inc., which served as a songwriters' union, to "create, promote, and distribute songs of labor and the American people." It was soon publishing *People's Songs*, with Pete serving as editor; the organization and Pete quickly became a target of FBI investigations. After attaining a membership of about 3,000 branches, the organization faced a major lack of funds and had to dissolve; the last issue of *People's Songs* was volume 4, number 1 (February 1949).

A nucleus from the old group reorganized as People's Artists, and in May 1950 published volume 1, number 1 of *Sing Out!* The first song printed was "Hold the Line," with words by Lee Hays, who had written it as a tribute to those who had stood against the anti-communist "fascists" and the Ku Klux Klan, which had perpetrated violence at a concert sponsored by People's Artists in September 1949 in Peekskill, New York. The Cold War was escalating; thousands of anti-communists gathered

to stop the concert, and thousands lined up to protect the rights of the performers and others. The ensuing riot led to numerous injuries; rocks thrown by the Klan and anti-communists injured Pete, Toshi, and one of their children. Pete kept one of the rocks and built it into the face of his fireplace as a reminder. The music was composed by the Weavers, the folk-singing group organized in 1948 by Pete, including Lee Hays, Ronnie Gilbert, and Fred Hellerman.

Their first year of performing was disappointing, so they decided to try a nightclub engagement. Toshi became their manager and worked an engagement for them at the Village Vanguard in late December 1949, a nightclub that often featured folksingers; they were well received, so their performances were extended into early 1950. Gordon Jenkins, the musical director of Decca Records, heard them and eventually talked them into becoming a commercial act. Their first Decca release was in May 1950, and they soon became popular nationwide; however, the red scare and the rise of McCarthyism dampened their success. By early 1952, their appearances were being canceled, and Harvey Matusow, who later admitted to lying about them, gave the House Un-American Activities Committee false testimony about the Weavers' communist ties. The Weavers disbanded.

In 1947, Moe Asch reorganized his recording business and created a new label, Folkways Records. In 1950, Pete recorded a series of songs for Folkways, *Darling Corey* (FC 2003; reissued on Smithsonian Folkways SF 40018), and it enjoyed moderate success. There were 45-RPM and extended-play issues of Pete's songs as the long-play records grew in popularity. In 1953, Pete recorded eleven songs issued as *American Folksongs for Children* (Folkways 7601; reissued on Smithsonian Folkways SFW 45056). He was busy in 1954 with *Pete Seeger Sampler* (Folkways FA 2043), *Goofing-Off Suite* (Folkways FA 2045; reissued on Smithsonian Folkways SF 40018), *Frontier Ballads, Vol. I & II* (Folkways FA 2175 & FA 2176), *Birds, Beasts, Bugs and Little Fishes* (Folkways FC 7610; reissued on Smithsonian Folkways SF 45039), and *How to Play the Five String Banjo* (Folkways FI 8203). Many other sessions and releases of albums on which songs made popular by Pete appeared during the period leading into the recording of *American Favorite Ballads*.

The anti-communist movement spread in many directions, and the entertainment industry was attacked from every direction. Pete was of particular concern, for he was honest about his beliefs and used music as his voice. He was ranked high on the blacklist. During a Weavers' show at the Vanguard in 1950, Pete and the others became met Harold Leventhal, who became their manager and friend. Harold had worked for the Irving Berlin Music Company and had much experience in

managing and promoting musicians. He brought new life to the Weavers when he booked their now famous reunion concert at Carnegie Hall, New York City, on 24 December 1955. Their future looked brighter, but the blacklist was still there.

Pete was called to appear before the House Un-American Activities Committee on 18 August 1955. Unlike numerous others, he did not invoke his Fifth-Amendment right to remain silent. Instead, he refused to answer questions that he believed the committee had no right to ask. He stated: "I feel that in my whole life I have never done anything of any conspiratorial nature and I resent very much and very deeply the implication of being called before this Committee that in some way because my opinions may be different from yours...that I am any less of an American than anybody else. I love my country very deeply." He was found guilty of contempt of Congress and sentenced to a year in jail and a fine of \$10,000. He successfully appealed this sentence, but the blacklist kept the Weavers and Pete from getting radio playtime and television appearances. The blacklist did open up college concerts, however, for students wanted to know why he was blacklisted, and many were fans of his Folkways recordings.

Moses Asch knew that there was limited demand for folk music in the purest commercial terms; competing with big-band music, pop singers, and the growing country-western industries was not feasible. He directed his sales toward libraries and schools, for the music he recorded and issued was an extension of the nation's history, literature, and culture. For many years, he exhibited and promoted his recordings at the American Library Association's annual conference, other librarian meetings, and educator's conventions. Pete's series of *American Favorite Ballads* was perfect for his primary consumers, and most of the songs in this collection were selected from its first volume (Folkways FA 2320), issued in 1957. The story of Pete Seeger's life and career will be continued in volumes to follow.

Pete used some of the following tunes in his instruction book *How to Play the 5-string Banjo*, 3rd ed. (Beacon, NY: Pete Seeger, 1962); however, we have not included the citations in these annotations.

## THE SONGS

## 1. JOHN HENRY

Pete Seeger, vocal and banjo (Also known as "I'm Gonna Die with a Hammer in My Hand," "John Henry Blues," "Steel Driving Man," "Death of John Henry"; Laws 11; from *Folkways* 2319, 1957)

"John Henry" is often the lead song in collections or listings of African American songs and/or work songs, and the stories and legends of John Henry are as varied as the locales and the recorded variants. There are easily more than 180 variants in the Ralph Rinzler Folklife Archives and Collections at the Smithsonian, and the Library of Congress Archive of Folk Culture has an extensive collection. The legend of John Henry came from the Big Bend Mountain, Summers County, West Virginia, where John Henry, a powerful steel-driver using a 10-pound hammer, worked at tunneling a mile and a half through the mountain for the Chesapeake & Ohio Railroad. Legend says he drove steel drills through the shale faster than the steam drill, but died from exhaustion. His death is assumed to be poetic license used by the

ballad writer. His story continues to pay tribute to hard-working laborers long after 1872, when the boring of the tunnel was completed. He was an African American man who probably had been a slave and possibly died in a rock slide during the boring. A statue near the east end of the tunnel commemorates his feat (see Jeffery M. Miller, *The Laborer*, 27 February 1973, 9-14). Fiddlin' John Carson recorded "John Henry Blues" in March 1924, and by 1941 at least twenty commercial recordings had been released. Pete's verses came from the artist Thomas Hart Benton; however, the last verse is credited to Alan Lomax. See Seeger and Reiser 1985:32-34; Laws 1964:246; Lomax and Lomax 1934:3-10; Lomax and Lomax 1947: 246-248, 258-263; Lomax 1960: 551-553, 560-564; Brunnings 1981:158.

## 2. SHENANDOAH

Pete Seeger, vocal and banjo (Also known as "The Rolling River," "The Wide Missouri"; from *Folkways* 2321, 1958)

Much speculation about the origin and meaning

of "Shenandoah" has been written, and it has been associated with numerous regions in the early development of the United States. Its origin is in a sea or sailor chantey from the days of sailing vessels, and it apparently became popular as a capstan chantey, sung when sailors moved in unison pushing capstan bars around to raise the anchor. It gained popularity up and down the waterways of mid-America and among mountain men and trappers who never worked on or with boats. Since the nation was young, there were few "native" American sea songs; "Shenandoah" stands out as one of the most enduring and popular of them.

The melody in each version remains relatively constant, but there are numerous lyric variants, with many not even mentioning "Shenandoah." It was being sung by the early 1840s, but the earliest documented reference to it is in an 1882 article (Alden 1882:386). Many decades later, William M. Doerflinger wrote that the song's maiden was the daughter of Skenandoah, an Oneida chieftain (1951). However, through the years the locale and players have been rationalized by tradition. Many have considered it a song about the Shenandoah River, in Virginia, which in turn takes its name from the Indian chief. But in reality the song is a Midwestern riverboat shanty. Stan Hugill (1966) gives seven lyric variants ranging from sailor to African-American with equally diverse titles, but sung to the same melody. Alan Lomax states that "the primitive

work chant...comes into life wherever men have to do hard labor with nothing but their bare hands and their co-operative spirit to help them...*Shenandoah*, the most beautiful of all sea songs in English" (1960:37), came from that tradition. An unusual topic in some variants is interracial miscegenation, the marriage of an Englishman with an American Indian.

Pete's version has a subdued banjo background that makes his singing sound almost unaccompanied, the way it was probably first sung. See Brunnings 1981:278; Laws 1964:278; Lomax and Lomax 1947:128-129, 138-139.

3. THE BLUE-TAIL FLY  
(JIMMIE CRACK CORN)

Pete Seeger, vocal and 12-string guitar (Words and music by Daniel Decatur Emmett; Laws 119; from *Folkways* 2320, 1957)

It has been written that before Abraham Lincoln gave his speech at Gettysburg, he asked for this song to be sung, and in *American Favorite Ballads* (1961) Pete wrote "I was on a CBS radio show when Alan Lomax first taught this song to Burl Ives, who made it practically his theme song. Alan got it from a collection by Dorothy Scarborough, *On the Trail of Negro Folk-songs*. It is a folk variant of a popular composed minstrel song of the 1840s. You change it some more." It is usually credited to Dan Emmett (see track 1, "Old Dan Tucker"), but according to James J. Fuld (2000), there is no evidence that Emmett composed it: he merely arranged it. In Hans Nathan's *Dan*

*Emmett and the Rise of Early Negro Minstrelsy* (1962:429–431), the melody of “De Blue Tail Fly” differs from that of the traditional song, and some of the words differ, but time and rationalization could have changed the words.

According to Fuld, the song was published on 20 January 1846 under the title “Jim Crack Corn,” or “The Blue Tail Fly,” by F. D. Benteen. No matter who wrote it, it became popular as a blackface minstrel song. Fuld also makes the correction that it did not first appear in the 1844 *Ethiopian Glee Book* (as has been reported), for volume one of the *Ethiopian Glee Book* was not published until 1847; it did appear in the 1848 edition. See Seeger 1961:12; Laws 1964:256; Brunings 1981:32; Fuld 2000:312.

#### 4. BLACK GIRL

Pete Seeger, vocal and 12-string guitar (Also known as “In the Pines,” “Little Girl,” “Where Did You Sleep Last Night?”; arranged by Huddie Ledbetter, from Folkways 2321, 1958)

Lead Belly’s influence is heard in Pete’s 12-string guitar work as well as in the vocal that makes his interpretation of the song a “moaning blues.” The song has been widespread among black and white singers for more than a century, but its origin has not been documented. Cecil J. Sharp included it in *English Folk Songs from the Southern Appalachians* (1932), as collected from Miss Lizzie Abner of Kentucky in 1917; however, it has been included in more recorded collections than printed field collections. In notes for *Folk*

*Songs from the Blue Grass: Earl Taylor and His Stoney Mountain Boys* (United Artists UAL 3049), Alan Lomax refers to Sharp’s variant as an example that, if not of African American origin, “shows the strong influence” of African American style on Southern white tradition. The song is now frequently performed by bluegrass musicians. It has been sung and/or recorded by a diversity of musicians, including Lead Belly, Josh White, Cisco Houston, Bill Monroe, Rod Stewart and John Baldry, and even the rock group Nirvana. See Brunings 1981:29, 149.

#### 5. SKIP TO MY LOU

Pete Seeger, vocal and banjo (From Folkways 2320, 1957)

This is an early frontier play-party song, popular where dancing was a sin. The fiddle, other musical instruments, and the dance caller were forbidden, so young people sang and clapped their hands to create the desired rhythm. The play-party had no age limits; young and old alike and together had musical fun and frolic. It retained popularity among children for many generations. John A. and Alan Lomax (1947) related the story of a young East Texas woman called to the front of her church by the minister to repent for dancing. When asked if she was sorry for her sin, she replied, “Yes, I’m sorry that I joined a Christian church that has such stupid rules.” She left the church and community approval and died a bitter old maid. It has been reported that more than a

century ago, the word *lou*, meaning “sweetheart,” came from the Scottish term, *loo*, meaning “love.” Pete’s banjo accompaniment would not have been acceptable at a frontier play-party. This song has been included in numerous printed collections of Anglo and African American songs and recordings. See Brunings 1981:284; Lomax and Lomax 1947:79–80, 98–99.

#### 6. THE BIG ROCK CANDY

##### MOUNTAIN

Pete Seeger, vocal and banjo (From Folkways 2320, 1957)

Harry “Haywire Mac” McClintock is generally credited with writing this song. John A. and Alan Lomax (1947) give no writer credit; George Milburn in *The Hobo’s Hornbook* gives no credit for either of the variants he collected; and a sheet music variant published by the Calumet Music Company in Chicago in 1935 with a photo of Smiley Burnette on the cover gives no writer credit. Apparently Burnette sang it over WLS Radio in Chicago during the early 1930s, but did not record it. McClintock recorded it in 1928 in Hollywood, California, for Victor Records (Vi 21704), and the following year Stuart Hamblen recorded a variant, “The Big Rock Candy Mountains No. 2.” The song was a hit for Burl Ives in the early 1950s (*Ballads & Folk Songs, Vol. III*, Decca DL 5093), and it is the opening song on the award-winning soundtrack of the movie *O Brother Where Art Thou?* However, Guthrie T. Meade in his “Discography of Traditional Songs and Tunes on

Hillbilly Records” credits Marshall P. Locke with writing the words and music with Charles Tyner in 1906. No evidence has been discovered to discredit McClintock.

McClintock was born in Knoxville, Tennessee, on 8 October 1882; little is known about his childhood other than that he learned to play the guitar and to sing when young. Apparently as a child he developed a passion for church singing and the railroad, and at the age of fourteen he left home for good. He worked as a merchant seaman and a soldier and became a singing hobo. He joined the IWW and sang the popular protest music of the time, before settling in San Francisco in 1925 and becoming a radio singer, performing mostly cowboy songs. He married and worked as a brakeman for a railroad. He died in 1957.

Pete’s version of the song is similar to the Lomax and Lomax lyrics and those collected by Milburn as variant II. The song is related to the songs “The Dying Hobo” and “Little Stream of Whiskey.” For numerous references, see Brunings 1981:28; Lomax 1960: 410–411, 422–423; Lomax and Lomax 1947:252–253, 278–281; Milburn 1930: 61–62, 86–89; Seeger 1961:66.

#### 7. CLEMENTINE

Pete Seeger, vocal and banjo (Also known as “Darling Clementine,” “My Darling Clementine,” “Oh, My Darling Clementine,” words and music by Percy Montrose, from Folkways 2322, 1959)

In 1863, lyrics similar to “Clementine” were published as sheet music under the title “Down the

River Lived a Maiden" (Oliver Ditson & Co., Boston) with H. S. Thompson credited for "Song and Chorus," but in 1884 the melody and lyrics were published by the same company under the title "Oh, My Darling Clementine," with Percy Montrose credited with words and music. The following year, a variant was published as "Clementine" by Willis Woodward & Co., New York, with credit given to Barker Bradford. Even though reference is made to "miner, forty-niner," no lyrics remotely similar appear in songsters related to the California gold rush. It became identified as a western song in 1946, when John Ford's film about Wyatt Earp and the Tombstone shootout, starring Henry Fonda as Earp, hit the screens, and the song was constantly played as the theme music.

The song was recorded by Floyd Thompson & His Hometowners in 1928 in Indianapolis, Indiana, for Vocalion Records (Vo 5242) and six years later by Bradley Kincaid for Decca (De W4271). It is strange that only two commercial recordings prior to 1941 have been documented, but the song was being sung for decades by people of all ages. Many variants, including bawdy lyrics, have been sung, and the song has been included in numerous popular collections. Folklorists have not listed it in field collections—which makes it one of the songs Pete considers an American favorite without being classified as a folk song. See Brunnings 1981:54; Seeger 1961:27; Fuld 2000:174–175.

#### 8. YANKEE DOODLE

Pete Seeger, vocal and banjo (From *Folkways* 2320, 1957)

Much has been written about this song; in fact, it is the official state song of Connecticut, and since Pete's roots are deeply embedded in New England and "Yankee" was, and still often is, used in reference to New Englanders, it is an appropriate song for Pete to sing as an American favorite. The most thorough study of the song (Murray 1999), shows that British soldiers used the "foundation song" before the American Revolution to insult Americans, who were less dressed and trained than the British troops. They may have started this practice during the French and Indian War. They sang it in many locations to show their contempt for the colonists, and it appeared as sheet music in England and was even used in an American comic show before being adopted by Revolutionary forces. Variants quickly became widespread. American Tories used it to make fun of George Washington, but it spread as a patriotic song supporting Americans and the Revolution.

A few of the lyrics often sung today are credited to Edward Bangs, who served at the battle of Lexington. During the Civil War there was a Confederate variant. Early in the 20th century, a quotation from "Yankee Doodle" appeared in George M. Cohan's Broadway song "The Yankee Doodle Boy" (1904), which James Cagney sang in the biopic *Yankee Doodle Dandy* (1942). Into the 21st century, it has been used to promote items and events from athletic and community activi-

ties to coffeeshops. Often considered America's song, it continues to be known and sung by people of all ages; however, before 1941, there were not many recorded versions. A recently printed version as "funny poetry for children" gives readers the opportunity to fill in blank spaces, thus creating a modern-day variant. For additional information, see Brunnings 1981:352; Fuld 2000: 659–660; Seeger 1961:71.

#### 9. HOME ON THE RANGE

Pete Seeger, vocal and 12-string guitar (Words by Brewster Higley, music by Daniel E. Kelley; from *Folkways* 2320, 1957)

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

Music publishers hired an attorney, Samuel Moanfeldt, to trace the song's heritage. He terminated the search in Kansas, where he found the poem had been published as early as 1873 in the newspaper *Smith County Pioneer*. Further research revealed that the words had been written by Dr. Brewster Higley and set to music by Daniel E. Kelley, both early Kansas settlers. Nevertheless, John A. Lomax went to his grave believing that the song had been sung earlier than 1873. In 1947, Kansas named it the official state song, and it is still widely sung as a cowboy song. For additional references, see Brunnings 1981:130; John A. Lomax 1945:1–8; Lomax & Lomax [1938] 1986:424–428; Mecham 1949: 313–339; Seeger 1961:26.

#### 10. JOHN BROWN'S BODY

Pete Seeger, vocal and 12-string guitar (Includes a verse from "Battle Hymn of the Republic" by Julia Ward Howe; music from *Folkways* 2322, 1959)

The Civil War years inspired many patriotic songs, and this song has inspired the creation and singing of numerous variants and parodies. It is traditionally associated with John Brown, the abolitionist who in 1859 led a raid on the federal armory at Harper's Ferry and was subsequently executed, and with Julia Ward Howe's "Battle Hymn of the Republic." Pete's version includes verses from both variants. However, the John Brown in the original version was a soldier stationed at Fort Warren, Massachusetts, where recruits using the melody of

the late 1850s Methodist hymn "Say, Brothers, Will You Meet Us?" sang lyrics making fun of their sergeant. The hymn is generally credited to William Steffe, though each printing of the hymn seemed to list a different composer. It was those soldiers who in 1861 improvised verses and reportedly enjoyed knowing that the public believed them to be about the anti-slavery martyr; soon other regiments were singing "John Brown's Body," and broadsides were being published with each claiming a different writer. It became a Northern song against slavery.

One story often told is that President Abraham Lincoln and poet Julia Ward Howe (1819–1910) heard the soldiers sing "John Brown's Body." Lincoln was so moved that he asked Howe to write lyrics to the tune. There are other stories explaining her inspiration, but no matter what its source, on 19 November 1861 in the Willard Hotel, Washington, D.C., she did write the words that became known as "The Battle Hymn of the Republic." They were published in the February 1862 issue of *The Atlantic Monthly* and in newspapers. See especially Brunnings 1981:158, 357; Fuld 2000:131–135; Seeger 1961:62; Silber 1960.

#### 11. GOODNIGHT, IRENE

Pete Seeger, vocal and 12-string guitar (Also known as "Irene," "Irene, Goodnight"; words and music by Huddie Ledbetter, adapted by John Lomax Sr., from Folkways 2322, 1959)

Lead Belly had a profound influence on Pete, other singers of traditional songs, and the entire

folk-music scene, and this is without doubt the best known song that he shared with the public. It was his theme song. He called it "Irene" and usually opened and closed his shows with it. It is the lead song on *Lead Belly: Where Did You Sleep Last Night?* (Smithsonian Folkways SF 40044), and the version by The Weavers and the Gordon Jenkins Orchestra issued in mid-1950 (Decca 27077) became a number-one hit, selling more than two million copies worldwide. It has been sung in many different languages.

Little is known about the origin of the song. When very young, Lead Belly learned it from an uncle and was singing it by 1909 (Wolfe and Lornell 1992). It may have origins in minstrel show music. An "Irene, Good Night," by Gussie L. Davis (1863–1899) published in 1887 with some melodic similarity, was sung as a minstrel song (Fuld 2000), and lyrics published in the *Journal of American Folklore* as early as 1909 resemble some that Lead Belly sang, indicating that "Irene" may have been a traditional song. No matter: it became a Lead Belly song.

Since it was John A. Lomax who discovered Lead Belly, it is appropriate to cite his information about "Irene." It is the final item in *Negro Folk Songs as Sung by Lead Belly* (1936: 235–242). While in prison, Lead Belly created and added verses, almost making a ballad out of it: "a sweet, sentimental song from the nine-

teenth century to tell a realistic, salty story of Negro married life." In *American Favorite Ballads*, Pete wrote, "He always said Irene was a real person and he knew her—a girl just sixteen years old, who met a rambler and a gambler." Lead Belly died in December 1949 without enjoying the popularity and financial benefits that came after The Weavers' hit recording. See Brunnings 1981:150; Fuld 2000:305–306; A. Lomax 1960:580–581; Seeger 1961:48; Wolfe and Lornell 1992:52–56.

#### 12. SWING LOW, SWEET CHARIOT

Pete Seeger, vocal and banjo (Words and music by Wallace and Minerva Willis, 1872; from Folkways 2322, 1959)

Some Choctaw Indians were slaveholders in the South, and in the 1820s and '30s, when they were forcibly removed into Indian Territory, they took their slaves and resumed cotton farming in the Red River region of what is now southern Oklahoma. Britt Willis, a white man who married a Choctaw woman and was a citizen of the Choctaw Nation, operated a large cotton farm and had many slaves. The federal government with the aid of missionaries was dedicated to teaching the Indians to read, write, and become agriculturalists. In 1842, the Choctaw Council authorized the establishment of a boarding school for boys, Spencer Academy, in the southern area of their nation. They engaged the assistance of the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions to find administrative leadership for the school. The sec-

ond superintendent sent by the Presbyterians was the Rev. Alexander Reid, a graduate of Princeton Theological Seminary, who arrived in July 1849 and remained until the Civil War started in 1861.

Britt Willis lent two slaves to work at the school; they were known as Uncle Wallace and Aunt Minerva Willis, and they sang songs that Uncle Wallace had composed as he worked. Rev. Reid and his sons were impressed and influenced by their singing. When Fisk University was established in Nashville, Tennessee, as the first black school in the postwar south, the Jubilee Singers were organized to raise money for the school, and in 1871 they were performing in Newark, New Jersey. Alexander Reid and his family, then back at Princeton, went to hear them, and Reid decided that Uncle Wallace and Aunt Minerva were better than the Jubilee Singers. An appointment was made to teach the Jubilee Singers some Indian Territory songs a few days later in Brooklyn. Reid taught them songs he had learned from Uncle Wallace and Aunt Minerva Willis: "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot," "Steal Away to Jesus," "I'm a Rolling, I'm a Rolling," and three others. In 1883, Reid went to great expense and trouble to have photographs made of Uncle Wallace and Aunt Minerva to hang at Fisk University, where this writer saw them in 1979.

Shortly after the photographs were made, Uncle Wallace died; both he and his wife are buried in a burial ground for black freedmen

near Old Boggy Depot in Oklahoma. Alexander Reid's letter outlining his involvement was published in *The Presbyterian* on 10 September 1890, and a portion of it appears in Thoburn and Wright (1929:2:826–827). The slave-song collection gathered by Allen, Ware, and Garrison (1867) does not contain any of the songs Reid taught the Jubilee Singers. "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot" first appeared in print in Seward (1872:6). See Brunnings 1981:300; Fuld 2000: 546; Seeger 1961:61.

### 13. OH, SUSANNA

Pete Seeger, vocal and banjo (Words and music by Stephen Collins Foster; from Folkways 2321, 1958)

When recording this song, Pete thought it was "probably Stephen Foster's greatest song, a ditty children will always love" (1961); since the banjo is the musical instrument most often identified with Pete, he may have enjoyed singing it because of the lyrics "with a banjo on my knee." It is among the first of Foster's songs to become popular and one of the earliest songs to mention the banjo. In the 20th century, it was widely recorded as a popular song, with at least thirty recordings before 1942, starting with Riley Puckett and his banjo in 1924 (Columbia 15014-D).

Stephen Collins Foster was born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, in 1826 and died at the age of thirty-seven in New York City, in 1864. He gave America more than 200 songs, some of which live today. Others profited, but he died in poverty.

Gilbert Chase wrote that he "succeeded remarkably well in producing the kind of songs that irritated the pundits while delighting millions of people throughout the world" (1987). About 1846, he moved to Cincinnati to work as a bookkeeper for an older brother, and there he wrote "Oh, Susanna." His family had Southern roots, but he visited the South only once. Fascinated by minstrel entertainment, he wrote many songs portraying blacks and slave life. Often they were adopted by blackface minstrel singers and later criticized for romanticizing the South and slavery; however, he was not socially or politically motivated: he merely wanted to be the best possible songwriter he could be, and his legacy of songs like "O, Susanna," "Camptown Races," "Hard Times," and "My Old Kentucky Home" shows he succeeded. See Austin 1987; Brunnings 1981:229; Chase 1987:248–265; and Seeger 1961:46.

### 14. WAYFARING STRANGER

Pete Seeger, vocal (Also known as "The Wayfaring Pilgrim," "I'm a Poor Wayfaring Stranger," "Over Jordan," "Poor Wayfaring Stranger"; traditional shape-note hymn; from Folkways 5003, 1954)

Little has been written about this song, which apparently had its origin in the traditions of shape-note hymnals, singing, and singing schools. Since musical instruments were scarce in early American life, the concept of geometrically shaped musical notes representing relative pitches instead of round notes representing definite pitches was introduced in New England in the late

1700s, primarily for church singing. It soon spread to the Southern states as a teaching method that encouraged singing in harmony, and eventually traveled as far west as Indian Territory (now Oklahoma). Singing conventions and organizations grew from the movement, and numerous songs traveled as the tradition moved into new regions. "Wayfaring Stranger" seems to have been one of those songs; considered a "white spiritual," sung by whites and blacks, it was printed in many shape-note hymnals. Early in his singing career, Burl Ives became identified with the song and became known as the "The Wayfaring Stranger." The shape-note tradition remains alive in fundamental denominations and numerous sacred harp-singing conventions. See Brunnings 1981:332; Lomax and Lomax 1947: 330–31, 346–47; Seeger 1961:15.

### 15. OH, MARY, DON'T YOU WEEP

Pete Seeger, vocal and banjo (Also known as "Mary, Don't You Weep"; from Folkways 2320, 1957)

This African American spiritual has been popular among young people for decades, particularly in late night and campfire singings, and a few choral arrangements of it have been published; however, though it is believed to predate the Civil War, information about it is limited. One woman from Columbia, Tennessee, recalled that it had been sung in her area for many years (White 1965:59). Lead Belly also sang it (Smithsonian Folkways SF 40068/71, 1994, disc

2); he may have been Pete's source for the song. Some of the lines are from the Book of Exodus, with slaves identified with the children of Israel and slaveholders with Pharaoh and his army. See Blood-Patterson 1988; Brunnings 1981:228; Hille 1956; Seeger 1961:78.

### 16. DOWN IN THE VALLEY

Pete Seeger, vocal and banjo (Also known as "Birmingham Jail," "Little Willie," "Bird in a Cage"; from Folkways 2320, 1957)

This is another of the campfire songs sung by people of all ages for decades, for it has been printed in church camp songbooks and numerous popular songbooks from coast to coast. It was recorded, but not issued, as early as September 1927 by Marion Underwood for Gennett Records. The first issued recording was under the title "Birmingham Jail," by Darby & Tarlton in March 1928 (Columbia 15212-D). By 1940, at least twenty-three commercial recordings, representing a wide variety of musical styles, had been issued.

It is a song that came out of the English, Irish, and Scottish courting-song traditions; however, while it grew into popularity in the Southern mountain region, its lonesome tone made it easily adaptable to any of various circumstances in which the singer might be placed. The melody may have come from "The Happy Home Waltz," published in the 1850s, but the composer may have obtained inspiration from the traditional song. It is a song that seems destined to be popular as long as people sing togeth-

er. See Brunnings 1981:78; Fuld 2000:201-02; Laws 1964:277; Lomax and Lomax 1947:38-39, 62-63; Seeger 1961:33.

#### 17. THE WABASH CANNON BALL

Pete Seeger, vocal and banjo (From *Folkways* 2320, 1957)

In *American Favorite Ballads*, Pete wrote that this is a hobo song and the "words, half of which must be incomprehensible to most people, have a wild rush of imagery," and, indeed, the lyrics sung by Pete are in the railroad and hobo language, with the final verse metaphorically implying that death is victory. The Wabash Railroad was a company that came from the financial efforts of Jay P. Gould, but there was no train called the "Cannonball." It is possible that hobos using the term may have nicknamed a specific train or may have used it for any fast train, but George Milburn in *The Hobo's Hornbook* stated that to the hobo "it is a mythical train that runs everywhere." The song was published in 1905, with William Kent credited with writing the words and music; however, it was based on the song "Great Rock Island Route!" by J. A. Roof, published in 1885. It became popular among hobos, Southern mountain singers, and country musicians.

It was recorded but unissued in March 1928 in Richmond, Indiana, by an unknown duo, Clark and Edans, for Gennett Records. The following year, Hugh Cross recorded it for Columbia Records (15439-D) in Atlanta, Georgia. A month after the Cross recording was issued, the Carter Family

recorded it for Victor Records, also in Atlanta; their version was released in November 1932, with A. P. Carter listed as the writer of the words and music. Carter also claimed to have written other traditional songs (Malone 1985). The Carter Family helped spread its popularity, but it became widely associated with Roy Acuff. Acuff and His Crazy Tennesseans recorded it for Vocalion Records in 1936, but it was not released until 1939. Acuff stated that he had learned it as a young boy in Tennessee; it could almost be considered his theme song, for he sang it when performing on "Grand Ole Opry," broadcast by WSM Radio, in Nashville. See Brunnings 1981:328; Milburn 1930:188-191; Seeger 1961:85.

#### 18. ON TOP OF OLD SMOKY

Pete Seeger, vocal and banjo (Laws, "Ballad Like Pieces"; from *Folkways* 2320, 1957)

When The Weavers recorded this song, Pete lined it out as a preacher or songleader would in frontier days, or in the more traditional fundamental religion style. Their rendition (Decca 27515) became one of their biggest hits in 1951, when it became the number-two song for many weeks on the *Billboard* charts. Sheet music was published by Moe Asch and Folkways Music Publishers with the statement "New words and music arrangement by Pete Seeger." In *American Favorite Ballads* (1961), Pete provided two versions and wrote: "The first version given here shows how some songs can be adapted slightly for

group singing.... I learned it from someone in the Smoky Mountains. Certain verses go back to Elizabethan times." Cecil J. Sharp (1932) included it under the title "The Wagoner's Lad."

It is identified with the wagoners or freight haulers of the frontier before railroads started shipping most of the freight. To young, farm boys, the freighter's lifestyle had an appeal—seeing new places, money, limited responsibilities, and an undisciplined life that included women. This is a song probably from the Smoky Mountains, where Clingman's Dome is considered to be the "top" of the range. It warns young girls of the perils of falling in love with a wagoner or a traveling man, a man who will love you and then leave you. Many women still identify with and love to sing this song. It was first recorded by George Reneau, "The Blind Musician of the Smoky Mountains," for Vocalion (Vo 15366) in 1925. See Brunnings 1981:236; Lomax 1960:201-201; Lomax and Lomax 1947:38-39, 60-61; Seeger 1961:60-61.

#### 19. FRANKIE AND JOHNNY

Pete Seeger, vocal and guitar (Also known as "Frankie," "Frankie and Albert," "Frankie Baker," "Little Frankie," "Frankie's Gambler Man"; Laws 13; from *Folkways* 2320, 1957)

This is another of the songs that appears in numerous field collections and popular songbooks throughout the 20th century, and one that will continue to generate controversy and speculation about its origin. Sigmund Spaeth (1927: 34-39)

cited a twenty-seven verse variant and stated that anyone who knows the song will have a different variant and opinion. Vance Randolph (1948:125-136) cited six variants and stated that claims dating it back to 1840 or 1850 had not been supported with evidence. Even though the melody and basic song may have been sung for decades, the locale and events in the popular variant song are often traced to St. Louis, Missouri, on 15 October 1899.

An eighteen-year-old African American named Al Britt lived with a woman named Frankie Baker. She claimed that he had threatened her with a knife and that she had shot him in self-defense; he died four days after the shooting. The song tells that her motive in shooting him was jealousy. James J. Fuld (2000) found no evidence to support any of the aforementioned stories or claims. He cites the publication of the song under the title "Frankie and Johnny" in 1912, with words and music credited to Leighton and Leighton and Tell Taylor. The first recording was by Ernest Baker in 1924 for Columbia Records (168-D). During the next fifteen years, there were at least twenty additional commercial records under different titles.

Any of numerous events could have caused the shooting, and similar shootings today can easily be inserted into the song. The actual inspiration for the lyrics may never be known, but it will have no impact on the fact that this song was and is sung by singers of all races, wherever the blues are sung.

See Seeger 1961:64–65; Laws 1964:247; Brunnings 1981:100; Fuld 2000: 233–235; Oliver 1969.

## 20. I RIDE AN OLD PAINT

Pete Seeger, vocal and 12-string guitar (From *Folkways* 2320, 1957)

Pete recorded one version of this with Woody Guthrie, 7 July 1941, for General Recordings (released on *Sod Buster Ballads*, General Album G-21); Woody is credited with writing a verse that starts with, “I’ve worked in your town, I’ve worked on your farm,” but Pete does not sing it in this variant. Woody wanted it to sound more like a worker’s song than a lyrical cowboy song, and he learned it from Alan Lomax, who had learned it from Margaret Larkin. Pete’s interpretation is basically Larkin’s. Larkin was a writer-poet who grew up on a New Mexico ranch. In New York City in the 1920s, she was singing folksongs including those she had collected from a North Carolina textile worker, Ella Mae Wiggins, and she provided cowboy songs for the Broadway play *Green Grow the Lilacs* and authored one of the best cowboy songbooks, *Singing Cowboy* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1931). The song has been a popular cowboy song since the early 1930s. For additional information, see *Cowboy Songs on Folkways* (Smithsonian Folkways SF 40043). It was first recorded as “Riding Old Paint, Leading Old Bald” by Stuart Hamblin, 3 March 1934, in Los Angeles, California (Decca 5145). See Brunnings 1981:139; Seeger 1961:25.

## 21. THE WRECK OF THE OLD 97

Pete Seeger, vocal and banjo (Words and music by Henry Whitter, Charles W. Noell, and Fred J. Lewey; from *Folkways* 2320, 1957)

In the early days of the recording industry, the record company, the composer of the song, and the publisher made most of the money; the performer, as a rule, made the advance they paid him or her, and usually not much more. As with many public-domain songs that are given a new life and generate large amounts of revenue, individuals who claim to be the composer emerge from all walks of life. Such is the case of “The Wreck of Old 97.” In December 1923, hillbilly music pioneer Henry Whitter recorded his version of “The Wreck of the Southern Old 97.” His recording was soon followed by the North Carolina blind singer Ernest Thompson’s recording of a slightly different version for Columbia, and in May 1924, Vernon Dalhart recorded Whitter’s version for Edison. Vernon Dalhart was a stage name of Marion Try Slaughter, a Texan who became a popular and light opera singer in New York and eventually recorded under at least 110 names. The Edison recording sold well enough for Dalhart to persuade Victor to record it as the flip side of “The Prisoner’s Song.” This recording was the first hillbilly or country music recording to sell more than one million copies. Dalhart also recorded it for more than ten different labels, so the claims for composing or owning the rights to it started. Sheet music claiming Henry Whitter, Charles W. Noell,

and Fred J. Lewey was published, but litigation soon pitted RCA Victor against David Graves George, who claimed to be the composer. Victor prevailed, and in January 1940, the U.S. Supreme Court denied a rehearing of the case. A study by Norm Cohen concludes that the song is a parody of Henry Clay Work’s 1865 song “The Ship That Never Return’d” (1981:197–226).

The tragedy was obscured by the song and the litigation, for, indeed, Number 97 was wrecked. It was a mail train that ran between Washington and Atlanta on the Southern Railway in the early 1900s. When the engineer, Joseph A. “Steve” Broady, took the controls on Sunday, 27 September 1903, in Monroe, Virginia, the train was one hour behind schedule. In an attempt to make up the time, combined with a lack of knowledge about the track, Broady literally flew the train off the tracks, killing himself and eight others—perfect material for a tragedy ballad. See Brunnings 1981:352.

## 22. WAGONER’S LAD

Pete Seeger, vocal and banjo (Also known as “My Horses Ain’t Hungry,” “Drunken Hiccups,” “Lovin’ Nancy,” “Fare You Well, Polly”; from *Folkways* 2320, 1957)

This is a singing cousin to “On Top of Old Smoky,” and it possibly came from a British broadside; however, the “wagoner” is the same Conestoga wagon lad who hauled freight and worked on the frontier seeking fortune and fun, and lyrics, including entire verses, are interchangeable with its cousin

and with many other songs from that era. To some singers, it is simply a frontier love song. Pete’s version reflects a male playing on the heartstrings of the girl, stating he is too poor for her and her parents, and she responds that she is not interested in wealth, only his love. The last verse is an “Old Smoky” verse that warns, “Don’t trust him.”

It was recorded for Victor in 1926 by Kelly Harrell (V 20103), and later by such folk and Southern country musicians as Vernon Dalhart, Sarah Ogan Gunning, and others. Buell Kazee recorded it as “Loving Nancy” in 1928 for Brunswick (Br 213B; available on *Anthology of American Folk Music*, Smithsonian Folkways Recordings 40090, 1997, track 7). With some lyrics different from those recorded by Pete, it became a mildly popular song during the folksong revival of the 1960s and ’70s, when Joan Baez, the Kingston Trio, Peggy Seeger, and others recorded and performed it. See Brunnings 1981:329.

## 23. OLD DAN TUCKER

Pete Seeger, vocal and banjo (Words and music by Daniel Decatur Emmett, from *Folkways* 2320, 1957)

This song has a long and varied history. It has survived as a fiddle and/or banjo instrumental and a song sung in a wide variety of settings, with lyrics from bawdry to sentimentality, and it has been a popular dance tune, usually at play-parties and for contra dancing. Benjamin A. Botkin wrote that play-party dancing developed from a “need for vigorous recreation”—recreation that was controlled by reli-

gious fervor and purity. Instrumental music was banned by some religions, and the fiddle as the basic instrument for dancing was the “devil’s instrument.” Dancing was, and still is in some denominations, a sin, equal to adultery. The play-party afforded revelers an opportunity to sing a song unaccompanied, to hold hands, to “elbow swing” (“waist-swinging” was the ultimate dance sin), and to have a good time. (For more information about play-parties and dancing, see Botkin [1937] 1963.

“Old Dan Tucker” has the musical simplicity to be adapted easily for dance calls, jingles, and harmless games. It was written by Daniel D. Emmett in approximately 1831, but first published by C. H. Keith in Boston in 1843; Emmett also wrote “Dixie” and “The Blue-Tailed Fly” (see track 3). The popular theater of the early 19th century evolved around white imitation and humorous interpretation of black song and dance, usually exaggerated and stereotyped. Dan Emmett was the master writer, imitator, and entertainer of his times. He was born in Mount Vernon, Ohio, in 1815, and died there in 1904. He was one of the originators of the “Negro Minstrel” troupe, in 1842–1843 (Nathan 1962).

The first documented recording was on 12 March 1925 in St. Louis, Missouri, by Judge Sturdy and His Orchestra (Victor-20102); it was a dance disc, with Sturdy as the caller, backed up by two fiddles and a guitar. Variants have been recorded by hundreds and maybe thousands of

professional and amateur musicians, and numerous variants can be found in printed form. Pete’s version is close to the traditional lyrics as collected by John A. and Alan Lomax, but many of Emmett’s original lyrics were stereotypically 19th-century racist in content. See Brunnings 1981:231; Laws 1964:278; Lomax and Lomax 1934:258–262; Lomax and Lomax 1947:77–78, 92–93.

#### 24. I’VE BEEN WORKING ON THE RAILROAD

Pete Seeger, vocal and 12-string guitar (Also known as “Someone’s in the Kitchen with Dinah”; “Dinah,” “Levee Song,” “Workin’ on the Line,” “The Eyes of Texas”; from *Folkways* 2445, 1962)

This is another song found in numerous songbooks and one that young people in the last century who experienced any form of camp life sang. They were probably singing it even before having a camp experience. It was so widely sung that the common answer to the question “When did you learn it?” would be, “I don’t know; I’ve known it all of my life—it’s a song that’s part of my life.” It gained widespread popularity in the early 20th century, and tradition has identified it as a railroad song; however, there is no evidence that it was a railroader’s song. For unknown reasons it was adopted by college students.

Though some have written that black railroad workers adapted it from a slave-period levee song, there is no evidence to support such claims (Cohen 1981:537–542). It first appeared in 1894 in print in the college songbook *Carmina Princetonia*,

under the title “Levee Song” (Fuld 2000). In 1903, John Lang Sinclair adapted the words for a student minstrel show at the University of Texas, and “the eyes of Texas are upon you” became another traditional song in Texas; however, non-Texans, as heard in Pete’s variant, continue to sing the 1894 lyrics with the addition, as a tag to end the song, of lyrics from another song, “Someone’s in the Kitchen with Dinah.” See Brunnings 1981:53; Fuld 2000:309, 513–514.

#### 25. CIELITO LINDO

Pete Seeger, vocal and banjo (Words and music by Quirino Mendoza y Cortez; from *Folkways* 2320, 1957)

This is a song of admiration that may date to Mexico in the 1830s; however, Quirino Mendoza y Cortez was credited as the composer by a copyright granted to him in Mexico in 1929. As with copyright of traditional songs in the United States, Mendoza probably arranged it before publication. Pete wrote in *American Favorite Ballads*: “No one has yet been able to make a singable English translation which is worth printing on the same page as this gem. It’s worth learning Spanish just for this one song. It was probably composed in the 19th century, when Italian opera had a great influence on Mexican popular song.”

A literal translation of “Cielito Lindo” is “Lovely Little Heaven,” and the words go: “Only on Sundays I see your face when you go to mass in the morning; Ay, ay, ay...ay! I wish every day of the week, Cielito Lindo, were Sunday” (Toor

1947:427–428). The song was printed, untranslated, in numerous songbooks throughout the 20th century. See Brunnings 1981:54; Fuld 2000:172; Seeger 1961:23.

#### 26. SO LONG, IT’S BEEN GOOD TO KNOW YOU (DUSTY OLD DUST)

Pete Seeger, vocal and banjo (Words and music by Woody Guthrie, music adaptation of “Billy the Kid”; from *Folkways* 2320, 1957)

Woody Guthrie wrote his well-known Dust Bowl version under the title “Dusty Old Dust” on 1 April 1940 during one of his early trips to New York City, and his first recording of the song, a few weeks later for RCA Victor, carried the same title. As the song became better known, Woody changed the title to “So Long, It’s Been Good to Know You.” Through the 1940s, he wrote at least four different versions, two of which were war songs.

He typed many different manuscripts of the song, of which six are in the Asch-Folkways Archives. He composed the tune for the chorus, but for the verses adapted the melody of “Billy the Kid,” a song that he and many others believed to be a folksong; however, it was composed by the Rev. Andrew Jenkins on 20 January 1927 and recorded for two different labels by Vernon Dalhart a few weeks later. Professional singers and folklorists have assumed the ballad to be traditional, and through the song transmission process, indeed, it has become so. Woody had no problem in adapting that melody or any other melody. See Brunnings 1981:286; Seeger

1961:92–93; Seeger and Reiser 1985:155–157.

### 27. AMERICA THE BEAUTIFUL

Pete Seeger, vocal and guitar (Words by Katherine Lee Bates, music by Samuel Augustus Ward; from *Folkways* 2323, 1961)

Standing before 10,000 young people, a songleader probably would get greater vocal response from “This Land Is Your Land” than from this song; however, following the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks, “America the Beautiful” has been sung at many public gatherings and may well be the nation’s favorite song. It is easier to sing than the national anthem, but then most songs are easier to sing. Pete introduces it with whistling, showing his musical versatility, followed by a genuine musical expression of love for his country.

The poet Katharine Lee Bates was inspired to write the poem “America the Beautiful” as she viewed the region surrounding Pike’s Peak, Colorado, when she visited the famous site in 1893. The music was adapted from Samuel Augustus Ward’s “Materna.” See Brunnings 1981:9; Sherr 2001.

### 28. THIS LAND IS YOUR LAND

Pete Seeger, vocal and banjo (Words and music by Woody Guthrie, 1940; previously unreleased; from Smithsonian Asch reel 1349, recorded 29 September 1958)

Much has been written and speculated about why Woody Guthrie wrote this song. Indeed, he grew tired of hearing “God Bless America” almost everywhere he went, and he believed that the words were not inclusive for all. If instead of

Kate Smith Mother Maybelle Carter had been heard singing it all across America, Woody may have reacted differently, and there may not have been “This Land Is Your Land.” Woody did not like Smith’s singing style or the establishment that she represented. He loved the grassroots and laborers of the United States and the musical styles that came from them, and during his formative years the Carter Family represented the people and life he loved; they had a tremendous influence on Woody’s musical style.

For the melody of Woody’s song (originally titled “God Blessed America for Me”), he adapted “When the World’s on Fire,” a gospel tune that the Carter Family used and his lyrics stressed that God made this land “for you” and “for me”—leaving no one out. Pete, by continually singing this song and talking about Woody in his shows, made it a favorite during the folksong revival, and the informal national anthem. See Brunnings 1981:310; Seeger 1993:142–146; Seeger 1961:30; Seeger and Reiser 1985:160–162; *Woody Guthrie: Asch Recordings vol. 1* (Smithsonian Folkways SF 40100)

*For a complete listing of Pete Seeger’s recordings in the Smithsonian Folkways Collection go to [www.folkways.si.edu](http://www.folkways.si.edu). For lyrics to the songs on this CD go to: [www.folkways.si.edu/catalog/40150lyrics.htm](http://www.folkways.si.edu/catalog/40150lyrics.htm)*

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## ABOUT THE COMPILERS

JEFF PLACE

**Jeff Place** has been the archivist for the Ralph Rinzler Folklife Archives and Collections at the Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage since coming from the Library of Congress American Folklife Center in 1988. He has overseen the cataloging of the center's collections. He has a master's in library science from the University of Maryland and specializes in sound archives. He is currently on the Preservation and Technology Committee for the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences and the advisory board for the Woody Guthrie Archives. He has been involved in the compilation of 20 CDs for Smithsonian Folkways, including Woody Guthrie's *Long Ways to Travel: The Unreleased Folkways Masters*, which won him the 1994 Brenda McCallum Prize from the American Folklore Society; the Asch Recordings of Woody Guthrie; and the Lead Belly Legacy Series. He has been nominated for four Grammy Awards and 10 Indie Awards, winning two Grammys and five Indies. He was one of the producers and writers of the acclaimed 1997 edition of the *Anthology of American Folk Music* and *The Best of Broadside, 1962–1988* (2000). He has overseen the recording of a number of regional folk festivals in addition to the Smithsonian Folklife Festival (1988–present). In addition, he was a member of the curatorial team for the current traveling Woody Guthrie exhibition, *This Land Is Your Land*. He has been a collector of traditional music for more than 30 years. A native of Palo Alto, CA, he lives in Mayo, MD, with his wife, Barrie and son, Lee.

## ABOUT THE COMPILERS

DR. GUY LOGSDON

Born and reared in Ada, Oklahoma, **Dr. Guy Logsdon** is a Smithsonian Institution Research Associate, and in 1990–1991 was a Smithsonian Institution Senior Post-Doctoral Fellow, compiling a biblio-discography of the songs of Woody Guthrie. He received a two-year grant, 1993–1995, from the National Endowment for the Humanities to complete the Woody Guthrie project. Logsdon has written numerous articles about Woody Guthrie, cowboy songs, and poetry, and has authored the highly acclaimed, award-winning book *"The Whorehouse Bells Were Ringing" and Other Songs Cowboys Sing*, and compiled and annotated *Cowboy Songs on Folkways* (Smithsonian Folkways SF 40043) and *Cisco Houston: The Folkways Years 1944–1961* (Smithsonian Folkways SF 40059). Former Director of Libraries and Professor of Education and American Folklife, University of Tulsa, Logsdon works as a writer and entertainer.

Logsdon and Place have collaborated on other Smithsonian Folkways collections: *Woody Guthrie: Long Ways to Travel, The Unreleased Folkways Masters 1944–1949* (40046), *That's Why We're Marching: World War II and the American Folk Movement* (40021), and *Woody Guthrie: The Asch Recordings, Vols. 1–4* (40100–40103, 40112).

**C R E D I T S****Compiled by** Jeff Place and Guy Logsdon**Annotated by** Guy Logsdon and Jeff Place**Mastered by** Pete Reiniger**Original recordings made by** Moses Asch, New York, 1950-1962**Production coordinated by** Mary Monseur**Production supervised by** Daniel Sheehy and D.A. Sonneborn**Edited by** Jacob Love**Cover photo by** David Gahr**Design and layout by** Visual Dialogue, Boston, MA**Many thanks to** Pete Seeger, Toshi Seeger, Bill Aldacushion, Greg Adams, David Dennie, David Gahr, Gerald Gay, Bob Kaiman, Harold Leventhal, Ronnie Simpkins, Pam Stanfield.**ABOUT SMITHSONIAN FOLKWAYS RECORDINGS**

Folkways Records was founded by Moses Asch in 1948 to document music, spoken word, instruction, and sounds from around the world. In the ensuing decades, New York City-based Folkways became one of the largest independent record labels in the world, reaching a total of nearly 2,200 albums that were always kept in print.

The Smithsonian Institution acquired Folkways from the Moses Asch estate in 1987 to ensure that the sounds and genius of the artists would be preserved for future generations. All Folkways recordings are available by special order on high-quality audio cassettes or CDs. Each recording includes the original LP liner notes.

Smithsonian Folkways Recordings was formed to continue the Folkways tradition of releasing significant recordings with high-quality documentation. It produces new titles, reissues of historic recordings from Folkways and other record labels, and in collaboration with other companies also produces instructional videotapes and recordings to accompany published books and other educational projects.

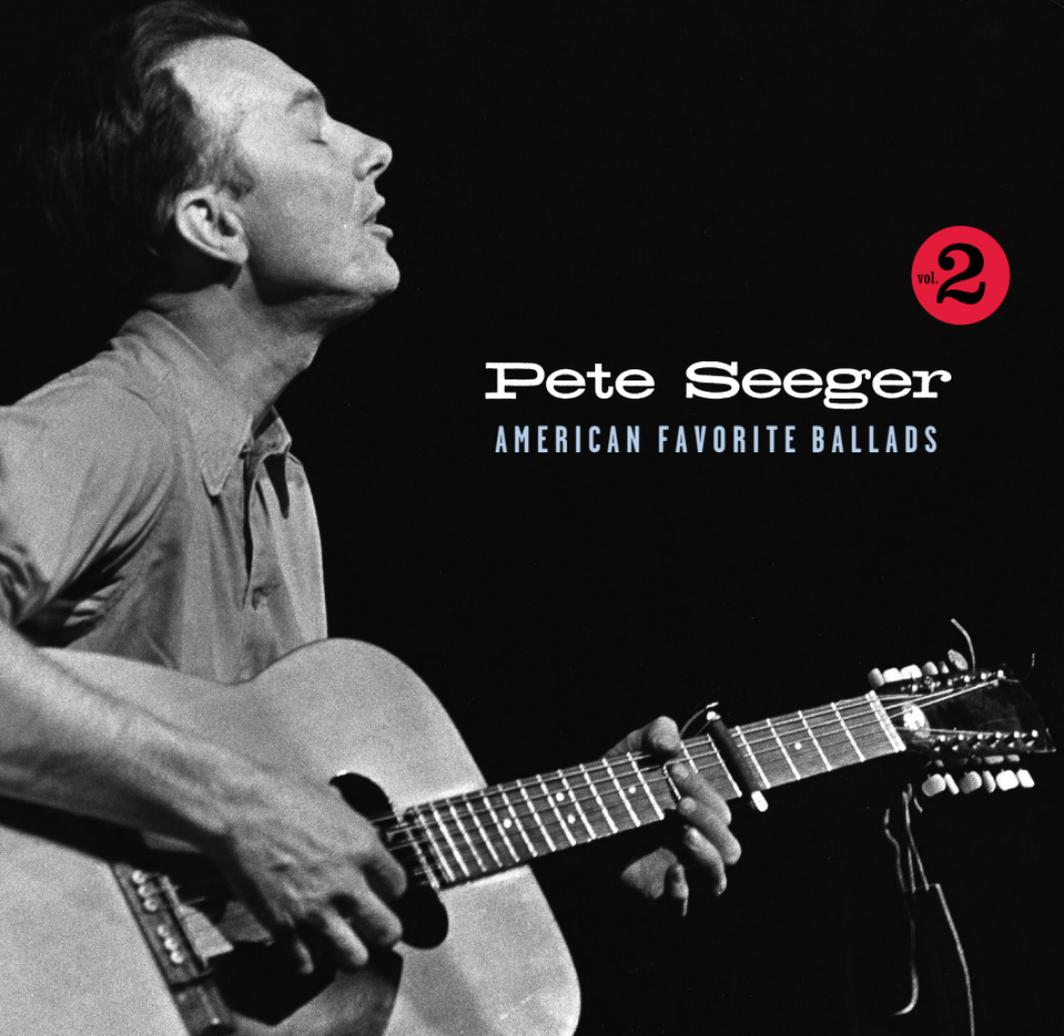
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vol. **2**

**Pete Seeger**  
AMERICAN FAVORITE BALLADS

A black and white profile photograph of a man singing, with his eyes closed and mouth open. The image is grainy and occupies the left half of the page.

vol.

2

1. BARBARA ALLEN 2:48
2. YOUNG MAN WHO WOULDN'T HOE CORN 1:34
3. MIDNIGHT SPECIAL 3:02
4. HOUSE OF THE RISING SUN 2:30
5. CARELESS LOVE 3:04
6. OH, WHAT A BEAUTIFUL CITY 3:24
7. POOR BOY 2:13
8. SALLY ANN 1:28
9. THE RIDDLE SONG 2:23
10. GO TELL AUNT RHODY 3:11
11. THE WATER IS WIDE 3:31
12. THE FOX 2:02
13. THE KEEPER AND THE DOE 2:10
14. PRETTY POLLY 3:35
15. JESSE JAMES 4:25
16. STAGOLEE 2:10
17. BLACK IS THE COLOR OF MY TRUE LOVE'S HAIR 2:27
18. CAMPTOWN RACES 1:27
19. BLOW THE MAN DOWN 2:00
20. FROGGIE WENT A COURTIN' 2:48
21. I HAD A ROOSTER (BARNYARD SONG) 3:51
22. PUTTING ON THE STYLE 2:45
23. THE FARMER'S CURST WIFE 2:47
24. HOUND TRAVELIN' 2:40
25. ALABAMA BOUND 2:17
26. WIMOWEH 2:57
27. DINK'S SONG 2:37

**PETE SEEGER AND FOLKWAYS RECORDS**

JEFF PLACE

ARCHIVIST, RALPH RINZLER FOLKLIFE ARCHIVES

DECEMBER, 2002

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. One of the cornerstone series of albums among this vast collection of songs was his five-record *American Favorite Ballads* series (1957–1962). This series presented the great American songs, the ones known by all children growing up in America during the 20th century. Although technically not all of these songs are ballads, these were the songs sung in schools and around campfires, many having their roots in the middle and late 19th century. The series was accompanied by the publication of the sheet music for most of the songs by Oak Publications (now Music Sales Inc.) in 1961.

Issued during the height of the Folk Revival, these songs became essential resources for any student of folk song to learn from and add to their repertoire. As the 21st century begins, we offer them to current generations of folk song enthusiasts. The reissue series is projected to be five recordings, which will include the *American Favorite Ballads* series along with selections from similar Seeger-Folkways projects of the time (like *Frontier Ballads* [1954] and *American Ballads* [1957]).

**INTRODUCTION**

GUY LOGSDON, 2002

During the compilation of material for these reissues, a document written by Pete Seeger was found in the Moses Asch/Folkways Collection files housed in the Ralph Rinzler Folklife Archives and Collections, Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage, Smithsonian Institution. It is a three-page "Introduction" to the first volume in the American Favorite Ballads series that was not printed in that first volume:

**Introductory Notes by Pete Seeger**

First a note in General

Some music is to dance to, and its rhythm is more important than any other aspect. Other music we listen to for the charm of melody or interplay of harmony.

Not so with ballads. "The story is the thing." A simple melody may repeat itself almost endlessly; the harmony may be non-existent, the rhythm erratic and the singer's voice cracked. But once the listener's attention can be focused on the drama in the story, the song will hold his interest to the last verse.

For many Americans this requires new listening habits. True, once upon a time our ancestors here or in any other country used narrative balladry instead of history books or newspapers. Around many a farmhouse fire gathered a circle exchanging ancient and topical tales in song. But nowadays our listening habits are conditioned by the three-minute juke-box record and its often meaningless lyrics. Or if not this, by opera or art song, where

the words are so poorly pronounced as to be just as meaningless.

However, once the idea of listening to a long narrative ballad can be got across to an audience, you will find that ballads will appeal to a greater variety of people than almost any other form of music, cutting across lines of age groups, sex, national origin, wealth or station. A ballad can seduce the sworn enemy of whatever musical idiom happens to be its vehicle. For, as we said, "the story's the thing," and if the story rings true and holds the listener's attention, all else will be forgotten and—at least for the moment—forgiven.

These are American ballads in the sense that all have been traditionally sung in America by Americans. It is a random and personal sampling, of course. No one region, North, South, or West, could claim them all. Large segments of the population have, at least in this first volume, had to be omitted, such as the French-language ballads of Louisiana or the Spanish of the Southwest.

Many are American versions of ballads known earlier (not necessarily originating) in England, Ireland, and Scotland. But none are sung as they were in the older lands—where they were usually sung without accompaniment, for example.

Other ballads were composed in America using typical Anglo-American verse forms and melodies, but changed also by influence of the banjo, an instrument first brought to America by Africans in chains.

While the exact selection of songs and the style of performance might not be typical of any one section of the country, in one respect we claim the lyrics are typical—the relative absence of superstition and the concentration on the affairs of realistically portrayed people. For all the thousands of ballads about lords and ladies which were brought over by the earliest settlers, the ones that have been remembered have been those such as the one about the rich lady who ran off with the gypsy. And more widespread than any has been the story about the farmer's wife who went to Hell and back. "After all," says one informant, "the war between the sexes goes on and on, but folks don't seem as interested in lords and ladies as they used to be."



At the top of the first page is a holograph note, "I still think you should get a good essay on ballads from Norman Studer," which is what Moe Asch did. Studer was a New York collector, folklorist, and scholar of balladry and a poet whom Pete admired and respected (in 1961 Asch released an album by Studer that included documentary recordings, *All the Hometown Days: A Narrative Poem of New York State Life* F 3853).

In his essay, Pete's observation about ballad appreciation, "For many Americans this requires new listening habits," is more apropos today than in it was 1957 when he wrote it, for unfortunately in today's society few families and neighbors get together to sing and make music. They watch television and/or listen to loud sound in which a heavy rhythm section is far more important than harmony, lyrics, or counterpoint. Pete also credits African Americans with introducing the banjo to the United States, but it was he who re-introduced it as a living folk instrument.

The popularity of the 5-string banjo in the Folk Revival was the direct result of Pete Seeger's influence through the numerous programs he gave, the distribution of his recordings by Moe Asch and Folkways Records, and his album, *How to Play the 5-string Banjo*. This instruction book and record remain an outstanding guide for the beginner as well as an inspiration for the accomplished player. He wrote a short history of the instrument based on information available at that time. Indeed, the banjo was played by African American slaves and Jefferson mentioned it in one of his writings as the "banjer," but it was a 4-string and sometimes only a 3-string instrument played in those days. For decades, many believed that Joel Sweeney, a minstrel show banjo-playing entertainer in the mid-1800s, was the individual who added the fifth string, but later research indicates that it was being used prior to Sweeney's time (see: Linn 1991; Epstein 1975:347-71; Bailey 1972:58-65; and Bluestein 1964:241-48). The banjo's image in various shapes and forms is centuries old, but it was Pete Seeger who added length to the neck.

Since I am not a banjo player, for many years I thought that the added length was because Pete is tall and has long arms, but in his teaching guide he explained that adding two frets helped the picker to play in more keys. He illustrated that with the standard banjo; if you want to play in G-flat (F-sharp) "you cannot move your capo high enough for it," and "if you want to use the C tuning but

the key of C is too high for your voice...you may prefer B-flat. The only way you can get B-flat is in the G tuning, three frets up. Therefore, I have found it very convenient to do a little carpentry on my banjo neck, lengthening it by two frets. Thus I can play in F or B-flat without having to capo so far up the neck that I lose my bass notes" (Seeger 1962:63).

In the preface to his second edition, which was reprinted in the third edition, Pete wrote, "The first edition was mimeographed, its stencils having been typed in a variety of hotel rooms while the author was accompanying Henry Wallace in the presidential campaign of 1948. The first printing of 100 copies sold out in three years" (Seeger, 1962:2). To claim that his instruction guides have been best sellers would obviously be misleading, but to deny their importance and influence would be equally wrong.

The banjo was popular during the decades of minstrel shows and in some circles was even played in classical music. The 4-string banjo was a popular rhythm instrument in early-day jazz and dance bands. In the video extension of his record and guide book, *How to Play the 5-String Banjo* (Seeger 1991), Pete emphasizes that even today "...the banjo is a rhythm instrument." However, by the mid-1930s the banjo was losing its popularity in most musical ensembles, but the 5-string banjo remained popular in Southern mountain regions as a folk instrument. As bluegrass music gained popularity, the 5-string banjo became a vital force through the influence of Earl Scruggs, but it was Pete who kept the 5-string alive as a folk instrument during the last half of the 20th century.

In October 1958 the Kingston Trio's recording of "Tom Dooley" became the #1 hit on the Hit Parade and stayed in the charts for eighteen weeks; the Folk Revival was in full swing. By the early 1960s, in spite of being blacklisted, Pete Seeger had many albums that had sold in the upward range of hundreds of thousands of copies for Moses Asch and Folkways Records; his influence was continuing to expand. Along with his personal appearances, he wrote *American Favorite Ballads* (Seeger 1961), *The Bells of Rhymney* (Seeger 1964), and with Julius Lester the guide book *The 12-String Guitar as Played by Leadbelly* (Seeger and Lester 1965), and he continued his thought-provoking and informative column "Johnny Appleseed, Jr." for *Sing Out!* As a result of the blacklist he was not allowed to perform on television in the United States; however, in the mid-1960s he recorded thirty-

eight thirty-minute television shows titled "The Rainbow Quest," filmed in New York City and produced and directed by Sholom Rubinstein, which were aired in Canada. Individuals who lived close enough to the border in this country could see them. In each program he either sang the songs of an individual songwriter, such as "A Tribute to Woody Guthrie," or featured folk performers such as Tom Paxton, Elizabeth Cotten, Doc Watson, and many more. They were, and still are, outstanding folk music programs that showed, among other things, how unfortunate the blacklist was for all American citizens.

Of course, Pete was not the only person affected by the blacklist. In the 1954 publication *Red Treason on Broadway* (Hollywood: Cinema Educational Guild) 300 individuals from "Stage, Television, Radio" were named as "Moscow's Stars in TV." They included Pete Seeger, Lucille Ball, Humphrey Bogart, Leonard Bernstein, Oscar Brand, Eddie Cantor, Olivia de Havilland, Gypsy Rose Lee, Arthur Miller, Vincent Price, Edward G. Robinson, Frank Sinatra, and other performers, writers, directors, and folks involved in the entertainment world; very few of them were completely banned from television as was Pete. In his January 1964 "Johnny Appleseed, Jr." column, Pete wrote a prophetic line, "Well, someday this old TV blacklist will be long gone and dead, and those who perpetuated it or put up with it will be forgotten" (reprinted in Seeger 1972:251). The statement on his banjo, "This Machine Surrounds Hate and Forces It to Surrender," basically came true in the blacklist world, but the scars remain.

In 1955 while on an airplane flying to perform for students at Oberlin College in Ohio, Pete wrote one of his best-known songs of social conscience, "Where Have All the Flowers Gone." He used it during his show for the students and the next year recorded it for Folkways (reissued on *Pete Seeger, If I Had a Hammer: Songs of Hope & Struggle*, SFW CD 40096, 1998) and a "year later stopped singing it." Joe Hickerson, an Oberlin student and leader in the Oberlin College Folksong Club who became a well-known folk singer as well as the Head of the Archive of Folk Culture at the Library of Congress, was a counselor at the progressive education Camp Woodland in the Catskills, New York; he heard the song and adapted some verses and the rhythm and taught it to the camp students. Later Peter, Paul and Mary heard the Hickerson version and started singing it. The Kingston Trio learned it from them and recorded it in 1962 (Seeger 1993:166-67; Dunaway 1981:186-87). It stayed on the Hit Parade for

seven weeks. Pete was not to be heard or seen on the air waves, but his songs and influence were.

The 1960s were years of change in this nation, and Pete was involved. He played an active role in Civil Rights marches in the South and in Washington, D.C. As the war in Vietnam escalated, his dedication to the peace movement increased, and by 1966 he was writing lyrics such as "So if you love your Uncle Sam, Support our boys in Vietnam. Bring 'em home, Bring 'em home." In 1967 he wrote another song that gained popularity in the peace movement and among college students and also brought more criticism against him, "Waist Deep in the Big Muddy." The popular line was, "The big fool says to push on!" There were other changes, for in the fall of 1967 his friends Tommy and Dick Smothers, who were hosting "The Smothers Brothers Show" over CBS Television, called him to be on their show. The CBS executives had finally agreed to let Pete appear. For his final song he sang "Waist Deep in the Big Muddy," which was censored and edited out by CBS; however, the Smothers Brothers let the newspapers know about it, and in January 1968 Pete was once again filmed singing it. It was aired with millions of viewers watching the show. Pete wrote, "A month after the TV program, LBJ threw in the sponge, said he would not run for re-election. Did this song help? Who knows?" (Seeger 1993:149-51).

Pete's honesty in singing and speaking his beliefs about democracy and freedom of opinion and speech, along with his dedication to and love of his country, did not always make life easy for his family. He and Toshi had three children, Mika, Tinya, and Danny, and they still lived in the cabin home they had built near Beacon, New York, near the Hudson River. The Beacon area was home for some of the Klan members who had stoned them in the late 1940s during the Peekskill incident, and unfriendly individuals spoke and worked against them openly. However, a few of the businesses with whom the Seegers had traded through the years remained supportive of them and their right as U. S. citizens to believe as they wanted (Seeger 1993:148). The Seeger children were often taunted and called names that schoolmates had learned from their hate-filled parents. In the late 1960s when Pete and Toshi became more involved with the environmental efforts to clean the Hudson River, and the sloop *Clearwater* brought attention to the water problems of the Hudson, attitudes began to change.

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

## THE SONGS

GUY LOGSDON AND JEFF PLACE, 2002

*Pete used some of the following tunes in his instruction book How to Play the 5-string Banjo, 3rd ed. (Seeger 1962); however, we have not included the citations in these annotations.*

### 1. BARBARA ALLEN

*Pete Seeger, unaccompanied vocal (Also known as "Barb'ry Ellen," "Barbara Ellen," and others; from Folkways 2319, 1957)*

This is one of the most popular ballads sung in the English language. England and Scotland have claimed it, but variants have also been collected in other languages. In the United States, it is classified as "Child Ballad #84." Francis James Child, the first professor of English at Harvard, was a ballad scholar in the late 1800s; he took 305 ballads from books and manuscripts and edited them under the title *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads*. They were published in five volumes (ten parts) by Houghton, Mifflin and Company, Boston, between 1882 and 1898 and reprinted in five volumes by Dover in 1965. Child adopted the title "Bonny Barbara Allan" for his three variants that

were taken from texts such as Thomas Percy's *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry*, 1765. Child was not a field collector, but collectors in the United States have found the ballad about the female "cruel lover" nationwide in numerous variant forms including a play-party game and dance. In Virginia, ninety-two variants and at least twelve different tunes have been collected, and the Archive of Folk Culture, Library of Congress, has over sixty-four field recordings of the ballad. The first documented commercial recording was by Vernon Dalhart in 1927 (Columbia 15126-D), and over a dozen copyrighted arrangements of "Barbara Allen" have been deposited in the Copyright Office. Pete penned, "Samuel Pepys wrote in his diary: Heard this evening the delightful new Scottish song, Barbara Ellen." Pepys wrote his diary in the mid-17th century. Pete continues with, "...everyone knows a different version and swears it is the 'real one'" (Seeger 1961:79). See Brunnings 1981: 22; Alan Lomax 1960:170-71, 183-84.

## 2. YOUNG MAN WHO WOULDN'T

### HOE CORN

Pete Seeger, vocal and banjo (Also known as "A Lazy Farmer Boy," "Lazy Man," "The Young Man Who Wouldn't Raise Corn," and others; Laws H12; from Folkways 5003, 1954)

The story of the young man too lazy to hoe his corn, unable make his "own cornbread," and consequently rejected in marriage by the young maiden as well as by the "little widder" seems to have been known in many areas; however, Pete wrote, "Another folksong first printed, of all things, by the Resettlement Administration, the New Deal Agency of the 1930s" (Seeger 1961:42). That first printing was actually edited by Pete's father, Dr. Charles Seeger, in *Resettlement Song Sheets*, "No. 3 of a series of American Songs rarely found in popular collections" (Washington, D. C.: Special Skills Division of the Resettlement Administration, 1936-37). Since then it has appeared in well over twenty printed song collections, many of which were not field collected.

John A. and Alan Lomax wrote that Europeans came to the new land seeking gold, but instead "they found Indian corn." American Indians taught them how to plant, cultivate, and cook corn in dishes with such names as hominy, pone, and succotash, and today the popularity of Hispanic foods such as tortillas and tacos is founded on their primary ingredient—corn. Corn became a major agricultural crop, taking the place of wheat in many regions, and a man who was too lazy to grow corn was considered by many to be unworthy of even living (Lomax 1947: 222-23, 23-31).

The first documented commercial recording of this song, made in 1931, was under the title "A Lazy Farmer Boy" (Columbia 15702-D), by Buster Carter and Preston Young, who were from the Piedmont region in Virginia and North Carolina. Their recording was reissued by Folkways Records on the *Anthology of American Folk Music* (1952) edited by Harry Smith (reissued as SFW CD 40090, 1997). In the Smithsonian Folkways reissue, Jeff Place notes that the band's fiddler, Posey Rorer, and Young actually sang it, not Carter and Young. Pete first recorded the song in 1954 for *Frontier Ballads* (Folkways FA 2175 and FH 2176, reissued in 1957 FP and FH 5003). The tune was later used by the Almanac Singers for a World War II anti-war song, "The Strange Death of John Doe," and by Bob Dylan for "Man in the Street." See: Brunnings 1981:356.

### 3. MIDNIGHT SPECIAL

Pete Seeger, vocal and banjo (From Folkways 2321, 1958)

In the video *A Vision Shared: A Tribute to Woody Guthrie and Leadbelly* (CBS Music 19V-49006, 1988) Alan Lomax states that "Midnight Special" is "a tender prisoner song that was invented in Sugarland, Texas, since a little railroad ran past the penitentiary about midnight every night; it was the train of their dreams that was gonna bring their pardon to them, gonna bring their girl friend to see them.... It was about freedom." It is a song usually associated with the legendary ex-convict Lead Belly, who was discovered in the State Penitentiary in Angola, Louisiana, by John

A. and Alan Lomax, but who had also served time in Texas for murder. In the Lomax story written about Lead Belly (Lomax 1939:221), they wrote that the song was "popular among both Negro and white American jailbirds." It was recorded by Otto Gray's Oklahoma Cowboy Band as "Midnight Special" in 1929, and by a few others before Lead Belly gained recognition and fame. In later years it became popular in the world of rock music through the recordings of Johnny Rivers and Creedence Clearwater Revival. In his annotations for *Lead Belly: Bourgeois Blues* (SFW CD 40045: 12) Jeff Place points out that if it were written in Texas, it spread quickly, for the Archive of Folk Culture, Library of Congress, has recordings of it made in other states during the 1930s. However, it was Lead Belly's singing and arrangement that made it popular during the 1960s Folk Revival. Pete wrote, "Lead Belly taught us this version. I fixed up the last verse as a tribute to him.... [T]he inmates ... remembered a story that if the headlight should shine through the bars on a man, he'd go free" (Seeger 1961:55). See: Brunnings 1981:357.

### 4. HOUSE OF THE RISING SUN

Pete Seeger, vocal and banjo (Also known as "Rising Sun Blues," "Rounder's Luck," and others; from Folkways 2321, 1958)

Many young girls all over the world, past and present, have engaged in prostitution for survival. In the 1800s, when New Orleans was the leading Southern city, many young girls went there seeking a better life but ended up as prostitutes, as

this song describes. In England, "The Rising Sun" signified houses of ill repute and was adapted into this blues. In their book *Our Singing Country* the Lomaxes credit a young lady, Georgia Turner, in Middlesboro, Kentucky, with giving them the song "The Rising Sun Blues" in 1937. They comment that while many jazz musicians knew of the song, "We have heard it sung only by Southern whites" and also that the "Rising Sun" appears in "unprintable songs of English origin" (Lomax 1941: 368-69). Later Alan Lomax described Turner as "a thin, pretty, yellow-headed miner's daughter," and the melody as related to "old traditional British tunes." He also noted that his adaptation was the version that became popular (Lomax 1960: 280, 290); he copyrighted his arrangement, giving Turner credit. Pete wrote, "This song I first learned from Alan Lomax, though I've since heard it in other versions: major instead of minor, 4/4 time instead of 3/4 time, etc." (Seeger 1961:18). The song's first documented commercial recording was in 1927 by Black blues singer Texas Alexander for Okeh Records, and in 1934 the legendary Clarence "Tom" Ashley with Gwen Foster recorded it under the title "Rising Sun Blues" (Vocalion 02576), years before Lomax recorded Turner. However, it is doubtful that she ever heard those recordings. An early-day apprentice and friend of Ashley, country-music legend Roy Acuff, learned it from him and years later recorded it as "Rising Sun." The Weavers recorded it, along with such diverse singers as Josh White, Woody Guthrie,

Joan Baez, Bob Dylan, Peter, Paul and Mary, and several rock groups, usually under its "House of the Rising Sun" title. It was the #1 *Billboard* hit for three weeks in 1964 sung by the British rock group the Animals (MGM 13264), and it has appeared in many printed folk song collections. Its popularity must be credited to Alan Lomax. The most complete story of the song was written by Ted Armstrong, Associated Press, in the *Abilene (Texas) Reporter*. "House of the Rising Sun: In an Old Song, the Story of Modern Culture" first appeared September 17, 2000, and was reprinted by many newspapers across the country. See: Brunnings 1981:132, 262.

#### 5. CARELESS LOVE

Pete Seeger, vocal and 12-string guitar (Also known as "Careless Blues," "Loveless Love," "Reckless Love," and others; from Folkways 2321, 1958)

This is a lament of a young girl who is in a family way, and is ignored by the one she carelessly loved. After pledging to cry for three nights, she vows to accept her fate and cry no more. Carl Sandburg wrote that he obtained his eight-verse version from the Robert W. Gordon Collection, which was compiled both by correspondence and by fieldwork (Sandburg 1927:21); Gordon's collection is the foundation of the Archive of Folk Culture, Library of Congress. The Lomaxes wrote that "Careless love would give you the blues, blues enough to make a newborn baby cry," and that "Careless Love" is one of the earliest, if not actually the first, Blues" (Lomax 1947:39, 64-65).

They also speculated that it was a Southern song sung by Whites but "has changed hands across the race line so frequently that it has acquired a pleasant coffee color." Its structure lends itself to many textual variants (Lomax 1960:574-75, 585). Pete wrote, "One of the greatest American songs—I've heard it from so many sources, I don't know where to credit it" (Seeger 1964:11). The first documented commercial recording under the title "Careless Love" was by the early-day blind country singers, Mac and Bob, for Vocalion (Vo 5125) in 1926. By 1938 there were at least twenty-seven commercial recordings with a few groups such as jazz and western swing bands using the title "Loveless Love." It has appeared in more than thirty-five books, and numerous field recordings of it in the Archive of Folk Culture, Library of Congress, were collected before 1940. Lead Belly's version is on *Bourgeois Blues* (Smithsonian Folkways SF 40045, 1997). See Brunnings 1981:47.

#### 6. OH, WHAT A BEAUTIFUL CITY

Pete Seeger, vocal and banjo (Also known as "Twelve Gates to the City," from Folkways 2321, 1958)

Little is known about this spiritual other than it was sung in the South by African American street singers. Pete wrote, "Learned from Marion Hicks of Brooklyn, N. Y., who sang simply, with a deep alto voice. The last verse is ancient, but could be considered as contemporary as this year's headlines" (Seeger 1961:81). Hicks was a cook in Brooklyn; she shared the song with the Seeger family, adding new words. It also was recorded by

Sonny Terry for *America's Greatest Blues* (Folkways FP 2035, 1958) as well as by blind street singer Reverend Gary Davis. It has been recorded by The Weavers, Joan Baez, Judy Collins, Dave Van Ronk, and others. See Brunnings 1981:322; Blood-Patterson 1988; *Sing Out!* 8 (1):12-13 (Spring 1958); *The Collected Reprints from Sing Out!* Vol. 1-6: pp. 78-79 (1990).

#### 7. POOR BOY

Pete Seeger, vocal and 12-string guitar (Also known as "Who's Gonna Shoe Your Pretty Little Foot [or Feet]?" "Green Valley Waltz," "Storms Are on the Ocean," and others; from Folkways 2321, 1958)

The title of this ballad is a little misleading, for there is another song titled "Poor Boy" that is a variant of the "Coon-Can Game," "The Cold Penitentiary Blues," and other titles dealing with prison. Pete's song is usually known as "Who's Gonna Shoe Your Pretty Little Foot?" which he described as "[a] love song, a lullaby, a fragment from the 15th century, remade and passed on to me by Woody Guthrie of Oklahoma and Brooklyn" (Seeger 1961:64-65). Jean Ritchie and Doc Watson used the title "Storms Are on the Ocean" (SFW CD 40005, 1990), the same title used by the Carter Family when they recorded it in 1927 with Maybelle Carter singing the lyrics (Victor 20937). The first recording under the title "Who's Gonna Shoe Your Pretty Little Feet?" was by the Renfro Valley Boys (Paramount 3321, 1932); however, by 1938 Woody knew and sang the lyrics as "Them Green Valley Blues," and he

included it in his unpublished manuscript "Woody & Lefty Lou's One Thousand and One Laffs and Your Free Gift of One Hundred and One Songs," dated April 1938. The earliest documented recording of that variant was under the title "Green Valley Waltz" by the McCartt Brothers & Patterson (Columbia 15454-D, 1958). The lyrics Guthrie sang and gave to others differed from earlier versions, for "the train...a hundred coaches long" replaced the "storms" and "ocean"; when and from whom Woody learned it is not known. It has been recorded many, many times under numerous titles and versions.

It is a Southern folk song with roots in the Scots ballad, "The Lass Of Roch Royal" (Child #76), which was documented as early as 1790. It is the story of Lady Margaret taking her illegitimate son to see his father, Lord Gregory. But while Gregory lies sleeping, his mother tells Margaret that the lord has gone. Lady Margaret gets in a small boat with her son intending to find Gregory, but they both drown when a storm captures them. The lord awakens and sees them drown, a tragedy that also kills him. The line "Who will shoe my bonny feet?" became a commonly used song motif. Thus, hundreds of traditional songs can claim kinship to that old Scots ballad. See: Brunnings 1981:345; Woody Guthrie, *Muleskinner Blues: The Asch Recordings, Vol. 2*, SFW CD 40101, 1999; Lomax 1960:200-01, 216; *The Collected Reprints from Sing Out!* Vols. 1-6, p.101 (1990).

**8. SALLY ANN**

Pete Seeger, vocal and banjo (Also known as "Sandy Land" and others; from Folkways 2321, 1958).

Little is known about this tune other than it is a fiddle or other instrumental breakdown and has been a favorite at play-parties and square dances from coast to coast for many generations. Pete referred to it as a "hoe-down" and recommended, "You better hunt up more verses for it" (Seeger 1961:53). Indeed, his version has few verses, but Alan Lomax found more and included "Sally Anne" under the topic "Frolic Tunes" (Lomax 1960: 224–25, 230–31). For information about play-parties see "Old Dan Tucker" on Pete Seeger *American Favorite Ballads, Vol. 1* (SFW CD 40150). Pete's final verse starts with "Make my living in sandy land," which makes it a version of "Sandy Land." In *The American Play-Party Song* Benjamin A. Botkin refers to "Sandy Land" nine times but only once to "Sally Anne" (Botkin [1937] 1963). The first known commercial recording of "Sally Anne" was in 1925 (Okeh 40336) by a rural band from North Carolina and Virginia who called themselves the Hill Billies (Malone 1985:39–40); within a ten-year period after that session, it was recorded more than ten times under different titles by such artists as "Fiddlin'" John Carson from Georgia, fiddler Eck Robertson from Texas, the National Barn Dance Orchestra, and other old-time musicians and rural bands. See: Brunnings 1981:272 "Sandy Land."

**9. THE RIDDLE SONG**

Pete Seeger, vocal and banjo (Also known as "I Gave My Love a Cherry," "Captain Walker's Courtship" and many others; from Folkways 2321, 1958)

Riddles and riddle songs are often associated with children's folklore, but this "Riddle Song" is in the courtship genre. Pete credits his source: "I first heard this sung by Burl Ives in 1938. Can't say where he got it" (Seeger 1961:72); Ives did not credit his source, but he did explain, "Unlike this short form, traditional riddle songs had a story setting. Usually a knight offers to marry the youngest of three sisters if her word equals her beauty" (Ives 1953:38–39). Of course, the maiden answers the riddles, and the knight marries her. These events are part of "Riddles Wisely Expounded" (Child #1; Child, 1882 [1965]:1–6), about which Child noted, "Riddles...play an important part in popular story, and that from very remote times." That certainly was still true in the 19th century.

This song is also associated with "Captain Wedderburn's Courtship" (Child #46; Child, 1884 [1965]: 414–25), found in both England and Scotland. It has been printed in over forty-five song books including those of the Girl Scouts, *Lift Every Voice* published by the United Methodist Church for youth groups, song books for housewives, and others. It is usually listed as a folk song from Kentucky, and John Jacob Niles wrote that it was "sung by Miss Wilma Creech of Pine Mountain, Ky. in the summer of 1933" (Niles 1961:5–7). Even though it is widely known, Burl

Ives was apparently the first to record it in the early 1950s on the long-play album *Wayfaring Stranger* (Columbia CL 628); it was also available as a single. Peter La Farge, Jean Ritchie, John Jacob Niles, and others recorded it, and the Trapp Family Singers also performed it. See: Brunnings 1981:261.

**10. GO TELL AUNT RHODY**

Pete Seeger, vocal and banjo (Also known as "The Old Gray Goose," "The Old Grey Goose Is Dead," "Go Tell Aunt Tabby," "Go Tell Aunt Nancy," and others; from Folkways 2321, 1958)

This is usually cited as a traditional ballad. Its melody is heard in a 1750s French opera by Jean Jacques Rousseau, but when and how it migrated to this country is not known. Shape note singers (the fasola movement) of New England heard the tune and used it in hymnodies, and the more contemporary hymn "Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing" has a similar tune (Jackson 1933: 173–74). Jackson notes that the melody is related to the tune "Rousseau's Dream." Vance Randolph collected it in the Ozarks with the title used in this collection and listed many published references (Randolph 1948, Vol. II: 347–49). While Pete credits the tune source as Rousseau, he uses the shorter title "Aunt Rhody" (Seeger 1961:45). Pete has also recorded it as "Go Tell Aunt Nancy." The first documented commercial recording was in early 1930 by the Carolina Tar Heels under the title "The Old Gray Goose" for Victor (V40177), and within the next ten years at least six other recordings were released, with most using the

Tar Heels' title. There are many field recordings of it under different titles in the Archive of Folk Culture, Library of Congress, for it has been collected nationwide as a children's song, a play-party song, and an instrumental tune. See: Brunnings 1981:108.

**11. THE WATER IS WIDE**

Pete Seeger, vocal and 12-string guitar (Also known as "Waly, Waly," "The Brisk Young Lover," "Down in the Meadow," and others; from Folkways 2321, 1958)

Pete wrote that this ballad "has long been one of the most widely known love laments in Britain.... This version I learned from my sister Peggy.... I made a singalong out of it, putting it in 4/4 time, with the sonority of the 12-stringer in Dropped D.... [W]hy is it that human beings can get a warm comfortable feeling as they all sing together about someone ready to kill themselves with despair?... [I]t's true with love songs in the Americas, and in Europe east and west" (Seeger 1993:134–35). The song is related to "Lord Jamie Douglas" (Child #204), a lengthy ballad dating to 1776 in Scotland; however, it is sung to the tune of "Waly, Waly," dated to the early 1720s in England (Leach 1955:546–51). Cecil Sharp, an English collector of folk songs in America and England, collected five variants and published them under the title "O Waly, Waly" and related it to a ballad known in the 1600s (Sharp 1916). Pete listed it as one of his favorite songs (Seeger 1972:568), and probably was the first to record it. Many other performers followed, and it was a

mainstay of Pete's concert repertoire for years. See: Brunnings 1981:331; Seeger, 1961:77; *Sing Out!* 9 (1):7, (Summer 1959); *The Collected Reprints from Sing Out!* Vols. 1-6, pp.78-79 (1990).

#### 12. THE FOX

Pete Seeger, vocal and banjo (Also known as "The Fox and His Wife," "The Fox and the Grey Goose," "Old Miss Flipper Flopper," and others; from Folkways 2321, 1958)

For decades most ballad scholars and collectors have described this ballad as a song for children that dates back to the late 18th or early 19th century; it has been collected in many states by folk-song scholars and printed in many 20th-century collections. It was very popular in the South and has been absorbed into African American song (White 1928:177). Scholar MacEdward Leach noted that this song "has long been famous in English tradition. As early as the latter part of the 18th century it had become a nursery ballad" (Leach 1955:749); Burl Ives stated that its history "can be traced back to an English version of 1492" (Ives 1953:26-28) but gave no supporting citations. The most complete study, one written by George Perkins, considers it to be a medieval carol and concludes, "There can be little doubt that the 15th century carol is a direct ancestor of the song as it is still sung. It tells the same story, in the same rhyme scheme, and in essentially the same meter" (Perkins 1961:235-44). Burl Ives in 1950 may have been the first to record it commercially (*Ballads and Songs* Decca DL 5080), for no earlier recordings have been found. Pete did

not indicate when or from whom he learned it, but he did relate that around 1947 he and four or five others were riding in a car with Alan Lomax, and Lomax had them sing all of the animal songs they knew and that "The Fox" was one of them (Seeger 1972: 249). Woody Guthrie also knew it, so they probably passed it around. It has been printed in more than thirty song books, and many singers have recorded it. See: Brunnings 1981:100.

#### 13. THE KEEPER AND THE DOE

Pete Seeger, vocal and banjo (Also known as "The Keeper," "Hey Down, Hoe Down," and others; from Folkways 2321, 1958)

Very little has been written about this song, but it is one that many people know or remember hearing. It has appeared in more than forty song books. Cecil J. Sharp collected it in this country as early as 1916. Pete referred to it as "[a] song from our British cousins, lots of fun as an answer-back song" (Seeger 1961:77). Later when The Weavers recorded it, they wrote that it "started in the days of Robyn Hode, and has been sung at many a campfire since then," and that feeling sorry for the doe, they rewrote the last verse to let her go (*Traveling On with The Weavers* Vanguard VRS 2022, 1962). See: Brunnings 1981:164; *The Collected Reprints from Sing Out!* Vols. 1-6, pp. 295 (1990).

#### 14. PRETTY POLLY

Pete Seeger, vocal and banjo (Also known as "The Gosport Tragedy," "The Cruel Ship's Carpenter," "The Ship Carpenter," "The Ghost Ship," and others; Laws P36A & P36B; from Folkways 2319, 1957)

There are many field recordings of this ballad made before 1940 under the title "Pretty Polly" in the Archive of Folk Culture, Library of Congress; some versions are fiddle tunes, and many were collected in Kentucky. One of the important early commercial recordings of the song is that by Kentucky fiddler B.F. Shelton made in 1927. Polly seems to have been the name transferred to many tragedies and unfaithful-lover murders in the whole country, not just in Kentucky; the ballad writers and/or singers localized and rationalized the traditional ballad to their own settings. In the British broadside, "The Gosport Tragedy," which first appeared in the 1750s, a ship's carpenter makes love to the girl and promises to marry her when she becomes pregnant, but after taking her to a lonely spot where he has dug her grave, he murders her. Later at sea her ghost appears on board ship, carrying a baby, and the carpenter confesses and dies (Laws 1957: 268-70). The Americanized versions of "Pretty Polly" are related to that broadside ballad. However, in Pete's version, which is a popular version in this country, the cruel lover leaves only "the wild birds to moan" and never confesses. Woody Guthrie knew the song and used the melody for his "Pastures of Plenty." See: Brunnings 1981:253; Lomax 1947: 286-87, 304 -5; *Sing Out!* 11 (1):13 (February-March 1961); *The Collected Reprints from Sing Out!* Vols. 1-6, p. 356 (1990).

#### 15. JESSE JAMES

Pete Seeger, vocal and banjo (Also known as "The Death of Jesse James" and "The Life and Death of Jesse James;" Laws E1; from Folkways 2319, 1957)

The themes of robbing the rich and giving to the poor and of seeking revenge against the unjust, powerful, and impersonal organizations and individuals have been popular among writers and singers of folk ballads for centuries; however, the giving-to-the-poor part is rarely practiced except in song. Betrayal and death at the hands of a trusted friend add to the heroic image. In this country, robber and killer Jesse James was reimagined with these heroic themes, and with the help of dime novelists and then motion pictures, he became the Robin Hood of the West. His story also captured the imagination of balladeers. Since outlaw songs are often part of a larger group of cowboy songs, "Jesse James" is sometimes thought to be a cowboy song. However, he was not a cowboy; he was originally a farmer. While in hiding, he used the name "Mr. Howard" and was shot in the back of the head by his outlaw friend, Robert Ford.

The first documented commercial recording was in 1924 by Bascom Lamar Lunsford for Okeh Records (OK 40155), and by 1940 there were at least twenty-three additional recordings. The Ralph Rinzler Archives, Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage, houses over thirty-five recordings, and the Archive of Folk Culture, Library of Congress, had accumulated at least twelve field recordings by 1940, most of them collected east of

the Mississippi. Woody Guthrie knew the song and wrote on a manuscript in the Asch/Folkways Archives, "If Jesse and Frank had got everybody in their part of the country to go down and vote for the right man, they'd have done the world a lot more good." See: Brunnings 1981:156; Laws 1964: 176-77; Lomax 1938:152-58; Seeger 1961:36.

#### 16. STAGOLEE

Pete Seeger, vocal and banjo (Also known as "Stackolee," "Stagger Lee," "Stack Lee," and others; Laws 115; from Folkways 2321, 1958)

Pete recalled that he learned this bad-man ballad "from Woody Guthrie, in 1940. I think he got it from a phonograph record" (Seeger 1961:51). However, Robert W. Gordon in his *Adventure Magazine* column, "Old Songs That Men Have Sung" (January 1926:191-92), quoted a written statement by a man from California that the song was popular "amongst the sporting element in the early days of Oklahoma and the Indian Territory... [and was] founded on an actual happening in St. Louis in the early 1880s," and he provided twenty-four verses. It is possible that Woody heard it in Oklahoma. It is one of the "native American ballads" that grew out of the lore of southern African Americans. There may be disagreement about where the killing took place, but no matter where it occurred, all agree that Stackolee was a big, strong, mean man. In one version, the devil does not want him in Hell. He is heroic in his rebellion and profound anti-social meanness; he killed Billy de Lyons over a Stetson

hat, showing no mercy when de Lyons begged for his life. There are questions about what started the argument, but apparently all Stackolee wanted was an excuse to kill. Sung by blues singers for decades, the song has numerous variants. For Woody Guthrie's version see: *Muleskinner Blues: The Asch Recordings, Vol. 2*, Smithsonian Folkways SFW CD 40102. See: Brunnings 1981:293; Laws 1964:88-91, 253-54; Lomax 1934:93-99; Lomax 1960:559, 571-72.

#### 17. BLACK IS THE COLOR OF MY TRUE LOVE'S HAIR

Pete Seeger, unaccompanied vocal (Also known as "Black, Black, Black," "Down by the River," and others; from Folkways 2321, 1958)

John Jacob Niles said that he wrote the holograph notebook that contained "Go 'Way from My Window" and "Black Is the Color of My True Love's Hair" when he was a teenager in Kentucky, thus establishing "the validity of my claim to their composition and copyright" (Niles 1961: xv). However, the original copyright registered by G. Schirmer in 1936 states "collected and arranged, by John Jacob Niles"; it does not state "composed by." Cecil Sharp collected a version in 1916 in North Carolina (Sharp 1932: 31). The Lomaxes wrote that "'Black, Black' is an American original which Jack Niles has recast in the image of an English courting song" (Lomax 1947:37-38, 56-57). Later, Alan Lomax wrote, "[A]lthough these elements can be traced to other songs, the mountain people have here woven a lovely new song out of old materials" (Lomax

1960:197, 206-07). The singing of Burl Ives made it popular, and it has been printed in various versions in over twenty songbooks. Classical composers of the 20th century also have used it in at least six orchestral works. See: Brunnings 1981:30; *Sing Out!* 9 (1): 10-11(Summer 1959); *The Collected Reprints from Sing Out!* Vols. 1-6, p.289 (1990).

#### 18. CAMPTOWN RACES

Pete Seeger, vocal and 12-string guitar (Also known as "Gwine to Run All Night"; from Folkways 2322, 1959)

Stephen Foster wrote this song under the title "Gwine to Run All Night"; it was published in February, 1850, by F. D. Benteen, Baltimore, as a "plantation" melody "as sung by the Christy & Campbell Minstrels and the New Orleans Serenaders" (Howard 1943:180-81). It was implied to be a comic song from slave influence; the use of "doo-dah" in the chorus along with the listing of three minstrel groups who were singing Foster's songs added to the comic element.

Not too long after its publication, the town of Camptown, New Jersey, changed its name to Irvington, and it was suggested that "the song had brought the town so much notoriety that its citizens changed the name in self-defense" (Howard 1946:63). The period when it became known as "(De) Campground Races" has not been documented, and it is doubtful that Foster was influenced by African American singers. It is more likely that his songs influenced them. During the 1860 presidential race between Lincoln and

Douglas, the Republicans turned it into a parody "Lincoln Hoss and Stephen A." and used it effectively against Douglas (Spaeth 1927:44-46). The original song by Foster became widely known and so popular that most people who sing or whistle it do not know who wrote it; Pete wrote that Foster's "best songs grew out of folk tradition and got taken back into it" (Seeger 1961:40), and indeed, this song, or at least the melody, is known around the world (for additional information about Foster, see: Austin 1987). See: Brunnings 1981:45; Fuld 2000:158-59.

#### 19. BLOW THE MAN DOWN

Pete Seeger, unaccompanied vocal (From Folkways 5003, 1954)

There was a time when the verb "blow" was synonymous with "knock," and there are a few songs and versions known as "Knock the Man Down." Pete wrote, "Like most sea chanties, this too must be highly expurgated in print. Paradise Street [mentioned in the song] was in Liverpool" (Seeger 1961:39). Chanties (shanties) were the work songs of sailors or maritime workers; this one is classified as one of the "halyard (halliard) chanties," which "were used chiefly for the longer and heavier tasks aboard ship" (Colcord 1938 [1964]:45, 49-55). This sea chanty, like many work songs, has been expurgated in many of its numerous versions, for Paradise Street was known as a place of houses of pleasure for hard-working men and of rough, tough street life. Pete sings it unaccompanied as most work songs were

sung by sailors, cowboys, and African American slaves. It is easily the most popular sea song, usually retaining its melody and basic theme across versions. Carl Sandburg wrote that Robert Frost as a boy in San Francisco "learned shanties from listening to sailors and dock-wallopers"; this one was a favorite of Frost, for "[i]t has the lurch of ships, tough\*sea legs, a capacity for taking punishment and rising defiant of oppression and tyranny" (Sandburg 1927:404-05). See: Brunnings 1981:31-32; Hugill 1966:200-15.

## 20. FROGGIE WENT A COURTIN'

Pete Seeger, vocal and banjo (Also known as "The Frog and Mouse," "The Frog He Would a Wooing Go," "The Frog's Courtship," "King Kong Kitchie Kitchie Ki-Me-O," "Here's to Cheshire, Here's to Cheese," and many others; from Folkways 2323, 1961)

This children's song has probably been heard in one of its numerous variants by most children in the English-speaking world; it has more than fifty titles and variants. There are over thirty versions collected before 1940 in the Archive of Folk Culture, Library of Congress. The frog as the main character dates back to 1549 in Scotland, but not until 1580 was a song about the wedding of a frog and mouse recorded in Stationers Hall Register, England. Pete encourages audience participation by having the children repeat the "ah-hah" refrain (Seeger 1961:56). The earliest commercial recording documented in this country was in 1927 by Buell Kazee for Brunswick, but it was not issued. The following year, Bradley Kincaid recorded it for Gennett

(Gnt 6462). Even western-movie star and recording-artist Jimmy Wakely recorded it in 1941 (Decca 5995). It can be heard as performed by Chubby Parker and His Old Time Banjo (recorded in 1928) in the *Anthology of American Folk Music* (Smithsonian Folkways SFW CD 40090, 1997). For a history of the song, see: Parsons 1990: 39-48. See: Brunnings 1981:102.

## 21. I HAD A ROOSTER (BARNYARD SONG)

Pete Seeger, vocal and banjo (Also known as "The Barnyard Song," "My Little Rooster," "I Love My Rooster," "Green Berry Tree," and others; from Folkways 7610, 1955 and Smithsonian Folkways 45039, 1998)

The origin of this very popular 20th-century children's song has not been factually documented; however, Bradley Kincaid, the renowned early-day country music recording and radio artist from Kentucky, told Loyal Jones that he wrote it while in school in Kentucky (Jones 1980:153). Kincaid may have modified the lyrics to fit his style and taste. The song was also part of fellow Kentuckian John Jacob Niles' repertoire as "I Had a Cat" and was popular in Eastern Kentucky.

In the annotations for *Birds, Beasts, Bugs and Little Fishes* (Folkways 7610) Pete wrote, "How I sing 'The Little Rooster'.... A teacher or song leader with little or no training can easily make quite a party out of this song by drawing pictures of the animals or birds coming up" With his artistic talent he shows how one line, drawn with a pen or chalk, can with a few added lines

become a rooster and other figures as well. Most of his written instruction text and the lyrics were included in the annotation booklet in the Smithsonian Folkways reissue (SFW CD 45039); there was not enough space to include the drawings, however (see also: Seeger, 1972:336-42). Its popularity has inspired numerous parodies using its melody and structure. See: Brunnings 1981:22, 137.

## 22. PUTTING ON THE STYLE

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

Sheet music for this song that pokes fun at the pretentious, pompous, and showy in lifestyle and actions was copyrighted and published in 1875 by the man who composed it, George P. Wright, Three Rivers, Michigan. It became popular during the last quarter of the nineteenth century and entered the world of traditional song after the turn of the century. Pete referred to the time when it became popular as "an era of tight corsets for ladies, and the phrase was current: 'Let's take the agony out of putting on the style'" (Seeger 1961:68). He obtained it from Norman Cazden, who had collected and then adapted it from Ernie Sager, of Camp Woodland, Catskill Mountains, New York. The last two verses, reflecting attitudes in the early 1960s, were written by Mr. and Mrs. Jerry Walters, San Francisco. The first known commercial recording was issued in 1926 by Vernon Dalhart for Victor (Vi 19919); it must have been popular, for the same year he recorded it six more times for six different companies. However, it was

Pete's singing that brought it into the folk revival, and numerous parodies were written, many of which appear in *Sing Out!*. One popular version was recorded by the Chad Mitchell Trio. See: Brunnings 1981:255; The Collected Reprints from *Sing Out!* p.8 (1990).

## 23. THE FARMER'S CURST WIFE

Pete Seeger, vocal and banjo (Also known as "The Farmer's Old Wife," "The Devil and the Farmer's Wife," "The Old Lady and the Devil," and others; from Folkways 2319, 1957)

Francis James Child documented this (Child #278) under the title Pete uses. In this humorous ballad, the devil tells the farmer he has come for a family member. The farmer is relieved to learn that the devil has come for his wife, not his eldest son, for there "is work to be done." But the wife is too mean even for the devil in Hell, so he returns her to the husband. This shows, according to the song, "that the women are better than the men. They can go down to Hell and come back again" (Seeger 1961:58). Some versions portray the wife's kicking and beating out the brains of the young imps or devils. The ballad's roots are in Scottish balladry; it was entered in the Stationer's Register on 24 June 1630. It became very popular in this country with a number of Americanized variations. In his commentary about the ballad Alan Lomax wrote, "In the Ozarks, if a man divorces his first wife, and marries again unhappily, they say, 'E's swapped a witch for the devil'" (Lomax 1960:173-74, 187). See: Brunnings 1981:92; Child, 1892-98, Part IX, Vol. 5: 107-08.

**24. HARD TRAVELIN'**

Pete Seeger, vocal and 12-string guitar (From *Folkways* 2321, 1958)  
 Woody typed and mimeographed a collection of his songs, *Ten of Woody Guthrie's Songs*, dated April 3, 1945. He sold it for twenty-five cents or less on the streets of New York City or wherever he might be traveling. "Hard Travelin'" was the fourth song in the collection, and it was the first time it appeared in print. On the upper left corner Woody wrote, "Sing it like you mean it." He also wrote, "This is a song about the hard traveling of the working people, not the moonstruck mystic traveling of the professional vacationist. Sung about a man that has rode the flat wheelers, kicked up cinders, dumped the red hot slag, hit the hard rock tunneling, hard harvesting, the hard rock jail, looking for a woman that's hard to find." He referred to it as a "Dust Bowl" song, but wrote it while working on his Columbia River project in 1941. The first printed version was in *People's Songs 2* (1-2):11 (February-March 1947). It remains one of Woody's best-known songs and has been printed in a variety of songbooks; for Guthrie's interpretation, see: Woody Guthrie, *Hard Travelin': The Asch Recordings, Vol. 3*, Smithsonian Folkways 40102, 1999. Pete wrote, "Give it a steady, hard beat, and it will give out that hard-times, hard working feeling" (Seeger 1961:89). See: Brunnings 1981:120; Lomax 1960: 426-27, 435-36.

**25. ALABAMA BOUND**

Pete Seeger, vocal and 12-string guitar (Also known as "Don't You Leave Me Here"; from *Folkways* 2321, 1958)

This song is an example of the influence Lead Belly and his 12-string guitar had on the folk revival. Pete noted, "From the singing of Huddie Ledbetter. He remade every song to fit his big 12-string guitar, with its booming bass notes" (Seeger 1961:44); however, Pete's version is different and much shorter than Lead Belly's version. The Lomaxes called the song a "barrel-house conversation" that "has been popular amongst both whites and blacks for several decades" (Lomax 1934:206-09). They collected it before meeting Lead Belly. A different version was published in Texas in 1926 as "Alabama Boun'" with humorous lines such as, "Preacher in the pulpit jumpin' up and down, While amen-corner sisters shout, 'I'm Alabama Boun'!' and 'Elder Green a-shootin' craps, and his point wuz ten. Sez he, 'I'm gwain to Waco now for to try again.'" (Thomas 1926:177). Thomas explained that "Alabama Boun'" was a "psychic state, rather than a place." It was popular throughout the South and was recorded for the Library of Congress by ragtime pianist Jelly Roll Morton and by Texas songster Henry Thomas in the 1920s. It later became part of the jump-jazz repertoire of bandleader Louis Jordan. It was rewritten as a civil rights "Freedom Riders" song in the early 1960s in *Sing Out!* 11 (4):43 (October-November 1961). See: Brunnings 1981:6; *Sing Out!* 10 (2):19 (Summer 1960); *The Collected Reprints from Sing Out!* Vol. 1-6, p. 121 (1990).

**26. WIMOWEH**

Pete Seeger, vocal and banjo (Also known as "The Lion Sleeps Tonight"; from the South African song "Mbube"; from *Folkways* 2322, 1959)

Before being blacklisted, Pete and The Weavers made the Hit Parade with this song. They learned it from Solomon Linda's recording of the song "Mbube." According to Pete, "The late Solomon Linda had a popular quintet in Johannesburg, South Africa, called the Evening Birds. This was one of his greatest hits, built out of an older Zulu form. The original words, translated, meant: 'The lion is sleeping, the lion, the lion, the lion.' And some saw no significance in the phrase" (Seeger 1964:73). For those who like the song, Pete quotes a Vietnamese saying, "When the hawk comes, the lion will rise, then peace will come to the world" (Seeger 1972:314). He always sings this as a group-participation song; in this recording with no audience, he talks and teaches group singing. Later he wrote, "Sometimes the most eloquent song I can sing is 'Wimoweh,' with no words at all. Just melody, rhythm, and great bass harmony" (Seeger 1972:320). This song is usually performed by a chorus of voices, but here Pete alone demonstrates the various parts. See: Brunnings 1981:348; Seeger 1993:90-92.

**27. DINK'S SONG**

Pete Seeger, vocal and banjo (Also known as "If I Had Wings," "Dink's Blues," "Nora's Dove," "Fare Thee Well," and others; from *Folkways* 2322, 1959)

This is an African American variant of "Careless Love," and it was named after the woman who

sang it for John A. Lomax. In 1908 he received a grant from Harvard to collect songs and was invited to take his Edison recorder and visit with African American levee workers who had been brought from Mississippi to build a levee on the Brazos River across from Texas A&M University. He was told that Dink knew many songs; she was one of the prostitutes transported from Mississippi to take care of the men, for each worker was provided a woman "to wash his clothes, cook, draw water, cut firewood, and warm his bed" (Lomax 1934:193-96). Lomax recalled that he had to buy her a pint of gin. "She sipped her gin and sang and drank until the bottle was empty." He enjoyed this song so much that each of his family members learned it. Later, when he went to find her in Yazoo, Mississippi, friends pointed "to a nearby graveyard, [and] told me, 'Dink's done planted up there'" (Lomax 1947:39-40, 66-67). Pete gave credit to the Lomax family for preserving and sharing "a great flower of beauty" (Seeger 1961:88). The song has appeared in a few other books. See: Brunnings 1981:74; Utley 1971: 453-61.

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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 “broadsides.” 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 every thing 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-ri-e 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 Carlisle 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 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 "Fillimeeoreay," "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 "Fillimeeoreay" 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 "Arkansaw 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 Rackinsack Waltz"; "Rackinsack" 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 work song 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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**Pete Seeger**

AMERICAN FAVORITE BALLADS

vol. **4**



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**PETE SEEGER AND FOLKWAYS RECORDS**  
JEFF PLACE, 2006

The 1950s and early 1960s were a prolific time 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. These songs were sung in schools and around campfires, many having their roots in the mid and late 19th century.

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 folk song enthusiasts. It will include 5 CDs, containing all of the *American Favorite Ballads* series along with selections from other Seeger material on Folkways (like *Frontier Ballads* [1954] and *American Ballads* [1957]). This CD contains primarily material from the original issues of *American Favorite Ballads*, Vols. 4 and 5 (FW 2323 and 2445). Guy Logsdon continues his five-part biography of Pete Seeger in the following section.

**INTRODUCTION**  
GUY LOGSDON AND JEFF PLACE, 2006

Pete Seeger's *American Favorite Ballads* series was and is an amazing collection of songs known, performed, and recorded within a short period of time, 1957 to 1962. As narrated in previous volumes, during those years Pete defended himself from attacks by the House Un-American Activities Committee, Senator Joseph McCarthy, right-wing political activists, and others who opposed his right as a citizen of the United States to express his beliefs. He verbalized personal convictions with clear and honest statements and with songs that expressed traditional and/or historical activities and attitudes. He spoke and sang about his faith in the Constitution of the United States, a document written by liberal leaders of the day, and he spoke and sang words that enraged those who had less faith, belief, and confidence in freedom of speech.

Starting in the late 1960s, Pete and Toshi Seeger began to involve themselves in environmental concerns, and they led a campaign to clean up the Hudson River (for more details, see the liner notes to SFW 40152). With their sloop, *The Clearwater*, Pete and others traveled up and down the Hudson River performing concerts along the way. Pete has always shown a love and keen interest in his home area of New York State. He recorded two records for Folkways in which he sang ballads and historical songs of the region. These "American" ballads are not included in this series, but they can be acquired separately.

In 1960, Folkways released Pete's *Champlain Valley Songs*, with notes by folklorist Kenneth Goldstein and local New York historian Marjorie Lansing Porter. The record included songs collected in the field by Porter from local residents, including Seneca Indians and French Canadian settlers and interpreted by Pete. In 1976, he worked with Ed Renehan to release another collection, *Fifty Sail on Newburgh Bay and Other Songs of the Hudson River*. The set chronicles the history of songs from the region—from those of the native peoples to historical ballads. The complete liner notes for both

of these recordings can be downloaded from [www.smithsonianglobalsound.org](http://www.smithsonianglobalsound.org).

At the same time as he recorded his collections of “ballads” for the adult market, Pete was recording important American children’s songs for Folkways. In some cases, they were the same songs. Pete has not been just a folksong singer and folk-music entertainer: he has been a teacher and an educator. America’s favorite traditional songs, along with songs written by him and presented in his contemporary style, were enjoyed by folks of all ages; additionally, he taught listeners new songs from around the world and how to sing and enjoy them. He performed and recorded songs directed specifically to young listeners that were also enjoyed by parents. His constantly positive attitude and qualities as an entertainer and human being made it necessary for him to share his songs and stories with young people.

Among the records Folkways released during this period were the album *American Folk Songs for Children* (Folkways Records FP 701), issued in 1953. The songs were selected from *American Folk Songs for Children: In Home, School and Nursery School* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., 1948) and *Animal Folk Songs for Children: Traditional American Songs* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., 1950), written by his stepmother, Ruth Crawford Seeger.

A similar collection was issued in 1962 under the title *American Game and Activity Songs for Children*. It primarily included play-party songs, with instructions about how to dance or “play” some of the items. Both *American Folk Songs for Children* and *American Game and Activity Songs for Children* were reissued as CDs by Smithsonian Folkways Recordings in 2000 with the title *Pete Seeger: American Folk, Game & Activity Songs for Children* (SFW CD 45056).

In 1955, *Birds, Beasts, Bugs & Little Fishes: Animal Folk Songs* (Folkways 710) was released and dedicated to Ruth Crawford Seeger, who had died in late 1953. Pete included suggested line drawings for the various animals and birds, and told how and why he used them, one line at a time, to encourage group participation. Then in 1956 *Birds, Beasts, Bugs & Bigger Fishes: Animal Folk Songs* (Folkways 711) was issued. Both albums were reissued by Smithsonian Folkways in 1998 on CD as *Birds, Beasts, Bugs & Fishes Little & Big: Animal Songs*.

Other collections for children followed, containing traditional songs, songs written by Pete, and story songs by Pete. *Sleep-Time Songs & Stories* (Folkways F 7525) was issued in 1958 and reissued as *Pete Seeger: Abeyoyo and Other Story Songs for Children* in 1989 by Smithsonian Folkways (SFW CD 45001). The title song, “Abeyoyo” (later changed to “Abiyoyo”), was a South African folktale and lullaby adapted by Pete; it became a classic story song that remains popular as a recording and as a children’s book. In 1960, Pete recorded more songs for children of all ages issued as *Song and Play*

*Time* (Folkways FC 7526); the songs were either well known at that time or became well known because of Pete’s concerts and recordings.

Without doubt, no other individual in history has lifted his or her voice to the millions of people—all ages, all religions, all ethnic groups, all nations—as has Pete Seeger, and he has always led into *singing-together songs*, especially “seeing-eye-to-eye songs,” which express a variety of beliefs from around the world. Pete has brought voices together to sing belief in the human race and has sought to bring all humans and all nature together in peace and harmony, no matter what the discords, disputes, or variations may be. His performances on Folkways, now Smithsonian Folkways, reflect his dedication to and love for all humankind. His willingness to forgive is the reflection of one who believes in all of us.

In his “Introductory Notes” to *With Voices Together We Sing*, Pete stated that most people in the audience were “teen-agers and young adults” and that most folks remember “the warm and exciting feeling of a mass of people singing together.” He continued with most of us can remember “when a song leader, out of tune with the audience, tried unsuccessfully to get a group to loosen up and sing.” Pete then proceeds with steps to take and what not to do to inspire a group to sing along with the leader, such as: “Too much talk is the death of the spirit of music. . . . Rhythm and pacing are the most important things. . . . Pitch a song in a key everyone can sing. . . . Keep the tempo.” Since Pete is the greatest singer and leader of traditional music, it would be wise for those who aspire to perpetuate folk-music traditions to read his “Introductory Notes” to this album over and over again.

The 1980s started well for Pete and Toshi, for Pete was booked on 11 January 1980 to give a concert at Harvard. In his “Introduction” to the annotations for the album *Pete Seeger: Singalong; Demonstration Concert* (Folkways FXM 36055; reissued SFW CD 40027/8) he explained:

*Before my voice, memory, and sense of rhythm and pitch were too far gone, I decided, at age sixty, to ask Folkways Records to document one of my two-hour “concerts” such as I have given for over twenty-five years, usually at colleges. They are not concerts so much as singalongs. My main purpose is to show people how good it is to sing together.*

This live recording highlights Pete’s dedication to the value of singing—singing together. For those who love and respect the sounds of group singing but have not experienced the beauty, happiness, and charisma of Pete Seeger, this collection is essential.

A longer version of these liner notes, with more background on Pete Seeger’s children’s recordings, is available on the Smithsonian Folkways website. Additional information about Pete and Toshi in the 1980s up to the 2006 era will be in volume 5.

**THE SONGS**  
GUY LOGSDON AND JEFF PLACE

**1. BANKS OF THE OHIO**

Pete Seeger, vocal and 12-string guitar (Also known as "The Banks of the O. B. D.," "Down Beside the Ohio," "Down on the Banks of the Ohio," "Miss Julie," and others; traditional; Laws F5; from Folkways 2323, 1961)

Murder was and is a common folk-ballad topic. It appears so often that the murder ballad is a genre in many ballad and folksong books, and many movies and television shows use murder as a theme. In short, murder remains interesting. This ballad is native to the United States, but it is distinctly related to murder ballads from other countries. Perhaps murder is popular around the world! It portrays a young man who murders "the only woman I love, because she would not be my bride." The reason for the bride's rejection is not always stated, but the concept that the sanity of a sick person, even lovesickness, justifies murder remains constant until after the crime. The afterthought is usually a rationalization and an apology for the murder. There were and are many murder

ballads and stories, but no matter the reason or justification, the murder remains a crime.

Between 1927 and 1937, this ballad was recorded by eleven singers, some with backup musicians, and since then many recordings have been made; it is in many songbooks, but very little research into its origin and development exists. See Brunnings 1981:21; Laws 1964:154; Sing Out! 7 (Winter 1958) 4:3; Meade 2002:42.

**2. YOU ARE MY SUNSHINE**

Pete Seeger, vocal and banjo (From Folkways 2323)

This song is credited to Jimmie Davis, who recorded country songs and blues for Victor as early as 1929. His last recording session for Victor was in 1933; he then moved to Decca Records with his first session in September 1934, and recorded "You Are My Sunshine" on 5 February 1940, accompanied by the Charles Mitchell Orchestra, also known as Charles Mitchell & His Texans. The song was actually

recorded by the Rice Brothers' Gang in September 1939, but the Davis recording became a great hit, with eventually 350 artists recording it, including Bing Crosby, Gene Autry, and Ray Charles. Davis was twice elected Governor of Louisiana, capitalizing on his and the song's popularity. Pete's inclusion of this song was and is appropriate, for it remains a popular and excellent song for group singing. See Brunnings 1981:354; Ginell 1989:168, 239; Kingsbury 1998:136; Weill 1977.

**3. HALLELUJAH, I'M A BUM**

Pete Seeger, vocal and 12-string guitar (Also known as "Hallelujah, Bum Again" and "Hallelujah on the Bum"; from Folkways 2445, 1962)

For many years, "Hallelujah, I'm a Bum" circulated as a folksong with no known authorship. By 31 March 1928, when Harry ("Haywire Mac") McClintock made the first recording of the song for Victor Records, it had been sung by many folks from all walks of life, broadcasted over radios, printed on sheet music, and altered by numerous changes to the verses, along with new verses. It was a popular song of the day, and many were making money publishing and singing it. McClintock decided to claim its authorship.

As a young person in Nashville, Tennessee, he had learned the revival song "Revive Us Again," sometimes known as "Hallelujah! Thine the Glory." He became a hobo—at time, the term

for a migratory worker. While riding in railroad boxcars in the 1890s, he started writing new verses or parodies to the gospel song and sang them to others in the boxcars and along the roads. In the early 1900s, he became a member of the I. W. W. (Industrial Workers of the World), and by 1909 songs were printed and circulated as Wobbly songs—"Hallelujah, I'm a Bum" was one of them. Many recordings and published versions give him credit for "words" and "music," but he did not compose the music.

John Jenkins Husband was born in England around 1760. He moved to the United States in 1809 and settled in Philadelphia, where he taught music and became a church leader. The exact date of the composition of the tune, other than during the early 1800s, is not known. A wide variety of individuals wrote lyrics for his melody, but it was many years later when the Rev. William Paton Mackay wrote the words that became the standard: "Hallelujah! Thine the glory; revive us again." Credits cited in gospel songbooks are "Husband" and "Mackay."

McClintock became a unique figure in the history of traditional songs, for he recorded many cowboy songs for Victor and had his own radio show in San Francisco. In 1981, an interesting and informative booklet, "Haywire Mac" and "The Big Rock Candy Mountain," by Henry Young, was published by the Stillhouse Hollow Publishers, but no place of publication was printed. Young was a retired Santa Fe Railway

locomotive engineer who used many railroad photos and information as well as telling Haywire Mac's story. See: Brown and Butterworth 1906:416–417; Brunnings 1981:118; Fowke & Glazer 1973:126–127; Greenway 1953:197–204; Kornbluh 1968:71–72; Meade 2002:312; Milburn 1930:98–101.

#### 4. THE FOGGY DEW

Pete Seeger, vocal and banjo (Also known as "The Foggy, Foggy Dew" and "The Bugaboo"; traditional; Laws O 3; from Folkways 2445, 1962)

There are different versions of this controversial ballad, but most tell the same basic story. The narrator works at "the weaver's trade" or "the ramblin' trade"; he courts or protects "a fair young maid" and sleeps with her to "keep her from the foggy, foggy dew" or "the bugaboo." In bowdlerized versions, they are married; in less chaste versions, they make love and live together. Why they sleep together makes no difference, for a son is born. Every time he looks into her eyes or his son's eyes, he remembers "the foggy dew." Her reason for fearing "the foggy dew" or "the bugaboo" varies among folk musicologists and folksingers. The "foggy dew" represents virginity, and the "bugaboo" is the devil or a legendary demon. It was a British broadside dating to the late 1600s.

This ballad enjoys origin-controversy, as well as melodic and lyric variations. A. L. Lloyd supplied an interesting variant and wrote about the origin of some of the words in his *Folk Song*

in *England*. His ballad starts, "When I was in my prenticeship and learning my trade, I courted my master's daughter"; she rejected him until he paid a friend to dress like a "Bogle bo" or "ghost" and scare her into his bed. When they awaken, she realizes what has happened and agrees to marry him; he is happy and vows never to tell her about "the joke."

Alan Lomax in *Folk Songs of North America* included two variants: "East Anglian version" and "The Midwestern Sandburg version." His East Anglian version is from "the English region where it has been most often recorded," and his Sandburg "somewhat censored form" was spread by popular folk-music entertainers. He wrote that "we shall never know precisely how the 'The Foggy Dew' got from East Anglia to the Middle West. . . . The likelihood is that this rather bawdy ditty was not carried by prudish New Englanders, but by English settlers who came to America during the Ohio land boom." Bradley Kincaid, a Southern singer, recorded "Foggy Dew" for Decca in 1934.

On 24 April 1916, in Dublin, Ireland, there was a rebellion against British control, known as the Easter Rebellion; it resulted in much destruction and many deaths. Using the melody of "The Foggy Dew," the lyrics were changed to reflect the anguish felt by the Irish over their lost brothers: "But to and fro in my dreams I go, and I kneel and pray for you; For slavery fled, oh, Rebel dead, when you fell in the foggy dew."

It is known as the "Easter Rebellion Song," and on the internet as "A Terrible Beauty—Dublin, Easter 1916." See Brunnings 1981:97–98; Laws 1957:227–228; Lloyd 1967:59, 213–214; A. Lomax 1960:77–78, 89–90; Meade 2002:10; Sandburg 1927:14–15; Sharp 1932:2:174; *The Collected Reprints from Sing Out!* 1990:22–23.

#### 5. MOLLY MALONE

Pete Seeger, vocal and banjo (Also known as "Cockles and Mussels" and "In Dublin's Fair City"; traditional; from Folkways 2445, 1962)

There has been a general belief that this ballad has been known and sung for more than three centuries in many different cultures; however, it is not three hundred years old. It is not in any of the collections of Irish traditional songs, or in any field collected collections, and current documentation shows that it first appeared in print in Cambridge, Massachusetts, in 1883. The following year, it was published in London as a comic song written by James Yorkston of Scotland. It may have been published earlier in Scotland (see "Irish Historical Mysteries: Molly Malone" on the internet at <http://homepage.tinet.ie/~seanjmurphy/irhismys/molly.htm>).

No matter its age, it did become very popular, for it carries the traits of traditional ballads. It can be considered traditional, for it has been sung by many and recorded by a wide variety of singers. The setting is in the first line: "In Dublin's fair city," and through the years Dublin has not been replaced by any other city. In fact,

it has become "the unofficial anthem of Dublin." It apparently became popular among many who participate in pub or tavern activities, for on the internet there are numerous "Molly Malone" pub, tavern, and/or restaurant webpages—in Dublin, Ireland; Prague, Czech Republic; Limassol, Cyprus; Singapore; Portsmouth, New Hampshire; numerous other sites in the United States, as well as other towns and cities around the world—and there are "Molly Malone" gift shops.

Burl Ives recorded it and included it in *Burl Ives: Irish Songs*. Boni's *Fireside Book of Folk Songs* lists it as an Irish folksong. It has been published in many other 20th-century folksong collections. Indeed, cockles and mussels were gathered and sold by many folks, and there were probably many "Molly" girls, as "Molly" is merely a nickname for "Mary." Some of the interested folks, past and present, believe that Molly worked another trade at night. Nevertheless, it is ironic that a song written by a Scotsman has become identified as an Irish folksong. When you hear Pete's recording of "Molly Malone," its beauty overpowers speculation about age, origin, and occupations. See Boni 1947:22–23; Brunnings 1981:205, 56; Ives 1958:22–23.

**6. OLD MAID'S SONG**

Pete Seeger, vocal and banjo (Also known as "Take Me Out of Pity," "Don't Let Me Die an Old Maid," "The Black Chimney Sweeper," and many more; traditional; previously unissued; from Archive reel FW-3358 (CDR 244))

This song has not only a variety of titles, but also a variety of versions; however, the theme is always the old maid wanting to marry. Where and when Pete learned his previously unissued version is not documented, but Peggy Seeger recorded it for Folkways in 1955, as issued on *Songs of Courting and Complaint* (Folkways 2049). In *Sing Out!* (11 [February-March 1961] 1:38), Peggy's version, basically the same as Pete's, was printed with the introductory statement from Norman Cazden's *The Abelard Folk Song Book* that the old maid was a young lady, not a middle-aged woman, and that the song was sung for humor. According to John Renfro Davis ("Old Maid in the Garret," [www.contemplator.com/england/oldmaid.html](http://www.contemplator.com/england/oldmaid.html)) its origin might be dated to mid-1636 as a London broadside; he states that the Irish version, "The Black Chimney Sweeper," says that a chimney sweep marries the old maid out of pity. No doubt it traveled many miles during numerous decades, and it possibly reached the United States in the early 1800s. The Seeger version is the American version.

There is an interesting website for "The Old Maid's Society" which is "for the determined old maid, the sweet spinster, the 'unclaimed treasures', and for anyone wanting to get a laugh at

us as well." It carries interesting quotes, such as "Men mature well underground," and there are sections that, indeed, reflect much humor: "Old Maid's Poetry," "Old Maid's Songs," "Old Maid's Quips," "The Christian Single Sister's Society," "Featured Portraits of Old Maids," and "For You Poor Bachelors." "The Old Maid's Song" is in the song section. See Brunnings 1981:232; <http://ylcf.org/old-maids>.

**7. OH, HOW HE LIED**

Pete Seeger, vocal and banjo (Also known as "The Deceiver," "He Told Her He Loved Her," and "The Villain and the Maiden"; traditional; from Folkways 2323, 1961)

There was a time in many religious homes when to tell a lie was an unforgivable sin, and to call a person a liar was a greater sin, even if that person had earned the title. There are probably many people who continue to believe this rule, but with so many lies told in modern society by individuals who seek power and/or wealth, it is difficult to believe that this rule has the control over lives that it once had. The "villain" of this story certainly should be called a liar, for he "told her he loved her"—he lied. In some versions, she played the guitar while he smoked a cigar and told him she loved him—she did not lie. To go to a funeral "just for the ride" was and is an unforgivable venture, but it was the lie that sent him to be "frizzled and fried" while "she went to heaven." He was, indeed, the unforgivable sinner. The origin and villain of this song can be adapted to

all parts of any nation; Dick and Beth Best placed it in their songbook as a college song. See Best 1955:69; Brunnings 1981:228, 271.

**8. WHERE THE OLD ALLEGHENY AND THE MONONGAHELA FLOW**

Pete Seeger, vocal and banjo (Traditional; from Folkways 2323, 1961)

The Allegheny and Monongahela rivers meet in Pittsburgh at the Point State Park area and there form the Ohio River. For *Pennsylvania Songs and Legends*, edited by George Korson, Jacob A. Evanson, formerly a music teacher in Pittsburgh, compiled the songs in the chapter "Folk Songs of an Industrial City," basically songs from the steel industry in Pittsburgh. His version was sung in 1947 by J. J. Manners, who told him he had composed the verse, but that in 1942 another man had composed the chorus. Another informant told that he had learned it in 1910 while in a quartet, and another related that it was a favorite sung by the Smokey City (Pittsburgh) Quartet. Pete's rendition is only the chorus, not the verse, as notated by Evanson. See Brunnings 1981:343; Korson 1949:434-435.

**9. LEATHERWING BAT**

Pete Seeger, vocal and banjo (Also known as "The Bird Song," "The Birds' Courting Song," "The Birds' Conversation," and others; traditional; from Folkways 2445, 1962)

In his *How to Play the 5-String Banjo*, Pete wrote, "Here is a favorite song of mine." He provided the first verse and chorus, and then direct-

ed the reader to *Best Loved American Folk Songs* (the second printing of *Folk Song U. S. A.*) by John A. Lomax and Alan Lomax. The fourth song in their opening chapter, "Critters and Chillun'," is "Leatherwing Bat." In their explication they state, "people who live and work close to animals and depend directly upon them for food and for helpful work, the folk endow them with human characteristics, including the power of speech." Until modern times, tales of talking animals were not rare. After relating an ex-slave's story of barnyard fowls telling tales about the Civil War, they continue with "there is no reason to believe that the pretty birds of the woods cannot chatter about love." They close with "there are more pretty girls than one' has been said in every language, but nowhere more merrily and more fitly than by the leatherwing bat and his friends." See Brunnings 1981:175; Lomax 1947:5, 18-19; Seeger 1962:28.

**10. JOHNNY HAS GONE FOR A SOLDIER**

Pete Seeger, vocal and banjo (Also known as "Shule Aroon," "Shule Agrah," "Buttermilk Hill," and many more; traditional; from Folkways 2323, 1961)

This song enjoyed popularity for many decades in the United States. It is believed to have stemmed from the traditional Irish song "Shule Agah," which dates back to the late 1600s. There is no doubt that it was taken across the Atlantic by many immigrants and that it became an Americanized song. Russell Ames wrote, and it

still is true, “No matter how patriotic the soldier, there was always the sorrow of parting from home and loved ones.” He added that this song was likely “the most beautiful song sung by Washington’s men”; others have written that it gained great popularity during the Revolutionary War, and Burl Ives described it as “an anonymous American song popular with the colonials.”

Alan Lomax explained that when an Irish immigrant landed on American soil, he or she was happy immediately to become an American and that a high percentage of the colonial army were of Irish descent. He wrote that the Irish meaning of *shule agra* is “come with me, my love,” and that in 1691 after the Treaty of Limerick, young Irishmen went to France to fight; the girl left behind “dyes her petticoat red to show that she is engaged and loyal to her absent Johnny.” It has been adapted into various musical settings, printed in numerous folksong books, and collected in many states. The basic theme, “Here I sit and cry my fill,” applies to all wars. See Ames 1955:39; Brunnings 1981:160; A. Lomax 1960:34–35, 47–48.

#### 11. FARTHER ALONG

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

This song appeared in *Sing Out!* (6 [Winter 1957] 4:3) as a “Southern gospel hymn” with the credit “Words and music adapted from W. P. Jay.” In *The Bells of Rhymney and Other Songs and*

*Stories from the Singing of Pete Seeger*, Pete wrote “I coupled one of my favorite hymns with a sequel written to it years ago by Woody Guthrie”; the song written by Woody is “I’ve Got to Know.” The credit given is the same as in *Sing Out!*; however, others have claimed credit. Virgil O. Stamps’s *Radio Song Album* (Dallas, Texas: Stamps-Baxter Music Co., 1937, no. 165) gave credit to the Rev. W. B. Stevens as the source for the words and the music with “arrangement by J. R. Baxter, Jr.” and “copyright, 1937, Stamps-Baxter Music Company.” One of the “Farther Along” internet entries ([http://library.timeless-truths.org/music/Farther\\_Along/](http://library.timeless-truths.org/music/Farther_Along/)) states that it was published as early as 1911, credited to “Anonymous.” It has been recorded by numerous singers in several musical genres. It is another example of the diversity of Pete’s material. See Brunnings 1981:92; Seeger 1964:48.

#### 12. GO DOWN, MOSES

Pete Seeger, vocal and 12-string guitar (Traditional; from Folkways 2323, 1961)

For many years, this African-American spiritual has been included in songbooks for youths and in many organizations and denominations, and it has been sung across the United States and in other countries. Its theme is “let my people go,” a cry heard around the world for centuries and into modern times—but the “cry” that inspired this song was heard during slavery days in the United States.

According to John A. Lomax and Alan Lomax, the engineer who ran the underground railroad from the South toward freedom was Harriet Tubman, a woman who had escaped slavery, and that African-Americans believed her to be God-driven. She was the Moses of her time; thus, this song was written about her. Dena J. Epstein wrote that the first mention of “Go Down, Moses” was 4 September 1861, by Reverend Lewis Lockwood, who heard it sung at Fortress Monroe, Virginia, and “by December 2 he had sent an extended text of the song to the secretary of the YMCA in New York.” That secretary sent it to the New York *Tribune*, which published it, apparently as “the first publication of the complete text of a Negro spiritual.” See Brunnings 1981:108; Epstein 1977:244–246, 248–251; Lomax 1947:342, 372–373.

#### 13. ALL MY TRIALS

Pete Seeger, vocal and 12-string guitar (Traditional; from Folkways 2323, 1961)

Little is known about this song other than it traveled far and wide before returning to the United States. Pete sings it as a lullaby—a spiritual lullaby—expressing the thoughts of a “mama born to die.” James F. Leisy wrote that it “apparently originated with a Baptist hymn that was current in the South after the Civil War” and was in the Bahamas before being revived in the United States; his published verses have spiritual overtones. The song was printed in *Sing Out!* (7[Fall

1957]3:5) with the statement “This sounds like a West Indian version of this spiritual,” which implies that it was a Negro spiritual. Its origin has not been documented; therefore, it remains a spiritual lullaby that expresses a mother’s spiritual and social concerns. See Brunnings 1981:7; Leisy 1964:174–175.

#### 14. MONSIEUR BANJO

Pete Seeger, vocal and banjo (Also known as “Michie Banjo,” “Mister Banjo,” “Mister Banjo—Look at the Dandy,” and others; traditional; from Folkways 2323, 1961)

This is another song that has had little information printed about it. Margaret Bradford Boni called it “A gay, satirical Creole song from Louisiana. The word ‘creole’ is derived from the Spanish word ‘criollo,’ meaning native to the locality.” Pete performs it with the cheerful rhythm and vocalization that make fun of the dandy who egotistically parades like a peacock with tailfeathers spread for all to see and hear. See Boni 1952:251; Brunnings 1981:206.

#### 15. NO MORE AUCTION BLOCK

Pete Seeger, vocal and 12-string guitar (Also known as “Many Thousand Go”; traditional; from Folkways 2323, 1961)

Russell Ames wrote that a “secret song, traced to slaves forced by General Beauregard to build Confederate fortifications [was]. . . No More Auction Block for Me.” Later Tom Glazer wrote that the song “may have been written to honor Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation, 1863. . . .

It was sung by Black soldiers of the North, ex-slaves." John A. Lomax and Alan Lomax included "Many Thousand Go" with quotes from *Slave Songs of the United States* (Allen, Ware, and Garrison 1867). It seems that "Many Thousand Go" was the original title, for in *Slave Songs of the United States* it was printed without the apostrophe. Other than the opening verse, the lyrics are the same, and there is no mention of an auction block. The following information, as printed here, was a footnote following the lyrics:

*A song "to which the Rebellion had actually given rise. This was composed by nobody knows whom—though it was the most recent doubtless of all these 'spirituals,' and has been in secret to avoid detection. It is certainly plaintive enough. The peck of corn and pint of salt were slavery's rations." T. W. H.—Lt. Col. Trowbridge learned that it was first sung when Beauregard took the slaves to the islands to build fortifications at Hilton Head and Bay Point.*

Eileen Southern included "No More Auction Block for Me" as found in Gustavus D. Pike's *The Jubilee Singers, and Their Campaign for Twenty Thousand Dollars* (Boston, Mass.: Lee and Shepard, 1873); Pike's inclusion of the song is the first printing with the opening verse as now known and followed by the verses of "Many Thousand Go." Who wrote the auction-block

verse and/or when have not been documented; however, Pete's rendition of this slave song was a major influence in its revival, and it was adapted by Bob Dylan as the melody for his popular "Blowin' in the Wind." See Ames 1955: 156–157; Brunnings 1981:219; Glazer 1970: 248–249; Lomax and Lomax 1934:577; *Slave Songs of the United States* 1867:48, song 64; Southern 1997:160–161.

#### 16. HOLE IN THE BUCKET

Pete Seeger, vocal and banjo (Also known as "The Bucket Song," "Jug Hot en Loch, Der," "Leiwel Heindrich," "Hole in the Bucket," and more; traditional; from Folkways 2323, 1961)

A generation or two of Methodist youth learned this song during outings, summer church camps, and other Methodist youth gatherings, for it was a popular song in *Lift Every Voice*, a small songbook to encourage young people to sing. In the "Accompaniment Edition," the editor wrote that it "is an English version of a famous old Pennsylvania Dutch song," and included a version in the dialect of those folks that had been published in 1949 in *The Pennsylvania Dutchman*. The editor of that publication was quoted as saying "when he was studying and traveling in Germany in 1937–1938, he had found versions of the song in no less than twelve different regions." The Pennsylvania Dutch are descendants of Germans, Swiss, and other Europeans who immigrated to the United States in the late 17th and early 18th centuries, and

this song is of similar origin. It was probably taken across the Atlantic by those who became known as Pennsylvania Dutch. Pete performs it with the distinctive and humorous conversation between a male and female. See Brunnings 1981:129; *Lift Every Voice* 1953:53.

#### 17. WHAT SHALL WE DO WITH THE DRUNKEN SAILOR

Pete Seeger, vocal and banjo (Also known as "The Drunken Sailor," "Early in the Morning," "Hooray an' Up She Rises," and others; traditional; from Folkways 2323, 1961) c1891

A sea shanty (chanty) is a worksong for sailors at sea. Stan Hugill, a genuine seaman, wrote, "Early shantying was from what we know, little more than primitive chanting and wild aboriginal cries to encourage the seamen to keep time and work harder," and he called this a "stamp-an'-go song," of the sort that was usually heard on ships with large crews. This type of shanty was when sailors were pulling a sail up the mast, stamping up the deck, and "with all hands roaring out the song in unison." He identified this song as "one of the oldest known Anglo-Saxon shanties. . . . It appears with music in *Incidents of a Whaling Voyage* (1839) by Olmstead."

It is well known even today, for it is entered in many folksong books. Joanna C. Colcord in her book about American songs called it a "run-away song" with the crew "tailing on to the rope and running with it down the deck to the stomp and go of the music." Pete lets the banjo be a mild supporting instrument while he sings with

a seaman's gusto, for while not having served on an old-time sailing ship, he is a seaman. See Brunnings 1981:338, 80; Colcord 1964:73–74; Hugill 1966:1, 133–135; Hugill 1977:170–171.

#### 18. ARMY LIFE

Pete Seeger, vocal and banjo (Also known as "Gee, But I Want to Go Home," "I Don't Want No More Army," and others; words and music by Gitz Rice; from Folkways 2323, 1961)

There are few professional soldiers in the United States, and the armies that have fought in American wars have been composed mostly of "citizen-soldiers." That does not mean that professionals did not fight and die; it means that the majority of soldiers were either drafted or volunteered: they were not professionals. Usually each war has called upon a different decade of citizens, and each has developed its own "soldier verse and soldier balladry." John A. Lomax and Alan Lomax wrote that "From the very first days of training, . . . the most popular of all soldier songs in World War II was 'Gee, But I Want to Go Home.' This is an adaptation of a British song of World War I composed by Lt. Gitz Rice." Rice was born in Nova Scotia, and during the Great War (World War I) served with the Canadian Army in Europe. He was a songwriter and pianist; he fought in battles, but became deeply involved in creating entertainment for the other soldiers. This song is just one of many that he wrote.

When adapted by U. S. soldiers, the song became a bitter, but humorous statement about

army life. Pete served in World War II and knew that the experience was not humorous, but humor can be a valuable defense. Pete's friend Lead Belly recorded it in 1948 during his last sessions, using the title "I Don't Want No More Army Life" (SF 40068/71). See Brunnings 1981: 8, 105; Lomax and Lomax 1947:115, 124–25; www.collectionscanada.ca/gramophone.

#### 19. BLUE MOUNTAIN LAKE

Pete Seeger, vocal and banjo (Also known as "The Belle of Long Lake," "Come All Ye Good Fellers," and others; traditional; Laws C 20; from Folkways 5003, 1954)

This is an American lumberjack ballad depicting a fight at Blue Mountain Lake in upper New York. There are other Blue Mountain Lakes in the United States and other lumbercamp fights, but this story song is set in the New York site that has a rich timber industry. The story is that a man named Bill Mitchell took care of the shanty (shack) and was lazy and mean; lumberjack Jim Lou got mad at him and "beat the hell" out of him. Everyone was glad, including Mitchell's wife; their cook was young, "short, thick, and stout" and known as "The Belle of Long Lake." John A. Lomax and Alan Lomax depict life in a logging camp as "primitive" with long working hours, "in the sub-zero weather of the woods[. . . cheerful acceptance of crumbs, long hours, low pay, bad food, months of isolation[. . . always honing for a fight]" and "is still remembered by old-timers in the lumbering community of Glen

Falls[. . . where it happened." It may be an adaptation of "Moosehead Lake," a similar song collected in Maine by John A. Lomax and Alan Lomax, and it has been adapted into other states and incidents.

As a long-time resident of New York, Pete possibly heard an old-timer sing it; however, before Pete's recording, the same version was recorded a few times for Moe Asch (Folkways) by Frank Warner. Warner and his wife, Anne Locher Warner, as reported in *American Folklore: An Encyclopedia*, edited by Jan H. Brunvand, were: "Collectors, performers, and interpreters of American folksong[. . . especially in the Northeast." Therefore, it is possible that Pete obtained it from Warner. See Brunnings 1981:32; Brunvand 1996:740; Laws 1964:156–157; Lomax 1941:226–128; Lomax 1947:156–157, 168–169; Lomax 1960:104–105, 225–227.

#### 20. LADY MARGARET

Pete Seeger, vocal and banjo (Also known as "Lady Margaret and Sweet William," "Fair Margaret and Sweet William," "Fair Margaret's Misfortune," and others; traditional; Child 74; from Folkways 2319, 1957)

In most variants of this ballad, Lady Margaret commits suicide after being rejected by Sweet William; after confronting her ghost, he dies. The action varies, but the story is the same: rejection, her death (usually by suicide), and then the appearance of her ghost, followed by his death. In his notes to *American Ballads* (F 2319) Pete wrote:

*This ballad was one of the first I ever learned, in 1935, from the country lawyer and old-time banjo picker of Asheville, North Carolina, Bascom Lunsford. My thanks to him. It is a medieval vignette, and the last verses describing the conversation between Lady Margaret's ghost and her false lover are as close as we get to superstition in this LP.*

In his collecting and research, Francis James Child found this ballad in the 1765 edition of Percy's *Reliques* and quotes Percy as finding it published as early as 1611. Pete's version after it crossed the Atlantic has seven verses, but Child has one variant with twenty verses. Tristram Coffin found numerous printings and titles and stated, "This song is very popular in America, but the New World texts are not really close to any Child version." It has appeared in many folksong and ballad books; Pete included it with credit to Lunsford in *The Bells of Rhymney*. See Brunnings 1981:170, 189; Child, 1885:3: 199–203; Coffin 1977:70–72; Seeger 1964:24.

#### 21. JOHN HARDY

Pete Seeger, vocal and banjo (Also known as "Johnny Hard," "John Hardy Was a Desperate Little Man," "Johnny Harty," and others; traditional; Laws I 2; from Folkways 2319, 1957)

This ballad sometimes is mistakenly thought to be "John Henry"; however, it is a traditional song about an actual event, even though the locale

and victims often differ, because of a singer's memory or imagination. "John Hardy" was an African-American in West Virginia who worked as a railroad hand and was hanged on 19 January 1894 for killing another black man, whom "he had accused of stealing twenty-five cents." In his *American Ballads* (Folkways 2319) notes, Pete wrote:

*Here again research has traced the ballad to its source (if there can ever be such a thing as one source for a ballad showing the handiwork of many musicians), to court records in West Virginia of the trial and execution of John Hardy, in 1894. Beyond that, we cannot vouch for the fictional or factual status of the song, since so many verses are common to other ballads as well.*

As is well known, Pete and Woody Guthrie were friends, and this was a traditional ballad sung by Woody. Woody adapted the tune for the melody of his "Tom Joad." Where and when he learned it is not known, but he was singing it before 1940 and called it "John Harty." While the story is basically the same, the versions differ, especially in length; Woody sang nine verses. In the magazine *Goldenseal* 18 (Spring 1992) 1:47–51), published by the State of West Virginia, the complete story is told by Richard Ramella in "John Hardy: The Man and the Song." Ramella included a letter written in 1916 by the man who was governor at the time of the

trial and hanging and apparently thought that he was writing about John Henry.

"John Hardy" was first recorded by Eva Davis for Columbia in 1924; by 1939, it had been recorded eight times by country-music singers such as Ernest V. Stoneman, Buell Kazee, and the Carter Family. It has been published in many ballad and folksong books, and recorded by numerous individuals and groups from many musical genres, including the Kingston Trio. See Brunnings 1981:158; Guthrie 1958/1960:16; Laws 1964:246–47; Meade 2002: 75. See also Lomax 1947:287–288, 306–307; Lomax 1960: 264–265, 271–273; *Sing Out!* 14 (September 1964) 4:14–15.

## 22. JOHNSON

Pete Seeger, vocal and banjo (Also known as "The Three Butchers," "The Two Butchers," "Young Butcher Boy," and numerous others; traditional; Laws L 4; from Folkways 2319, 1957)

This ballad has many, many variants and titles. Both ballad scholars and singers—and Pete is both—often thought it to be a Child ballad; it is not, at least it has not been cited as a Child ballad in many contemporary studies and has not been located by title variants in the original Child *Ballads*. However, it has traveled and been adapted as much as any other ballad. It always involves at least one man, sometimes up to three, who often while riding with great sums of money, hears or hear the cries of a woman, often a naked woman, in distress. He or they help her

and ride toward town; she makes a sound, and one or more men come to rob and kill those who tried to help her. The battles vary with the villains being killed and/or brave men being killed; usually, the woman in distress kills her savior, or is killed while trying to kill. The message is not always explicit.

Under the title "The Three Butchers," Cecil Sharp collected four variants in four different Southern states. In variant formats, it has been collected as far north as Maine under the title "The Three Worthy Butchers of the North." As a broadside in England, it dates back to the 1600s. Pete's version is one of many Americanized variants. See Brunnings 1981:311, 160; Flanders 1966:241–244; Laws 1957:166–167; Sharp 1932: 1:370–372.

## 23. JOHN RILEY

Pete Seeger, vocal and banjo (Also known as "Pretty Fair Maid," "The Broken Token," "As I Walked Out One Summer's Morning," and many others; traditional; Laws N 42; from Folkways 2005, 1950, Smithsonian Folkways 40018)

When a young woman goes walking and a sailor asks her to marry him, she says that her "heart is with Riley," who has been gone for three years, and she will never marry. He discloses to her that he is Riley, and in some variants they marry. It is a story of constant, unconditional love, and has been found in many variants across the country. Jean Ritchie told that when her older sister, May, got married, one woman at the wedding wanted to have "everybody" sing "John

Riley." It may seem to be a strange wedding song, but all the guests knew it and sang it.

In his notes for *Darling Corey* (Folkways FP 3; Smithsonian Folkways 40018) Alan Lomax wrote:

*'John Riley,' that's my favorite song" many an old-time balladeer has told me. Although the ballad originated in England, American singers have connected it with whatever was the latest war and with the separations and reunions this war had caused. . . . Pete sings this sentimental 18th-century come-all-ye with the delicate restraint of the old-time ballad-rememberer, a reserve which permits the listener to step into the garden and hear the lovers' conversation among the ancient roses.*

John A. Lomax and Alan Lomax collected it in Kentucky in 1937, and later put it in a chapter on "social songs." Alan Lomax placed it as the opening song in his "Across the Blue Ridge" chapter as a true Southern mountain song. See Brunnings 1981:159; Laws 1957:224–225; Lomax 1941:168–170; Lomax 1960:154–156, 161–162; Ritchie 1955:229–231.

## 24. WASHER LAD

Pete Seeger, vocal and banjo (Also known as "Four Pence a Day"; traditional; from Folkways 5801, 1960)

This is a labor song that tells the sad story of those who barely survived or survive on starva-

tion wages or less. Its origin is England, where long hours and low wages were common in the industrial trade. When it made its way to the United States is not known; however, the theme was known here and is still known around the world, for sweat shops using individuals of most ages still exist, particularly in the milling industry. As long as huge profits take priority over human welfare, they will continue.

The song is from Pete's *American History in Ballad and Song* (Folkways 5801); it is a part of American history, and excessively low wages were not and are not uncommon. Pete and others have written and have sung songs to improve workers' lives, and his album *American Industrial Ballads* (SFW CD 40058) is an extension of his honest battle for a fair wage for a good day's labor. See Brunnings 1981:100; *Reprints from Sing Out!* 3, New York (Oak Publications, n. d.):56.

## 25. TALKING BLUES

Pete Seeger, vocal and banjo (Also known as "The Original Talking Blues"; from Folkways 2445, 1962)

When Woody Guthrie made his way to New York City, he played and sang songs in his "talking blues" style. Many of the early day folk song revivalists, including Pete, thought that he had originated his own genre of blues, or had learned a black blues style. They were wrong, for the "talking blues" was a singing/guitar-picking style from Chris Bouchillon, who was born into a

musical family in the western hill country of South Carolina became a singer and mandolinist; his two brothers played fiddle and guitar. In 1926, having been unsuccessful as a recording family trio, they tried again as “The Greenville Trio” and recorded two numbers under Chris’s name. According to Charles Wolfe (*Chris Bouchillon “The Original Talking Man”* Old Homestead Records OHCS 181, 1986), Frank Walker, the recording director or Artist & Repertoire chief, recalled that he did not like the singing, but did like Chris’s voice: “I said, ‘Can you play the guitar while you are talking?’ He said, ‘Yes.’ So I said ‘Let’s do it, let’s fool around with something like that. He had a little thing called a ‘blues thing’ and tried to sing it. I said don’t sing it, just talk it. Tell them about the blues but don’t sing it.” The record was released in early 1927 under the title “Talking Blues” on the Columbia label (Co 15120-D), and sold 90,000 records, an amazing number during those days. The “talking blues” genre was born, and Woody Guthrie used the genre for many topics: “Talking Dust Bowl Blues,” “Mean Talkin’ Blues,” “Talking Constitution,” “Talking Hitler to Death,” and many more unpublished songs.

Bouchillon was a comedian at heart, and the opening phrase, “If you want to get to heaven, Let me tell you what to do,” has been the beginning of many humorous songs. See Brunnings 1981:302; Kingsbury (Charles Wolfe) 1998:45–46.

## 26. LOLLY TOO DUM

Pete Seeger, vocal and banjo (Also known as “The Fit Comes On Me Now,” “I Must and I Will Get Married Now,” and others; traditional; from Folkways 2445, 1962) 1844

In their 1941 book, *Our Singing Country*, John A. Lomax and Alan Lomax placed “Lolly Too Dum” in the “Courting Songs” portion of the chapter on “social songs.” Their explication of it was:

*One familiar form of folk song carries for ward its theme by question and reply of two actors, usually a boy and a girl—a form often used a generation ago in courting bees, neighbor concerts, and on the amateur stage. In America such songs were sometimes called “answer-back” songs.*

However, in this song, the mother does the questioning, and then starts the humorous portion with “now, I’m on the market, too.” The daughter responds with a common attitude, as old as you are “who would marry you?” In their *Folk Song U. S. A.*, they have a much longer statement in the unit “When You Go A-Courtin’,” and emphasize that on the frontiers of the United States the marriage of young maidens was common and that a female unmarried at the age of twenty-two was usually considered to be an old maid.

There is a variant in which a “widow woman” during verses one through four tells her daughter to whistle and she will get a cow, a pig, and a sheep; the daughter responds that she cannot whistle and cannot get the animals. In the fifth verse it is “Whistle, daughter, whistle, and

you will get a man.” The daughter starts whistling loudly. The collection containing this variant states, “Here is another set of words for this same tune,” and the words that follow are almost the same as sung by Pete. The last line Pete sings is “That fit is off of me,” and in the “whistle variant,” a footnote states, “There is a 17th century country dance with the title ‘The Fit Comes on Me Now.’” The meaning of the word *fit* can be ‘seizure’, ‘outburst’, ‘proper’, ‘attack’, and many more; therefore, the reader or listener can make a personal interpretation of the meaning. It is a traditional American folk-song, probably from the 1840s, started by folks in the Southern mountains, and it spread to many other regions. See Brunnings 1981:184; Chase 1956:138–139; Lomax 1941:126–27; Lomax 1947:33–34, 46–47.

## 27. T. B. BLUES

Pete Seeger, vocal and banjo (From Folkways 2445, 1962)

Pete and his banjo present a sharp contrast in style to the “T. B. Blues” recording of Jimmie Rodgers and his guitar accompanied by steel guitarist Charles Kama, and it is a song that indicates the diversity of sources that provide the music Pete sings and plays. This is a song well known among older country musicians and fans, as well as by all fans of Jimmie Rodgers. It was recorded by Rodgers on 31 January 1931 for Victor Records, and recorded two months later, also for Victor, by Gene Johnson, a name used at that time

by Gene Autry, one of many singers who imitated Rodgers. The Rodgers recording earned approximately four million dollars for Victor during his short lifetime.

Tuberculosis, referred to as “T. B.,” was killing and did kill Rodgers, but he did not compose this song. Nolan Porterfield, in *Jimmie Rodgers: The Life and Times of America’s Blue Yodeler*, wrote that during the mid-1920s, Rodgers, a railroad man and singer of many railroad songs, met Raymond Hall, an ex-convict, near a railyard in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma; they traded songs, including “Take Me Back Again,” written by Hall. Later, Hall was back in prison in Texas; he wrote to Rodgers asking for help, and they developed friendship through correspondence. “T. B.” was not a new theme in folk music, for it was an often-used theme among African-American blues singers, such as Lead Belly and Josh White. Rodgers wrote to Hall asking for any verses he knew about tuberculosis; Hall sent verses for Rodgers to use as he wanted, and was paid fifty dollars by Rodgers. Jimmie Rodgers is always listed as the writer of the song, but the Victor file card lists Rodgers and Hall as cowriters.

About Rodgers, Pete recalled that “A man once told me in a Montana saloon, ‘The reason I like Jimmie Rodgers is everything he sings is true’—the highest praise a folksinger could ever have.” See Porterfield 1979:56–57, 280. For more information about Hall, see Malone 1985:89; Seeger 1972:206–207.

**28. SUMMERTIME**

Pete Seeger, vocal and banjo (Also known as "Summertime an' the Livin' Is Easy"; from Folkways 2445, 1962)

The opera *Porgy and Bess* by George and Ira Gershwin and DuBose Heyward was a Theatre Guild production in 1935. In 1926, the novel *Porgy* by DuBose Heyward was published; it was about the community life of African-Americans in Charleston, South Carolina, Heyward's home, and he also wrote a play based on the novel. After reading the novel and seeing the play, George Gershwin believed that he could write an opera libretto based on Heyward's play; Heyward agreed, but it was in 1934 before Gershwin started the project.

Gershwin traveled to the Charleston region to observe, study, and assimilate African-American culture in order to turn it into an inspiring opera. When completed, the opera was "three acts and nine scenes, of which the manuscript score contains 700 pages of closely written music. . . . It contained three hours of music, including arias and recitatives." It was an American grand opera; however, Broadway was not the opera staging sector: scenes and musical numbers were cut, and it became a Broadway musical production. It was not until 1975 that the original Gershwin version was seen and heard in the United States, when the Houston Grand Opera Company produced it with an all-black cast.

"Summertime" was written as an operatic

lullaby, not a children's lullaby, and became for many years a well-known song sung and heard across the nation. While Ira Gershwin wrote many of the *Porgy and Bess* musical lyrics, the "Summertime" sheet music credits "Lyrics by DuBose Heyward." It is another beautiful example of the diversity of Pete's song sources and interests. See Chase 1987:546-549; Fuld 2000:538-539.

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Smithsonian Folkways Recordings is the nonprofit record label of the Smithsonian Institution, the national museum of the United States. Our mission is the legacy of Moses Asch, who founded Folkways Records in 1948 to document music, spoken word, instruction, and sounds from around the world. The Smithsonian acquired Folkways from the Asch estate in 1987, and Smithsonian Folkways Recordings has continued the Folkways tradition by supporting the work of traditional artists and expressing a commitment to cultural diversity, education, and increased understanding.

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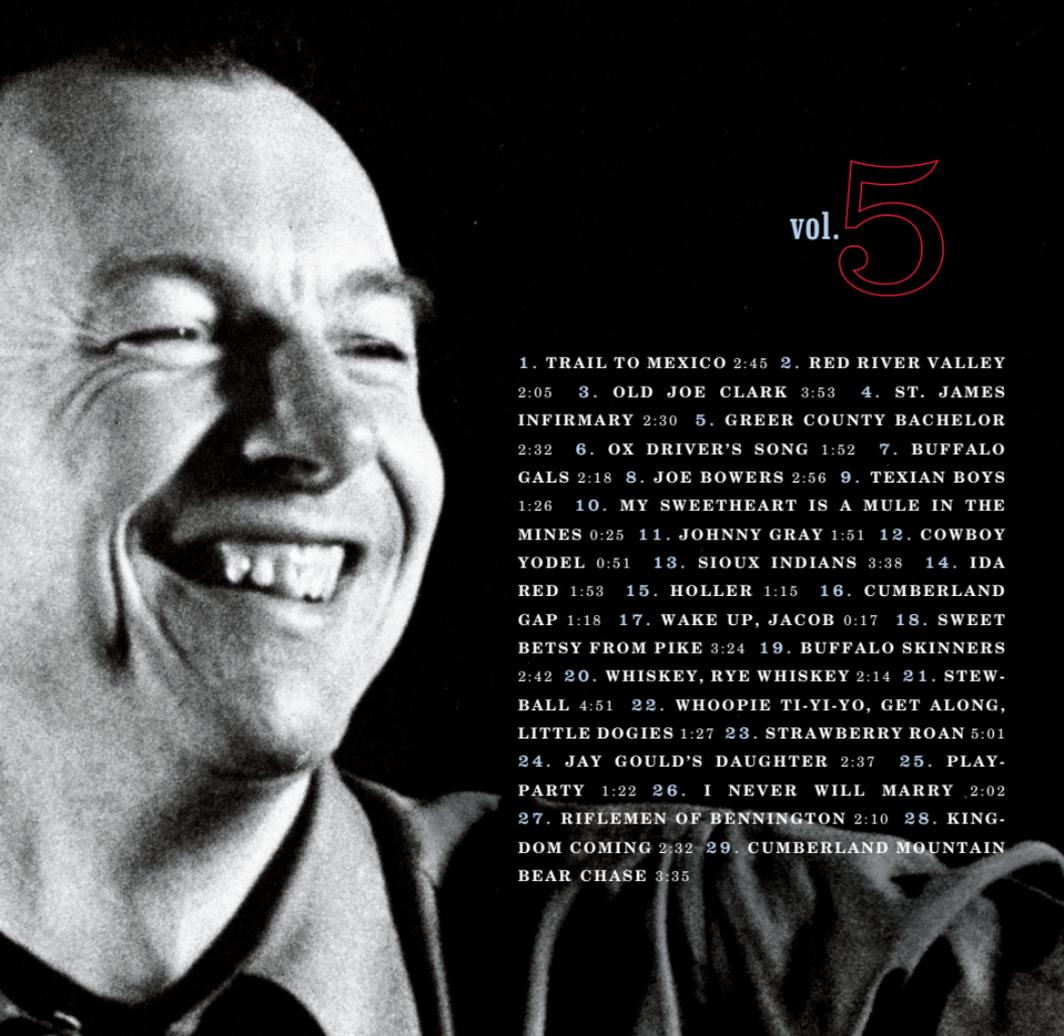
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Pete Seeger

AMERICAN FAVORITE BALLADS

vol. 5



vol. 5

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## 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](http://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](http://www.folkways.si.edu).*

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Pete Seeger's life, music, and legacy encapsulate nearly a century of American history and culture. He has immersed himself in folk music and used it, like Johnny Appleseed, to "plant the seeds of a better tomorrow in the homes across our land." The songs in this collection of 139 *American Favorite Ballads* narrate tales of ordinary people and their extraordinary deeds, and show Pete at the crossroads of the past and the future—putting his own stamp on America's folk song heritage while bequeathing it to generations to come. 5 CDs, each with its own booklet of extensive notes, nearly 6 hours of music.



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