Pennsylvania Dutch Folk Songs
sung by George Britton with guitar
Pennsylvania Dutch Folk Songs

JOE RAETEL (Joe Rattle)

REIDE, REIDE, GEILI
DE HUCKLICH MENNIL (The Little Humpback)

EIEI, REIE, RIDDIEOO
IN EINEM KIEHLLEN GRUNDE

SCHRINN, SCHRINN
SIS, NEE, ALLE DAAG LUSCHDICH LEEWE

MEEDLI, WEDDU
HEIER, HELLO

LAUF, KANKEN KINDLEIN (Year A Boy)
WE KINNICH AN DES GROSSHADERS HUS?

UNSER, SCHLOOF BOBBELI SCHLOOF

SCHLOOF, RODELI SCHLOOF
George S. Britton was born in Reading, Pennsylvania, the Capitol of Berks County, and a center of Pennsylvania Dutch culture, of Scots-Irish and Pennsylvania Dutch parentage.

As a professional 'classical' singer (and guitarist) he became interested in folk songs and spent several years in search of this material. In Los Angeles he met Uncle Remus (of radio fame) and together they toured Nevada, Colorado and Wyoming. He delved deeply into the field and now has a repertoire of more than 1500 folk songs. In recent years, he has been increasingly interested in the Pennsylvania Dutch songs of his mother's people.

This is a little children's song which is related to the old German songs from the Odenwald, given in Erk-Bohme, "Deutscher Liederhort" "Kathrinchen, Kathrinchen". This version is from "Songs Along the Mahantong".

Joe Raetel

Joe Raetel, Joe Raetel, geh mit mir ins Graas,
Datt pei'fe die Veggel, datt rabbelt der Haas,
Datt danst der Ox, datt brummt die Kuh -
Un der Gesel schlaeckt noch die Drumm dezu!

Joe Rattle

Joe Rattle, Joe Rattle, go with me into the grass,
There pipe the birds, there hops the hare,
There dances the ox, there lows the cow -
And the donkey beats on the drum.

Most of us can remember being chucked on the knee of our parents or older brothers and sisters. When I was a child, my father would cross his legs and straddle me over his foot and sing a little Irish song-

"Chup, chup, chup, my little horse,
Chup, chup again, sir.
How many miles from this to Dublin?

Joe Rattle

Three score and ten, sir.
Can I get there by candle-light?
Yes, and back again, sir."

This song would be its Pennsylvanian Dutch equivalent, and on the last word of the verse, the foot would be pulled out and baby would sprawl on the floor, with great glee.

Reide, reide, Geili

Reide, reide. Geili
Alle Schtunn en Meili;
Geht's iwwer der Schtumbe,
Fallt's Bobbli nunner!

Reide, reide Geili
Alle Schtunn en Meili;
Marriye wol de mer Hawwer dresche,
Kann des Geili Hawwer fresse.

(translation)

Ride, ride, the pony
Every hour a mile;
Over the hill he never goes,
Bubbs falls down.

Ride, ride, the pony
Every hour a mile;
Goes over the stump,
Bobbi falls down.

Ride, ride the pony
Every hour a mile;
Over the hill he never goes,
Bubbs falls down.

Ride, ride the pony
Every hour a mile;
Tomorrow will we thresh oats,
And the pony can eat oats.

Joe Raetel, Joe Raetel, geh mit mir ins Graas,
Datt pei'fe die Veggel, datt rabbelt der Haas,
Datt danst der Ox, datt brummt die Kuh -
Un der Gesel schlackt noch die Drumm dezu!

Joe Rattle, Joe Rattle, go with me into the grass,
There pipe the birds, there hops the hare,
There dances the ox, there lows the cow -
And the donkey beats on the drum.
When I was a little fellow, my father used to scare me with a mythical "boogie-man" he called "Finkenheimer". I was so terrified of "Finkenheimer" that it was very difficult to induce me to go into the cellar or upstairs alone. I wonder if there is any connection between "Finkenheimer" and Des Bucklich Mennli. According to Dr. Arthur Graeff, it was a house spirit. "Des Bucklich Mennli" who was the inspiration of Shakespeare's "Puck"

When I get up in the morning, I look up into the clouds. "Mother, is the soup ready? Are the cows milked?"

When I enter my barn To milk my cows, The little humpback is there And begins to scold me.

When I enter my garden To plant my flowers, The little humpback is there And begins to dance,

When I enter my cellar To strain my milk, The little humpback is there And begins to fiddle.

When I enter my room To sweep it out, The little humpback is there And attempts to hinder me.

When I go upstairs To make my beds, The little humpback is there And starts to laugh.
This is a song of the snitzing party. After the first frost in the Fall, the ripe apples were picked and sorted. The good ones were buried in the ground for winter eating; the poor ones were pressed into cider; and the middle-grade apples were used for apple-butter and general cooking. Snitzing parties were held to pare and quarter the apples, and as they sat around working, many songs were sung and stories told. Later in the evening, the benches would be cleared, the instruments brought out, and dancing would begin. This song was used to mix up the boys and girls who had gravitated to opposite sides of the room. The boys invite the girls over and finally everybody is paired off. There are many more verses in all—too many to do in entirety.

**EIEI, REIE, RIDDIEOO**

Reie, reie, riddieoo,
Kummt emoll doo riwer!
Reie, reie, riddieoo!
Kummt emoll doo riwer!

Was soll ich dann do hiwwe duh?
Reie, reie, riddieoo!
Was soll ich dann do hiwwe duh?
Reie, riddieoo!

EI mer wolle schloofe,
Reie, reie, riddieoo!
EI mer wolle schloofe,
Reie, riddieoo!

Ach denkscht du dann mer kennde?
Reie, reie, riddieoo!
Ach denkscht du dann mer kennde?
Reie, riddieoo!

Mer wolles moll browiere,
Reie, reie, riddieoo!
Mer wolles moll browiere,
Reie, riddieoo!

Kummscht du dann geloffe?
Reie, reie, riddieoo!
Kummscht du dann geloffe?
Reie, riddieoo!

Ach ya, ich kumm geloffe,
Reie, reie, riddieoo!
Ach ya, ich kumm geloffe,
Reie, riddieoo!

**IN KINSEM KIEHLEN GRUNDE**

In einem kiehlen Grunde,
Do schteht ein Miehlenrad,
Meine Liebchen ist verschwunden;
Die dort gewohnet hot,
Die dort gewohnet hot.

Sie hot mir Trei verschprochen,
Gab mir ein Ring dabei;
Sie hot die Trei gebrochen;
Das Ringlein schpran in zwei;
Das Ringlein schprang in zwei.

Ich mecht als Schpeilman reisen,
Weit in di Welt hinaus,
Un singen meine Weise
Un ghehn vun Haus zu Haus,
Un ghehn vun Haus zu Haus.

Haer das Miehlrai gehen
Ich wees nicht was ich will;
Am liebsten mecht ich achterben

(translatation)

Rye-a Rye-a Riddy-oh
Come over here once.
Rye-a Rye-a Riddy-oh
Come over here once.

What'll I do over there?
Rye-a Rye-a Riddy-oh!
What'll I do over there?
Rye-a Riddy-oh!

Why, we want to sleep
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Oh, do you think we can?
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Well, we can try it once.
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Will you come a-running?
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Oh yes, I'll come a-running.
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Dann werd es auf einmol schtill,
Dann werd es auf einmol schtill.

In yonder lovely valley,
The wild mill-waters roar.
My love, who dwelt there, vanished,
I'll see her never more,
I'll see her never more.

She gave me a faithful promise,
Gave me a gold ring, too;
But soon her vow was broken;
Then broke my ring in two.

I fain would be a minstrel,
And wander far away;
And sing in town and hamlet
My brokenhearted lay.

That clatt'ring mill wheel's echoes
Strike woe into my breast;
I wish that I were dying,
Then all would be at rest.
SCHPINN, SCHPINN

Schpinn, schpinn, meine liewe Dochder,
No kaf ich dir'n Frack,
Ja, ja, meine liewe Mammi,
Un den mit ma Sack.

CHORUS:
Ich kann nimmi schpinne,
Mei Finger schwellt immer,
un'r dudd m'r weh, so weh.

Schpinn, schpinn, meine liewe Dochder,
No kaf ich dir'n Schtaz.
Ja, ja, meine liewe Mammi,
Un den net zu kaz.

Schpinn, schpinn, meine liewe Dochder,
No kaf ich dir Schuh.
Ja, ja, meine liewe Mammi,
Mit Bendel dazu.

Schpinn, schpinn, meine liewe Dochder,
No kaf ich dir'n Kuh.
Ja, ja, meine liewe Mammi,
Mit ma Kelwel dazu.

Schpinn, schpinn, meine liewe Dochder,
No kaf ich dir'n Gaul.
Ja, ja, meine liewe Mammi,
Mit em Hawwer im Maul.

Schpinn, schpinn, meine liewe Dochder,
No kaf ich dir'n Mann,
Ja, ja, meine liewe Mammi,
Den brauch ich schun lang!

CHORUS:
Ich kann widder schpinne,
Mei Finger schwellt nimmi,
Un'r dudd m'nimmi weh, m'nimmi weh.

(translation)

Spin, spin, my dear daughter,
And I'll buy you a dress.
Yes, yes, my dear mother,
And one with a pocket.

CHORUS:
I can spin no more,
For my finger keeps swelling,
And hurts me much, so much.

Spin, spin, my dear daughter,
And I'll buy you an apron.
Yes, yes, my dear mother,
And one not too short.

Spin, spin, my dear daughter,
And I'll buy you shoes,
Yes, yes, my dear mother,
With shoestrings too.

Spin, spin, my dear daughter,
And I'll buy you a cow.
Yes, yes, my dear mother,
One with a calf.

Spin, spin, my dear daughter,
And I'll buy you a horse.
Yes, yes, my dear mother,
With oats in his mouth.

Spin, spin, my dear daughter,
And I'll buy you a husband.
Yes, yes, my dear mother,
I've wanted one for so long!

Chor:
I can spin again,
My finger swells no more,
And no longer gives me any pain, any pain!

Note:

This song has a counterpart in many languages. I have heard French versions, Yiddish, Holla~Dutch, and German variants. There is an Old English relative to it - "Whistle, Daughter, Whistle". This song was probably brought to America in the eighteenth century from Germany, and is still popular with the Pennsylvania Dutch.
Siss net alli Jaag luscdich Leewe,
Siss net alli Jaag Fassenacht!
Ich hab mei Geld em Schpielmann gewwe
Un hab gedanzt die ganse Nacht.

Datt drausse schteht en scheener Bu;
Wau er iss, des wees ich net.
Ich will geh en karressiere;
Maag mich lieewe noch aach nicht.

Ach Buweli, ich hab Gold un Silwer!
Buweli, ich hab Haus un Lott!
Buweli, ich hab alli Gieder,
Was mann sich erwinschen kann.

Awwer liewer das ich mei yung frisch Leewe,
Soo me alde Wittmann geewe,
Liewer wollt ich Kuggele giesse
Fer denn alde Wittmann schiesse.

'Tis not every day lusty living,
It is not always Fasenacht Day.
I gave my cash to the fiddler,
And danced the whole night.

Outside there stands a handsome boy,
Who he is I do not know
I will go caress him
Whether he likes it or not.

Oh, little boy, I have gold and silver,
Little boy, I have house and lot.
Little boy, I have all the good things,
That anyone could want.

But rather than that I should give young
fresh life
To that old widower.
Rather would I mold some bullets
For to shoot the old widower.

Note:

Faasnacht is the Pennsylvania Dutch name for Shrove's Tuesday. In the old
days, our grandfathers used to hold dances on Faasnacht Day to try to cram
in a little more enjoyment before Lent. We always made Faasnachts (doughnuts)
on that day. My older sister made the best Faasnachts in the entire neighbor-
hood. This version comes from the "Songs Along the Mahantong".

MEEDLI, WIDDU HEIERE?

Meedli, widdu heiere?
Ya, Vaader, Ya!
So heierscht du en Bauer?
Nein, Vaader, Nein!
Bauer heiere will ich net
Kiehschtall mischde gleich ich net
Nein, Vaader, Nein!

Meedli, widdu heiere?
Ya, Vaader, Ya!
So heierscht du en Parre
Nein, Vaader, Nein!
Parre heiere will ich net
Windle wesche fleich ich net
Nein, Vaader, Nein!

Meedli, widdu heiere?
Ya, Vaader, Ya!
So heierscht du en Dockder
Nein, Vaader, Nein!

(translation)

Maiden, will you marry?
Yes, father, yes.
Will you marry a farmer?
No, father no.
Marry a farmer will I not,
Cow stall droppings I don't like.
No, father no.

Maiden, will you marry?
Yes, father, yes.
Will you marry a preacher?
No, father no.
Marry a preacher will I not,
Cradle rocking I don't like.
No, father no.

Maiden, will you marry?
Yes, father, yes.
Will you marry a doctor?
No, father no.
Dockder heiere will ich net
Leit vergifde gleich ich net
Nein, Vaader, Nein!

Meei, widdu heiere?
Ya, Vaader, Ya!
So heierscht du en Schuhmacher?
Nein, Vaader, Nein!
Schuhmacher heiere will ich net
Bech kaue gleich ich net
Nein, Vaader, Nein!

Meei, widdu heiere?
Ya, Vaader, Ya!
So heierscht du en Musigaaner
Ya, Vaader, Ya!
So heierscht du en Musigaaner
Ya, Vaader, Ya!
Musigaaner heiere will ich dann
Singe un Danze gleich ich schunt
Ya, Vaader, Ya!

Versions of this love song may be found from the African Veli to the frozen tundras of Alaska. In some parts, when a man had marriageable daughters, he'd paint his fence gate blue. Naturally, he didn't want to be saddled with a daughter past her maturity. Here he's trying to find out what kind of man she wants.

HEI LIE, HEI LO

Mer hen en Stahl ful alde Kie
Sie Stehne im Misht bis on de Onie,
Mer schlachte de Kelver, un ferkaufe die Heit.
Ungewe es gelt d' oreme leit.

CHORUS:
Hei Lie, Hei Lie, Hei Lo!
Bei uns geht's immer,
Wie lenger, wie schlimmer;
Hei lie, Hei lo, Hei Lie, Hei lo!
Bei uns geht's immer ja so.

Die Hindel im Stahl, die gaene uns dot,
Mer, schlage sie in knick un fresse sie mit Brot,
Die Schof am hiwwel sie griegge grumme Bae,
Die Hund springa naus un blicke die zee.

We have a stall full of old cows,
They stand in straw and manure up to their knees.
We kill the calf and sell the hide,
And give the money to the poor.

CHORUS:
Hy Lee, Hy Lo, Hy Lee, Hy Lo!
With us, the longer it goes
The worse it gets.
Hei lie, Hei lo, Hei Lie, Lei lo!
With us it is always so.

The chickens in the coop, they come to us there
We wring their necks and eat them with bread.
The sheep on the hill, they grow crooked legs,
The dog springs out and snaps his teeth.

I remember my mother singing this often when I was a child, and we all used to love the way she would yodel the chorus. It was one of my life's ambition to learn how to yodel in my childhood. Anybody who knows "Where, oh where, has my little dog gone" knows the tune to this song. Some people sing "Hy Lee, Hy Loo" as a chorus.
LAUTERBACH

Zu Lauterbach hab ich mein Strumpf verlor'n
Und ohne Strumpf geh ich net Heim;
Da geh ich halt wieder auf Lauterbach zu
Und kauf mir ein Strumpf zu mei'm Bein.

Zu Lauterbach hab ich mein Herz verlor'n
Und ohne Herz kan ich net leb'n;
So geh ich halt wieder nach Lauterbach hin
Und Meedel muss eines mir geb'n.

Note: I remember this as one of my grandparent's favorite songs which was played on an old wind-up phonograph on our visits. I found many more verses to this song in the collection of Pennsylvania Dutch Songs, "Songs Along the Mahantongo" by Boyer, Buffinton, and Yoder. In these verses the "dumb" Dutchman pokes fun at practically everything in his daily experiences.

ALLE YAHR EN KINDLEIN (Every Year A Baby)

Alle yahr en Kindlein
Alle yahr en Kindlein
Bis es fier und tzwanzig sinn
(repeat)

CHORUS:
O Susanna
Wie iss des Leewe doch so scheen
O Susanna - Wie iss des Leewe scheen

Alle Aage sehne
Alle Aage sehne
Nor des gree Aag sehnt gor net
(repeat) - CHOR.

Alle Haane grehe
Alle Haane grehe
Nor des Topfhaan greht gor net
(repeat) - CHOR.

CHORUS:
O Susanna
How beautiful indeed is life
O Susanna
How beautiful is life.

All eyes see
All eyes see
Only the grey eye (corn on your toe) sees not at all.
(repeat) - CHOR.

Every cock crow
Every cock crow
Only the stop-cock crows not at all
(repeat) - CHOR.

This is a play-party or tavern song, sung over glasses of beer, etc., or when folks get together on a Saturday night. We got this song from Dr. Arthur Graeff from Philadelphia, who is one of the Board Members of the Pennsylvania German Folklore Society. The puns are lost in translation.

WIE KUMM ICH AN DES GROSSVADDER'S HAUS?

Wie kumm ich dann an des Grossvadder's Haus,
Mein geliebdes Maedlein?
So gehscht du gleich di Schtrooss hinaus,
No kummscht du an des Grossvadder's Haus.

CHORUS:
Un so mei Maedel, so, so, so,
Un so mei Maedel, so.

Wie kumm ich dann zu d'r Dier hinein,
Mein geliebdes Maedlein?
Dadd vor d'r Dier, dadd liegt ein Schtein,
Dadd schtellscht dich druff an gehscht hinein.

Wu henck ich dann mai feiner Rock,
Mein geliebdes Maedel?
Dadd hinnich di Dier, dadd schieht en Schtock,
Dadd hengscht du dran deii feiner Rock

Wie kumm ich dann di Schteeg Hinauf,
Mein Geliebdes Maedel?
Duscht einen Fuss vor andre naus,
Dann kummscht du gleich di Schteeg hinauf.

This is the Pennsylvania Dutch version of a sixteenth century German trysting song, probably brought to Pennsylvania in the eighteenth century according to Thomas R. Brendle and William J. Troxell in "Pennsylvania Songs and Legends".

How do I get to grandfather's house, My beloved maiden? Take the road right outside, Then you'll come to grandfather's house.

CHORUS:
So, my maiden, so, so, so,
So, my maiden, so.

How do I get in the door, My beloved maiden? Before the door there lies a stone, Just step on it, and go in.

Where shall I hang my fine coat, My beloved maiden? Behind the door there stands a rack, Hang your fine coat thereon.

How do I get up the steps, My beloved maiden? Put one foot before the other, And you'll soon g.
UNSER Sallwi

Unser Salwi hot en Kaldi,  
Hot en hilzni Pischtol;  
Panne Schallt si, Hinne gnallt si;  
In d'r Mitt is si hohl.

CHORUS:
Ludel lei lei, ludel lei lei,  
Ludel lei lei, ludel lei lei,  
Ludel lei lei, ludel lei lei,  
Ludel, lei lei lei lei.

Meine Schwiegrmudder is en Schindluder,  
Hot di Damfnudle dgebrennt;  
Bin ich widderkumme si di Pennekuche,  
Mit dar Mischtgawwel rumgerennt.

Unser aldi Schwiegrmudder  
War en aldes Dunner.  
Siwwe Jahr war sie im Himmel,  
Krumm si widder runner.

Wann ich geld hab kann ich Grundniss esse,  
Wann ich kens hab muss ich di Schale frese;  
Sis mar all eins, sis mar all eins,  
Hawnich Geld odder hwwich keen.

Hawwich rild oder hawwich keins.

Meine Schwiegrmudder is en Schindluder,  
Hot di Damfnudle dgebrennt;  
Bin ich widderkumme si di Pennekuche,  
Mit dar Mischtgawwel rumgerennt.

Unser aldi Schwiegrmudder  
War en aldes Dunner.  
Siwwe Jahr war sie im Himmel,  
Krumm si widder runner.

Sis mar all eins, sis mar all eins,  
Hawnich Geld odder hwwich keen.

Play-party or drinking song. This is an example of what we would call a nonsense song. The mother-in-law idea is common in all folklore and it is probably related to an old German folk song.

SCHLOOF BOBBELI SCHLOOF

Schloof Bobbeli schloof  
Der Daadi hiet die Schoof  
Die Mami schittelt en Bammelain  
Es fallt d'rfun en Bammelain  
Schloof Bobbeli schloof.

Schloof Bobbeli schloof  
Die Shtahne sinn die schoof  
Sie hengke so hoch im Himmel dass  
Epmols fliegt eener so softig saht  
Schloof Bobbeli schloof.

Draam Bobbeli draam  
Der Umschel peifft im Baam  
Die Jhtahne, der Umschel und die Schoof  
Sie histe dich in niesser Schloof  
Draam Bobbeli draam.

Sleep, Baby sleep,  
Daddy's watching the sheep.  
Mother's shaking the little tree  
From which falls a little dream.  
Sleep, Baby sleep.

Sleep, Baby sleep,  
The stars are the sheep.  
They hang so high in the heaven there.  
Now and then one flies so softly away,  
Sleep, Baby sleep.

Dream, Baby dream,  
The robin sings in the tree.  
The stars, the robin and the sheep,  
They guard you in your sleep,  
Dream, Baby dream.

While I sang this many times as a child, I got this complete version of it from Dr. Arthur Graeff.
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PENNSYLVANIA DUTCH FOLK SONGS
Sung by George Britton, with Guitar

SIDE 1

1. LEI LIE, HEI LO
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3. ALLE YAHRL EN KINDLEIN
4. WIE KUMM ICH AN DES GROSSWADDER'S HAUS?
5. INSER SAIWI
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