

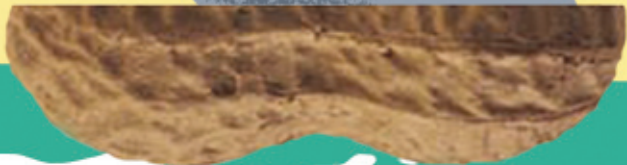


Smithsonian Folkways

**Whoever  
Shall Have Some  
Good Peanuts**

**and other  
folk songs  
for children**

sung by  
**Sam Hinton**



# Whoever Shall Have Some Good Peanuts

and other folk songs  
for children

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SFW CD 45062

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## Introduction

Bess Lomax Hawes

**During the 1950s**, when we were new to California, my husband, Butch Hawes, and I began singing at occasional local hootenannies and gatherings. These were casual events, almost always free, and occurred when the spirit moved someone. They mostly featured such stalwarts as Vern Partlow, Will Geer, Rich Dehr, Mickey Miller, and other Topanga neighbors; young singers just getting started, such as Odetta, Frank Hamilton, Guy Carawan; and the occasional luminary from the East Coast.

It was at just such an event that I first heard Sam Hinton, who had come northward from his San Diego home accompanied by his lovely wife, Leslie. Even then, he made a sort of West-Coast Burl Ives figure, apparently casual but professional to the core, his flexible baritone floating effortlessly through an extensive repertory of songs that nobody else knew or had even heard but every one of them accessible to everybody in the audience. He was the consummate pro, and he made it all seem so easy.

Unlike some of the passionately unruly singers who were to come along later, Sam was gentle, calm, and friendly, and it took no time at all for the Hintons and the Haweses to get acquainted off-stage. Both Sam and I were from Texas and knew many of the same songs (in different versions, of course). We had had different as well as oddly similar lives, and Sam used to tell me about his awfully well.

He was born in Tulsa, Oklahoma, in 1917 and was playing the harmonica by the age of five. In his earliest years, he became fired by a private ambition to learn every song he ever heard, and eventually he admitted to a repertory of 5,000 songs (though most people believe this is a modest assessment). His maternal grandfather, who had been a songster and a widely appreciated entertainer in his day, knew a vast number of songs and vocal tricks which young Sam absorbed through the age-old method of family transmission—from one mouth or body to another. In many respects, though, Sam's mother—an excellent musician who took especial pleasure in playing ragtime piano—was his direct model.

In college, Sam learned guitar and made expenses partly through his musical performances. And in 1937 he was taken on by the Major Bowes organization and sent on a two-year performing tour of the United States. It seems likely this experience helped Sam in his ever-increasing mastery of stage-craft and musical discipline, and also allowed him time to perfect the vocal tricks he ever afterwards used to perk up his performances. Sam was the only person I ever knew who could sing around with himself—whistling, for instance, the first part of "Frère Jacques" and humming the second part. (He once told me that the hardest thing he had ever worked out along this line was learning to hum an ascending scale while simultaneously whistling the descending octave. He had had to take it out of his performances, however,

because audiences didn't appreciate it—it wasn't that exciting to anybody but musicians.)

But there was a lot else going on during Sam's growing-up days. Since his earliest childhood, Sam had been fascinated by the natural world around him and had carefully observed the behaviors of the insects, snakes, and amphibians of the area of Texas where he grew up. In college he majored in zoology and eventually earned almost all his academic expenses by supplying a Texas medical company with rattlesnake venom for use in local hospitals.

Many years later when the Hawes family first visited the Hintons at their home in La Jolla in southern California, Sam took us through the aquarium at the Scripps Oceanographic Institution, which he had directed for some twenty years. At the time we had no idea of his scientific career—to us, he was the man who sang all those good songs. But we happily joined him in his tour, and in one laboratory along the way we saw an enormous massive green bottle—about a five-gallon size—containing several active rattlesnakes. Our children happily ran up to it, but Sam cautioned them, "Watch out, don't get too close," I said, "Oh Sam, surely those snakes couldn't break out of that enormous jar," but Sam said mildly, "No, they couldn't, but they might get scared and try to strike at the children, and then they might hurt their noses." None of us ever forgot his clear concern.

As we found out later, Sam was doing far more than harboring rattlesnakes and directing the aquarium; he was also teaching a varied group of classes in biology at the University of California, San Diego. And he was also furthering his special concern with elementary education, in which he always managed to include not only biology but folk singing. Don't ask me how he did it—with Sam such things just seemed to come naturally—and all of

these complex interrelated interests came to light during his sixteen years as UCSD's Director of Relations with Schools. It was during this period that he developed his techniques for performing his music for children, a sample of which you will hear in this album.

When he found an extra few minutes, Sam also continued to pursue his long-time interest in calligraphy. He was finally able to combine this well-developed skill with his lifelong concern with folk song by doing all the calligraphy for the seminal songbook, *Rise Up Singing* (Sing Out Publications, 1988). That special songbook has fueled an infinite number of singers and songwriters and just everyday folks like all of us.

But I cannot close this essay without some discussion of Sam's personal performance style. A widespread, possibly even apocryphal anecdote so deftly indicates a crucial factor in what you are going to be hearing that I can't leave it out. A rising young singer of the time (perhaps Joan Baez) was talking with the fierce-tongued and open-hearted Ozark ballad singer, Almeda Riddle, asking her, "When I sing songs from your records, Almeda, they just don't sound the same as when you sing them, and I can't figure out why not." "Well," Mrs. Riddle said, "it's just that when you sing a song, you get in front of it, and when I sing a song, I put it in front of me."

Mrs. Riddle is pithily describing two particular performance styles, the older of which possibly developed along with the oldest song traditions we know of; it is conceivable that Homer's original tales were sung this way. Generally speaking it is closely associated with storytelling, with bringing the news; in modern times it is often associated with singers of European origin. For example, contemporary *corridos* are often sung in this dispassionate, personally removed fashion. The ultimate idea is that the song should be delivered as

coolly as a news item, the individual reaction of the singer being irrelevant, possibly even diluting the power of the actual event.

One of the few stories that I ever heard Sam Hinton tell more than once (a good indication of its perceived value to him) concerned an old Appalachian gentleman who was singing a murder ballad to a respectful group gathered on his front porch. The singer had rocked back on the legs of his chair with his eyes closed, and when he came to the lines about how the (false) true lover had stabbed her to the heart and then threw her body into the river to float away downstream, he crashed forward on the front legs of his chair and in a voice quivering with disgust said, "How on earth could any son-of-a-bitch be so mean?" Having delivered his editorial comment, the old gentleman rocked back again onto his chair legs, closed his eyes, and proceeded to bring the grisly tale to its inevitable conclusion.

Sam himself has never sung any song in my hearing in which his own personal emotions took over those of the song. He always lets it tell its story straight, investing each one with his own impeccable combination of modesty and elegance. I believe he is trying to sing each song just the way he heard it, although on the rare occasion where he has found it necessary to change a word or so, like the good folklorist he is, he always tells you what he has done.

As I have been working on this introduction, attempting to demonstrate Sam's roster of excellencies as a great singer of folk songs, they seem to me to combine all the many sides of his unusual life experiences. In the first place, he always maintains his view of himself as a singer who passes it on, who feels no need to insert his own personality into performances. Secondly, he maintains a deep and glowing respect for the songs themselves, partly because he works, as far as he can, out of his own tradition, and partly because of the

depth of his research into the folkloric background of every song he sings. Thirdly, he really wants his audiences, whether schoolchildren or university students, to enjoy themselves. Thus he is not above singing in falsetto the female part of a song about a husband and wife quarrel; the original singers did that, too. His performances take enormous strength from his scientific background, his ultimate concern with meaning—which may sound silly when applied to a singer who does so many pure nonsense songs. But Sam Hinton always means what he says, and he says what he means.

The first time we visited Sam and Leslie's house in San Diego, on walking into the living room, the thing that first struck us was a round solid-slab table, on which we later had lunch. But this table was special—it was floating up in the air because it had no legs at all, and our children went down instantly to the floor to confirm the magical effect. My husband, Butch, and Sam were immediately locked in a technical discussion about how he had produced such a marvelous thing, for it was absolutely stable and didn't wobble at all. Remembering it now, it reminds me of Sam and his music—solid, stable, minimal, well-crafted, useful, elegantly designed, and underneath it all, definitely a bit mysterious.

Sam still lives at their old home and he still uses this incredible table. It will continue to memorialize to me this remarkable man, who has managed so beautifully to assemble, sequence, and combine his multiple talents and his multiple interests. For that we must thank him and admire how well he does absolutely everything—including singing the most engaging songs for children ever recorded.



## Track Notes

Sam Hinton

### 1. Whoever Shall Have Some Good Peanuts

One of the most important things about folk songs that makes them different from other kinds of songs is that there is never just one way to do them; everybody can sing them in his own way, and nobody can say that there is any "right" or "wrong" about it. Of course, if a song came from the mountains of Kentucky, when you sing it in your own way it will no longer be a Kentucky mountain folk song. But it will be *your* song. This one, "Whoever Shall Have Some Good Peanuts," is a song from American schools; I've heard it in grade schools, high schools, and colleges. And, since you are a student in a school, you can do anything you like with the song—and it will still be an American school song!

You'll notice that each chorus is longer than the one before, because you have to sing back through all the earlier choruses. This kind of song is called a cumulative song.

## 2. The Green Grass Growing All Around

This is another cumulative song, and it's an old one; mothers and fathers have sung it to their children for hundreds of years, in many different languages. My mother and father taught it to me, when I was a little boy in Oklahoma. You can add more verses if you have enough breath to sing 'em—put dirt on the nail on the toe on the foot on the flea, and a germ on the dirt, and a leg on the germ, and so on and on... .

## 3. I Had a Little Nut Tree

Some people say that this song isn't supposed to mean anything; others say that it is, and that the King of Spain's daughter was Juana of Castile, who paid a visit to King Henry the Eighth of England about 450 years ago. We know for sure that it's a good song, and that's really the most important thing about it.

## 4. The Crawdad Song

Crawdads, as you probably know, are small animals that look like little Maine lobsters; like the lobsters, they have big pinching claws, and they, too, are good to eat. French-speaking people called them *écrevisses*, which is pronounced ay-cre-VEECE, and to some English speakers, this sounded like crayfish. In the South, this was changed to crawfish, and finally it became a

sort of pet name—crawdad. The song comes from East Texas, where I was raised. We used to fish for crawdads with a piece of bacon tied to a string. We didn't need a hook, because the crawdads would use their big claws to hold onto the bait until we pulled them right up to the top of the water. If we caught enough, my grandmother would make a delicious crayfish bisque. You ought to try it sometime!

## 5. Michael Finnegan

I've met lots of people who sang this song, and every one of them did it differently. Lots of them made up some of their own verses, and that is what I did. You can do it, too; all you have to do is think up some rhymes for Finnegan, and there you go!

## 6. Jolly Old Roger

Nowadays, when a teakettle or a frying pan starts leaking, most of us throw it away and buy a new one. In the old days, though, people didn't do this; instead, most of them had such things repaired by a tinsmith like Jolly Old Roger. We know that this is a pretty old song because it says that Roger lived in the town of New Amsterdam, which is an old, old name for New York. There may never have been a real person named Jolly Old Roger, but there were certainly real tinsmiths, and we can be sure that the young folks liked to visit their shops, and listen to the sounds of their tools on the metal. So, when someone made up this song a couple of hundred years ago, people liked to sing it because it reminded them of pleasant things, and they've been singing it ever since.

## 7. Old Dan Tucker

About 175 years ago, a new sort of stage entertainment started in America—the Black-Face Minstrel Show. Singers and dancers and comedians used make-up to make their skins dark; they sang some old songs, and some that were written especially for them. Even though the minstrel shows gave people all sorts of wrong ideas about African Americans, some of the songs were pretty good ones; and the shows played an important part in getting songs of all sorts spread around through the country in the days before radios and record-players. “Old Dan Tucker” was written by a minstrel writer and performer named Dan Emmett—the same man who wrote “Dixie.” Most singers today, however, have forgotten that it is Mr. Emmett’s song, and they sing it as if it were their own.

## 8. Old Boastun Was Dead

Although it’s about an old man who was dead and buried, this is not a sad song. In every part of America there is a way of singing it—sometimes it’s about Old Grumbler, or Old Pompey, or Old Grimes; in England, it’s about Oliver Cromwell, or Sir Roger. People have always wondered about the miracle that happens when a seed is buried in the ground and grows into a plant—and it really is a thing to wonder about. A thousand or more years ago, people believed that you had to perform some sort of magic ceremony, and sing a magic chant whenever a seed was planted, to make sure it would grow. I think that “Old Boastun Was Dead” may have begun as that sort of chant. Today we think of Old Boastun as a man who rose up out of his grave, but when the song was a magical one, he may have been a symbol for a plant that did the same thing. It was always a favorite in my family when I was little, and has been a favorite with my own children.

## 9. Little Old Woman All Skin and Bones

Here is another old song. It was written down in a book in the year 1810, nearly 200 years ago, and even then the writer spoke of it as an old song. Let me warn you that the whole idea of the song is to scare you, and that there’s a loud yell at the end where you won’t expect it. If it does startle you, you might like to know that it has startled other people, too; Robert Southey, the famous English poet, wrote in his diary that it always scared him when he was a little boy in the late 1700s, and that he used to beg his sisters not to sing it. They sang it anyway!

## 10. A Horse Named Bill

Some songs are put together just to see how silly they can be, and this is one of the champion silly songs of all time. A few of the verses came from Chicago and a few from San Francisco; but wherever you hear them, do not expect them to make any sense! You’ll recognize the tune as being part of “Dixie.”

## 11. The Barnyard Song

Over 250 years ago people from Ireland, Scotland, and England started settling in the southern mountains of what is now the United States, and their descendants still live there. These folks brought with them lots of songs from the old countries, and this is one of them. I learned it from a singer who had learned it in Knott County, Kentucky.

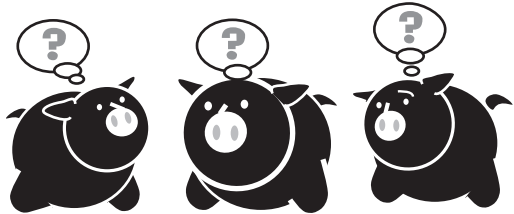


## 12. Groundhog

Called the woodchuck in some parts of the country, the groundhog is an animal about the size of a large cat, but fatter; it digs deep burrows in the ground, and farmers don't like it because it eats up their crops, and makes holes that can trip up a horse. People have fun hunting groundhogs, though, and they like to eat them, too; but the most fun of all, I think, is to sing about them. So why don't you join me in the chorus of this song? Pretend you're a Tennessee groundhog hunter and sing out!

## 13. Three Foolish Piglets

Sometimes grown-ups make up songs that are supposed to teach lessons to young folks; this one tells you, for example, that you mustn't think you are bigger than you really are, and that a little pig can't sound like a big pig. Most kids, though, don't pay much attention to the lesson, because they have sense enough to know that little pigs would never learn to say, "oink, oink, oink" if they never tried! The best thing you can do with a song like this is just to enjoy it; that's what I did when I was a boy—enjoyed it for years before I found out that it was supposed to teach me a "lesson."



## 14. Old Blue

Down in the South, good hunting dogs have always been very highly prized, partly because they are such good hunters and partly because they are such good company. Old Blue must have been one of the best, and from the way his master sings about him, you can tell he loved him. You'll notice that at the beginning the man gets his horn and calls Old Blue. This kind of horn was made from the horn of a cow, and was often used as a signal to tell the dogs to come for a hunt. I had a hard time learning to blow one of these horns when I was a boy, because there never was a chance to practice; my grandfather, Judge Duffie, said I shouldn't blow the horn if we weren't really going hunting, because the dogs might come and be disappointed, then not bother to come when we really wanted them. And if we were going hunting, blowing the horn was a job for a man, and it had to be done right! In the kind of hunting done in the song, no gun is used—all you need is a good dog and an axe. The dog runs ahead, barking in a certain way so you can tell where he is, and, when he finds a trail, he barks in another way. Finally, when he chases the possum or coon up into a tree, he bays in still another way, until you get there and either chop down the tree or shake the animal out; then the dog runs and grabs him.

## 15. Mr. Rabbit

This song is probably a mixture of a game song and a church song, and comes from African Americans in East Texas. It gives a good description of a rabbit, and it's lots of fun to sing.

## 16. All Hid?

Most kids who are “it” in a game of hide-and-seek have to hide their eyes and count to 500 by fives, or to 100 by ones, before they can open their eyes and leave the base to seek the hiders. In Livingston, Alabama, however, they sometimes used songs instead of counting, and this song was composed for that purpose by a nine-year-old girl name Hetty Godfrey. By great good luck, Professor John Lomax heard her singing it in 1940, and got her to make a recording of it for the Library of Congress. I learned it from that record. I’ve never had the fortune to meet Hetty Godfrey myself, but I know she must be a grown-up lady by now, and probably has children of her own. I hope her children have learned her song, and I hope you will, too. Hide-and-seek is fun any way you play it, but it’s more fun than ever if you can sing while you’re “it.”

## 17. Robin the Bobbin

Many boys and girls in America have grown up with this song, as I did. It is very, very old, having been sung for perhaps as long as 2,000 years, always changing as it passed from person to person. When it first started, it was a sort of magical and religious song, based on an old belief that the wren was the king of the birds; if the right people captured a wren in the right way at the right time, some of its magic would rub off on its captors. In the beginning, of course, the song wasn’t at all like this one; it wasn’t in English, and it was a very serious song. Gradually, however, as some people came to take the belief less seriously, it changed little by little, and split up into a whole lot of

songs; this is one of them. When I sing it, I enjoy thinking that it may have been sung, in a very different way, by a man who wasn’t my great-grandfather, or my great-great-grandfather— but my sixty-times-great-grandfather, and that he passed it on to me (and to you) through the singing of all the people who have lived in the years between us.

## 18. Frog Went Courting

The first time this song was mentioned in a book, as far as we know, was in 1549, so we know that people have been singing it for at least 450 years. It started in England but is now sung in many other countries, and there are dozens and dozens of ways of singing it in the United States. Because of the nonsense words in the chorus this version is often called “Keemo Kimo.”

## 19. The Eagle’s Lullaby

Often you find a single tune being used for many different purposes. The “Eagle’s Whistle” used to be an Irish marching tune that was played on the bagpipes; later on, it became a fiddle tune, used for dancing in the United States. The way it’s used here is another Irish way of treating it—as a lullaby. It is supposed to represent a mother eagle singing to her babies in the nest. “Ei-nee-nee” is an old Irish word for little bird, and “sho-ho-een” is just a quiet sound, to make a baby go to sleep.

## 20. The Frog Song

Sometimes a song isn't complete without a story to go with it, and the story wouldn't be complete, either, without the song. This one is that kind of a song-story, and I learned it from my mother, who learned it from her grandfather; I sang it to my two children when they were little, and I'll bet they're going to sing it to *their* children. When you do the "Frog Song," you're supposed to be holding a baby on your knee and bouncing him up and down while you sing "Jinga bungla bungla bungla." In the story, the boy sits down on a cypress knee. That's a part of the root of a cypress tree. These trees grow in the swamps of southeast Texas and other parts of the South, where the ground is usually covered with shallow water; the knees stick up out of the water and keep the trees from drowning. They make a good place to sit if you want to listen to the frogs.



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### **About Smithsonian Folkways**

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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