



American Favorite Ballads, Vol. 1 Lyrics

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1. John Henry 4:34

John Henry was a little baby
Sitting on his papa's knee,
And he picked up a hammer and a little piece of steel
Cried: "A hammer gonna be the death of me."
(Lord, Lord!) (x4)

The Captain said to John Henry,
"I'm gonna bring that steam drill around.
I'm gonna bring that steam drill out on the job.
I'm gonna whup that steel on down." (Lord, Lord!)
(4x)

John Henry told his captain,
"Lord, a man ain't nothing but a man.

But before I'd let your steam drill beat me down,
I'd die with a hammer in my hand!" (Lord, Lord!)
(4x)

John Henry said to his shaker,
"Shaker why don't you sing?
And because I'm swinging thirty pounds from my
hips on down
Just listen to that cold steel sing!" (Lord, Lord!) (4x)

Now the captain said to John Henry,
"I believe that mountain's caving in."
John Henry said right back to his captain,
"Ain't nothing but my hammer sucking wind." (Lord,
Lord!) (4x)

Now the man that invented the steam drill,
He thought he was mighty fine.
But John Henry drove fifteen feet.

The steam drill only made nine. (Lord, Lord!) (4x)

John Henry hammered in the mountain.



His hammer was striking fire.
But he worked so hard it broke his poor heart.
And he laid down his hammer, and he died. (Lord,
Lord!) (4x)

John Henry had a little woman.
Her name was Polly Anne.
John Henry took sick and had to go to bed.
Polly Anne drove steel like a man. (Lord, Lord!) (4x)

So every Monday morning
When the blue birds begin to sing,
You can hear John Henry a mile or more.
You can hear John Henry's hammer ring. (Lord,
Lord!) (4x)

2. Shenandoah 1:53

Oh Shenandoah, I love your daughter,
Wey hey, you rolling river.
Oh Shenandoah, I love your daughter.
Away, we're bound away, 'cross the wide Missouri.

Oh Shenandoah, I long to see you,
Way hey, you rolling river.
Oh Shenandoah, I'll not deceive you.
Away, we're bound away, 'cross the wide Missouri.

For seven years, I've been a rover,
Wey hey, you rolling river.
For seven years, I've been a rover.
Away, we're bound away, 'cross the wide Missouri.

3. Blue Tailed Fly (Jimmie Crack Corn) 2:37

When I was young, I used to wait
On my master and serve him his plate,
And pass the bottle when he got dry,
And brush away the Blue Tail Fly.

CHORUS:
Jimmy cracked corn, and I don't care. (3x)
My master's gone away.

And when he'd ride in the afternoon,
I'd follow with a hickory broom.
The pony being rather shy
When bitten by the Blue Tail Fly.
(CHORUS)

One day he rode around the farm.

The flies so numerous, they did swarm.
Once chanced to bite him on the thigh.
The devil take a Blue Tail Fly.

(CHORUS)

The pony jump, he toss, he pitch.
He threw my master in the ditch.
He died, and the jury wondered why.
The verdict was the Blue Tail Fly.

(CHORUS)

He lies beneath a 'simmon tree.
His epitaph is there to see.
"Beneath this stone, I'm forced to lie.

The victim of the Blue Tail Fly."

(CHORUS)

4. Black Girl 2:34

"Black girl, black girl, don't lie to me.
Tell me where did you sleep last night?"
"In the pines, in the pines, where the sun never
shines.
I shivered the whole night through."

"My husband was a railroad man.
Died a mile and a half from town.
His head was found in the driver's wheel,
And his body, it never was found."

5. Skip to My Lou 1:29

Lost my partner; what'll I do? (3x)
Skip to my Lou my darling.

CHORUS:
Gone again, skip to my Lou. (3x)
Skip to my Lou my darling.

I'll get another one prettier than you. (3x)
Skip to my Lou my darling.

(CHORUS)

Little red wagon painted blue. (3x)
Skip to my Lou my darling.

(CHORUS)

Flies in the buttermilk two by two. (3x)



Skip to my Lou my darling.

(CHORUS)

Flies in the sugar bowl, "Shoo fly shoo!" (3x)
Skip to my Lou my darling.

(CHORUS)

Learn more verses, but this'll have to do (3x)
Skip to my Lou my darling.

6. Big Rock Candy Mountain 3:15

One evening as the sun went down
And the jungle fires were burning,
Down the track came a hobo hiking.
He said, "Boys I'm not turning.
I'm headed for a land that's far away.
Beside that crystal fountain,
I'll see you all this coming fall
In the Big Rock Candy Mountain."

In the Big Rock Candy Mountain, it's a land that's
fair and bright.
The handouts grow on bushes, and you sleep out
every night.
The box-cars all are empty, and the sun shines every
day.
I'm bound to go
Where there ain't no snow
And the wind don't blow
In the Big Rock Candy Mountain.

CHORUS:

Oh the buzzing of the bees in the cigarette trees
By the soda-water fountain
Where lemonade springs, where the blue-bird sings
In the Big Rock Candy Mountain.

In the Big Rock Candy Mountain you never change
socks.
Little streams of alky-hol comes trickling down the
rocks.
Oh the shacks all have to tip their hats, and the
railroad bulls are blind.
There's a lake of stew
And ginger ale too.
And you paddle all around it
In a big canoe
In the Big Rock Candy Mountain.

(CHORUS)

In the Big Rock Candy Mountain, all the cops have
wooden legs.
The bull-dogs all have rubber teeth, and the hens lay
soft-boiled eggs.
The box-cars all are empty, and the sun shines every
day.
I'm bound to go
Where there ain't no snow
Where the sleet don't fall
And the wind don't blow
In the Big Rock Candy Mountain.

(CHORUS)

In the Big Rock Candy Mountain, all the jails are
made of tin.
You can slip right out again as soon as they put you
in.
There ain't no short handle shovels, no axes, saws nor
picks.
I'm bound to stay
Where you sleep all day
Where they hung the jerk
That invented work
In the Big Rock Candy Mountain.

(CHORUS)

7. Clementine 3:07

In a cavern, in a canyon, excavating for a mine,
Lived a miner, forty-niner and his daughter
Clementine.

Oh my darling, oh my darling, oh my darling,
Clementine
You are lost and gone forever, dreadful sorry
Clementine.

Light she was and, like a fairy, and her shoes were
number nines.
Herring boxes without topses, sandals were for
Clementine

Drove she ducklings, to the water, every morning just
at nine.
Stubbed her toe against a splinter, fell into the
foaming brine.

Ruby lips above the water, blowing bubbles soft and
fine.
But alas I was no swimmer, so I lost my Clementine.



There's a churchyard, on the hillside, where the
flowers grow and twine.
There grow roses, 'mongst the posies, fertilized by
Clementine.

8. Yankee Doodle 1:41

Yankee Doodle went to town
Riding on a pony.
Stuck a feather in his hat
And called it macaroni.

CHORUS:

Yankee Doodle, keep it up,
Yankee Doodle dandy.
Mind the music and the step
And with the girls be handy.

9. Home on the Range 1:54

Oh give me a home where the buffalo roam
Where the deer and the antelope play,
Where seldom is heard a discouraging word
And the skies are not cloudy all day.

CHORUS:

Home, home on the range
Where the deer and the antelope play
Where seldom is heard a discouraging word
And the skies are not cloudy all day.

How often at night when the heavens are bright
With the lights of the glittering stars,
I stood there amazed, and I asked as I gazed:
Does their glory exceeds that above?

(CHORUS)

10. John Brown's Body 2:59

John Brown's body lies a-molderin' in the grave, (3x)
But his soul goes marching on.

CHORUS:

Glory, glory hallelujah, (3x)
But His soul goes marching on.

The stars above in Heaven are a-lookin' kindly down
(3x)

On the grave of old John Brown.

(CHORUS)

He captured Harper's Ferry with his nineteen men so
true.
He frightened Old Virginia till she trembled through
and through.
They hanged him for a traitor, themselves the traitor's
crew.
But his soul goes marching on.

(CHORUS)

Well, he's gone to be a soldier in the army of the
Lord. (3x)
But His soul goes marching on.

(CHORUS)

Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the
Lord.
He's trampling out the vintage where the grapes of
wrath are stored.
He's loosed the fateful lightning of His terrible swift
sword.
His truth is marching on.

(CHORUS)

11. Goodnight Irene 3:43

Irene goodnight. Irene goodnight.
Goodnight Irene. Goodnight Irene.
I'll see you in my dreams.

Sometimes I live in the country.
Sometimes I live in town.
Sometimes I take a great notion
To jump into the river and drown.

I asked your mother for you.
She told me you was too young.
I wished to God I'd never seen your face.
I'm sorry you were ever born.

You caused me to weep.
You caused me to morn.
But the very last words I heard her say
Was, "Please sing me one more song."

12. Swing Low Sweet Chariot 2:38

Swing low, sweet chariot, coming for to carry me
home.



Swing low, sweet chariot, coming for to carry me home.

I looked over Jordan and what did I see, coming for to carry me home.
A band of angels coming after me, coming for to carry me home.

If you get there before I do, coming for to carry me home,
Tell all my friends, I'm coming there too, coming for to carry me home

13. Oh, Susanna 1:17

I come from Alabama with my banjo on my knee.
I'm going to Louisiana, my true love for to see.
It rained all night the day I left, the weather it was dry.
The sun so hot, I froze to death. Susanna don't you cry

Oh, Susanna, don't you cry for me.
I come from Alabama with my banjo on my knee.

I had a dream the other night when everything was still.
I dreamed I saw Susanna a-coming down the hill.
A red rose was in her cheek; a tear was in her eye.
I said to her, "Susanna girl, Susanna, don't you cry."

14. Wayfaring Stranger 1:14

I'm just a poor wayfaring stranger,
A-traveling through this world of woe.
But there's no sickness, toil or danger
In that bright world to which I go.

I'm going there to see my father.
I'm going there no more to roam.
I'm just a-going over Jordan.
I'm just a-going over home.

15. Oh, Mary Don't You Weep 2:35

If I could, I surely would
Stand on the rock where Moses stood.

REFRAIN:
Pharaoh's army got drowned,
Oh Mary, don't you weep.

Mary wore three links of chain.

Every link was Freedom's name.

(REFRAIN)

One of these nights about twelve o'clock
This old world is gonna reel and rock.

(REFRAIN)

Moses stood on the Red Sea shore
Smotin' the water with a two by four.

(REFRAIN)

16. Down in the Valley 3:47

Down in the valley, valley so low
Hang your head over, hear the wind blow.
Hear the wind blow love; hear the wind blow.
Hang your head over; hear the wind blow.

Roses love sunshine; violets love dew.
Angels in Heaven, know I love you
Know I love you dear, know I love you.
Angels in Heaven know I love you.

Build me a castle forty feet high,
So I can see him as he rides by.
As he rides by love, as he rides by,
So I can see him as he rides by.

Write me a letter, send it by mail.
Send it in care of Birmingham jail,
Birmingham jail love, Birmingham jail.
Send it in care of Birmingham jail,

Down in the valley, valley so low
Hang your head over; hear the wind blow.
Hear the wind blow love; hear the wind blow.
Hang your head over; hear the wind blow.

17. Wabash Cannonball 3:05

I stood on the Atlantic Ocean, on the wide Pacific shore.
Heard the queen of the flowing mountains to the south-bell by the door.
She's long tall and handsome; she's loved by one and all.
She's a modern combination called the Wabash Cannon Ball.

CHORUS:



Listen to the jingle, rumble and the roar.
Riding through the woodlands to the hills and by the shore.
Hear the mighty rush of the engine; hear the lonesome hobo squall.
Riding through the jungles on the Wabash Cannon Ball.

Now the eastern states are dandies, so the western people say.
From New York to St. Louis with Chicago by the way,
From the hills of Minnesota where the rippling waters fall,
No chances can be taken on the Wabash Cannon Ball.

(CHORUS)

Now here's to Danny Claxton, may his name forever stand.
Will he be remembered through the parts of all our land?
When his earthly race is over, and the curtain round him falls,
We'll carry him on to victory on the Wabash Cannon Ball.

18. On Top of Old Smoky 2:18

On top of Old Smoky, all covered with snow
I lost my true lover from courting too slow.
For courting is pleasure, but parting is grief.
And a false hearted lover is worse than a thief.

Say a thief will just rob you and take what you have.
But a false-hearted lover will lead you to the grave.
And the grave will decay you and turn you to dust.
Not one boy in a hundred a poor girl can trust.

They'll hug you and kiss you and tell you more lies
Than the cross-ties on the railroad or the stars in the skies.

So come all you young maidens, and listen to me:
Never place your affection on a green willow tree.

For the leaves they will wither, and the roots they will die.

You'll all be forsaken and never know why.
On top of Old Smoky, all covered with snow
I lost my true lover from courting too slow.

19. Frankie and Johnny 4:31

Frankie and Johnnie were lovers.
Oh my good Lord they could love!
Swore they'd be true to each other
Just as true as the stars above.
He was her man, but he was doing her wrong.

Frankie she was a good woman
As everybody knows.
Spent a hundred dollars
Just to buy her man some clothes.
He was her man, but he was doing her wrong.

Frankie went down to the corner
Just for a bucket of beer.
Said: "Mister Bartender,
Has my loving Johnny been here?
He was my man, but he's a-doing me wrong."

"Now I don't want to tell you no stories,
And I don't want to tell you no lies.
I saw your man about an hour ago
With a gal named Nellie Bligh.
He was your man, but he's a-doing you wrong."

Frankie she went down to the hotel.
Didn't go there for fun.
Underneath her kimono

She carried a forty-four gun.
He was her man, but he was doing her wrong.

Frankie looked over the transom
To see what she could spy.
There sat Johnny on the sofa
Just loving up Nellie Bligh.
He was her man, but he was doing her wrong.

Now the first time that Frankie shot Johnny
He let out a awful yell.
Second time she shot him
There was a new man's face in hell.
He was her man, but he was doing her wrong.

"Oh roll me over easy.
Roll me over slow.
Roll me over on the right side,
For the left side hurts me so."
He was her man, but he was doing her wrong.

Sixteen rubber-tired carriages,
Sixteen rubber-tired hacks,
They take poor Johnny to the graveyard.



They ain't gonna bring him back.
He was her man, but he was doing her wrong.

Frankie looked out on the jailhouse
To see what she could see.
All she could hear was her two-string beau
Crying "Nearer my God to Thee."
He was her man, but he was doing her wrong.

Frankie said to the sheriff,
"What do you reckon they'll do?"
Sheriff he said, "Frankie,
It's the electric chair for you."
He was her man, but he was doing her wrong.

This story has no moral.
This story has no end.
This story only goes to show
That there ain't no good in men!
He was her man, but he was doing her wrong.

20. I Ride an Old Paint 3:30

I ride an old paint, and I lead an old dan.
I'm going to Montana to throw the houlihan.
They feed them in the coolies; they water in the draw.
Their tails are all matted; their backs are all raw.

CHORUS:

Ride around little dogies, ride around them slow
For Fiery and Snuffy are raring to go.

Old Bill Jones had a daughter and a son.
Son went to college, and the daughter went wrong.
His wife got killed in a pool-room fight.
Still he keeps singing from morning to night.

(CHORUS)

When I die, take my saddle from the wall
Put it on my pony, lead him out of his stall.
Tie my bones to his back, turn our faces to the west,
And we'll ride the prairie that we love the best.

(CHORUS)

21. Wreck of the Old 97 1:55

Oh they handed him his orders at Monroe, Virginia
Saying, "Pete, you're way behind time.
This is not '38,' it is 'Old 97'
You must set her into Spencer on time."

He looked round his cab at his black, greasy fireman
Saying, "Shovel on a little more coal!
And when we cross that White Oak Mountain,
You can watch 'Old 97' roll."

It's a mighty rough road from Lynchburg to Danville,
And Lima's on a three-mile grade.
It was on that grade that he lost his airbrake.
You can see what a jump she made.

He was going round the bend making ninety 90 miles
an hour.
The whistle broke into a scream.
And they found him in the wreck with his hand on
the throttle
And scalded to death by the steam.

Come ladies, you must take warning.
From this time never more,
Never speak harsh words to your true loving
husbands.
They may leave you never to return.

22. Wagoner's Lad 1:25

"My horses ain't hungry; they won't eat your hay.
So fair you well Polly; I'm going away.
Your parents don't like me; they say I'm too poor.

They say I'm not worthy to enter your door."

"My parents don't like you; you're poor I am told.
But it's your love I'm wanting not silver or gold."
"Then come with me Polly; we'll ride till we come
To some little cabin. We'll call it our home."

Sparking is pleasure, but parting is grief.
And a false hearted lover is worse than a thief.
A thief will just rob you and take what you have.
But a false hearted lover will lead you to the grave.

23. Old Dan Tucker 2:20

Now old Dan Tucker was a fine old man,
Washed his face in a frying pan,
Combed his hair with a wagon wheel,
And died with a toothache in his heel.

CHORUS:

Get out the way old Dan Tucker.
You're too late to get your supper.
Get out the way old Dan Tucker.
You're too late to get your supper.



Now old Dan Tucker is come to town
Riding on a Billy goat --- leading a hound.
Hound dog bark, and the Billy goat jump.
Landed Dan Tucker on top of the stump.

(CHORUS)

Now old Dan Tucker he got drunk.
Fell in the fire and kicked up a chunk.

Red hot coal got in his shoe,
And oh my lawd how the ashes flew.

(CHORUS)

Now old Dan Tucker is come to town,
Swinging the ladies round and round
First to the right and then to the left,
Then to the girl that he loves best.

(CHORUS)

24. I've Been Working on the Railroad 1:27

I've been working on the railroad
All the livelong day.
I've been working on the railroad
Just to pass the time away.
Can't you hear the whistle blowing?
Rise up so early in the morn.
Can't you hear the captain shouting,
"Dinah, blow your horn."

Dinah, won't you blow (2x)
Dinah, won't you blow your horn.
Dinah, won't you blow (2x)
Dinah, won't you blow your horn.

Someone's in the kitchen with Dinah.
Someone's in the kitchen I know.
Someone's in the kitchen with Dinah
Strumming on the old banjo.

Fee, fi, fiddle-i-o (3x)

Strumming on the old banjo.

25. Cielito Lindo 2:37

De la Sierra Morena cielito lindo, vienen bajando
Un par de ojitos negros, cielito lindo, de contrabando.

CHORUS:

Ay, ay, ay ay!
Canta y no llores.
Porque cantando se allegan, cielito lindo, los
corazones.

TRANSLATION:

From the Sierra Morena arrives descending
A pair of black eyes, of contraband

Ay ay ay ay,
Sing and don't cry.
Because singing gladdens the heart.

26. America the Beautiful 1:40

Oh beautiful, for spacious skies
For amber waves of grain
For purple mountain's majesty
Above the fruited plain.
America, America,
God shed His grace on thee
And crown thy good with brotherhood
From sea to shining sea.