Pete Seeger
AMERICAN FAVORITE BALLADS
Smithsonian Folkways Recordings
1. BARBARA ALLEN 2:48
2. YOUNG MAN WHO WOULDN'T HOE CORN 1:34
3. MIDNIGHT SPECIAL 3:02 (arr. Huddie Ledbetter/TRA; Folkways Music Publishers Inc., BMI)
4. HOUSE OF THE RISING SUN 2:50
5. CARELESS LOVE 3:04
6. OH, WHAT A BEAUTIFUL CITY 3:24 (arr. Marion Hicks/Stormking Music Inc., BMI)
7. POOR BOY 2:13
8. SALLY ANN 1:28
9. THE RIDDLE SONG 2:23
10. GO TELL AUNT RHODY 3:11 (arr. J. J. Rousseau)
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. STÄGÖLJE 2:10
18. CAMPTOWN RACES 1:27 (Stephen Foster)
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 (George P. Wright)
23. THE FARMER'S CURST WIFE 2:47
24. HARD TRAVELIN' 2:40 (Woody Guthrie/TRA; Laddlow Music Inc., BMI)

For song lyrics and discography, go to the Smithsonian Folkways Recordings Web site at www.folkways.si.edu
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)).

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—forgotten.

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 Honespun Days: A Narrative Poem of New York State Life P 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 "banjero," 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 Bluestone 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 cape 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 Trojan 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 Haviland, 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, SFV 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 executive 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 1992:149-51).

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, Tanya, 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 stomed 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.

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
Pig, singer; unaccompanied vocal. Also known as “Hawkey Elroy,” “Barbara Allen,” and others; from Folksongs (1928, 1937).
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 300 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 “Boney Barbara Allen” 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


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 1930's" (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, pole, 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 Recordings on the Anthology of American Folk Music (1952) edited by Harry Smith (reissued as SFW CD 40000, 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 2176, reissued in 1957 FP and FH 5063). 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: Brunings 1981:356.

3. MIDNIGHT SPECIAL

Pete Seeger, singer and banjo (From Folkways 2321, 1956)

In the video A Vision Shared: A Tribute to Woody Guthrie and Leadbelly (CBS Music 1949006, 1988) Alan Lomax states that "Midnight Special" is "a tender prison 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 the recordings of it made in other states during this period. 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: Brunings 1981:357.

4. HOUSE OF THE RISING SUN

Pete Seeger, singer and banjo (Also known as "Rising Sun Blues," "Rounder's Luck," and others, from Folkways 2321, 1956)

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 women 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 label this "a young lady, Georgia Turner, in Middlesex, 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: 286, 290); he copied the 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 13284), 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 1981:332, 392.

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 pleading 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 a 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 FW 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 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 Feet?" 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" (SWF 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 Loew's One Thousand and One Laffs and Your Friend's 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 McCarty 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"; and when 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 Royall" (Child #78), 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 is 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 capsizes them. The lord awakens and sees them drown, a tragedy that also kills him. The line "Who will sho my bonny feet?" became a common 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 Ashch Recordings, Vol. 2, SWF CD 40101, 1999; Lomax 1960:200-201, 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 (SFCD 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-Song Project 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: Brunings 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 1955:35-39). Of course, the maiden answers the riddles, and the knight marries her. These events are part of "Riddles Wisely Expounded" (Child #1; Child, 1882 [1905]:1-46), 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 Wodeburn's Courtship" (Child #46; Child, 1884 [1905]: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 1930s on the long-play album Wayfaring Stranger (Columbia CL 6285); it was also available as a single, Pete Niles, John Jacob Niles, and others recorded it, and the Trapp Family Singers also performed it. See: Brunings 1981:261.

10. GO TELL AUNT RHODY
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 folsa 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." Vince 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: Brunings 1981:108.

11. THE WATER IS WIDE
Pete Seeger, vocal and 12-string guitar (Also known as "Waly, Waly," "The Britik Young Lover Doth Come At Thee," 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 songalong out of it, putting it in 4/4 time, with the sonority of the 12-stringer in D.... [Why is it that human beings can get a warm comforting feeling as they all sing together about someone ready to kill themselves with despair?... It'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 1730s 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 1972:668), and probably was the first to record it. Many other performers followed, and it was a
12. THE FOX
Pete Seeger, vocal and banjo (Also known as "The Fox and His Wife," "The Fox and the Grey Goose," "Old Miss Pipper Flapper," 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 Deca 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, Bye 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, 1982). See: Brunnings 1981:164; The Collected Reprints from Sing Out! Vols. 1-6, pp. 295 (1990).

14. PRETTY POLLY

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 same 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 becomest 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 1987: 268-70). The Americanized versions of "Pretty Polly" are related to that broadside Ballard. 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, 1967)

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 adds 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 movie 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 recorded versions, and the Archive of Folk Culture, Library of Congress, has 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, 1935)

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 meaningfulness; 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: Malekshifer Blues: The Asch Recordings, Vol. 2, Smithsonian Folkways SFW CD 40102. See: Brunnings 1981:293; Laws 1964:88-91, 253-54; Lomax 1994:93-99; Lomax 1980:559, 571-72.

17. Black Is The Color Of My True Love’s Hair

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 (Sharf 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, “Although 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. 1-4, p.289 (1990).

18. Camp Town 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 Sere-footers” (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.


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 (chanties) were the work songs of sailors or maritime workers; this one is classified as one of the “halyard (halyard) chanties,” which were used chiefly for the longer and heavier tasks aboard ship” (Colcord 1938 [1964]:45-50). 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
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 Folksongs reissue (SFW CD 45659); 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 (Pross Folkways 2043, 1954)

Sheet music for this song that poses 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 nineteenth century and Handel made it 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 Canzad, who had collected and then adapted it from Ernie Seger, of Camp Woodland, Catakell 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 become popular, for the same year he recorded it six more times for 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 2339, 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 much of a woman even for the devil to hunt 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 youngimps 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 on the ballad Alan Lomax wrote, "In the Ozarks, if a man divorced 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, 1982-98, Part IX, Vol. 5: 107–08.

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-wallflowers"; this one was a favorite of Frost, for "[i]t has the lure 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 Mason," "The Frog He Would a Wanda Was," "The Frog's Courtship," "King Kong Kitchie Kitchie Ki-Me-O," "Here's to Cheshire, Here's to Cheese," and many others). 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 "ahah" 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 (G462). Even western-movie star and recording-artist Jimmy Wakely recorded it in 1941 (Decca 5965). It can be heard as performed by Chubby Parker and His Old Time Band (recorded in 1928) in the Anthology of American Folk Music (Smithsonian Folkways SFW CD 40900, 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, 1991)

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
24. HARD TRAVELIN'
Pete Seeger, vocal and 12-string guitar (From Folkways 2322, 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 1 (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' his craps, and his hope went ten feet. See 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 blacklist, 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.' And some saw no significance in the phrase" (Seeger 1964:73). For those who like the word, 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," "Wearin' Down," "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 1951:74; Utey 1971:453-61.


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Many thanks to Pete Seeger, Toshi Seeger, Greg Adams, Bill Aldacushion, David Dennis, Kelly Duke, Gerald Gay, Chris Magaña, Andrea Rose Place.
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