

## Introduction

### *Bullfrog Jumped*

#### **The Long and Short Histories of Songs on the CD**

*Bullfrog Jumped* is a CD of children's songs that were recorded across Alabama in 1947. Though it is subtitled *Children's Folksongs from the Byron Arnold Collection*, not all of the songs on it fit the definition of the term "folksong" which is commonly defined as "music of unknown origin spread about or passed down orally by the common people of a nation or region over a long period of time, often with considerable variation." When Byron Arnold collected the songs, he may have asked people to sing their favorite old songs or those they remembered from their childhood or he may have specifically asked for "folksongs." What they sang for him was a mixture of all of these. Some, such as "Old Pompey" and "Two Little Gentlemen from the Spring" are variants of folksongs that originated in Europe centuries ago. Others, such as "Springfield Mountain" grew up on American soil in the eighteenth century.

Some, such as "Shoemaker Song" came from elementary school music and physical education manuals in the early 1900s. The youngest of the songs on *Bullfrog Jumped*, "Ain't Going to Rain No More," was a top-selling record in 1923, only 24 years before Vera Hall sang it for Byron Arnold.

The [Alabama Folklife Association](#), which produced *Bullfrog Jumped*, commissioned [John Bealle](#) to research the origins and histories of the songs on the CD. Dr. Bealle, a folklore scholar, also authored our on-line essay on [Byron Arnold and his work](#). In his notes you will find long and fascinating histories of some of the songs and brief suggestions on others. In the list below, the origins of songs whose titles are not hyperlinked still remain mysteries to us. Bealle ends the notes with a summary essay on the Byron Arnold collection.

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— Notes to Song Tracks —  
by John Bealle

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**2. All the Little Horses** Pansy Richardson, Mobile, July 10, 1947

Hush a bye little baby.  
When you wake you'll have a little cake  
And all belong to the baby. Hush little baby, don't you cry.  
Hush a bye little baby.  
When you wake you'll have a little cake  
And all belong to the baby. All them horses in pa's window  
All belong to the baby.  
Hush little baby, don't you cry  
Hush a bye little baby. Go to sleepy little baby.

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Under various titles—"Go To Sleepy" and "All the Pretty Little Horses" are common—this song is one of the most widely collected lullabies in American folksong. It is a favorite among African American singers and is well know to popular audiences through folksong recordings and collections.

The song employs common functional elements of lullabies, promising pleasant rewards to an infant "when you wake" in order to "lull" the infant to sleep. Moreover, the particular way lullabies solicit the cooperation of the infant is taken as a marker of deeply-held values that shape an individual's self-concept beginning in infancy.

Bess Lomax Hawes (1974) has examined the "when you wake" formula in this song, concluding that on the surface, it seem to contain a bribe, a promise of a reward for good behavior. But on closer examination it is revealed as a simple prediction: "When you wake, you shall have...." This future-orientation distinguishes "Pretty Little Horses" from other American lullabies, which are generally "expressed in present tense and filled with descriptive terms about the surroundings and the activities of various people" (p146).

Other characteristics distinctive for this song involve the spatial isolation of the baby. Most American lullabies situate the sleep-induced baby elsewhere:

"All the people around him in song are actually somewhere else—shaking dreamland trees, gone hunting, out watching sheep, or what have you. Baby, meanwhile, is up in a tree, or sailing off in a boat made out of the moon, or driving away with his "pretty little horses." When he does sleep, he is described as being in a place called "dreamland" which, wherever it is, clearly isn't his own bed; and he is variously requested or ordered to take himself to that "land of Nod" by the linguistic convention that requires English speakers to "go to

sleep." Even the most widespread choice of a lulling nonsense syllable takes the form of a spatial metaphor: "bye bye," after all, means both "sleep" and "farewell." (p146)

Hawes believes that in this respect, lullabies form part of the bedrock of American individualism. "If we want independent children," she says, "we must thrust them away from us, and, equally importantly, we must thrust ourselves away from them." As a ritual act, then, lullabies shape the consciousness not so much of the infant as of the caretaker. They are "a mother's conversation with herself about separation" (p148).

But "Pretty Little Horses" does not stress separation. The reason, other researchers have noted, have to do with its connection with African American slavery. In this, the song embodies a cruel irony: slave caretakers comforting the masters' babies with assurances of their material privileges. Scarborough (1925:144-47) observed the song sung specifically for that purpose. The version in Harris's Uncle Remus books begins, "Mammy went away—she tol' me ter stay, an take good keer er the baby" (1892:213-14). And some variants, such as the one that appeared in the Lomaxes' collection, *American Ballads and Folksongs* (1934:204-5; also in Scarborough 1925:147), contain a mysterious, heartrending stanza, "Way down yonder; In de medder; There's a po' little lambie," which is taken by some to refer to a second baby, a slave baby neglected while the caretaker tends to the master's children (Singer 2001:8). "De bees an' de butterflies; Peckin' out its eyes," the verse continues, "De po' lil thing cried, "Mammy!"

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#### 4. Two Little Gentlemen from the Spring Mozella Longmire, Atmore, July 10, 1947

One little gentleman just from the spring\*  
To court your loving daughter Jane.  
My daughter Jane, she's most too young  
To be controlled by anyone.  
Get back, get back you sassy man  
To the fairest in the land,  
The fairest one that I can see  
So come Miss (*name*) and walk with me Here come two little gentlemen just from the  
spring  
To court your loving daughter Jane.  
My daughter Jane, she's most too young  
To be controlled by anyone.  
Oh let her be old, oh let her be young  
It is a duty and it must by done.  
Get back, get back you sassy man  
To the fairest in the land,  
The fairest one that I can see  
So come Miss (*name*) and walk with me (Repeat 2nd verse with "three little gentlemen.")

\*Pansy Richardson sang this song and called it "Two Gentlemen from Spain":

Here comes a gentleman out of Spain  
To court your daughter, daughter Jane.  
My daughter Jane she is too young  
To be controlled by anyone.  
Let her be old or let her be young  
It is your duty, it must be done.  
Go back go back you sassy old man  
And choose the fairest in the land.  
The fairest one that I can see  
Is "Come Miss (name) and walk with me."

*Directions:* A group of players stand in one line and sing. Another group of players are the gentlemen. The gentlemen come up to the line, walking toward their chosen ones. On the last line the gentleman calls out a name and the one who is called goes back with him to the gentleman's group. When everyone has been chosen from the line, the game is over.

*Note:* In this game and all others on *Bullfrog Jumped* the part of the "gentlemen" may be played by girls.

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This is "Knights of Spain" in Newell (1883:39-45) and "Three Brethren out of Spain" in the Opies (#12, 1985:92-103), a game brought to the U.S. by its earliest European settlers and known throughout Europe as well. The Opies (p93) reckoned it well-known but "not wholly intelligible" (because of archaic language, etc.) when Ritson collected it in 1784. It was already in severe decline in the U.S. when Newell observed it, so the Arnold variants a half-century later would have been remarkable. In the first Arnold versions here, "spring" is likely a corruption of "Spain."

"It's theme is courtship; but courtship considered according to ancient ideas, as a mercantile negotiation." Newell describes various European versions, including an Icelandic one played by adults and Italian and Spanish versions where the negotiation was conducted by ambassadors. In later versions the bride managed the negotiations herself, representing "the whole affair as one of coquetry instead of bargaining." But in many versions, the mercenary spirit of the negotiation suggests diffusion of the game in Europe "far back into the Middle ages."

The mercenary courtship is articulated in a couplet, one found in many variants, yet omitted in the Alabama versions:

Let her be young or let her be old,  
She must be sold for Spanish gold

Both Longmire and Richardson substitute essentially the same replacement:

Let her be old or let her be young  
It is your duty, it must be done.

This is neither mercenary nor coquettish, and the mother rejects the offer without further negotiation. Halli (2004:171) prints this version of "Two Gentlemen" from the Arnold collection.

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### 5. Shoemaker Song Katherine Leggitte, Grove Hill, 1947

There's a little wee man in a little wee house  
Lives over the way you see.  
And he sits at the window and sews all day  
Making shoes for you and me.

A rat-a-tat-tat, a rat-a-tat-tat  
Hear the hammer's tick-tack-tee,  
A rat-a-tat-tat, a rat-a-tat-tat  
Making shoes for you and me.

He puts his needle in and out.  
His thread flies to and fro.  
And with his awl he bores his hole  
Hear the hammer's busy blow.

A rat-a-tat-tat, a rat-a-tat-tat  
Hear the hammer's tick-tack-tee,  
A rat-a-tat-tat, a rat-a-tat-tat  
Making shoes for you and me.

*Directions:* The singers act out the words to the song. To imitate the awl boring a hole, they push the index finger of one hand into the palm of the other.

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This song was composed for a collection of recreation materials as a part of the turn-of-the-twentieth-century playground movement. It was written by Alice C. D. Riley (lyrics) and Jessie L. Gaynor (music) and was published in *Songs of the Child-World* (1897:17). It does not commonly appear in folksong collections, and in one collection was explicitly identified separately by two different performers as a "school song" (Char 1959:248-49). The original text does not include instructions for acting out the shoemaker's tasks.

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### 6. Riggity Jig Martha Drisdale, Sheffield, June 10, 1947

As I was walking down the street  
Heigh-o, heigh-o, heigh-o, heigh-o,  
I chanced a little friend to meet  
Heigh-o, heigh-o, heigh-o.  
A-riggity jig and away we go  
Away we go, away we go  
A-riggity jig and away we go  
Heigh-o, heigh-o, heigh-o.

*Directions:* One child walks around the ring as the others sing. At the end of the fourth line, that child chooses someone from the ring. They joined crossed hands and skip around the ring with on the words "riggity jig.". When the song starts over those two walk around the ring in single file and then choose partners to skip around with. This continues until everyone as been chosen.

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This song has been a standard children's recreational song for well over a century and commonly appears in collections today. One early published version of the game appeared in the *Wisconsin Journal of Education* in 1856 (p17). In 1910 it appeared in the United States Children's Bureau *Handbook of Recreation*.

The song had a parallel life as a nineteenth century college glee club song. The *Yale University Quarterly* of 1860 reported, "Sometimes of a warm evening you can see half the class march two by two under the elms on the College green, singing at the top of their voices, and then, when too hoarse to sing more, ending up with "all hands round" to the tune of "Rig-a-jig-jig" (p185). In 1897 it appeared in Emil Schwab's collection *The Best College Songs*.

In the 1940s, the song achieved new life as a component of the square dance movement. It was featured in printed collections and appeared in the series of Folkraft recordings.

The song does appear to have had its own life in oral tradition—it was recorded by the Lomaxes in Mississippi in 1935 as "Hig a ma jig and away we go" (Archive of Folk Culture AFS 3099). Paul Brewster reported a North Carolina version from the Frank C. Brown collection contributed in 1928 (1952:128).

Halli (2004:177-78) prints the version by Mrs. Drisdale from the Arnold collection.

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## 7. Old Gray Goose Callie Craven, Gadsden, November 26, 1946

Go tell aunt Tempie, go tell aunt Tempie  
Go tell aunt Tempie, the old gray goose is dead.

The one she's been saving, the one she's been saving  
The one she's been saving to make her feather bed.

She died the other morning, she died the other morning  
She died the other morning for the want of a piece of bread.

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Under the title "Old Gray Goose," "Go Tell Aunt Rhody," or "Go Tell" any of several other aunts, this song was common and widely dispersed in collections by twentieth-century folklore collectors. The "Aunt Rhody" text does not appear in British collections. Krehbiel considered the song "widely distributed" among African Americans.

The tune is thought by some to have been derived from an air composed for a 1752 opera by the philosopher Jean Jacques Rousseau. It was extracted as a song and printed in many settings, including shape note tunebooks that permeated areas of the U.S. where "Aunt Rhody" later appeared. It is believed that this is the source for the "Aunt Rhody" tune.

There is no known source for the text, but some speculate that "Go Tell Aunt Nancy" variants are connected to the Anansi trickster cycle of West Africa and the Caribbean and that other Aunts are related to this source. There is still disagreement surrounding both conclusions. Because "Aunt Rhody" has been widely collected and because the connection with Rousseau is so unusual, this matter is still of great interest to some scholars. I have reviewed the various arguments below in detail, but this may well be beyond the interests of many readers.

The tune has received a great deal of attention due to accounts of its unusual route into American folksong, summarized in an article by musicologist Murl Sickbert (1999). It first appeared as an air in an opera by the philosopher Jean Jacques Rousseau, *Le devin du village*, first performed in 1752, in a section titled "Pantomime," with no text. In the early nineteenth century the tune was extracted from the opera and printed in song adaptations and pianoforte variations. In 1812 it appeared under the title "Rousseau's Dream," with English words, "Now, while eve's soft shadows blending," written by William Ball. Spurious stories circulated that the air had appeared to Rousseau in a dream. *Le Devin* was performed in New York as early as 1790, and by the early nineteenth century the air "Rousseau's Dream" had arrived in the U.S. Over the years the song achieved so compelling a distribution in this form that "Rousseau's Dream" had its own entry in *Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians* beginning in 1878, though without any mention of "Aunt Rhody" in this or any revisions (to 1954) of the article (Sickbert 1999:137n26).

The implication of all of this is the suggestion that the simple air was adapted from printed sources and performances for the "Aunt Rhody" text that circulated in folksong. This case is strengthened considerably by the appearance of the tune in singing tunebooks, which, unlike the parlor and concert sources, circulated mostly in rural areas where "Aunt Rhody" variants later appeared, seemingly without explanation. The first tunebook printing of the song was in the Boston Handel and Haydn Society collection of 1825, with the title

"Greenfield" and tune attribution "Rosseau." The appearance of the tune as "Sweet Affliction" in *The Sacred Harp* in 1844 was, as Sickbert so aptly notes, "the first instance of the melody appearing in this type of hymnal for the common folk of the United States" (146). The attribution appeared as "John J. Rosseau, 1752," with the "Rosseau" spelling as in the Handel and Haydn Collection—suggesting that Handel and Haydn was the source for "Sweet Affliction." Later examples proliferate in tunebooks and hymnals, and this would seem to establish with certainty that the "Rousseau's Dream" pedigree extended through books like *The Sacred Harp* into areas where "Aunt Rhody" was collected.

All of these circumstances predate the collection of "Aunt Rhody" variants (Sickbert's chronological table begins with the Campbell-Sharp collection of 1918), and this suggests to Sickbert and many others that Rousseau is the ancestor for the air. But "Aunt Rhody" was collected widely in the U.S., and early collectors, unaware of the Rousseau link, had other ideas about the traditional origin of the song. For example, George Lyman Kittredge (whose grandfather sang the song in New Hampshire) squabbled with Dorothy Scarborough (who collected African American variants in Texas) over whether the song tradition belonged to European or African Americans (Scarborough 1925:195).

The "Rousseau's Dream" pedigree presumes to negate this argument altogether. But there are some unresolved issues. There is no known source for the text, yet no one has accounted with any satisfaction how a tune dispersed in print could be so widely attached to a relatively stable oral text that never appeared in the printed sources. Sickbert's over-the-top (or facetious?) suggestion that the water imagery in "Rhody" was imported from "Sweet Affliction" ("floods of tribulation," "rolling billows," "gracious rain") can only fuel such skepticism (147n55). He cites George Pullen Jackson in asserting a crossover in the Rousseau-to-Rhody direction. But Jackson has been discredited for this reasoning: to say that printed sources preceded oral ones does not assure that the oral sources were not already there.

The sheer simplicity of the tune and the wide dispersal of "Aunt Rhody" variants is enough to suspect that traditional sources operated through or alongside Rousseau. One such argument, though speculative, attributed Italian influences:

I find however, on what is, I am afraid, good authority, that this air was not even pretended by Rousseau to be composed by him: that it was the melody to which the verses of Tasso and Ariosto were nightly sung by the gondoliers of Venice. When Rousseau paid his visit to that romantic town he heard this and introduced it in his Operetta; it is there called "Pantomime," no words being set to it. (Fraser 1893:45-46)

The Rousseau connection is further confounded by confusion as to what hymn tunes he influenced. The above writer reports that Toplady wrote "Rock of Ages" to this tune. And folklorist William McNeil (1985) reported that Arkansas folksinger Almeda Riddle derived her "Aunt Rhody" variant from "Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing." These observations do not discredit the well-documented pedigree of the Rousseau air, of course, but merely suggest that other similar tunes may not be governed by it.



Such a claim is bolstered by a study of this tune in the context of tune-family research. This type of research is used, for example, in legal cases where familial relationships establish the basis for copyright litigation:

Tune-family research has included delineating processes of song transmission and musical borrowing, locating the geographical and/or temporal margins of a persistent melody, establishing the range of uses to which a single melody has been put, and exploring the diverse ways in which it can be elaborated. The study of similarity and its perceptual correlates has obvious value in the examination of music plagiarism claims. (Selfridge-Field 2006:1)

Selfridge-Field's tune-family analysis of the Rousseau-Rhody connection draws this conclusion:

This pair of "matches" is somewhat disputable. Rousseau's piece has a melodic range of a perfect fourth but includes four different note durations (plus that of the grace note). "Aunt Rhody" spans a perfect fifth but includes only two durational values. To judge from studies of music perception, the difference of a third between the first notes of Bar 3 is so significant (because of its occurrence at the start of the second phrase) that these melodies should probably not be considered to belong to the same melodic family. (Selfridge-Field 2006:3)

Selfridge-Field's analysis must be taken with a substantial grain of salt, however. She presumes in advance that this is a case "in which a composed melody passes into common usage," and then uses that presumption to measure Rousseau's original against a *single* Rhody variant, one not clearly transcribed from performance. Most disturbing, the presence of "Sweet Affliction as an intermediary tune"—which *does* span a perfect fifth, omit the grace note, and incorporate the change in Bar 3—is neglected. Her evidence, then, would seem to prove that "Sweet Affliction" is related to Rhody but not to Rousseau, even though tunebook compilers credited it as a Rousseau composition. I doubt anyone would agree with that conclusion, particularly after Sickbert's fine account.

If "Aunt Rhody" is to be considered as a traditional (non-Rousseauan) melody, the most insistent assertion has been an African origin. Dorothy Scarborough's 1925 retort to Kittredge (1925:195) that she was "reluctant to surrender this favorite to the whites" was based on fieldwork and firsthand observation among Texas singers, and she may have taken into account factors such as the distribution of the song in Texas and the song histories given by performers. In a later collection, Arkansas singer Almeda Riddle sang "Go Tell Aunt Nancy" to the "Aunt Rhody" tune—a version she learned in her childhood that speaks to the alleged African American connections of the song. A key theme in Riddle's "Aunt Nancy" was that the goose was killed by a falling walnut. The gander and goslings mourn. When she is taken in and cooked, the family is stricken by misfortune—the fork breaks, grandma's teeth break, and the saw teeth break when she is butchered (Abrahams 1970a:117-120). Thus Riddle's trickster goose links the song, as folklorist Roger Abrahams observes, to the African American "Grey Goose" (such as the version sung by Leadbelly to a

wholly different tune) where the goose exacts revenge upon her killers (178n47). And "Aunt Nancy" is the character "Anansi" from the West African story cycle, who appears in the Caribbean and parts of the U.S. with the "Aunt Nancy" name.

The suggested Anansi link can be easily assessed by determining whether any Rhody characteristics—the Gray Goose character, for example—exists in Anansi tradition, or if the song itself is sung in areas out of Rousseauan reach. The goose does not appear at all in Beckwith's Jamaican Anansi collection of 150 tales, and has not turned up in my cursory survey of other African and Caribbean materials. But there are some insistent claims in popular collections that a traditional Caribbean Gray Goose exists. Hobson and Hobson (1996) report a game whose text goes: 'Go tell Aunt Nancy; That poor Mother Goose is gone; She left nine little goslings; All along' (Hobson and Hobson 1996). Vinton reports, with a lamentable absence of documentation, a "Go tell Aunt Nancy" text that is used with a game "throughout the Caribbean as far south as Cartagena, Columbia, and in the Gulf Coast states of the U.S.A." (1970:96). In this version Aunt Nancy is the trickster-rescuer, in keeping with the usual Anansi role, who rescues the goose and goslings after they are taken by the fox. The implication of this is clear: evidence of any part of the "Aunt Rhody" melody or narrative outside of Rousseauan reach suggests a parallel tradition that should be the source for most if not all "Aunt Rhody" variants.

One further minor issue: Sickbert makes an astute point about the line, "the one that she's been savin'; to make a feather bed." The line is the foremost concern associated with the goose's death. It projects an atmosphere of pathos and suggests some kind of loss. But for someone long awaiting feathers for a bed, the goose's death should be a matter not of loss but of gain, of great celebration. Perhaps the plaintive Rhody melody is to blame for the apparently widespread misinterpretation. In any case, the song's pathos is more comprehensible when gander-gosling grief or even trickster revenge is included. Sickbert, of course, does not go so far as to suggest that these elements were eliminated in Anglo-American Rhody variants, where the inexplicable concern for material comfort has replaced the grief and revenge from the "Gray Goose" variants. This point is not overwrought: accounts of the "meaning" of Aunt Rhody often point to the extraordinary value during frontier times of goose feathers for homemade beds.

In sum, it seems there is a line to be drawn somewhere between Rousseau and Aunt Rhody. The "Sweet Affliction" family of tunebook entries belong to Rousseau. And while the Rousseauan air may have exerted influence on all the various Aunts, it seems clear that they were not entirely borne from it.

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## 8. All the Pretty Little Ponies Jane Peavy, Atmore, July 11, 1947

Hush a bye, don't you cry  
Go to sleep little baby.  
When you wake, and when you wake  
You shall have six horses.

Two blacks, two bays, a sorrel and a gray,  
Oh the pretty little horses,  
To ride you round, to ride you round  
To ride you round the pasture.

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See notes for Track 2, "All the Little Horses."

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### 9. Old Pompey Pansy Richardson, Mobile, July 10, 1947

Old Pompey was dead and he lay in his grave'  
Lay in his grave, lay in his grave.  
Old Pompey was dead and he lay in his grave,  
Oh, ho, ho.

There grew an old apple tree over his head  
Over his head, over his head.  
There grew an old apple tree over his head,  
Oh ho ho

The apples got ripe and begun to fall,  
Begun to fall, begun to fall.  
The apples got ripe and begun to fall,  
Oh, ho, ho.

There came an old woman a-picking 'em up,  
Picking them up, picking them up.  
There came an old woman a-picking 'em up  
Oh, ho, ho.

Old Pompey got up and he gave her a pop,  
Gave her a pop, gave her a pop.  
Old Pompey got up and he gave her a pop,  
Oh, ho, ho.

And made the old woman go hippity hop,  
Hippity hop, hippity hop.  
And made the old woman go hippity hop,  
Oh, ho, ho.

Directions: As Robert Halli explains in *An Alabama Songbook*, children march in a circle around Old Pompey, who pretends to be dead. On the fourth verse the child nearest the head of Old Pompey steps into the circle and pretends to pick up apples. On the fifth verse

Old Pompey chases the old woman and tries to tag her before the song ends. If he doesn't, he must remain in the center. If he does, the old woman becomes Old Pompey when the song is repeated.

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This game, which derives from an ancient European folk drama, is commonly known in collections as "Old Roger is Dead" (Gomme 2:16-24) or simply "Old Roger" (Opie and Opie #57, 1985:250-53). Other names used are "Old Rover," "Old Grampus," "Old Pompey," "Old Cramer," and "Old Johnny." Some versions use "Old Cromwell," a reference to Oliver Cromwell. Gomme believes this to be the original form (2:15), but the Opies consider it a rationalization of popular names such as "Old Cromley" or "Old Grumble" (1985:252). It has been associated with May Day celebrations. Krehbiel includes an African American version, "Old Ponto is Dead" (1914:136-37).

Gomme describes the characteristics of ancient drama that "Old Roger" emulates:

[The game] clearly shows a survival of the method of portraying old plays. The ring of children act the part of "chorus," and relate the incidents of the play. The three actors say nothing, only act their several parts in dumb show. The raising and lowering of the arms on the part of the child who plays "apple tree," the quiet of "Old Roger" until he has to jump up, certainly show the early method of actors when details were presented by action instead of words. Children see no absurdity in being a "tree," or a "wall," "apple," or animal. They simply *are* these things if the game demands it, and they think nothing of these incongruities. (23)

When Old Roger/Pompey "gives her a pop," he jumps up and knocks the old woman character, beating her out of the ring. "She goes off hobbling on one foot, pretending to be hurt" (Gomme 22). This element owes much to the apple-tree character, who stands in the ring over Old Roger/Pompey, with arms raised, and drops them to her sides to show the falling apples. In traditional belief, a tree or flower planted at the head of a grave binds the plant to the spirit of the dead. As the Opies put it:

...the apple tree was evidently Old Roger himself, and one may be forgiven for kicking anyone who is stealing part of one's body. The belief that the soul can pass into a plant or tree is old. (1985:251)

Robbery of the fruit thus invokes the spirit to live to protect it. Gomme concludes: "The game is, therefore, not merely the acting of a funeral, but more particularly shows the belief that a dead person is cognizant of actions done by the living, and capable of resenting personal wrongs and desecration of the grave" (23).

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## 11. A Tisket, A Tasket Mozella Longmire, Atmore, July 10, 1947

A tisket, a tasket, a green and yellow basket,  
I wrote a letter to my mother; on the way I dropped it.  
I dropped it, I dropped it, I dropped it 'til I lost it  
I want someone to help me find it and make me happy again.

Oh gee, I wonder where my basket can be.  
So do we, so do we, so do we, so do we.

A tisket, a tasket, a brown and yellow basket  
I wrote a letter to my mother, on the way I dropped it.  
I want someone to help me find it and make me happy again.

*Directions:* Children stand in a circle and one is chosen to skip around the circle and drop a ribbon or other small item behind someone's back. That person picks it up at the end of the song and skips around the circle as the song starts over again. The game continues until everyone has had a chance to drop the "basket." Each time, the singers may change the colors of the basket.

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This game is a variant of the widely popular "Drop the Handkerchief," which designates several closely similar game variants played to different songs and rhymes. Newell called it "Hunt the Squirrel" (#117:168-69), and reported versions featuring a chase and a competition to reclaim the toucher's spot in the circle. Also there are kissing versions, where the toucher is entitled to a kiss. Gomme's "Drop the Handkerchief" (1:109-12) was a chasing game similar to "Cat and Mouse," sometimes with "tisket-a-tasket" verses. Also, "Kiss in the Ring" (1:305-10) features "wrote a letter to my love" with rules similar to "Handkerchief." In "Kiss in the Ring," since the chosen one is the favorite of the chooser, there is much incentive to be caught and have the opportunity of a kiss.

Leah Yoffie reported that at the 1916 meeting of the Missouri Folk-Lore Society, this game was known by all members and visitors present (1947:24). Her study of St. Louis playgrounds documented various letter recipients (mother, love), basket colors (brown and yellow, green and yellow), and even topical rhymes ("...Hitler's in his casket!") (1947:40). Gardner's Michigan study noted the variations in the expressions of loss and longing, which was not always an emphasis (1920:96-97). In Heck's study of folk criticism in Cincinnati games, "Tisket" got 28 votes (high-mid range) as a favorite playground game; comments focused on the fun of running, chasing, tag, etc. (1927:72).

Janet Cliff analyzed the game in an article focusing on the role of music in games. She challenged the assumption that music is extraneous or inconsequential in the "singing games" genre, and investigated the relationship of music, dance, and game. The dropped-object-behind-players game motif is a particular concern in this regard because it has a long history with and without musical accompaniment (1992:141). Her conclusion is that

the song serves to alert the player that the object is about to be dropped, and asserts the dramatic structure of the game. She argues, contradicting Brewster (1953), that music is an integral part of the games.

Finally, Hayes and MacEachern (1998) have made brief observations about the unusual "Tisket" verse form. They call the form a "Long-Last" construction, where the performer "will perceive a line, relatively separate from its surroundings, followed by a similarly separated line, followed by a relatively integral couplet; thus the longest unit comes last." Judging from the material in their database, this verse form is rare in folksong. It appears only in a few childhood rhymes, another example being "It's Raining, It's Pouring."

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## 12. **The Old Gray Cat** Martha Drisdale, Sheffield, June 10, 1947

The old gray cat is sleeping, sleeping, sleeping.  
The old gray cat is sleeping in the house.

The little mice come creeping, creeping, creeping.  
The little mice come creeping through the house.

*Directions:* One child pretends to be a cat and sits in front of a group of children who are the mice. The cat pretends to sleep as the mice slowly creep forward. At the end of the song, it wakes up and grabs one of the mice. That mouse becomes the cat as they repeat the game.

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This song apparently originated as a recreation exercise. It is found in preschool curricula, but is uncommon or nonexistent in folksong collections.

Halli (2004:178) prints Mrs. Drisdale's version in his book on the Arnold collection.

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## 14. **The Little White Daisies\*** Pansy Richardson, Mobile, July 10, 1947

(Name) is her first name, first name, first name,  
(Name) is her first name, among the little white daisies.

(Name) is her second name, second name, second name,  
(Name) is her second name, among the little white daisies.

Now poor (first name) is dead and gone, dead and gone, dead and gone,  
Now poor (first name) is dead and gone, among the little white daisies.

Left poor (name) a widower, a widower, a widower, Left poor (name) a widower, among

the little white daisies.

Twenty-four children out in a field, out in a field, out in a field, Twenty-four children out in a field, among the little white daisies.

Directions: The children sit in a ring and one person is chosen to sit in the center. According to Mrs. Richardson's directions they tease that player by singing the name of that person's sweetheart in the first, second and third verses and the center person's name in the fourth verse. When the song is over, that player counts around the ring and the twenty-fourth person goes to the center. .

---

"Daises" is not a common singing game. Newell prints one version from Washington, D.C. (#173, 1883:243) and Heck reports one from Cincinnati (1927:20). Daisies, of course, have a well-established association with love divination, children, and young girls (Kell 1956).

The Opies discuss a game, "Merry-ma-tansie" (#27, 1985:150-54) in which the "\_\_ is his first name" formula appears toward the end. The instructions are similar, with the prevailing action being the revealing of the players' sweethearts. Their citations for the game include references to the Washington and Cincinnati variants, which would seem to indicate a stable form. It is possible that the Pansy Richardson performance, which has elements not in any other version, conflates two different games or incorporates a song into the game.

Halli (2004:181) prints Mrs. Richardson's version from the Arnold collection.

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### **15. Cornbread Crumbled in Gravy** Mary Chapman, Grove Hill, July 5, 1947

Go to sleepy, go to sleepy,  
Go to sleepy, little baby.  
When you wake up I'll make you up a cake,  
Buy you little pretty little horsy.

Go to sleepy, go to sleepy,  
Go to sleepy, little baby.  
When you wake up I'll make you up a cake,  
Cornbread crumbled in gravy (*Repeat*)

---

"Cornbread" is a lullaby and bears resemblances to the "All the Pretty Little Horses" song family. See notes for Track 2, "All the Little Horses."

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**16. Old Shiboots and Leggings\*** Callie Craven, Gadsden, November 26, 1946

Mother told me to ask him in.  
Oh, but I shan't have him.  
I asked him in with a dripping chin,  
With his old shiboots and leggings.\*

My mother told me to give him a chair.  
Oh, but I shan't have him.  
I gave him a chair and he called me his dear,  
With his old shiboots and leggings.

My mother told me to give him something to eat.  
Oh, but I shan't have him,  
I gave him something to eat, Good Lord how he eat,  
With his old shiboots and leggings.

My mother told me to put him to bed.  
Oh, but I shan't have him.  
I put him to bed and he slept like he's dead,  
With his old shiboots and leggings.

My mother told me to wake him up.  
Oh, but I shan't have him.  
I woke him up and he quacked like a duck,  
With his old shiboots and leggings

My mother told me to light his pipe.  
Oh, but I shan't have him,  
I lit his pipe and he smoked like a snipe,  
With his old shiboots and leggings.

My mother told me to saddle his horse.  
Oh, but I shan't have him.  
I saddled his horse and I saddled him off,  
With his old shiboots and leggings.

My mother told me to bid him farewell.  
Oh, but I shan't have him.  
I bid him farewell and I wished him in the well,  
With his old shiboots and leggings.

\*Shiboots may be "shoe boots" and leggings may be stockings or long underwear. We can tell that whatever they were, the young woman in the song thought they were dreadfully out of style.



---

Under a wide variety of titles, "Old Shiboos and Leggings" has appeared in British and American collections since the 1700s. Other titles include "The Old Man's Courtship," "Old Shoes and Leggings," "The Old Man from Over the Sea," "Old Grey Beard," "The Dottered Auld Carle," and many others. All depict, in farcical tones, a failed courtship. Early country music versions were recorded by Henry Whitter ("Overshoes and Leggings," Okeh, 1926), Uncle Eck Dunford ("Old Shoes and Leggings," Victor V-40060, 1928) and the Burnett Brothers ("Old Shoes a-Druggin'," Victor 23727, 1932).

Among the many variants, there are a few narrative strategies that commonly recur. Callie Craven's version follows a well-known course: at the mother's insistence, a hapless suitor is offered chances at courtship; the dutiful daughter seems to have little hope of avoiding marriage; but the man spoils the courtship with his ridiculous and crude behavior.

Although there some versions by male singers, this song is chiefly a women's song. Jean Ritchie captured the spirit of the song with these comments on her version, "Mama Told Me":

There are three or four songs in our locality about the disadvantages of a young girl's marrying an old man. The others are more or less laments, cursing the mother for insisting on the match, and so on. "An Old Man Came Courtin' Me," is the only other one besides this that is downright funny. My sister Una used to sing "Mama Told Me" to us young'uns, and it was still thought of in our family as a children's song. (Ritchie 1965:93).

Normally the young woman's resistance is passive, but in a few cases a more recalcitrant daughter plays tricks on the man, foiling his attempts. "I opened the door and shoved him to the floor," one version records; "I used him so well, I kicked him to [hell]," says another. Aunt Molly Jackson related to the Lomaxes that the song was empowering for mountain women in this way:

He was an old rich man that had plenty of money and plenty of gold and silver, and this girl's mother wanted her to be nice to him and try to keer fer him because he was a wealthy man; and the girl—he simply didn't appeal to her, and naturally she didn't want him at any cost.

In the mountains you'd sing this song any time that the mother begin to talk to the daughters about marryin' some old man, when probably maybe they already kindly felt like they was in love or fancyin' some young man in the neighboring county. Then they sang it as a kind of protest song. (Lomax and Lomax 1949:132)

In most versions the mother's pragmatic argument for marriage goes unstated. But in the 1724 version in Ramsay's *Tea Table Miscellany*, the mother advises, "Tho' auld Rob Moris be an elderly Man; yet his auld Brass it will buy a new Pan."

Another narrative strain involves a joke built around the incongruity of perspective between the mother and daughter. In this the mother is overzealous rather than pragmatic, and the daughter incredulous. The tension builds until "My mother told me to give him a kiss" is met with the punch line, "If you like him so much, then kiss him yourself!" Jeannie Robertson's Scots version is of this type.

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### 17. **Oh Johnny Dear** Myrtle Love Hester, Florence, June 7, 1947

Oh Johnny dear weer weer weer-weer  
And I thought you'd know-woe-woe-woe-woed  
When the grass got dry-wie-wie-wie-wie  
That it had to be mow-woe-woe-woe-woed.  
You die, you die ray.

But he had not mow-woe-woe-woe-woed  
But half around the fie-weel weel weel wield  
When a rattle-um a sna-way-way-way-wake  
Came and bit him on the heel-weel-weel-weel-weel.  
You die, you die ray.

Oh Johnny dear- weer weer weer  
Won't you get my gal-wal-wal-wal-wal?  
For I think I'll die- wie-wie-wie-wie  
And I know I shall-wal wal wal -wal.  
You die, you die ray.

Now all young men-wen, wen, wen, wen  
Come a warning tay-way-way-way-wake  
And don't get bi-wi-wi-wi-wit  
By a rattle-um a sna-way-way-way-wake.  
You die, you die ray.

---

This song is likely a variant of "Springfield Mountain," discussed below in the notes to the version by Mae Randlette Beck. While Beck's version more resembles the original composition, this version by Myrtle Hester follows the many changes in the song, especially those introduced during the nineteenth century. Broadsides, concert performances, and songsters contributed to the dispersal of the song, and included comic versions much different than the original. Hester's version, given its light-hearted treatment of the narrative, may well have been derived from these sources.

The wide and varied dispersal of "Springfield Mountain" was considered exemplary by those, like William Wells Newell, who believed individual (and not communal) creativity

was the source of folk composition. Newell believed each variant was shaped to fit the sentiments of the performer and bore their creative stamp.

Halli (2004:77-79) prints two Arnold versions, including the Hester version (with the title "Rattle-um Snake"). Of Hester's performance he comments: "Mrs. Hester sang a 'stuttering' version that is remarkable for the length to which each line is drawn out and also for the cogent 'moral' of its last stanza.

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### **18. Skip to My Lou My Darling** Pansy Richardson, Mobile, July 10, 1947

Choose your partner, skip to my Lou.  
Choose your partner, skip to my Lou.  
Choose your partner, skip to my Lou.  
Skip to my Lou my darling.

Goin' across, skip to my Lou.  
Goin' across, skip to my Lou.  
Goin' across, skip to my Lou.  
Skip to my Lou my darling.

I got a partner, you've got none.  
I got a partner, you've got none.  
I got a partner, you've got none.  
Skip to my Lou my darling.

Prettiest little partner I ever did view.  
Prettiest little partner I ever did view.  
Prettiest little partner I ever did view.  
Skip to my Lou my darling.

Rats in the sugar bowl, two by two.  
Rats in the sugar bowl, two by two.  
Rats in the sugar bowl, two by two.  
Skip to my Lou my darling.

Hogs in the tater patch, tit tat too.  
Hogs in the tater patch, tit tat too.  
Hogs in the tater patch, tit tat too.  
Skip to my Lou my darling.

Little red wagon painted blue.  
Little red wagon painted blue.

Little red wagon painted blue.  
Skip to my Lou my darling.

Wash my feet in Three Mile Creek.  
Wash my feet in Three Mile Creek.  
Wash my feet in Three Mile Creek.  
Skip to my Lou my darling.

Buy my soap at the general store.  
Buy my soap at the general store.  
Buy my soap at the general store.  
Skip to my Lou my darling.

Goin' across, skip to my Lou.  
Goin' across, skip to my Lou.  
Goin' across, skip to my Lou.  
Skip to my Lou my darling.

*Directions:* Mrs. Richardson called this a folk dance but did not give directions. One way of playing it is to get a partner and join hands in a ring with other couples. One person who does not have a partner gets in the center and the others skip around him or her. At some point the center person chooses a partner. The person whose partner has been taken then gets in the center of the ring and the song begins again.

---

"Skip To My Lou" is a highly improvisatory singing game, with a simple instructional formula that provides for much variation in the descriptive lyrics while still outlining a vivid dramatic structure. The song has been widely collected in the U.S., notably in the Great Plains states. In 1915, Edwin Piper recorded a Nebraska version that ran forty verses (Piper 1915:277). He had these colorful remarks on the performance setting:

The old ring-games were familiar forty years ago to village folk and country folk throughout Iowa, Missouri, Kansas, and Nebraska. Now only an occasional quiet country nook, where musicians and music-machines are few, or where the church still bans the fiddle and the two-step, shelters them. In such a retired district, in unfavorable weather, young folk at a party may devote themselves to "fruit-basket" and charades within doors; but on moonlit nights in spring and fall they prefer "Skip to my Lou" and "Miller Boy" on the grass in the yard. (1915:262)

The extra un-partnered male is a standard feature, thus mapping gender relations with male desire and female accessibility as a preeminent theme. The term "lou" is a common east Tennessee term for sweetheart, probably derived from proper noun (Perrow 1913:136n1).

The wide degree of variation in the song lyrics has led folklorists to comment on the composition process. Compare these remarks on communal composition by Edwin Piper with those by Newell in the notes to "Oh Johnny Dear":

The song bears strong evidence of communal composition. The stanzas have no fixed order: any one may be sung at any time during the dance, if the fore-singer thinks fit. The rhyme-scheme, although a very simple one, is frequently lost sight of as the fore-singer, feeling that the dance must go on, is obliged from time to time to improvise the words to accompany his action. (Perrow 1913:136n1)

In Perrow's account, the role of fore-singer belongs to the odd male who "determines what verse shall be sung, the crowd joining in with him as soon as possible" (1913:136n1). According to Piper, this is what made the game so popular with players:

Though the "forty verses" of "Skip to My Lou" were current in western Nebraska, I cannot be sure of having heard them all at one time. That improvisation and adaptation were encouraged, witness the final stanza ["Stands like a fool, what'll I do?"], directed at the leader whenever his silence awkwardly halted the game. The ease with which any one could fashion the nonsense line quickly gave satisfying length to the song. It was this feature, I believe, which made it so widely popular. In any neighborhood, "Skip to my Lou" became one of the six or eight ring-games. "Tansy O," with as lively a tune, suffered from a monotony which, apparently, no one was tempted to relieve by improvisation. (Piper 1915:277)

The Opies included "Skip to my Lou" (#78, 1985:319-20) with only a short discussion of the game. Most impressive was the fact that in English versions, the typical performance had children "tearing around in a circle...whirling so fast that afterwards they collapsed in the grass among a litter of lemonade cans." The Opies thought this chaotic originary, and its more sophisticated relatives, they believed, under the sway of recreational teaching manuals. The Opies were curiously unaware of the lively American versions.

Piper notes a remote resemblance of "Skip to my Lou" to the first part of the tune of "Pov' Piti Lolotte," printed by Krehbiel in *Afro-American Folk Songs* (1914:135, 136-37).

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### **19. Little Sally Walker** Mozella Longmire, Atmore, July 10, 1947

Little Sally Walker, sitting in a saucer,  
Rise, Sally, rise.  
Now wipe your rosy cheek  
And put your hand on your hip  
And let your back-bone slip.  
Oh shake it to the east; shake it to the west,  
Shake it to the very one that you love the best.

Little Sally Walker, sitting in a saucer,  
Rise, Sally, rise.  
Now wipe your rosy cheek  
And put your hand on your hip  
And do the Mobile dip.  
Oh shake it to the east; shake it to the west,  
Shake it to the very one that you love the best.

*Directions:* Children stand in a ring around one child who sits or squats in the center. As the others sing, "Sally" rises and acts out the words to the song. When she shakes it "to the very one that you love the best," that person goes into the center. The game begins again and continues until everyone has had a chance to be little Sally Walker.

---

"Little Sally Walker" is a traditional marriage play extensively collected among British children. It is "Sally Water" in Gomme (2:149-179) and the Opies (#34, 1985:167-71). Gomme collected forty-eight versions of this game. In it, Sally will "choose to the east, choose to the west," and the game ends in marriage (p166). "In the Strixwould version [the oldest collected, in 1828], the child stands in the center holding in her hands something resembling a saucer; she then pretends to "knock it in a mortar," and gives the saucer to the one whom she chooses." At the beginning, Sally sometimes cries and wipes her eyes with a handkerchief (Gomme 2:167; Opie and Opie 1985:168).

In Gomme the name of the player is Sally "Water" in twenty-three variants, and "Walker" in seventeen (p174). Some versions which *do not* use the name "Water" have employed the sprinkling of water, suggesting that "Sally" may be a corruption of an action term rather than a name. Gomme believed that of the two last names, "Water" is the original name, and that other names are degraded forms.

In her analysis of sprinkling, Gomme's evolutionary approach is most vividly on display. She believes sprinkling is original to the game, and its absence a corruption (p176-77). Moreover, because the game is so explicitly a marriage play (most British versions have a "Now you're married..." line), Gomme associates it with sprinkling customs in non-Aryan marriage traditions: "Now it has been noted that the games of children have preserved, by adaptation, the marriage ceremony of ancient times (e.g. "Merry ma Tansa," "Nuts in May," "Poor Mary," "Round and Round the Village"); but this is the first instance where such an important particularization as that implied by water-worship qualifies the marriage ceremony" (p176). The Opies are skeptical of Gomme's theory of water symbolism, pointing to the American versions, where there is much weeping and crying but no other appearance of moisture (1985:169).

"Crying," Gomme believes, is really "announcing a want" and was corrupted into "weeping" (here the possibly degraded "wipe your rosy cheek") in many "Sally" variants and in the "Poor Mary" family. "Choosing" appears as "east vs. west" in twenty-two of Gomme's versions and "best vs. worst" in nine (2:453-454).

The game is widely collected in both urban and rural settings in the U.S. and in the Caribbean. Jones and Hawes remark that the American "Little Sally Walker" became "a brief drama about the joys of release from shame" (1972:107). Concluding stanzas (e.g., "Shake it to the East") seem to be African American additions.

Halli (2004:179-80) prints this version from the Arnold collection. "Do the Mobile dip," he says, is a playful invention by the singer, Mozella Longmire.

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## **20. Bullfrog Jumped** Laurie Cater Carleton, Grove Hill, July 5, 1947

Bull frog jumped in the middle of the spring  
Got so cold he could not sing  
Wrapped his tail around a stump  
Rared and kicked but he could not jump

Ree roll cob, call my true love  
Fare you well, Miss Dinah  
I'm going o'er the mountain  
Whang!

---

There are various "bullfrog jumped" rhymes but none identical to this. Krehbiel records two African American versions (1914:198-99).

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## **21. Paper of Pins** Julia Greer Marechal, Mobile, July 6, 1947

I will give you your paper of pins,  
If that's the way that love begins,  
If you will marry me, me, me,  
If you will marry me.

I don't want your paper of pins,  
If that's the way that love begins,  
And I won't marry you, you, you,  
And I won't marry you.

I will give you a little lap dog  
To take with you when you go abroad,  
If you will marry me, me, me,  
If you will marry me.

I don't want your little lap dog  
To take with me when I go abroad,  
And I won't marry you, you, you,  
And I won't marry you.

I will give you a dress of red  
Bound all around with a golden thread,  
If you will marry me, me, me,  
If you will marry me.

I don't want your dress of red  
Bound all around with a golden thread,  
And I won't marry you, you, you,  
And I won't marry you.

I will give you a dress of green  
That you may look like any queen,  
If you will marry me, me, me,  
If you will marry me.

I don't want your dress of green  
That I may look like any queen,  
And I won't marry you, you, you  
And I won't marry you.

Then I will give you the key to my heart  
That we may love and never part,  
If you will marry me, me, me,  
If you will marry me.

I don't want the key to your heart  
That we may love and never part,  
And I won't marry you, you, you,  
And I won't marry you.

Then I will give you the key to my chest  
And all of the gold that I possess,  
If you will marry me, me, me,  
If you will marry me.

I'm sure I'll take the key to your chest  
And all of the gold that you possess,  
And I will marry you, you, you  
And I will marry you.



You shan't have the key to my chest  
Nor any of the gold that I possess,  
And I won't marry you, you, you  
And I won't marry you.

---

Newell (#5, 1883:51-55) lists "Paper of Pins" as a "love game," but its form is more often a ballad, related to the English ballad "The Keys of Canterbury." The Opies (#24, 1985:140-43) include it in their collection of games, but are not certain the "words have always been part of a dialogue game" (p142). It is well documented in the U.S. in its "Paper of Pins" form; its English and Scots versions, says Newell, are "generally inferior as regards poetical merit and antiquity of language" (p51). In discussing the age of the song, the Opies note a "Paper of Pins" variant recorded in 1611 (p143).

As a marriage game, Newell notes that it is ancient and internationally distributed. Although texts have much in common, the outcome of the game is highly spontaneous, depending as it does on the wit and intention of the players (1906:13).

Even when it is not a game, it is social in spirit. Newell observed of New York versions: "It may often be listened to in the upper part of the city of New York, as it is sung (with a mere apology for a melody) by three or four girls, walking with arms entwined, or crooned by mere infants seated on the casks which, in the poorer quarters, often encumber the sidewalk" (1883:51). Roger Abrahams found the song incorporated into British West Indian folk dramas, called "tea meetings," where they were integral to the depiction of failed courtships (1970b:247-53).

The types of courtship objects vary, as one would expect, and comparisons of British and American versions have provided ample fodder for cultural analysis and for proclamations of national or regional character. Newell, for example, notes that in English versions the wooer overcomes the lady's objections with gifts, representing a primitive idea that in its mercenary character is "repugnant to modern tastes." "In the United States the hero is, in his turn, made to cast off the avaricious fair, or else the lady to demand only love for love" (51). Halli (2004:126-28) prints a version from the Arnold collection by Mrs. Emma Craig of Florence.

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## **22. Lank Dank Kimo** Janie Couch, Guntersville, June 13, 1947

Oh wife, oh wife do carry some bow  
And let me kill the carrion crow,  
With a lank dank kitty dank kimo.

I shot and missed the carrion crow  
And hit my old sow in the heart,  
Come a lank dank kitty dank kimo.

Kimo, kimo, nero  
Homijimmy, homijimmy, call for the dilly-lilly  
Lank dank kitty dank kimo, Oh wife, oh wife do cheer some rum,\*  
And let me give the old sow some,  
Come a lank dank kitty dank kimo.

Oh bring it in a silver spoon  
For this old sow's in a mighty tune,  
With a lank dank kitty dank kimo.

Kimo, kimo, nero  
Homijimmy, homijimmy, call for the dilly-lilly  
Lank dank kitty dank kimo,

\*The version of this song in *An Alabama Songbook*, says "bring my bow," and "bring some rum."

---

"The Carrion Crow" is of British origin; an early citation is Francis Grose's *The Olio* (1792:129-32). Grose facetiously purports to "place beyond doubt the antiquity of the poem" but means only to ridicule the extravagant claims of his ballad-scholar contemporaries. Later critics, in fact, were less attentive to the song's antiquity than to its topical content. According to Bell, the song is "believed to contain sundry covert political allusions applicable to the time of the Restoration, when it was written" (Bell 1857:244-45; see also Kennedy 1871:377). Most often the shooter is a tailor, and in one other version the crow "called the tailor a cheating folk," provoking the tailor's assault.

The crow is most always an ironic character, a harmless creature whose only danger is his capacity to expose the vanity of his assailants. American versions such as Janie Couch's, omitting the provocation, turn the focus on the ineptness of the shooter.

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#### **24. Green Gravel** Martha Drisdale, Sheffield, June 10, 1947

Green gravel, green gravel, your grass is so green,  
All over creation 'tis bound to be seen.  
Dear Martha, dear Martha, your sweetheart is dead,  
He wrote you a letter, so turn back your head.

*Directions:* The players sit in a line or circle. As each child's name is called, he or she turns and faces in the opposite direction. The song continues until everyone has turned around.

---

Green Gravel is a widely dispersed but less popular game that usually appears as only a single four- or six-line verse. Its earliest collection was 1835 in Manchester, England (Opie and Opie 1985:240). There are obvious elements of dramatic structure, but only faint suggestions of meaning. As in Martha Drisdale's version, the chief dramatic element is the turning back, one-by-one, of the players.

Although this motif is common in European games, there is little indication what makes it so captivating for players. Thus much of the commentary by folklorists on this game has involved examining text fragments to determine their origin and meaning. As can be seen here, there is much disagreement and much speculation on this.

Newell (#15:71), for example, provides this unusual text to discuss:

Green gravel, green gravel, the grass is so green  
And all the free masons are ashamed to be seen;  
O Mary, O Mary, your true love is dead  
The king sends you a letter to turn back your head.

Based on comparative fragments, Newell proposes a more original text for the second line—"And all the free *masons* (maidens) are *ashamed* (arrayed?) to be seen"—which later collections verify to be the preeminent version. He then cites a ballad fragment that suggests the origin of the game. Basically, the player is "arrayed" (visible at a large gathering) when she receives word from a messenger that her lover has been unfaithful:

A French round begins similarly: "Ah, the bringer of letters! Ah, it is news that you must change your love." ...All the ladies of Paris are at the dance; the king's daughter alone "regarde à coté," "turns her head," looking at a messenger who is approaching; he brings news of her love's unfaithfulness; a rival skilled in magic arts has enchanted him, in a far country where he is warring. (71)

Vance Randolph posits a different explanation, suggesting Irish sources to account for the reference to freemasonry:

"Green Gravel" is an old Irish song, and I have been told that the first stanza is connected with the Irish Catholics' hatred of the Masonic fraternity. The Ozark natives know nothing of this, however, and do not connect "free meshin" with "freemason" at all. Newell (*Games and Songs*, pp. 71 and 242) gives several similar songs, and points out that "freemasons" is sometimes changed to "free maidens," while "ashamed" becomes "arrayed." Perrow (1933:139) records two stanzas from Mississippi, in which it is the "fern nations" which are "ashamed to be seen."

Linscott, who discussed the game with his performers, had yet a third account:

This singing game was played by Misses Mary and Serena Frye of Brookline, Massachusetts, who spent their summers when they were children at Plymouth, Massachusetts, and learned the song from their playmates there. To them it was not a very exciting game and seemed rather silly. It was not played very often because it called for little energy or imagination. As these New England girls played it, it is indeed barely suggestive of the ancient custom of English life from which it came.

The game once was descriptive of the ceremony of washing and burying the dead, in which the whole village took part. All the ceremonial functions attendant upon these rites were performed in dramatic pantomime. The turning back is part of a curious funeral ceremony of ancient times called "Dish-a-loof," in which death was followed by clapping of hands and bell ringing to ward off evil spirits and to call all good men to pray for the departing soul. The final verse that deals with the letter sustains the belief in communion with the dead. The green gravel is the grass; the letter is the communion symbol.

Other commentary includes McDowell, whom Randolph cites, suggesting that the title "green gravel" is a corruption of "glen...something or other," evidently a Scottish place-name" (1938:64). And Yoffe, who surveyed games on St. Louis playgrounds, noted that the game was a recent arrival—present in her 1944 collections but not in her youth (1947:42). Moreover, they were found among African American players but not Anglo American: for these reasons she speculated that the game came north with the Great Migration.

Other oddities include a Michigan version where the lover returns in a second stanza: "Green gravel, green gravel; your-true love is here; so turn now and greet him; and dry all your tears" (Gardner 1920:100). And Heck reported a Cincinnati version that is a line game. At the command "turn back your nose" each player, named in succession, turns around to march backwards. Little of the original drama remains in this version: "the game proceeds until all are marching backwards or until some catastrophe has occurred" (Heck 1927:14).

Halli (2004:176) prints two versions of this game from the Arnold collection, including the Martha Drisdale performance.

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## 25. Miss Jenny O. Jones Pansy Richardson, Mobile, July 10, 1947

We're going to see Miss Jenny O. Jones,  
Miss Jenny O. Jones, Miss Jenny O. Jones.  
We're going to see Miss Jenny O. Jones,  
And how is she today?

*Spoken:* Washing

We're very glad to hear it, hear it, hear it.  
We're very glad to hear it,  
So we will call another day.

We're going to see Miss Jenny O. Jones,  
Miss Jenny O. Jones, Miss Jenny O. Jones.  
We're going to see Miss Jenny O. Jones,  
And how is she today?

*Spoken:* She's ironing.

We're very glad to hear it, hear it, hear it.  
We're very glad to hear it,  
So we will call another day.

We're going to see Miss Jenny O. Jones,  
Miss Jenny O. Jones, Miss Jenny O. Jones.  
We're going to see Miss Jenny O. Jones,  
And how is she today?

*Spoken:* She's sick.

We're very sorry to hear it, hear it, hear it.  
We're very sorry to hear it,  
So we will call another day

We're going to see Miss Jenny O. Jones,  
Miss Jenny O. Jones, Miss Jenny O. Jones.  
We're going to see Miss Jenny O. Jones,  
And how is she today?

*Spoken:* She's worse.

We're very sorry to hear it, hear it, hear it.  
We're very sorry to hear it,  
So we will call another day.

We're going to see Miss Jenny O. Jones.  
Miss Jenny O. Jones, Miss Jenny O. Jones,  
We're going to see Miss Jenny O. Jones,  
And how is she today?

*Spoken:* She's dead!

We're very sorry to hear it, hear it, hear it.  
We're very sorry to hear it,  
So we will call another day.

What shall we bury her in, bury her in, bury her in?  
What shall we bury her in?  
And we will call another day.

*Spoken:* Blue

Blue is for babies, babies, babies.  
Blue is for babies,  
And that will never do.

What shall we bury her in, bury her in, bury her in?  
What shall we bury her in?  
And we will call another day.

*Spoken:* Red

Red is for firemen, firemen, firemen.  
Red is for firemen,  
And that will never do.

What shall we bury her in, bury her in, bury her in?  
What shall we bury her in?  
And we will call another day.

*Spoken:* White

White is for angels, angels, angels.  
White is for angels,  
So that will have to do.

We're going to her funeral, funeral, funeral.  
We're going to her funeral...

*Shouted:* Ghost!

Directions: This is a line game. The person taking the part of Miss Jenny O. Jones is seated. The line comes up to her singing and she answers. At the end, her ghost chases the group and the one who is caught becomes Miss Jenny O. Jones.

This game has a well-developed dramatic structure and has as its prevailing theme the nature of death. It appears in Gomme, in Newell, and in the Opies (1985:254-60) as well as in other collections. Gomme (1:260-83) has seventeen variants, with slightly different instructions, and apparently received so many submissions that she didn't print them all. The game has been the subject of poetry, and was the source of a popular American song, "Jennie Jenkins."

The plot is a resurrection drama, but with several fascinating twists. A line of suitors approach in a courtship appeal, but a "mother" character has the spoken part and keeps Jenny hidden. The mother rejects the suitors with excuses ("ironing," etc.), which proceed by various routes to the eventual discovery of Jenny's death. Jenny, who has been hidden behind the mother, is revealed laying dead. Then there are various enactments of Jenny's funeral, and she is sometimes brought back to life. "The appeal of the game," say the Opies (1985:258), "must have lain in the mesmeric to-ing and fro-ing of the request and repulse, and the mock solemnity of the funeral, which burst into sudden excitement when 'Janet jo' or 'Jenny' came to life and chased the mourners."

Some commentaries have focused on the excuses, and their reflection on the important household activities in the lives of the players:

Domestic occupation is shown throughout, washing and its attendants, drying, folding, starching, and ironing being by far the most numerous, brewing, and baking only occurring in one. Illness, dying, and death are the usual forms of the later verses, but illness and dying are lost in several versions. (Gomme 1:279-81)

The colors are a common feature, and have been a favorite subject of commentary. White is a traditional funeral color in village customs. Performers themselves will espouse color theories: one American performer told Newell that the colors stand for professions (blue for sailors, which stands for constancy, etc.). Colors are also seen as pertaining to emotions: green for grief, red for joy, black for mourning, white for death, etc. (Newell 1883:63; Opie and Opie 1985:257-58).

Other traditional beliefs pertain to the disposition of the dead.

The rising of the dead lover, and the belief that excessive mourning over a loved one disturbs his or her rest in the grave, thus causing the dead to rise and speak, are shown in old ballads; the belief that spirits of the dead haunt churchyards and places of their former abode may also be adduced in illustration of the ghost incident.

These details, which are maintained as essential to the game's performance, give "Jenny Jones" its reputation as an exceptional dramatic game:

The methods of playing, and the incidents revealed by the verses sung, show that this is perhaps the most realistic of all the games, the daily occupation, the illness, death, and burial being portrayed, first, in the words of the rhymes, and secondly, by the

accompanying action. The Scottish versions make the opening incident that of a lover coming to the house of a loved one, then proceed to the domestic occupation, and finally to the death incident; while the English versions give the idea of village friends calling upon a favourite companion, and subsequently attending her funeral.

Newell says "Jenny Jones" "has been familiar in the Middle States since the memory of the oldest inhabitant" (1883:63). "Jones" derives from terms of endearment related to the English "Jo" and French "joie."

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**26. All the Pretty Horses** Julia Greer Marechal, Mobile, July 6, 1947 (accompanied by a bird outside her window)

Go to sleep little baby.  
Go to sleep little baby.  
When you wake up you shall have  
All the pretty little horses.

All the pretty little horses,  
All the pretty little horses,  
When you wake up you shall have  
All the pretty little horses.

All the horses in daddy's wagon  
All belong to the baby. All the pretty little horses,  
All the pretty little horses,  
Joe and Annie and the pony and Fannie,\*  
And all the pretty little horses.

Hush a bye, don't you cry,  
All the pretty little horses.  
All the horses in papa's wagon  
All belong to the baby.

\*These were the actual names of her father's horses.

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See notes for Track 2, "All the Little Horses."

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**27. Ain't Gonna Rain no More** Vera Hall, Livingston, June 17, 1947



Oh it ain't gonna rain no more, no more,  
Ain't gonna rain no more.  
How in the world can the old folks tell  
It ain't gonna rain no more?

Way over yonder high in the sky,  
Ain't gonna rain no more.  
Rain done gone, snow next time.  
It ain't gonna rain no more.

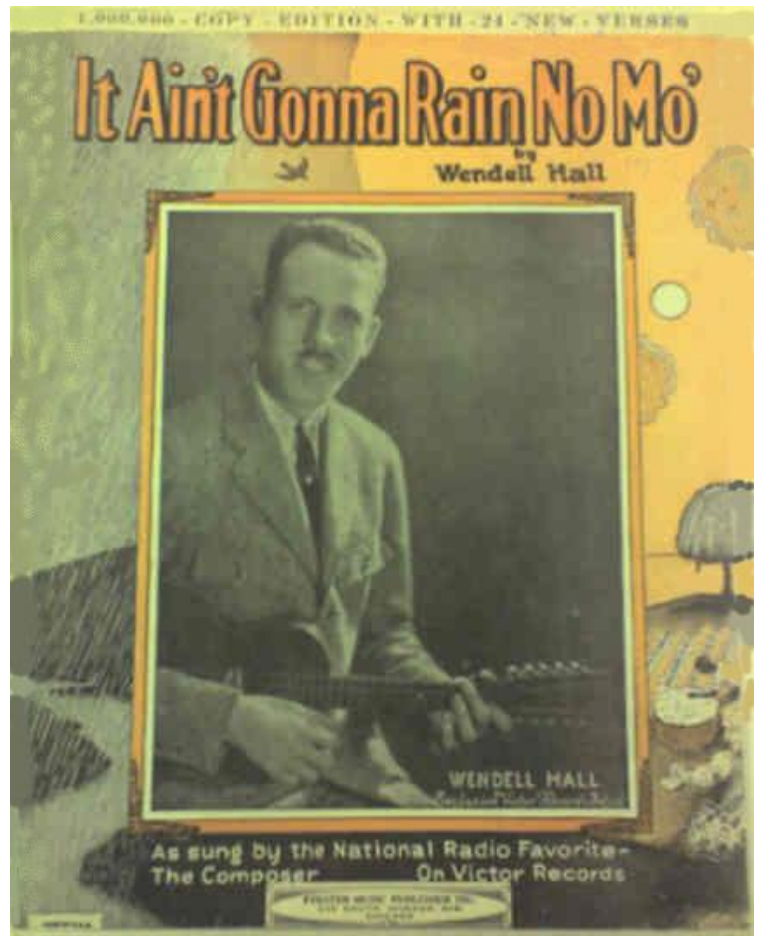
Oh it ain't gonna rain no more, no more,  
Ain't gonna rain no more.  
How in the world can the old folks tell,  
It ain't gonna rain no more?

Jay bird whistles and the martin sings,\*  
Ain't gonna rain no more.  
Jay bird whistles and the martin sings,  
Ain't gonna rain no more.

I'm gonna build me a house,  
Build it as a bungalow.  
Ain't going to put no top on it  
'Cause it ain't gonna rain no more.

Oh it ain't gonna rain no more, no more,  
Ain't gonna rain no more.  
How in the heck can I wash my neck  
If it ain't gonna rain no more?

In a version recorded by Alan Lomax in  
1948, Ms. Hall sang "Jaybird whistles and  
the martin dance."



"Ain't Gonna Rain no More" is most widely known as a 1923 Victor recording (Victor 19171), the best-selling recording of that year according to Archie Green (1965:218). In its popularity, it transformed the career of singer Wendell Hall from vaudevillian to industry star, and by extension the industry itself as a star-making apparatus. Born in Kansas in 1896, Hall began performing in high school and joined the vaudeville circuit first on ukulele and later on xylophone (Fritz 1975:276). Claiming to be the first to sing and play xylophone at the same time, Hall billed himself as the "Singing Xylophonist." Frustrated with long and fruitless touring, he turned to writing songs and recording.

In 1921 he began appearing on radio (KYW, Chicago) and switched back to ukulele because of its convenience. With a new moniker, the "Red-Headed Music Maker," Hall became a radio-celebrity and was hired by the station as a staff performer. Anticipating a trend in the instrument business, he developed a line of signature ukuleles (Chadbourne 2006). He continued songwriting and began promoting his publications on the air. In 1923 he wrote his signature piece, "Ain't Gonna Rain." During the summer of 1923 Hall initiated a driving tour of U.S. radio stations, covering 35 stations and 5,000 miles, stocking nearby music stores with his compositions. With "Ain't Gonna Rain" in greatest demand, Hall astutely capitalized on its popularity.

He began composing new verses and would republish the song as they emerged—"Wendell Hall's Own Latest 24 Verses" and "24 more extra verses." Biographer F. G. Fritz summarized the extraordinary significance of Hall's acumen as a commercial entertainer: Wherever he toured, requests for the "Rain" song led the rest. Over the years the song sold close to 10,000,000 copies of sheet music and records, with Hall's voice selling well over 2,000,000 recordings. From the 50 verses in the original composition the number grew to 1,000 and became one of the greatest novelty numbers in all music publishing. (279) Hall was a music industry pioneer, and more than any other song "Ain't Gonna Rain" embodied his most dramatic innovations.

In 1924, Hall signed a contract with the National Carbon Company, maker of Eveready batteries, as a sponsored entertainer. Hall's sponsored tours took Eveready promotion nationwide and anticipated the later formation of radio network broadcasting. Following these pioneering efforts, Hall followed the course of the radio and recording industry. During the Great Depression he returned to vaudeville and afterward worked writing advertising jingles. After he retired in 1951, Hall settled in Fairhope, Alabama. He died in 1969.

The song had some circulation in nineteenth century tradition. It is sometimes mentioned as a vaudeville favorite, but contemporary histories of vaudeville discuss it as significant. Scarborough (1925:107) printed an African American variant in her 1925 collection, a likely relative of Hall's song but apparently not under its influence. Folklorist Kip Lornell (2006) recorded a version that he said dates to the nineteenth century song, the "Raincrow Song." Vera Hall's performance for Arnold follows the melodic contour of Wendell Hall's composition and shares common phrases. It is entirely possible that the song circulated in African American tradition and was introduced to Wendell Hall during his vaudeville tours much in the form of his performances. It is also likely that any singer after 1923 would have been exposed to Wendell Hall's performance of it, either directly or indirectly.

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## **28. King William Was King James's Son** Pansy Richardson, Mobile, July 10, 1947

King William was King James's son,  
Around the royal race he run.

Upon his breast he wore a star.  
That's the way to the pickle jar.

Go choose your east, go choose your west,  
Go choose the one that you love best.  
If she's not there then do your part.  
Choose the next one to your heart.

Down on this carpet you must kneel,  
As sure as the grass grows in the field.  
Salute your bride and kiss her sweet.  
Then you rise upon your feet.

*Directions:* Children stand in a ring with one person in the middle. That person acts out the words of the song, then chooses another one to stand in the center.

---

Newell gives this game the title "King Arthur was King William's Son" (#17, 1883:73-76), but notes also that the William/James verse is common throughout the middle and southern U.S. states. The Opies call it "King William" (#18, 1985:122-25). In many versions, the hats of the players are placed on the floor, and the leader places each hat one-by-one on the head of the player he or she chooses. In Ireland a shawl was used to hide the chosen one.

The game would seem to be an archaic vestige of some earlier drama, with little meaning or dramatic investment for the players. But the game has retained a surprising vitality on American soil, far beyond what any indigenous concern for royal lineage would suggest. Newell suspected the drama was of Irish significance, but a Connecticut version collected by Backus (1901:299) suggested English origin and representation of recruiting in war time. The Opies note wild variation in the royal genealogies identified and unconcern by the players that one or another is correct. They conclude: "Not least of the curiosities of this game, with its seeming memory of a conflict for the British Succession, is that it is better known and earlier recorded in the United States than in the United Kingdom" (1985:122).

Furthermore, as if all this concern for royal succession were overwrought, many collectors have found the game degraded to a partner-choosing kissing game. And Hull (1938) observed in Great Plains variants the propensity for folk etymology: for "royal race" she found variants with "lawyer race," "river race," and a line, "Riley, Riley, race he won."

The Opies believe that the instructions in the last stanza ("Down on this carpet you must kneel," etc.) recall the "cushion dance," a game motif in which the "temporary possession of a cushion gave a man the right, on convivial occasions, to kiss the woman he most fancied" (1985:190).

Pansy Richardson's "pickle jar" line has been recorded elsewhere, and was apparently devised by children to replace an incomprehensible original (Opie and Opie 1985:124). Other extravagant variations in this line have also been collected. These innovations are in keeping with the opinion of the Opies that the lively social action of the game has sustained the interest of players long after the meaning of the historical or political references of the first stanza was lost.

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### **29. Like a Leaf or Feather** Martha Drisdale, Sheffield, June 10, 1947

Like a leaf or feather  
In windy, windy weather,  
We'll whirl about and twirl about  
And all fall down together.

*Directions:* As they sing, children act out the words by whirling and sinking down to the floor at the same time.

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This song appears in some recreational resource materials, but not in collections of traditional verse. It appears to have been devised as a dramatic exercise for small children.

Halli (2004:179) prints Mrs. Drisdale's version in his book on the Arnold collection.

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### **30. Springfield Mountain** Mae Randlette Beck, Mobile, July 8, 1947

On Springfield Mountain there did dwell  
A love-lie youth, I knowed him well.

One Monday morning he did go  
In a meadow for to mow.

While standing there he did feel  
A big black snake bite him on the heel.

"Daddy, Daddy, fetch the rake,  
I'm bitten by a big black snake."

Daddy took him by the hand;  
He went for to see Mollie Brand.

Singing, singing, as he went,  
"I'm bit by the ser-pie-ent."

---

"Springfield Mountain" is well known among folklorists as a song that was dispersed from a single source. The original ballad told the story of Timothy Myrick who died from a snake bite in 1761 near Springfield, Massachusetts. The song was apparently written soon after the event, but no text has been reported dating any earlier than the second quarter of the nineteenth century (Parker 1947:278-279).

During the nineteenth century, the song and the account of its origin were adopted as a component of local and state history for the area where the event occurred. The most complete account of the incident was recorded in Peck's *The History of Wilbraham, Massachusetts* (1914:79-84). A passage from a diary gave this account:

"Timothy Mirrick, the son of Lt. Thomas and Mary Mirrick was bit by a ratel snake on August the 7th, 1761, and died within about two or three ours, he being 22 years, two months and three days old and very near the point of marridg." The place where this young man lived is now the most southerly place in our town [Wilbraham], on the Main Street, and is owned by Ethelbert Bliss. The meadow where was mowing when bitten, is off to the southwest, some seventy to ninety rods from the home of Mr. Bliss...and the tragic spot can be plainly seen from the Sessions homestead, about a half mile farther south.... (p79-80)

Tolman and Eddy (1922:415) have reviewed the historical documents, which are consistent in tone with the one above.

Peck records the text of the "Elegy of the Young Man Bitten by a Rattlesnake," which is the text written by Nathan Torrey, a local citizen, around 1761. The second stanza, which compares in its narrative position to Hester's second stanza, was this:

One friday morning he did go  
in to the medow and did moe  
A round or two then he did feal  
A pisin sarpent at his heal

Newell (1900) believed that the original song was meant to be used as a dirge in funerals, and was preserved in its originally composed form in the family. Newell attributes the enduring popularity of the song to the "quaintness of the melody," which was different than the one sung by Hester. The song was printed as a broadside in 1850, and this surely was a factor in its wide dispersal (Barry 1905:299). Sometime during the mid-nineteenth century the song was appropriated into the repertory of the Old Folks' Concert performers, who toured the U.S. giving nostalgic performances in costume. In the 1860s comic versions were composed and printed in songsters, which achieved widespread distribution (Tolman and Eddy 1922:415).

The song's origin was known to early American folklorists through these documents, and it served as a paradigmatic case of the dispersal of a traditional song from a single composed source. Newell (1900), for example, used the song in his case against the supposed "communal" origin of ballads. Tracing the course of the song from the single source composition to the variants that proliferated in the ensuing years, he concluded:

The theory that ballads were born out of a mental state quite independent of any conditions familiar to literature, that they represent an unconscious cerebration, that, to use a phrase which to my mind conveys no distinct meaning, they possessed "communal origin," has no more application to the songs of old England than of New England, no more place in the twelfth century than the eighteenth. ...Again, the history of the song forcibly illustrates the manner in which popular tradition, setting out from a basis more or less answering to real life, ordinarily absorbs romantic elements, loses relation to the original surroundings, and may develop into a fanciful narrative; while again, the sentiments, which originally were profoundly serious and even solemn, in a more cultivated and sophisticated period are vulgarized and rendered prosaic, until at last the primitive earnestness survives only as a jest. (1900:113)

Compare these remarks by Newell with those of Piper, a communalist, in the notes here to "Skip to My Lou."

Halli (2004:77-79) prints two Arnold versions, the Hester version (with the title "Rattle-um Snake") and another by May Randlette Beck of Mobile.

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### **32. Frog Went a Courting** May Randlette Beck, Mobile, July 8, 1947

The frog went a-courting, he did ride, uh hmm.  
The frog went a-courting, he did ride,  
With a sword and pistol by his side, uh hmm.

He rode up to Miss Mousy's door, uh hmm.  
He rode up to Miss Mousy's door,  
And loudly there did ring and roar, uh hmm.

O pray, Miss Mouse, are you within? Uh hmm.  
O pray, Miss Mouse, are you within?  
O yes, kind sir, won't you please walk in? Uh hmm.

He took Miss Mouse upon his knee, uh hmm.  
He took Miss Mouse upon his knee,  
Says he, "Miss Mouse, will you marry me?" Uh hmm.

O wait 'til I ask old Uncle Rat, uh hmm.  
For without old Uncle Rat's consent,  
I would not marry the President, uh hmm.

Old Rat he came a'tearing home, uh hmm.  
Old Rat he came a'tearing home,  
Says "Who's been here since I've been gone?"

Uh hmm. Oh a nice young gentleman, Uncle Rat, uh hmm.  
O a nice young gentleman, Uncle Rat,  
With a willow cane and a beaver hat, uh hmm.

Go put that gentleman's horse away, uh hmm.  
Go put that gentleman's horse away,  
And feed him well on corn and hay, uh hmm.

O Mr. Rat, may I have Miss Mouse? Uh hmm.  
O Mr. Rat, may I have Miss Mouse?  
And I will build her a very fine house, uh hmm.

O take her, O take her with all your heart, uh hmm.  
O take her, O take her with all your heart,  
And may you never, never part, uh hmm.

He took Miss Mouse down by the lake, uh hmm.  
He took Miss Mouse down by the lake,  
And they were swallowed by a big black snake, uh hmm.

And this is the end of one-two-three, uh hmm.  
And this is the end of one-two-three,  
The rat, the frog and the little mousy, uh humm.

---

"Frog Went a Courting" is widely dispersed in traditional singing in the U.S. and has appeared in some of the most prestigious collections. Coffin (1949:159) identifies it as a relative of "Sir Lionel" (Child 18).

Tolman and Eddy (1922:394-396) provided a detailed discussion of the impressive history of the song; and Parsons (1990) has added subsequent details to this. These accounts are summarized as follows. The oldest mention of the song is "The frog cam to the myl dur" in "The Complaint of Scotland" (1549), although it is disputable that this is the same song. A surer link was the entry mentioning "A moste Strange Weddinge of the ffroge and the mowse" in the "Stationers' Register" (1580). The oldest text is "The Marriage of the Frogge and Mouse" in Ravenscroft's "Melismata" (1611). There is a substantial body of nineteenth

century Scottish texts collected from oral tradition, as well as English, Irish, Anglo American, and African American versions.

The song bears a number of distinctive features, some of which can be traced to particular sources. The "uh hmmm" tag is the least remarkable of several nonsense tags that serve to anchor the verse structure. The Scots "Cuddy alone" or "Kitty alone" is common and well-traveled. Parsons records variants with "A-too-re-lal" and "Rickety rol de rue de dee." All of the Arnold variants printed in Halli (2004:86-90) use "uh hmmm."

The so-called "kimo" burden is traced to a Herefordshire version. This is a separate chorus, sometimes sung to a different melody than the verses, that begins "Kemo kimo down to Cairo" in some versions. It does not appear in any of the Arnold variants. It received extensive development in American texts, especially African American minstrelsy, and later was "cut loose" to form a different song.

An Irish version introduced the array of wedding guests. The version Arnold collected from Laura Pillans of Mobile has this wedding-guests form: "Well, the first that came in was little Miss Moth," followed by the Bumblebee, Miss Flea, and Parson Crow. Emma Craig's wedding party includes the bumblebee and the old gray cat. Jane Peavy of Atmore sang only a two-verse fragment introducing Captain Redbug and Parson Flea, with no mention of the frog at all (Halli 2004:86-90).

The song received modern treatments throughout its history, particularly in staged settings. A 1809 English version was adapted for the comic stage with modern accouterments featured. David Highland's ["Frog Went a-Courtin"](#) website lists his compilation of 170 verses from various sources and illustrates these innovations.

---

### **34. Dance to Your Daddy** Kate Newton Middleton, Mobile, July 7, 1947

Dance to your daddy, my bonnie laddie.  
Dance to your daddy, my own little man.  
You shall have a fishy on a little dishy,  
And a little whirl-i-gig, and some nice jam (*Repeat twice*)

---

This song was written by William Watson around 1826 (FARNE Archive). Watson was a Newcastle, England, native, several of whose songs have endured in English tradition. The first printing of the song, as indicated by later publications, was apparently Fordyce's *Newcastle Song Book* (1842). The text was later published in collections of English nursery rhymes, including Mother Goose. Oral performances were recorded by collectors, including Cecil Sharp, and it appears in collections of sea shanties. The song was incorporated into U.S. and British music education materials for early grades.



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### 35. Oats, Peas, Beans and Barley Grows Pansy Richardson, Mobile, July 10, 1947

Oats, peas, beans and barley grows,  
Oats, peas, beans and barley grows,  
You nor I nor anyone knows,  
Where oats, peas, beans and barley grows.

Thus the farmer sows his seed.  
Thus he stands and takes his ease.  
He stomps his foot and claps his hand  
And turns around to view the land.

I'm waiting for a partner.  
I'm waiting for a partner.  
So open the ring and choose one in  
And kiss her as she enters in. Now you're married, you must be kind.

Now you're married, you must be kind.  
Now you're married, you must be kind  
So take your kiss and walk away. Directions: Children take hands in a ring with one in the center. All act out the words of the song. The partner who is chosen remains in the center for the next round.

---

"Oats" appears in Gomme (2:1-13) and the Opies (#37, 1985:178-83). The text was not collected until the 1880s, but the Opies note that

...the game was well known then, both in Britain and America, and memories of it apparently went back some years. Indeed the game was, it seems, a favourite on formal occasions, at children's parties and Sunday School treats. (Opie and Opie 1985:180)

Gomme distinguishes three categories of texts based on their form: (1) the questioning form ("Do you or I or anyone know?"), (2) the affirming form ("You nor I nor anyone knows"), and (3) the indiscriminate form ("You an' I an' ev'ry one knows"). "Of these," she comments, "I am disposed to consider the first to represent the earliest idea of the game" (2:11).

Newell considers the game a dance rather of young people than of children. The text is largely stable except for the "amatory chorus" ("Now you're married, you must be kind...") which is highly variable, and subject to humorous inversion in its consummating action. Other variations dwell on gender relations and on the exigencies of agricultural life.

The appearance of specific grains in this widely dispersed game is considered problematic. Gomme provides a table of grain appearances and the English counties in which the variants were collected (p11). Oats, beans, and barley are the more constant words, and Gomme considered it a "curiosity" for non-native grains to appear in indigenous versions of the song.

Newell gives the account for U.S. variants (#21, 1883:80-84). He thought the game to be unknown in Great Britain, but still a favorite in France, Provence, Spain, Italy, Sicily, Germany, Sweden. It may be related, he thought, to rustic festivities designed to promote fertility of the fields: "It is not in the least unlikely that the original of the present chant was sung by Italian rustics in the days of Virgil" (p7).

The Opies find annoying inconsistencies with this theory. The four main crops have in common that they are spring crops, and ought to be associated with leaping movements, which are not a part of the game (1985:182). The agricultural and calendar references seem out of character with the mating experience that the game suggests. Pointing to texts where the crops seem to be sexual references, they suggest that "Oats" derives primarily from a ring game, "Chop the Wood," and has had a separate agricultural game superimposed on it (180-81). Examining planting games with similar texts, they find no clear antecedent, and conclude: "Whether the game ever had more meaning than now appears...is simply conjecture" (182).

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### 36. Trotting Song Kate Newton Middleton, Mobile, July 7, 1947

Here we go up up up up up  
And here we go down down daisy.  
Here we go forward and trot trot trot  
And then we come little and easy.  
Old my little colkerry  
Such a sweet pet as this is  
Far or near-y.\*

(Repeat)

\*Near-y: Mrs. Middleton explained that the "y" was added to "near" to make a rhyme.

---

Trotting songs are highly improvisational, often wholesale inventions of the singer. They feature rhythmic sound patterns, soothing and happy melodies, simple thematic material. They are used to calm infants, often accompanied by bouncing the infant on the knee. Chamberlain (1906:177-78) has suggested that "trotting songs" are always related to cultures with acquaintance with the horse.

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**39. What'cha Gonna Do?** Kate Newton Middleton, Mobile, July 7, 1947

What'cha gonna do when your shoes wear out this morning?  
What'cha gonna do when your shoes wear out this evening?  
What'cha gonna do when your shoes wear out?  
Stand in the corner with your toes poked out  
This morning, this evening, so soon. What'cha gonna do when your clothes wear out this morning?

What'cha gonna do when your clothes wear out this evening?  
What'cha gonna do when your clothes wear out?  
Stand in the corner with your mouth poked out  
This morning, this evening, so soon.

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Both the melody and text of this song are common in traditional country music. "This morning, this evening" and also "What'cha gonna do" are both popular textual devices, often associated with this tune, and provide a textual anchor for much variation in the song. Other variants in the family include the "Crawdad Song," "Sugar Babe," and "How Many Biscuits Can You Eat?" A detailed list, including many recorded versions, is given by Wilgus and Montell (1968:313-14n14).

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**41. The Farmer** Martha Drisdale, Sheffield, June 10, 1947

Do you know how does the farmer,  
Do you know how does the farmer,  
Do you know how does the farmer  
Sow his seeds in the Spring?

See-oh seeds-sow does the farmer,  
See-oh seeds-sow does the farmer,  
See-oh seeds-sow does the farmer,  
Sow his seeds in the Spring.

*Directions:* The children stand in a ring and imitate the actions of a farmer sowing his seeds. The song continues with other actions such as pulling weeds, picking beans and so forth.

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"The Farmer" is a classic imitative game that mimics the actions of some occupation, role, or status important to its singers. Among singing games, it is exceptional in its focus on

dramatic imitation rather than interaction among the players. The simple formula encompasses a large family of "When I was a..." imitative occupational games that date to antiquity.

Urban and rural variants can be easily distinguished, each detailing occupations unique to their context. Newell collects these under the rubric "When I Was a Shoemaker" (#25, 1883:88-89) and gives versions collected in the New York streets. The Opies call this game "When I Was a Lady" (#68, 1985:294-97), and in its structure it has much in common with Julia Marechal's "When I Was a Young Girl." But the Opies distinguish the two (Gomme does not), this one being concerned mostly with occupations and the other with stages of feminine life.

Gomme cites a Welsh variant from the twelfth-century. Other ancient variants were collected in France, Italy, and European Russia. The well-known French game, "Sur le pont d'Avignon" ("On the Bridge of Avignon"), about the bridge built in 1177, is a prominent game in this family.

The game's enduring popularity is attributed to its adaptive form: it is structured so that "additions and alterations...can be made without destroying or materially altering, or affecting, its sense" (2:373). With "When I was a lady" variants, one sometimes finds depictions of social class. Gomme noted the modern occupations that had been incorporated into the variants she observed: "When I was a school girl," "When I was a teacher," etc.

Maclagan (1901:140-41) details variants collected in the Scots countryside, most concerned with rural life. But he describes an interesting comic game he calls "Dumb Trades," where players fill their mouths with water. "Each imitates the action of a working tradesman.... The first who laughs is punished by the others spurting the water in their mouths over him" (141).

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#### **42. When I Was a Young Girl** Julia Greer Marechal, Mobile, July 6, 1947

When I was a young girl, young girl, young girl  
When I was a young girl, then oh then.,  
T'was a' primp-primp this way, primp-primp that way  
This way, that way, then oh then.

The boys came a' courting, courting, courting,  
The boys came a' courting, then oh then.  
T'was a' primp-primp this way, a' primp-primp that way  
This way, that way, then oh then.

I got married, married, married,  
I got married, then oh then.  
T'was "oh my love" this way, and "oh my love" that way,  
This way, that way, then oh then.  
My husband got mad, mad, mad,  
My husband got mad, then oh then.

With a "hmmm-hmm" this way, and a "hmm-hmm" that way,  
This way, that way, then oh then My husband got pleased, pleased, pleased,  
My husband got pleased, then oh then.  
T'was a (kissing sound) this way, a (kissing sound) that way,  
This way, that way, then oh then

My husband got sick, sick, sick,  
My husband got sick, then oh then.  
T'was "oh doctor" this way, and "oh doctor" that way,  
This way, that way, then oh then.

My husband he died, died, died,  
My husband he died, then oh then.  
T'was a "mmmmm" this way and an "mmmmm" that way,  
This way, that way, then oh then.

Coming from the funeral, funeral, funeral,  
Coming from the funeral, then oh then.  
T'was "oh me" this way and "oh me" that way,  
This way, that way, then oh then.

Then I was a widow, widow, widow,  
Then I was a widow, then oh then.  
T'was a' primp-primp this way and a' primp-primp that way,  
This way, that way, for nice young men.

---

This stage-of-life drama appears under various titles. The Opies call it "Mary Was a Bad Girl" (#71, 1985:301-6). According to Gomme's survey of thirteen European variants (2:362-74), the game "consists of imitative actions of different events in life, or of actions imitating trades and occupations" (2:372-73). Whereas the game once was played by both genders, it was adapted to "the principle and important events in many working women's lives."

Gomme calls this game "When I Was a Young Girl" (2:362-74) but does not distinguish it from the occupational family, "When I Was a Lady," as do the Opies. This latter family includes Martha Drisdale's song, "The Farmer," and indeed the two types have much in

common. There the representational movements are children's imitations of the activities of other adults, whereas here the movements concern girls imitating the course of their own lives. The degree of self-involvement is much higher in this game. The Opies noted its "devil-may-care attitude to life's responsibilities, characteristic of popular song in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries."

Nigel Kelsey (1981) reviewed the early scholarship on this game, particularly its depiction of nineteenth century social life. A lengthy version collected by Gillington in 1909 provided great detail in "describing realistically the life as it actually was lived by a substantial part of the population" (p105). Most notable in Kelsey's study are the modern variants, many collected after 1960. Third-person variants are now found ("There was a girl in our school.."), and it is common for the young girl to be named ("When Susie was a baby..."). Also found are some of the stereotypical themes of modern teenage girlhood, such as bras and boyfriends.

Kelsey takes great interest in the fact that players are not at all disinclined to improvise. The song, unlike other singing games, seems designed to actively encourage this playful improvisation, easily incorporating the ordinary lives of the players into a formula long-associated with staid traditional roles. "Why does one singing game," Kelsey then asks (p108), "stay almost the same for a long period of time, while another goes through such rapid changes and decline as the one under review in this article?" He attributes much to a conflict between the classroom and the playground, where playground innovation reflecting contemporary social concerns is "ironed out by the next teacher-taught generation," often by reinforcement at the infant school level (p108).

It is ironic then that in the U.S., "When I Was a Young Girl" was incorporated into instructional materials for recreation at the turn of the twentieth century. In 1907, for example, it appeared in the collection *Education by Plays and Games* (Johnson 1907:135-36), citing Newell's collection as its source. Mrs. Marechal's version would have been outside the reach of the recreation movement.

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[Byron Arnold and Children's Folklore](#) by John Bealle The songs on this recording represent a component of the collection by Byron Arnold made in Alabama from 1946 to 1947, all but two during a two-month collecting tour during the summer of 1947.

A biographical sketch of Arnold, including the detailed itinerary of the collecting trip during which these songs were recorded, is available on the [Alabama Folklife Association](#) website. Many of the songs Arnold collected have been assembled in Robert Halli's fine book *An Alabama Songbook: Ballads, Folksongs, and Spirituals Collected by Byron Arnold* (2004). Others, of course, were published in Arnold's own book, *Folksongs of Alabama* (1950). These songs are all children's songs in some respect and as such have an obvious coherence as a collection. But in fact one could also recognize considerable differences between the lullabies sung by adults to infants and the play-parties that smooth the way of socialization and courtship for young adults. Some, like "Ain't Gonna Rain No

More," are merely simple songs that share a common cultural space inhabited by adults and older children. Such distinctions are vast in social practice, but they tend to disappear, as here, when they are performed as memory culture for a collector. Byron Arnold was exceptionally open-minded in his approach to collecting, apparently showing much deference to singers in their judgment of what songs were important.

In his guiding interests, Arnold would also have been aware of the enduring importance of children's folklore in regional and state collections. Discussions of children's material in the collections of Arnold's contemporaries revealed a deep and abiding interest in subject, one grounded in the fundamental tenets of folklore scholarship. They would have pointed him directly toward the authoritative collections of children's folklore—William Wells Newell's *Games and Songs of American Children* (1883) and Alice Bertha Gomme's *The Traditional Games of England, Scotland, and Ireland* (I:1894, II:1898).

These were comprehensive collections that asserted the prominence of children's singing games in Anglo-American folklore scholarship. These works asserted the prevalent paradigm in folklore of that time, that children's games, songs, and rhymes were vestiges of antiquity. They were, as Newell put it, "preserved from generation to generation, without the intervention, often without the knowledge, of older minds" (1883:xix). Folklorists could trace particular rhymes, songs, and games to antiquity, so children's folklore became a core interest. Much of the information on the background of these songs and games comes from turn-of-the-twentieth-century folklorists whose interest were driven by these concerns. Moreover, children's singing games played a role in one of the pivotal debates among early American folklorists—the dispute over the individual or collective character of folklore. William Wells Newell (1906) chided folklorists over the neglect of children's folklore and noted how children, who were most predisposed to absorb the traditions of the collective, were at the same time the most creative and spontaneous.

Newell likened the psychological quality of folklore to that of language itself, at once communal and extemporaneous. His comments on "Springfield Mountain" ("Oh Johnny Dear"), cited below, were a stern rebuke to the collectivists who insisted that folk poetry was composed spontaneously by communal groups. In reply, communalists would point to examples such as "Skip to My Lou," where composition was an embedded social experience. The psychology of childhood was also important in the development of public education in the mid-nineteenth century. Children's games and songs were a staple of school primers and readers such as the McGuffey *Eclectic Reader* series. Later, at the turn of the twentieth century, a widespread recreation movement, sometimes urged on by folklorists, incorporated folk materials into instructional materials. Collections of songs and games proliferated, designed especially to facilitate their use by recreation leaders.

Several games in the Arnold corpus can be found in these sources and may have made their way to Alabama through some instructional setting. The "Shoemaker Song," for example, was composed for recreational purposes and seems to have had its widest circulation in that setting. Most significant for Arnold, however, was the regionalist movement, which viewed folklore as a key substance for distinct regional culture. Regional and state folksong

collections proliferated during the first half of the twentieth century, with singing games as a ubiquitous component. Vance Randolph's *Ozark Folksongs* (1946) devoted a chapter to play-party songs, describing a typical event (p286). After the news of a party of circulated, guest would come in wagons and cars from as far as five or six miles over rough mountain trails. The parties were held in cabins filled to capacity, with some waiting outside for a turn to go in. Hudson's Mississippi collection of 1936 had a similar description, again emphasizing spontaneity and word-of-mouth invitations (294-295).

Arnold modeled his collection after the state volumes, designing his tours to embrace the geographical scope of Alabama. But, as is so evident, he was drawn by the sentiments of the singers into a performer-centered orientation. *Folksongs of Alabama* and the collection from which it was taken were considered a tribute to Alabama and its residents. Many of the materials Arnold discovered were being thought of as great works of folk literature, dispersed by travel over continents and reaching deep into the past with the guiding hand of tradition. Arnold correctly intuited that Alabama's people bore the burden of tradition as any other, and that in his travels he would encounter the songs and games that were being discovered elsewhere.

As we now know, he was overwhelmed with success. Singers were eager to have their songs recorded, and saw him as their link to posterity. The notes here are assembled mostly from the commentaries of folklorists who have previously written about these songs. Much of the material comes from the standard reference works on traditional songs and games. Not all songs could be readily traced. Some appear to be original compositions, the kind of playful songs one invents to amuse young children with the sounds of music and human language. For others, information will be eventually forthcoming, and this web page will be updated periodically as needed.

John Bealle  
May 1, 2007

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