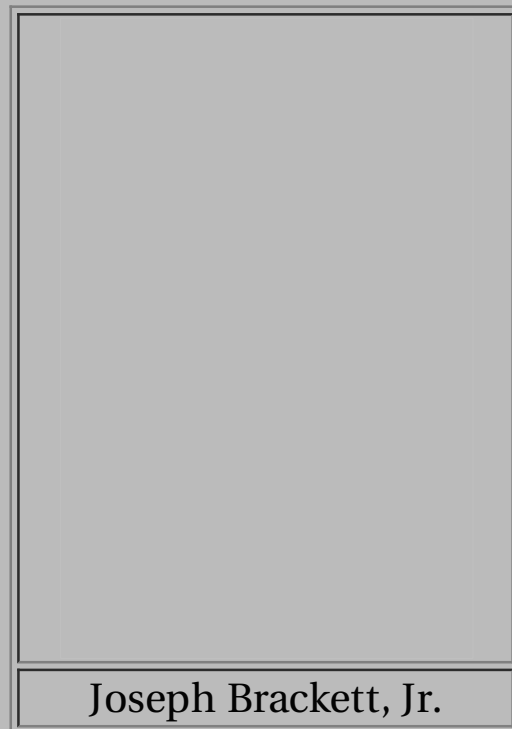


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Thirty Years with the Armstrong Family,
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Simple Gifts Joseph Brackett, Jr.

'Tis the gift to be simple, 'tis the gift to be free,
'Tis the gift to come down where we ought to be,
And when we find ourselves in the place just right,
'Twill be in the valley of love and delight.
When true simplicity is gain'd,
To bow and to bend we shan't be asham'd,
To turn, turn will be our delight,
Till by turning, turning we come round right.



recordings of "Simple Gifts"

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Bright Morning Star. **Arisin'**, Rainbow Snake RSR 004, LP, 1981.

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Mitzie Collins, **Sampler of Folk Music**, Sampler aafm 7601, LP, 1976.

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Devilish Merry. **Ghost of His Former Self**, Wildbeest WB 002, LP, 1979. (Tis the Gift to Be Simple)

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Jean Ritchie, **Traditional Music at Newport, 1964**, Part 2, Vanquard VSD 79183, LP, 1965. (Tis the Gift to Be Simple)

Jean and Lee Schilling, **Keep on the Sunny Side**, Traditional TR 021, LP, 1982.

Winifred Smith, **Simple Gifts**, Tennessee Squire Assoc. TFA 64440, LP, 196?.

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Paint Creek Folklore Society Song Tune Book, Visconti, Carl (ed.). Paint Creek, 1986.

Rise Up Singing, Peter Blood and Annie Patterson (eds.). Sing Out, 1992/1989.

Songs of Man, Norman Luboff and Win Stracke (eds.). Prentice Hall, 1969.

Winds of the People, Sing Out, 1982.

Simple Gifts

The Shakers, actually the United Society of Believers in Christ's Second Coming, had their beginnings in the middle of the 18th century in England. They had split off from the Quakers and because in their services they used extreme body movements, they became known as the shaking Quakers. The most significant

early event in their history was in 1758 when Ann Lee joined the society. The daughter and wife of blacksmiths, she had lost all four of her children as babies. Ann Lee was 22 years old when she joined the Shakers and after being a member for 12 years she experienced “a special manifestation of Divine Light.” Thereafter, the Shaker referred to her as “Mother in Christ” and called her Mother Ann Lee. She became the Society's most important spiritual leader in 1772.

Needless to say, the group's radical views provoked harassment and persecution. Following a vision by Ann Lee of a sanctuary in America, she, her husband and eight followers sailed for America on May 19, 1774. After a dangerous journey, which according to the captain they only survived thanks to the strong faith of Ann Lee and her group, they landed in New York on August 6, 1774. Still today, the Shakers gather on August in their community house at Sabbathday Lake, Maine and celebrate the day with song.

In America, the Shakers lived a communal life based on the common ownership of property. Among their core beliefs were an extreme simplicity in their daily lives and celibacy. It was Ann Lee who had introduced this doctrine into the group. She even rejected marital sex. [Her husband later left her and married another woman.] This was rationalized by saying it freed women of their identity as subservient wives and mothers. Thus women could live on an equal plain with men. Thus men and women lived and worked side by side, equal in power, in holding offices, with equal influence and of equal judgment. Shakers addressed one another as “brother” and “sister” and lived in separate living facilities. The Shaker doctrine of celibacy – as well as that of simplicity – also had to do with the suppression of individuality with the goal of creating a more unified community. Further, it reflected their view of God. They believed in one god, not in a trinity of three men, as they put it. They believed that God is both male and female, both father and mother. Mother Ann saw herself as the second coming of Christ.

At their peak, between 1830 and 1840, the Shakers had 19 settlements with about 6000 members. They were spared fighting in the Civil War, during which President Lincoln, respecting their pacifist beliefs, gave them an exemption from military service, the first conscientious objectors in history. After the war, they had difficulty competing in the developing new industrial society.

In the 20th century, their practice of celibacy began to take its toll and the Shakers withdrew more and more from the general society. In 1965, they decided to accept no new members. By 1998, there was only one Shaker society left with less than ten members.

The Shaker credo was: “Beauty rests on utility.” They gained renown and respect for their furniture and architecture. Likewise music played a significant role in their lives and was created on the same principles.

The earliest Shaker music was without words. Syllables like “la” and “lo” were

sung. Not until 1787 was the first Shaker song with words written, "In Yonder Valley," by Father James Whittaker. With time, more and more songs with lyrics were composed. Between the late 18 th and the early 20 th century, more than 12,000 Shaker songs were composed. Originally, the songs had only one melody; but from the 1830's three-part harmony were added. In 1852, the first Shaker songbook appeared.

There were so many Shaker songs that a quick method of copying the melody had to be found. The Shakers developed their own musical short-hand consisting of the first seven letters of the alphabet and a few other symbols. It was not until the 1870's that instrumental accompaniment was allowed. Of the thousands of Shaker songs, only a few hundred are still sung today.

The lyrics to "Simple Gifts" were written by Joseph Brackett, Jr. in Alfred , Maine in 1848. Brackett had been born in Cumberland , Maine on May 6, 1797, where his father's farm at Gorham , Maine became the nucleus of a new Shaker settlement. In 1819, he with the other Shakers moved to Poland Hill , Maine . Joseph Brackett, Jr. served as first minister of the Maine Shaker society at New Gloucester, Maine, now known as Sabbathday Lake , and he was Church Elder. He died on July 4, 1882.

In Shaker manuscripts, "Simple Gifts" is referred to as a "Dancing Song" and "Quick Dance." It was not a hymn. In 1940, the song was published in a book about Shaker music and dance, **The Gift to Be Simple** , by Edward Deming Andrews. It became famous through the arrangement by Aaron Copland in his ballet **Appalachian Spring** , first performed in 1944. Copland's arrangement was sung at inaugurations of both Ronald Reagan (1985) and Bill Clinton (1993). In 1970, Judy Collins recorded the song for her LP **Whales and Nightingales** . The English songwriter Sydney Carter adapted the melody for his song "Lord of the Dance," published in 1963.

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Shaker music discography

Shaker music bibliograpy

back to stories behind the song

Jesse James

Jesse James was a lad who killed many a man
He robbed the Glendale train;
He stole from the rich and he gave to the poor
He'd a hand and a heart and a brain.

(chorus)

Poor Jesse had a wife to mourn for his life,
Three children, they were brave;
But that dirty little coward that shot Mr. Howard
Has laid poor Jesse in his grave.

It was Robert Ford, that dirty little coward;
I wonder how he does feel
For he ate of Jesse's bread and he slept in Jesse's bed
Then laid poor Jesse in his grave.

Jesse was a man, a friend to the poor
He never would see a man suffer pain,
And with his brother Frank he robbed the Chicago bank,
And stopped the Glendale train.

It was his brother Frank that robbed the Gallatin bank,
And carried the money from the town;
It was in this very place that they had a little race,
For they shot Captain Sheets to the ground.

They went to the crossing not very far from there,
And there they did the same;
With the agent on his knees, he delivered up the keys
To the outlaws, Frank and Jesse James.

It was on Saturday night, Jesse was at home
Talking with his family brave,
Robert Ford came along like a thief in the night
And laid poor Jesse in his grave.

The people held their breath
When they heard of Jesse's death
And wondered how he ever came to die.
It was one of the gang called little Robert Ford
He shot poor Jesse on the sly.

This song was made by Billy Gashade,
As soon as the news did arrive;
He said there was no man with the law in his hand
Who could take Jesse James when alive.

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- Ry Cooder, ***Long Riders***, Warner HS 3448, LP (1980).
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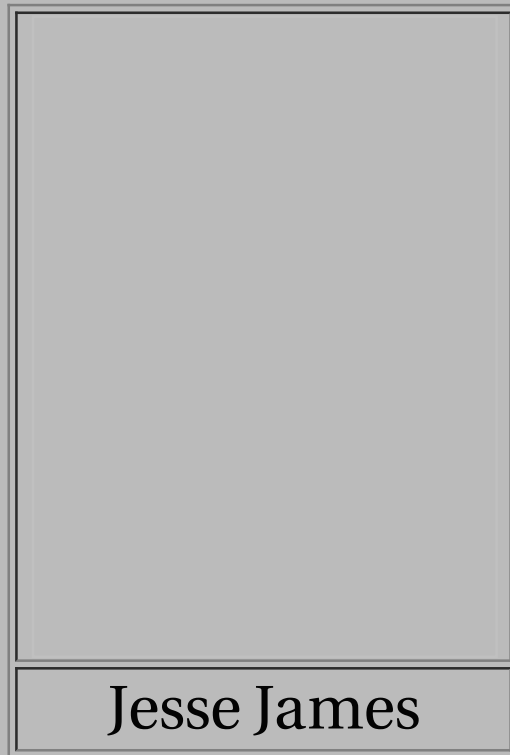
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a counter version of the song:“True Ballad of Jesse James.”



Jesse James

In St. Joseph, Missouri, where I grew up, Jesse James was a local hero. People said simply, “Jesse.” After all, he was a local boy. He had been killed in our town. The house in which he was shot stood at the time right near where we lived, along the Belt Highway, a busy four-lane highway. It had not always stood there. It had been built 1318 Lafayette Street and since I left St. Joseph, it has again been moved and now stands next to the Pattee House Museum. It has long been a museum and I visited it several times as a child and adolescent. We were shown the bullet hole in the wall and with awe we were told, “This was the place where Jesse was shot.” Jesse was a local hero, one of the town's two claims to fame. The other was the Pony Express, a mail service between St. Joseph and California. The Pony Express was in service for all of 18 months before it went bankrupt, a victim of technical progress. Jesse James was a thief and murderer. You have to take your heroes where you find them.

Jesse Woodson James had been born in Clay County, Missouri on September 5, 1847, the son of Robert James, a Baptist preacher from Kentucky, who helped found William Jewell College. But Jesse had few memories of his father, who became one of the 49ers, one of those who travelled to California dreaming of finding gold there. Robert James died in California. After the death of her husband, Jesse's mother, Zerelda, remarried twice, first to Benjamin Simms and

later to Reuben Samuel. Reuben and Zeralda Simms bought seven slaves and raised tobacco. In addition to Jesse's older brother Frank and his sister Susan, he had four half-siblings.

During the Civil War, the James farm was visited by Federal troops looking for information about Confederate guerrilla. Jesse claimed that they attempted to hang his step-father. Missouri was a slave state and though it remained formally in the Union, there was a second Confederate state government. In 1864, at the age of 17 or 18, Jesse James joined a guerrilla unit led by Bloody Bill Anderson, which had split off from Quantrill's raiders.

The end of the war led to chaotic conditions in Missouri. Republicans took control of the state government and prevented Democrats from voting or holding public office. In the process of surrendering in Lexington, Missouri, Jesse was shot by Union militia. His cousin Zeralda Mimms nursed him back to health and she later became his wife.

For the sympathizers of the South, the war had been lost, but among the former guerrillas, there were men who had little desire to return to a peaceful civilian life. Jesse James joined them. They robbed their first bank in 1866, the Clay County Savings Association in the town of Liberty. Jesse justified the crime, saying that he only wanted to acquire the deed to his land. Yet during the robbery, he also shot an innocent bystander. There followed more bank robberies. In 1869, he and his brother Frank join Cole Younger to rob a bank in Russellville, Kentucky.

Jesse James first gained fame when he and Frank robbed the Daviess County Savings Association in Gallatin, Missouri. There he shot and killed the cashier in the mistaken assumption, that the man had killed Bloody Bill Anderson during the war. That murder and the escape that followed put Jesse's name in the newspapers for the first time.

Jesse became the most famous of the former guerrillas turned outlaw largely through the work of a newspaper man. John Newman, an editor of the *Kansas City Times*, was working to return Confederate sympathizers to power in Missouri. He published Jesse's letters in which Jesse appealed directly to former Confederates and built him up as a symbol of Rebel resistance to Reconstruction. To what degree Jesse saw himself as a political fighter is a matter of question.

Jesse and his brother Frank join Cole Younger, his brothers and several other former Confederates to form the James-Younger Gang. They robbed banks from Iowa to Texas and from Kansas to Missouri. Likewise, they robbed stagecoaches and once a fair in Kansas City. They sometimes did these deeds in front of a crowd, which they seemed to enjoy. From 1873, they began robbing trains, in all but two instances robbing only the money the train was transporting in its safe and leaving the passengers alone. John Newman tried to create the image of a latter-day Robin Hood for his hero. It is said, that Jesse James shot 15 people

during his outlaw career.

Beginning in 1874, the victimized express companies hired the Chicago-based Pinkerton National Detective Agency, an agency also busy working against organized labor, to track down the gang. Initially, the agency's efforts met with little success. Then the founder and head of the agency, Allan Pinkerton, took the in hand and initiated sterner measures. In a raid on the James family farm, a bomb set by Pinkerton killed Jesse's half-brother and tore off one of his mother's arms. The house burned to the ground.

The attack only enhanced Jesse James' image as a persecuted hero. He could be sure of the sympathy and support of many former Confederates, among them those who had by then been elected to the Missouri state legislature. The introduced a bill praising the James and the Younger brothers and granting them an amnesty. It just barely failed to pass.

Jesse and his cousin Zeralda had married on April 24, 1874. They had four children, two of who died in infancy. Jesse James Jr. grew up to become a respectable lawyer in Kansas City .

An unsuccessful bank robbery in Northfield, Minnesota on September 7, 1876, where the citizens of the town armed themselves and confronted the gang members, led to the death of several members of the James-Younger Gang and the capture of the Younger brothers. Only Frank and Jesse James, who had murdered a cashier in the course of the attempted robbery, were able to escape.

Jesse and Frank went to the Nashville , Tennessee area and assumed the names Thomas Howard and B. J. Woodson. Frank settled down. Jesse later recruited a new gang. On October 8, 1879, the James Gang robbed a train at Glendale , Missouri . There followed a series of hold-ups, including one as far a field as Muscle Shoals, Alabama . But the new James Gang was no longer made up of former guerrilla fighters and fought internally. Some were captured. Jesse, growing paranoid, killed one member.

Pressure forced the James brothers to leave Tennessee . Frank decided to go to Virginia . In December 1881, Jesse rented a house in St. Joseph , Missouri . Having become mistrusting, Jesse asked the brothers Bob and Charley Ford, whom he felt he could trust, to move in with his family as a means of protecting his family. But unknown to Jesse, Bob Ford had been negotiating with Missouri governor Thomas T. Crittenden about delivering up Jesse James to the authorities. Crittenden had made the capture of the James brothers his top political priority.





Bob Ford

On April 3, 1882, the Fords and James retired to the living room after having had breakfast. Jesse stood up to straighten a picture that was hanging crooked. Bob Ford took advantage of the situation to shoot Jesse in the back of the head. Robert Ford reported the deed and claimed the \$10,000 reward the railroad and express companies had put up. Instead, he was charged with first degree murder. The Ford brothers were tried, convicted and sentenced to be hanged. Within two hours, Governor Crittenden granted them full pardon. The Fords were able to claim a portion of the reward. They fled Missouri . Charley Ford committed suicide in May 1884. Bob Ford was shot to death in a tent saloon in Creede Colorado on June 8, 1892.

Immediately after the shot that killed him, St. Joseph citizens crowded into the small house to see the dead outlaw. The Fords made no attempt to hide their role. Their pardon by the governor led many to believe he had planned to have Jesse killed and had never intended to try to capture him. This only added to the already existing legend of Jesse James. By this time, former Confederates had regained considerable political influence in Missouri . Some credit Jesse James with the renaissance of Southern influence in Missouri, but it seems more likely that he played the political card to justify criminal activities rather than out of any real conviction.

From the beginning, there were doubts that Jesse had really been killed. Men appeared, claiming to be Jesse James. The body buried as Jesse James were exhumed in 1995 and examined. There appears to be no reason to doubt that they were the remains of the outlaw.

Go Down Old Hannah

Huddie Ledbetter

Go down old Hannah,
and don't you rise no more
And if you do rise in the morning,
set the world on fire.

It was soon one morning
when the sun did rise
I was thinking 'bout my good-looking baby
hang my head and cry.

Do down old Hannah,
don't you rise no more
And if you do rise in the morning,
set this world on fire.

If you had been on the river somewhere
in 1910,

They was driving the women
just as hard as they do the men.

You go down old Hannah
and don't you rise no more,
So if you rises in the morning

Ain't No More C

trad

There ain't no more
Oh, oh
They done grind
Oh, oh

Now, cap'n, doncha do m
You done drive that bul

Oughta come or
You could find a dead

Oughta come or
They was drivin' the v

Now, wake up, dead ma
Wake up, dead man,

Wake up lifer, h
You may get a pardon,

Go down, ole Hannah
If you come back,

There ain't no more
They done grind

bring judgment day.

Some in the prison a

Some in the fields a

Yes I run to the captain
and I shake his hand,
I say, „Look-a here captain,
you got a hard workin' man.“

And I told the captain old
Ben was dead
And the captain didn't
do nothing but nod his head.

So why don't you go down old Hannah,
don't you rise no more,
And if you do rise in the morning
change this world around.

recordings of „Go Down, Old Hannah“

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Sparky (James) Rucker, *Cold and Lonesome on a Train*, June Appal, JA 0017, LP

Pete Seeger, *I Can See a New Day*, Columbia CL2252/CS9057

Pete Seeger, *Dangerous Songs!?*, Columbia CD65261, CD

Pete Seeger, *Pete Seeger, Archive of Folksong*, FS-201, LP

Pete Seeger, *A Pete Seeger Concert*, Tradition 2107

Joan Toliver, *Joan Toliver*, Kapp KRL-4502, LP

Jeff Warner and Jeff Davis, *Wilder Joy*, Flying Fish, FF-431, LP

recordings of “Ain't No More Cane on the Brazos”

Alan Lomax, *Texas Folk Songs*, Tradition TLP 1029, LP

Chad Mitchell Trio, *Singin' Our Minds*, Mercury, SR 60838, LP

Bernice Reagon (Johnson), *Folk Songs: the Songs*, Folkways FA 2457, LP

notes

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Go Down Old Hannah/No More Cane on the Brazos

Over the centuries, the river Brazos had made the land lying west of present-day Houston extremely fertile. Along with corn and cotton, sugar cane is grown there in an area known as „sugarland.“ The cane is cut in late fall. The wind is cold and the cane so tall that one works in eternal twilight, the leaves so sharp that hands and faces are cut. Before the Civil War, slaves labored in the cane fields. After emancipation, the cane growers discovered a new source of labor. They „leased“ black convicts from Texas prisons.

After 1920, Huddie Ledbetter, then aged 32, was among those convicts from the Central State Texas Prison, likewise known as „Sugarland,“ who had to work in the cane fields. At the time, the prison was 35 miles west of Houston . Cut off from the musical fashions of the 1920s – the jazz age – Ledbetter learned from an older musical tradition. Most of the songs made famous by Lead Belly were learned while in Sugarland, among them the „Midnight Special.“ The „Special“ was a train which ran from Houston to San Antonio . Shortly after midnight, it passed Sugarland. It was said that if the headlight of the train fell upon a convict, he would soon be released.

The two songs „Go Down Old Hannah“ and „No More Cane on the Brazos“ are obviously closely related, sharing some verses, and both surely come from slavery times. They make clear to what extent the situation of Blacks early in the 20 th century, and especially black prison inmates – and it was all too easy for a Black to land behind bars – was very similar to that of slaves, in some respects even more insecure and brutal.

The inmates in Sugarland could not escape the brutality of the Whites and the heat of the sun. Lead Belly explained, „They called the sun, Old Hannah because it was hot and they just gave it a name. That’s what the boys called it when I was down in prison. I didn’t hear it before I went down there. The boys were talking about Old Hannah – I kept looking and I didn’t see no Hannah, but they looked up and said, ‘That’s the sun.’“ [**The Leadbelly Songbook**, Oak Publications, 1962, p. 50.]

[back to stories behind the song](#)

Sailing Down My Dirty Stream

Pete Seeger

[click here for lyrics](#)

recordings of “Sailing Up My Dirty Stream”

Casey Neill, *Where Have All the Flowers Gone: The Songs of Pete Seeger*,

Wandertüte 74321456952, CD

Pete Seeger, **God Bless the Grass**, Columbia CD65287, CD

notes

Where Have All the Flowers Gone, Pete Seeger. A Sing Out Publication, 1993.

Sing Out! 19/2

Sailing Up my Dirty Stream

This song was written in 1965 and appeared on Pete Seeger's environmental record, *God Bless the Grass*. The Hudson River had been the essential artery between the state capital, Albany, and New York City. With the coming of the railroad and ever more because of the automobile, the river lost this function. The packets and sloops which had transported goods and passengers from the 17th to the middle of the 19th century became things of the past. The Hudson became a dump for the cities and towns along its shores.

In 1965, singer Victor Schwartz ran across a book about the Hudson River sloops. He showed it to Pete Seeger, who was an avid sailor. Pete decided to try to build a sloop, and Hudson River Sloop Restoration Inc. was founded. The idea was that the sloop would draw attention to the state of the river. Members were recruited in many towns along the river. The organization had the goal of raising 125.000 dollars to build the sloop by way of „sloop parties,“ stands at folk festivals and concerts. When Pete Seeger spoke to friends about his idea, they decided he had finally lost his mind. In order to raise more money, Pete's wife, Toshi, visited wealthy seamen and local historians. Toshi Seeger became the key to the success of the Project, Many leftist friends mistrusted Pete's project, his interest in environmental issues and the fact that he was willing to work with conservatives who were also interested in the environment.

In 1968, the marine architect Cyrus Hamilton of Kennebunkport, Maine was given the task of designing the sloop. Shipbuilder Harvy Gamadge of South Bristol, Maine was in charge of building the sloop. It was launched on May 17, 1969. The „Clearwater“ was 32,2 meters long and 7,6 meters wide and had sleeping quarters for 15 plus a cabin for the captain. The initial crew consisted of musicians, among them Jack Elliott, Don McLean, Len Chandler, Jimmy Collier, Douglas Kirkpatrick, and Lou Killan. Even the captain, Alan Auropu, played the guitar. First mate was Gordon Bok, the only real sailor among them. In order to pay debts, the crew had to sing and play in the evening after having worked all day. The „Clearwater“ arrived in New York on July 31.

With a constantly changing crew, the sloop sailed up the Hudson . By way of picnics, concerts with local musicians and celebrations, it was hoped to get people living along the river interested in local history.

In 1970, NET-TV broadcast a special about the „ Clearwater “ and in 1975, the recording *Clearwater* with contributions from Pete Seeger, Don McLean and Gordon Bok was released.

Later, two more, smaller sloops were built, the „Sojourner Truth“ and the „Woody Guthrie.“ By the 1990s, the Clearwater Organization had around 15.000 members and the river had actually gotten cleaner.

The Clearwater in internet

Clearwater Festival. Great Hudson River Revival

[back to stories behind the song](#)

Old Jerome

[Kate Wolf](#)

[click here for lyrics](#)

Recordings of “Old Jerome”

Kate Wolf, *The Wind Blows Wild*, CD, 1989

Kate Wolf, *Weaver of Visions*, 2000

musical notation

Kate Wolf Revisited, Kate Wolf. San Rafael, California: Another Sandown Publishing Company, 1991

Old Jerome

Jerome, Arizona was one of the richest mining areas in the United States. By the time the mines were closed, an estimated \$800 million dollars worth of gold, silver and copper had been mined. In 1826, copper had already been found on Mingis Mountain. But the history of Jerome began in 1882 with the building of a rail connection by the Atlantic and Pacific Railroad and the foundation of the United Verde Copper Company. The city of Jerome and the company were practically one and the same. The town grew up around the mines and was named after the principal New York investor, Eugene Jerome.

In 1888, William Clark of Montana bought United Verde, had a narrow-gauge railway built to reduce freight costs and moved to Jerome to run operations. In 1935, United Verde was sold for \$20,800,000.

The town of Jerome had been incorporated in March 1889 and had the typical cosmopolitan population of a western mining town: Mexicans, Croatians, Irish, Spaniards, Italians and Chinese. And it was as wide open as most other mining towns, with prostitution, gambling and vice. In 1915, the population of the town was estimated at about 2,500. In 1918, fire spread out of control through many miles of underground mines. This brought about the end of underground mining and the shift to open pit mining. In 1953, the mines were closed and Jerome became virtually a ghost town. By the late 50s it was down to around 50.

The odd thing about Jerome is that it was built on the side of a mountain. The upper houses are more than 1,500 feet higher than the lower ones. Ever since a dynamite explosion in 1925, the town has been slowly sliding down the mountain. Some empty buildings have fallen over. The town jail is now about a hundred yards further down the mountain than where it was originally built. After young people began to move into the empty houses in the sixties and seventies, the city began to build a tourist industry. In 1967 Jerome was designated an Historic District and in 1976 a National Historic Landmark. The state of Arizona founded the Jerome State Historic Park close by. Today, Jerome has a population of about 340.

Photos of Jerome

In her songbook, *Kate Wolf Revisited*, an introduction she gave to the song is quoted. "Well, maybe I'll do the song I wrote for old Jerome, down there in Arizona, for Katie Lee. This is a song about going in and reclaiming some place that has been neglected and died. In 1929, there were 15,000 miners... a population of 15,000 in the city of Jerome, Arizona. The mines go down to sea level underneath the mountains, and there's a mountain there called Cleopatra which has the open pit mine behind it. What's happened is that Jerome is one of the few places where houses are still very cheap. People are moving in and fixing them up. But when they blasted in 1929, [sic] they blasted 250 tons of dynamite under the center of town, and it started to sink an eighth of an inch a month. And ever since then, every building in downtown Jerome in the main heart of the city is every which way. And people just shore them up and patch them up and push them back up on the hillside. And all over you have the ghosts of the three hospitals that were there, the schools and everything: just concrete shells with their eyes up to the sky. No roofs; you can see right through them. All remainders of the city that was, and this other city coming out of it, almost like green coming out after the winter. The smelters were so bad that they killed all the vegetation all over the mountains there. And finally when it began to change, when the mining stopped in 1953, they went up in an airplane and they strewed these tree seeds from China, called the ailanthus tree, all over the hillsides because it was the only thing that would grow there. And it came up and started greening the hills. And now they have grass and the whole thing's coming back. So I wrote this song for a remarkable woman named Katie Lee that I met down there that we can't begin to do justice to in a short conversation. And it's interesting to note that Jerome has no grocery store, no laundromat, but it has a cappuccino/espresso house, several jewelry stores, many crafts shops. And the whole city's up on the side of this mountain, so every block is like a whole two or three stories down below the next one. And you feel like you're going for miles."

Kate Wolf's song, which she wrote in 1983 after visiting Jerome, was adopted as the official town song in 1987.

Jerome, Arizona in internet

[back to stories behind the song](#)

Dry Land Farm

Butch Hancock

[click here for lyrics](#)

recordings of “Dry Land Farm”

Butch Hancock, *West Texas Waltzes and Dust-Blown Tractor Tunes*. Rainlight Records, 1978.

Butch Hancock, *Own & Own*. Sugarhill [Country], 1989.

Dry Land Farm

The lack of water is a fact of life in large parts on the American West. Fifty percent of the West beyond the 100 th meridian receives only ten to twenty inches of rainfall annually, parts of Nevada, Arizona, and California less than ten inches. The Great Plains pass through wet and dry cycles. A series of wet years in the 1860s and 1870s convinced settlers to homestead in an area which had up to then been known as the Great American Desert . Beginning in 1889, however, a ten-year drought devastated large parts of the Great Plains .

Facing this dry cycle, farmers living where irrigation was not possible or practical learned to secure water by building windmills and by using agricultural techniques known as dry farming. Dry farmers need to keep

larger amounts of acreage under cultivation to compensate for drought. This requires the use of modern technology. In the northern plains, wheat is the preferred dry farm crop in the South, sorghum.

Those farmers in arid regions not practicing dry farming are dependent on irrigation. „Irrigation,“ wrote Marc Reisner, „is a profoundly unnatural act.“ [Marc Reisner, *Cadillac Desert. The American West and Its Disappearing Water*. New York: Penquin Books, 1986,1993. p. 459.] In the short run, it creates an abundance of food and wealth – at a extremely high price – in the long run, it is destructive. Irrigation demands serious disruptions of the rivers, and with time leads to the destruction of irrigated land through salinazation. The irrigating farmer is thoroughly dependent on the government, which builds the dams and the aqueducts with taxpayers‘ money and supplies the farmers, mostly large, wealthy landowners, and many corporations involved in agriculture for tax purposes, with dirt cheap water. Irrigation farmers look upon this highly subsidized water as a right. Irrigation has been called, „socialism for the rich.“ [Reisner, *Cadillac Desert* . p. 334.] Today, more land is being taken out of production on account of salinity than is being taken into production by irrigation. [Reisner, *Cadillac Desert*. p. 461.]

bibliography:

Marc Reisner, *Cadillac Desert . The American West and Its Disappearing Water*. New York: Penquin Books, 1986,1993.

[back to stories behind the song](#)

Hell Hound on My Trail

Robert Johnson

I got to keep moving, I got to keep moving,
Blues falling down like hail, blues falling down like hail,
Umh, blues falling down like hail, blues falling down like hail.
And the day keeps on 'mindin' me there's
a hell-hound on my trail, hell-hound on my trail.

If today was Christmas Eve, if today was Christmas Eve, and tomorrow
was Christmas Day,

If today was Christmas Eve, and tomorrow was Christmas Day,
(spoken) Oh, wouldn't we have a time, baby.

All I would need my little sweet rider, just to pass the time away, uumh, to
pass the time away.

You sprinkled hot foot powder all around my door, all around my door.

You sprinkled hot foot powder all around your daddy's door.

It keeps me with a rambling mind, rider, every old place I go, every old
place I go.

I can tell the wind is rising, the leaves trembling on the trees, trembling on
the trees.

I can tell the wind is rising, the leaves trembling on the trees, uumh.

All I need my little sweet woman to keep my company, uumh, my
company.

recordings of "Hell Hound on My Trail":

Robert Johnson, *The Complete Recordings*, Columbia CD64916, CD

Robert Johnson, *The Gold Collection 40 Classic Performances*, R2 CD 40-14, CD

Robert Johnson, *King of the Delta Blues Singers*, Columbia CL 1654, LP

Hell Hound on My Trail

Between 1889 and 1918, almost three thousand black Americans were lynched. [Leon F. Litwack, *Trouble in Mind: Black Southerners in the Age of Jim Crow*. New York : Alfred A. Knopf,

1998. p. 306.] The „crime“ of the victims was often nothing more than „sassiness,“ that is, among other things, not tipping their hat to a white person, a „sarcastic grin,“ or the wrong body language when meeting a white person. If there were differences between a farmer and his black sharecroppers, it could easily end with the sharecropper being lynched. Needless to say, a sexual relationship to a white woman, or more often just suspected lustfulness, could be a death sentence for a black man. Some lynchings had no other purpose than entertaining white people. For some Whites „nigger killing“ was sport. In some cases, Blacks were lynched just because they were successful and had aroused the jealousy of poor Whites.

Lynchings often attracted large crowds; some people brought cameras. It was not considered inappropriate for women and children to watch the spectacle. There were instances of special trains bringing spectators to lynchings and parents excusing their children from school. Sometimes schools rearranged their schedules so the children could witness a killing. Hockers sold picture postcards of lynchings. Occasionally the time and place of a lynching would be announced in the newspaper.

The murderers often demonstrated not only exhibitionism but also sadism. It was not enough to kill their victim. He had to be tortured and maimed alive. The killing could be drawn out for hours to satisfy the lust of the viewers. Often, the crowd destroyed the corpse. Only rarely was one of the murderers tried for his crimes and that made him all the more a hero.

Among the Blacks, fear reigned, but also hate and disgust at the brutality and cowardliness of the Whites. A black woman said, “My way to protect myself, I thought, was to build around myself an armor made of my hatred of whites. It was needed. It was valuable. And it helped me to deal with the memories, the terrible dreams and recollections. To hate those responsible made it bearable, and so I indulged myself, and began to despise every white face I saw.” [Leon F. Litwack, *Trouble in Mind: Black Southerners in the Age of Jim Crow* . New York : Alfred A. Knopf, 1998. p. 306.]

The image of hell hounds who came and caught sinners was widespread in the South.

[back to stories behind the song](#)

Aragon Mill
Si Kahn

[click here for lyrics](#)

recordings of “Aragon Mill”

Tina Bledsoe, *Brown Lung Cotton Mill Blues*, June Appal 006, LP

Bok, Muir and Trickett, *A Water over Stone*, Folk Legacy

Margaret Christi, *Looking towards Home*

Hazel Dickens, *Hard Hitting Songs for Hard Hit People*, Rounder

Dry Branch Fire Squad, *Fannin' the Flames*

Dry Branch Fire Squad, *Live! At Last!*, Rounder

Flinkfinger, *The Irish Collection*, 2003.

Si Kahn, *In My Heart Live in Holland*, Philo

Si Kahn, *New Wood*, Philo CD1168, CD

Si Kahn, *A Retrospective*, Rounder

Dolores Keane, *Where Have All the Flowers Gone.*

Paddy Goes to Holyhead, *Here's to the People*

Planxty, *Words & Music*

Harvey Reid, *Fruit on the Vine*, Woodpecker Records

Red Clay Ramblers, *Chuckin' the Frizz (Live at the Cat's Cradle)*, Flying Fish FF 089

Charles Sawtell, *Music from Rancho DeVille*, Acoustic Disc

Peggy Seeger, *From Where I Stand*, Folkways Records

Skylark, Favorites, *Little Bird*, LB 1001, Cas

Rosalie Sorrels, *The Long Memory*, Red House RHR CD83, CD

Hans Theesink, *Titanic*

White Mountain Bluegrass, *Aragon Mill*, Strictly Country

Dublin City Ramblers, *The Best Of the Dublin City Ramblers*, Dolphin, (“Belfast Mill”)

The Fureys, *When You Were Sixteen;*(„Belfast Mill (Oregon Mill)“)

Furey Brothers, *Take Me Back to Castlebar*, (“Belfast Mill”)

musical notation

Carry It On! A History in Song and Picture of the Working Men and Women of America, Pete Seeger & Bob Reiser. New York : Simon & Schuster, 1985.

New Folk Favorites, edited by Will Schmid. Hal Leonard Publishing Corporation, 1987.

Si Kahn songbook, Milwaukee Hal Leonard Publishing Company, 1989.

Sing Out! 28/4

Aragon Mill

The American textile industry was **originally** concentrated in New England, but had started moving south in the 1880s to draw on dispossessed farmers willing to work for far less pay than their northern counterparts. By the 1930's, Southern textile mills were producing almost

three-fourths of the country's cotton and woolen textiles. And the plants in the South were more modern, the companies preferring to invest there where organized labor was much weaker.

The town of Aragon, in Polk county, Georgia, is 29 miles west of Marietta, Georgia and 43 miles northwest Atlanta, Georgia. Construction of the Aragon Mill began about 1898 and textile production commenced in the year 1900.

In that Aragon was a small community – population in the year 2000 was 1039 – the mill became the dominant force in the town. The mill provided the people of the town with all the city services: water, garbage disposal, etc. The mill also owned the school and covered most of its costs. The community's social center, Aragon Club, included meeting rooms and a theatre. It, too, was owned by the mill. All this meant a high level of dependence on and control by the mill.

Aragon Mill*

In 1934, Aragon Mill was affected by the nationwide textile workers strike, which began on September 2.

After the First World War, the textile industry suffered from overproduction and competition from abroad. The answer was to lower production costs while raising productivity by forcing the individual worker to produce more, assigning him or her more looms, increasing the

speed of the machines, limiting breaks and paying by piece rates, a method referred to by the workers as the “stretch-out.” An increased number of supervisors were hired to increase work discipline. This, needless to say led to great dissatisfaction and many spontaneous short-term work stoppages as well as massive strikes in Gastonia, North Carolina and Elizabethton, Tennessee which were violently put down by local police and vigilantes.

The Great Depression made matters much worse. Many were laid off and those workers who ventured to strike could be quickly replaced by those unemployed textile workers.

After the election of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, the National Industrial Recovery Act created the National Recovery Administration to oversee codes of conduct in particular industries, raise wages, control working hours and guarantee the rights of workers to form unions. Unfortunately, the Act did not create the means to enforce these standards. Still, the promise of the Act rallied workers in the textile industry and they had hopes the NRA would help end the “stretch-out” and meliorate other conditions. Membership in the United Textile Workers of America (UTWA) increased from 15,000 in February 1933 to over 250,000 in June of 1934. A minimum wage was established and a forty-hour work week. Employers responded by requiring workers to produce the same amount in forty hours as they had previously in fifty or more hours. Complaints to the labor board by workers were almost universally rejected and many union activists found themselves without a job and blacklisted. The union threatened a national strike, but was unprepared for the effort and the mill owners were convinced that the threats were nothing but hot air. The NRA offered the UTW a seat on its board and the union stopped plans for a strike. Locals union leaders in Alabama thought otherwise and launched ineffective local strikes.

At a special convention of the UTW in New York on August 13, 1934, a list of demands were drawn up including a minimum weekly wage, elimination of the “stretch-out”, union recognition and reinstatement of workers fired for union activity. The delegates voted to strike the cotton mills on September 1 if the demands were not met. The National Labor Relations Board tried to set up meetings of the parties, but the employers refused to meet the union.

The strike spread quickly and so-called “flying squadrons” were employed to travel by truck or on foot from mill to mill to call out workers to strike. Support for the strike was especially strong in the South, where workers were particularly embittered, and they placed great hopes in the union, but the union had no deep roots in the region and few professional organizers. By the end of the first week, almost 400,000 textiles workers were out and the industry was effectively shut down.

Employers and local authorities responded with severity. The governor of South Carolina called out the National Guard and ordered them to shoot to kill any picketers who tried to enter the mills. Governor Ehringhaus of North Carolina followed suit on September 5.

Millowners obliged local authorities to swear in special deputies or hire private guards to police the mills. These were often employees opposed to the strike or local residents, sowing the seeds of division in the communities. Violence soon broke out. In Trion, Georgia, a picketer and a guard died in a shoot out, and on September 2, guards shot two picketers to death in Augusta, Georgia.

In Aragon, too, the strike led to violence. In hopes of maintaining order, Deputy Sheriff C.D. Stone from Cedartown posted three deputized guards on an Aragon street corner. On September 13, 1934 at approximately 11:00 p.m., three cars of a “flying squadron,” probably filled by strikers, drove through the mill-town, firing weapons into the night air. The cars came to a halt. Then, suddenly and without warning, the men in the cars opened fire on the three deputies, mortally wounding Russell “Napp” Brown. The fatally-wounded Brown was rushed to the hospital in Rome, Georgia, where he died on the way up to surgery.

In Polk County, the strike effected not only the several hundred workers at Aragon Mill, but also more than 2000 workers 2000 other employees of Goodyear Mills in the country, who, it is claimed [„Aragon Mill Strike,” by Gordon Sargent. *North Georgia Journal*. Autumn 2000. p. 50-53.] wanted to continue work.

Local police felt themselves unable to control the situation and asked the governor to deploy National Guard troops, ostensibly to protect the workers, their families, and their homes from “outside agitators.” Governor Eugene Talmadge declared martial law during the third week of

the strike and ordered the National Guard to arrest all picketers in the state. They were interned in a former POW camp from World War I until they could be brought before a military tribunal. In the end, only about a hundred picketers were interned, but it effectively ended picketing in the state. The governor also sent National Guardsmen from Macon, Georgia to Polk County's three cities, posting a company at each textile mill. This led to the resumption of operations at Aragon Mill, just two weeks after the strike had begun. To be on the safe side, however, the National Guard positioned a machine gun on the roof of each mill.

The strike soon fell apart. In North and South Carolina about half and in Georgia three-fourths of the textile workers went out on strike. But the lack of support by local authorities and churches as well as the inability of the union to feed the strikers and their families led many to drift back to work.

At this point, a mediation board appointed by the president during the first week of the strike recommended the creation of a new Textile Labor Relations Board to hear workers' complaints and urged employers not to discriminate against strikers. President Roosevelt supported these suggestions. The UTW, glad to have an opportunity to end the difficult strike, declared itself the victor and ended the walk out.

In reality, the strike was a total defeat for the union, especially in the South. Nowhere had the union obtained its economic demands or recognition of the union. Employers refused to reinstate strikers and thousands never returned to their former jobs.

The defeat of the strike ended hopes of organizing the South for decades. The inability of the union to gain its demands combined with its lack of help in getting strikers reinstated turned many workers against the union as an institution.

During the Second World War, Aragon Mill produced cotton "duck" for the war effort. It was used for tents and sandbags. After the war, the mill was converted to the production of corduroy and laundry bagging fabrics.

In the 1950, labor tension in Aragon rose again. Workers increasingly expressed their grievances, while the management rejected them. The union complained about unfair labor practices.

In 1951, management of Aragon Mill informed the union that it intended to unilaterally change a collective bargaining agreement because of what it called poor quality production at the mill. The union rejected a wage increase offered by the plant superintendent and on April 12, 1951, the first of several new strikes involving about 750 workers took place. Workers walked off the job when the shifts changed at midnight.

Soon, however, an agreement was reached and the workers returned to their jobs. But just two days after the agreement, the textile workers' union (UTWA) at Aragon went out on strike again. Tensions were high and there again violence before the company and the union reached agreement in late October.

Thereafter, however, the company ceased providing city services, leaving the town of Aragon in a most difficult situation.

In 1953, Aragon Mill was acquired by United Merchants & Manufacturers, which operated it until 1970, when the mill was shut down, putting 700 people out of work. Later, the mill was purchased by Integrated Products, and operations were resumed. Aragon Mill was closed permanently in 1990.

Today, 94% of the working population of Aragon, Georgia commutes to work and 17.5% of its inhabitants live in poverty. [
<http://www.citytowninfo.com/places/georgia/aragon>]

In 1971, not long after the textile mill in Aragon had been closed for the first time, Si Kahn spent three days in the little town. A woman said to him, „After they closed the mill, it was so still, I couldn't sleep anymore.“

When he began work on his first LP *New Wood*, „Aragon Mill“ was not one of the songs Si intended to record. His friend Rich Kirby, who was to play mandolin, demanded the song. The recordings were made in a small studio in Wise, West Virginia with a 4-track Teac recorder. First, the instrumental tracks were put down. When Si sang the lyrics, he discovered that the melody had been played one time too many. It was not possible to correct the mistake, so he sang one verse twice, the verse which has become the world famous chorus.

The song has been recorded by many groups and singers and has

developed a life of its own. Among the first to record „Aragon Mill“ were the Red Clay Ramblers and Hazel Dickens, who sang it bluegrass-style. Some versions have added verses. Si Kahn's eldest son visited Dublin and heard the song coming from a music store. He asked about it and was told it was „Belfast Mill,“ a traditional song from Northern Ireland . The Fureys and Davy Arthur recorded the song for their LP *When You Were Sweet Sixteen* under the name „Belfast Mill/Oregon Mill.“ As authors, „Khan/Furey“ were listed.

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["Treated Like Slaves": Textile Workers Write to Washington in the 1930s and 1940s](#)

[back to stories behind the song](#)

By the Rio Grande Tish Hinojosa

[click here for lyrics](#)

recordings of “By the Rio Grande”

Tish Hinojosa, *The Best of the Sandia, Wartermelon 1991-1992, Watermelon CD1062, CD*

Tish Hinojosa, *Culture Swing, Rounder CD3122*

By the Rio Grande

Along with the Ohio, the Mississippi and the Missouri, the Rio Grande is one of those rivers which have played a fateful role in the history of the United States. Yet the Rio Grande, which was given its name by the Spaniard Juan die Oñate in 1598, is certainly not big compared to the other rivers. In the dry landscape through which it flows, however, it carries great weight. Long before the arrival of the Spaniards, the peoples of the region used its water to irrigate their fields. From its origin in the San Juan Mountains in Colorado, the Rio Grande flows 1960 miles to the Gulf of Mexico. Three American and four Mexican states are dependent upon its water.

Along some stretches, massive diversions leave the river completely without water. Municipalities and irrigating farmers currently use 95% of the river's annual flow. Claims to the river's water actually exceed the river's flow and in light of declines in the aquifers from which the fast-growing cities of Sante Fe, Albuquerque, Las Cruces, and El Paso now draw a large part of their water, demands on the river are going to increase. The Rio Grande has been polluted, channelized, and its banks diked. The threat of ecological collapse is real.

For half of its length, the Rio Grande forms the border between the United States and Mexico. The location of that border was the excuse the United

States used to make war on Mexico between 1846 and 1848. Yet this border remains a difficult one in many ways. First of all, the river does not always cooperate with the politicians; instead it alters its course constantly. And though it is the border between the United States and Mexico, it is not necessarily the border between the „Americans“ and the „Mexicans“ or the border between their cultures. Because of history and human nature, that border is fluid. In its entire course, the Rio Grande drains a land whose people and culture are mixtures of Indian, Spaniard, Mexican and American influences. Still, the river does stand as a symbolic border between two worlds, between rich and poor. For those people who daily wade the river, it stands for hope. Many Americans see those who wade it as a threat.

Migrant Workers

[Mexican Migrant Workers - Photos and History](#)

[Mexican Migrant Workers: Dying at Work](#)

[back to stories behind the song](#)