Old Timey Songs for Children

Played and Sung by the New Lost City Ramblers: Mike Seeger, John Cohen, Tom Paley
Old Timey Songs for Children

Old Bell Cow
Hopalong Peter
Beware, Oh Take Care
Soldier, Soldier
 Will You Marry Me
Eyes Are Blue
Charley He’s A Good Ol’ Man
Adam in the Garden
Chewing Gum
Cotton Eye Joe
Jennie Jenkins
Barbara Allen
Hop High Ladies
Rabbit Chase
Common Bill
Johnny Get Your Gun

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DESCRIPTIVE NOTES ARE INSIDE POCKET

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FOLKWAYS RECORDS
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Old Timey Songs for Children

played and sung by

the new lost city ramblers
OLD TIMEY SONGS FOR CHILDREN

sung by

The New Lost City Ramblers

(Mike Seeger, Tom Paley, John Cohen)

THIS RECORD HAS

some songs and sounds that would be fine to grow up with

some songs where you don’t understand everything in them

some songs about things which are still to be done -- about girls and getting married

some songs which are very old and full of love and mystery -- and which have been held in love and mystery by people for hundreds of years

some songs which remind you that in this world of inhuman machines there is still a place for cows who eat hats and crows that go "caw"

some songs with common sense and common nonsense

some songs which tell you how other people felt about things

songs where you can sing with the record, songs you can dance to

songs you can sing to yourself when no one is listening

songs where you can say “that one sounds like me -- and that one like you”

songs to listen to

songs you can sing to others

some of these songs I heard when I was a kid -- and some of them I wish I had heard then.

John Cohen

The songs on this record are not just children’s songs, but they are songs that children will enjoy. Who says that children can’t love and understand some adult things anyway? Why should we aim our songs at a very low level? There is something in these songs for adults, too -- at least for those who haven’t become so pseudo-sophisticated that they can’t enjoy things which are simple and direct anymore.

You will not find slick commercial arrangements on this record -- you can hear that kind of pop on the juke box and the pot-luck juke box called radio any day -- we prefer to leave the songs with their original vigor and feeling. It’s a lot more fun to perform music that hasn’t been emasculated and there’s more there for the listener, too.

Tom Paley

These songs were part of the lives of people of the southern mountains, perhaps more than popular and school-taught songs are of city people. In the country there were fewer types of amusements, and home made recreation, especially music, played a large part in the raising of a child in the country. The songs with which these children grew up did include some which we might consider kids’ songs, such as nonsense songs, animal songs, and the like, but consisted mostly of the songs which grown-ups liked and sang for their own enjoyment.

In my case, coming from trained musician parents who were interested in world folk music, I heard little else in my childhood besides several hundred Library of Congress field recordings of southern folk music, the singing of these songs by my parents (who were eager for me to pick them up) and their mostly classical piano playing.

The first songs I can remember having sung (at about age 5) are "When de Whale Gets Strike," Barbara Allen, and "Paper of Pins" and I have some Library of Congress discs of those not too memorable performances. My father and mother also sang such old songs as "Froggie Went A-courting", "Lady of Carlisle" and "Going Back to Georgia" which they learned from the Library of Congress field recordings. My favorite record was "Fiddler’s Convention in Georgia" by Gil Tanner and his Skillet Lickers, a fiddle and guitar band from the southern hills that acted out on record a real contest.

In the early 1950’s I began listening more to commercial records of folk music made in the last 30 years and trying to play and sing the old tunes on them, as well as playing with several country bluegrass bands in Baltimore, until the New Lost City Ramblers fell together in mid-1958.

This has been, in short, my musical background. I hope that you enjoy this record and also that it might be a start (or a continuation), making our music part of your future musical background.

Mike Seeger
SIDE I, Band 1: OLD BELL COW

(Source: Dixie Crackers)

Went down to the cornfield to pick a mess of beans
Along came the bell cow a-pecking at the greens

CHORUS:
Oh the bell cow catch her by the tail
Oh the bell cow milk her in the pail
Oh the bell cow catch her by the tail
Oh the bell cow milk her in the pail

Some of these days when I learn how
I'm gonna milk that old bell cow

(Chorus)

The milk ain't whipped and the butter ain't fat
The damned old cow ate my best hat

(Chorus)

The old bell cow I milked her in a gourd
I sold my milk and bought me a Ford

(Chorus)

Way down yonder in Arkansas
The bell cow whipped her mummy in law

(Chorus)

Some of these days when I learn how
I'm gonna milk that old bell cow

(Chorus)

mike-fiddle & lead voice
tom-guitar & tenor voice
john-guitar & bass voice

SIDE I, Band 2: HOPALONG PETER

(Source: Fisher Hendley and his Aristocratic pigs)

Old Uncle Peter he got tight
Startled up to Heaven on a stormy night
The road being rough and his not well
He lost his way and went to --

CHORUS:
Hopalong Peter where you going
Hopalong Peter where you going
Hopalong Peter won't you bear in mind
I ain't coming back till the gooseberry time

SIDE I, Band 3: BEWARE, OH TAKE CARE

(Source: Blind Alfred and Orville Reed)

We know young men are bold and free,
Beware, oh take care,
They tell you they're friends but they're liars
You see --
Beware, oh take care.

CHORUS:
Beware young ladies, they're fooling you,
Trust them not, they're fooling you,
Beware young ladies, they're fooling you,
Beware, oh take care.

They smoke, they chew, they wear fine shoes,
Beware, oh take care,
And in their pocket is a bottle of boozes,
Beware, oh take care.

(Chorus)

Around their neck they wear a guard,
Beware, oh take care,
And in their pocket is a deck of cards,
Beware, oh take care.

(Chorus)
They put their hands up to their hearts,
They sigh, oh they sigh,
They say they love no one but you,
They lie, oh they lie.

(Chorus)

John - guitar and lead voice
Mike - fiddle
Tom - banjo and harmony

SIDE I, Band 4: Soldier Soldier Will You Marry Me

Soldier, soldier, will you marry me now,
To the musket, the fife, and the drum?
How could I marry such a pretty little girl,
When I have no coat to put on?
So down she ran to the coat-maker's shop,
As fast as she could go,
And she bought him a coat of the very best,
And the soldier put it on.

Soldier, soldier, will you marry me now,
To the musket, the fife, and the drum?
How could I marry such a pretty little girl,
When I have no hat to put on?
So down she ran to the hat-maker's shop,
As fast as she could go,
And bought him a hat of the very best,
And the soldier put it on.

Soldier, soldier, will you marry me now,
To the musket, the fife, and the drum?
How could I marry such a pretty little girl,
When I have no shoes to put on?
So down she ran to the shoe-maker's shop,
As fast as she could go,
And bought him shoes of the very best
And the soldier put them on.

Soldier, soldier, will you marry me now,
To the musket, the fife, and the drum?
How could I marry such a pretty little girl,
With a wife and two children at home?

Honest Tom - vocal & guitar

SIDE I, Band 5: Eyes Are Blue

(Learned in 1948 from Woody Wright of N.Y.,
who got it from Rufus Crisp of Allen, Ky.)

What do we do with the baby-oh
What do we do with the baby-oh
What do we do with the baby-oh
Send him home to his mummy-oh

Chorus:
Eyes are blue, cheeks are red
Eyes are blue, cheeks are red
Eyes are blue, cheeks are red
Lips as sweet as gingerbread

I got a girl named Mary Lee
I asked her if she'd marry me,
She says, "Like your manners, Joe,
But I gotta stay home with my mummy-o."

(Chorus)

Down in the roller, a cow bell rings,
A bulldog barks and a jaybird sings
Sung so loud his throat run dry
Ought to heard the jaybird cry

(Chorus)

John - banjo & vocal

SIDE I, Band 6: Charley He's a Good Ol' Man

(Source: Kelly Harrell)

Chorus:
Charley, he's a good ol' man
Charley, he's a dandy ol' man
Charley, he's a good ol' man
Feeds those girls on candy

Single life is a happy life
Single life is lovely
I am single and I have no wife
And no one can control me

(Chorus)

I don't want none of your weevilly wheat
I don't want none of your barley
But I want some of the best ol' flour
To bake a cake for Charley

(Chorus)
Charley, he's a good ol' man
Takes me out a-fishing
I put the bait on Charlie's hook
And I like to see him catch them

(CHORUS)

Some folks marry for good looks
Some folks marry for money
But I'm gonna marry to a country little girl
Kiss her and call her honey

(CHORUS)

John: vocal & banjo
Mike: fiddle

SIDE I, Band 7:  **ADAM IN THE GARDEN PINNIN' LEAVES**

(Source:  Our Singing Country - J.A. Lomax
sung by Alberta Bradford, 72, and
Becky Elsey, 86 - Avery Island, La. 1934)

**CHORUS:**
Oh Eve where's Adam
Adam in the garden pinning leaves

Well I know my God is a man of war
Adam in the garden pinning leaves
He fought the battle at the Jericho wall
Adam in the garden pinning leaves

(CHORUS)

Well the first time God called Adam refused
to answer
Adam in the garden pinning leaves
Well the first time God called Adam refused
to answer
Adam in the garden pinning leaves

(CHORUS)

And the next time God called God hollered louder
Adam in the garden pinning leaves
Well the next time God called God hollered louder
Adam in the garden pinning leaves

(CHORUS)

Mike: autoharp & voice
Tom: 5-string banjo

SIDE I, Band 8:  **CHEWING GUM**

(Source: Carter Family)

Mama sent me to the spring
She told me not to stay
Fell in love with a pretty little girl
Could not get away

**CHORUS:**
Chawing chewing gum, chewing chewing gum (2)
First she gave me peaches nice
Then she gave me pears
Next she gave me 50 cents
Kissed me on the stairs

(CHORUS)

I wouldn't have a lawyer
Now here's the reason why
Every time he opens his mouth
He tells a great big lie

(CHORUS)

I wouldn't have a doctor
Now here's the reason why
He rides all over the country
A-making the people die

(CHORUS)

I took my girl to the church last nite
And what do you reckon she done
She walked right up to the preacher's face
And chewed her chewing gum

(CHORUS)

Mama don't 'low me to whistle
Poppa don't 'low me to sing
They don't want me to marry
I'll marry just the same

(CHORUS)

Mike: autoharp & voice
tom: 5-string banjo

SIDE I, Band 9:  **COTTON EYE JOE**

(Source: Bob Wills)

Don't you remember don't you know
Daddy worked a man called cotton eye Joe (2)
If it hadn't been for cotton eye Joe
I'd a been married a long time ago  
(2)

Tune up your fiddle and resin your bow
Play a little tune called cotton eye Joe  
(2)

Where do you come from where do you go?
Where do you come from cotton eye Joe?  
(2)

Come for to see you, I come for to sing,
I come for to show you my diamond ring.  
(2)

Tom - vocal and banjo.

SIDE II, Band 2: BARBARA ALLEN

(Source: B.L. Lunsford, Asheville, N.C., 1935)

Twas in the merry month of May,
The roses were a-blooming,
Sweet William on his death-bed lay
For the love of Barbara Allen.

They sent his servant to the town
The place where she was a-dwelling
Saying, "Master's sick, so very sick,
If you be Barbara Allen."

And slowly slowly got she up
And slowly she went to him
And all she said when she got there:
"Young man, I think you're a dying."

Oh do you remember Saturday night
When you were at the tavern
You toasted all the ladies all
But slighted Barbara Allen.

As she went down that long piney walk
She heard the small birds a-singing
And every note those small birds sang
"Hard-hearted Barbara Allen."

She had not got one mile from home
Till she heard the death bell a-tolling
And every note those death bells tolled,
"Hard-hearted Barbara Allen."

She looked to the east, and she looked to the west
She saw that pale corpse a-coming
Go open up that pale cold corpse
And let me gaze upon him.

Oh mother, oh mother, make my bed
Make it long and narrow.
Sweet William died for me today,
I'll die for him tomorrow.

And Barbara was buried in a new-made grave,
And William was buried by her
On William's grave grew a red red rose,
On Barbara's grew a green briar.

They grew 'til they reached the old church tower
They did not grow any higher
They linked and twined in a true love knot
The rose grew around the briar
And they withered and died together.
SIDE II, Band 3:  **HOP HIGH LADIES**

(Source: Uncle Dave Macon)

Have you ever been to meeting, Uncle Joe, Uncle Joe?
I don't mind the weather so the wind don't blow.

(REFRAIN)

Hop high ladies for the cake's all dough
How I get enough time, Lord, I never will know.

Will your horse carry double, Uncle Joe, Uncle Joe?
I don't mind the weather so the wind don't blow.

(REFRAIN)

Is your horse a single-footer, Uncle Joe, Uncle Joe?
I don't mind the weather so the wind don't blow.

(REFRAIN)

Would you rather have a pacer, Uncle Joe, Uncle Joe?
I don't mind the weather so the wind don't blow.

(REFRAIN)

tom-banjo and vocal
mike-fiddle

SIDE II, Band 4:  **RABBIT CHASE**

(Source: Charlie Parker)

Well you know how the old lady is, she gets up in the morning feeling pretty bad. Says to the old man, "If I had a rabbit this morning I think I'd feel better." The old man says to the old woman, "I love you and anything I can do for you, I will." "Sit down under the hill and catch me a rabbit." (He's) Sittin' down beside and his ears pick up like a Kentucky mule. This old man hadn't seen a rabbit in forty years. The old lady hadn't seen one in fifty. So he round up an' call the ol' dog - 'Gonna have a little fun!' - he says, Here, here, here, here Yonder he goes, yonder he goes, yonder he goes - can't you see? That ol' dog is lying behind the house in the sunshine, like a dog does in the summertime.

He heard the ol' man calling and he raised up and listened. Hears the ol' man - giving 'em something like this says - Roff, roff, roff, roff Yonder he goes, yonder he goes, yonder he goes - can't you see. The ol' man put a lead on the backtrack, the dog run so fast he hate to call him back. He ought to give him a straight trail to see how fast he could run in his old days - and he said - Here, here, here, here Yonder he goes, yonder he goes, yonder he goes - can't you see. The ol' dog went down the mountain, he give him something like this - says Roff, roff, roff, roff - yonder he goes.

You know how little children are, being mad in the morning; you won't know what's the matter with 'em - One little boy been sitting around - hasn't said nothing all morning - All at once he said, "Mama" She said, "Wont, son?" "Ma's gonna catch a rabbit ma." (3 times) Yonder - yonder - yonder.

John - vocal & banjo

SIDE II, Band 5:  **COMMON BILL**

(Source: Vanny Mechaux, I.C. Greer)

I will tell you of a fellow, of a fellow I have seen, Who is neither white nor yellow, but altogether green. And his name it isn't charming, for it's only common Bill, And he wants for me to wed him, but I hardly think I will.

(REFRAIN)

Poor Bill, poor silly Bill, He wants for me to wed him, but I hardly think I will. He came one night to see me, and he made so long a stay, I began to think that lunkhead would never go away. And he talked of devotion, of devotion pure and bright, And to think, that silly fellow, he nearly stayed all night.

(REFRAIN)

Poor Bill, poor silly Bill, And to think, that silly fellow, he nearly stayed all night. Well, he wants for me to wed him, and the very Deuce is in it, For he says if I don't marry him, then he can't live a minute. And you know the blessed Bible, it teaches not to kill, So I've thought the matter over, and I guess I'll marry Bill.
REFRAIN:
Poor Bill, poor silly Bill,
I've thought the matter over, and I guess I'll marry Bill.

Mr. Paley - voice and the five-stringed banjo.
Mr. Seeger - Guitar obligato

SIDE II, Band 6: JOHNNY GET YOUR GUN

(Source: Earl Johnson's Closhoppers)

Johnny get your gun, get your gun, get your gun,
Johnny get your gun, and have a little fun

CHORUS:
Johnny get your gun, get your gun, get your gun
Johnny get your gun, I say.

Johnny pulled the trigger and the hammer came down
Gun kicked Johnny right back on the ground

(CHORUS)

Johnny got his gun, the gun was loaded
Johnny pulled the trigger and the gun exploded

(CHORUS)

Sing a little song I just made up
'Bout a cat and a kitten and a little ol' pup.
Cat run the kitten, kitten run the pup -
Around the table and pretty far up.

(CHORUS)

Johnny got his gun, says turn me loose
Shot a crow and hit an old goose
Crow went caw - the duck went quack
Ought to seen the goose - bailing the jack.

(CHORUS)

My ol' Johnny was a great ol' man
Washed his face in a frying pan
Combed his hair in a wagon wheel
Died with a toothache in his heel

(CHORUS)

john-vocal & guitar
Tom-second voice & banjo
Mike-fiddle