Dave Marsh's Notes for

Bruce Springsteen's "We Shall Overcome: The Seeger Sessions"

Old Dan Tucker

An antique fiddle tune, often used for square dances, "Old Dan Tucker" became famous around 1843 when Dan Emmett, one of the greatest early minstrel singers, wrote a version of these lyrics for his group, the Virginia Minstrels. It was the most famous of all blackface songs before the Civil War.

Dan Emmett didn't write "Old Dan Tucker." It seems to be a true folk song, which exists in many versions. Emmett's performances unquestionably made the song famous. But he certainly didn't come up with it at age 14 or perform it publicly at 15, as some sources claim. (A very good biography of Emmett is *Dan Emmett and the Rise of Early Negro Minstrelsy* by Hans Nathan.)

Other supposed authors of "Old Dan Tucker" are Henry Russell and J.R. Jenkins (who copyrighted a version called "Gwine to De Mill").

In Georgia, the song is said to be based on the life of Reverend Daniel Tucker of Ebert County, one of the area's richest citizens in the late 18th century. Elsewhere, the model is said to be Captain Daniel Tucker, a Virginian who became the second British governor of Bermuda. (If Captain Daniel Tucker inspired the song it is very old indeed, since he died in 1624, though not from a toothache or a heel injury.)

The version published in 1843 as by "Dan. Tucker, Jr." began with this verse:

I come to town de udder night,

I hear de noise den saw de fight,

De watchman was a runnin roun,

Cryin Old Dan Tuckeer's come to town,

So get out de way! Get out de way!

Get out de way! Old Dan Tucker,

Your too late to come to supper.

The surreal details of the 1843 version are limited to a few lines like: “To kiss de galls he thot was useless / 'Cept he kissed wid a sway-back-looseness.”

To contemporary ears, of course, the immediate reference points of the Seeger version are Bob Dylan of the mid-1960s and very early Bruce Springsteen (“Blinded by the Light”).

Among those who recorded “Old Dan Tucker” are Uncle Dave Macon, Roy Acuff, Burl Ives, Gid Tanner and the Skillet Lickers, Fiddlin’ John Carson, Johnny Horton, and the Youngbloods. The Pete Seeger version is contained on the album *American Favorite Ballads, Volume 1.*

Jesse James

An historical ballad written by minstrel Billy Gashade immediately after Robert Ford shot the famous outlaw Jesse James to earn a reward in April 1882. Not to be confused with the 1939 Woody Guthrie song, which is different in both melody and lyrics. (Woody did swipe the original tune and structure of this “Jesse James” for his song, “Jesus Christ.”)

Jesse James and his brother Frank did prey upon the banks and railroads despised by poor farmers in Missouri and Kansas, but they were hardly the noblemen portrayed in the lyric. The James brothers terrorized abolitionist farmers in Kansas before the Civil

War. During the war, they belonged to the Confederate guerilla band, Quantrill's Raiders, a notoriously bloodthirsty outfit which mostly preyed upon local Union sympathizers and once shot 22 unarmed Union soldiers debarking from a train for leave.

After the war, the James brothers and Cole Younger and his brothers specialized in bank and railroad robberies, many of which included murders. They committed their crimes from Kentucky to Iowa, Minnesota to Texas. James was seized upon as a symbol by anti-Reconstruction newspapers, who portrayed him as a heroic Confederate veteran treated unjustly after Appomattox. James embellished this image by writing self-exculpating letters to the newspapers. The image was further embellished by the theatricality of some of the gang's early exploits, including robbing a fair in Kansas and staging some of the heists in front of large crowds.

The James-Younger gang did limit itself to looting the express cars of the trains his gang held up and leaving passengers alone. Jesse's populist image also derived from being pursued by the Pinkerton Detective Agency, which was most infamous for its lethal union-busting tactics.

Robert Ford shot Jesse to earn a reward of $10,000 put up by the Missouri governor. Ford received part of the reward money (legend says only $25), and, even after he'd pled guilty and was sentenced to hang, the governor pardoned him. Ford died in 1892, when another outlaw, Edward O'Kelly, seeking to avenge Jesse's death, shot him. A sympathetic judge and jury gave O'Kelly only two years.

Before long, even Theodore Roosevelt began referring to Jesse James as "America's Robin Hood." Rumors circulated that Jesse had really survived the shooting,

and these remained so persistent that in 1995, his body was exhumed and its DNA tested. The test made it 99.7% sure that Robert Ford had indeed shot Jesse James.

James does find immortality in popular culture. There have been dozens of movies and several other songs written about him. But it is this ballad that remains famous. Leadbelly probably made the most famous recording of it, but it has been recorded by many others, including the Kingston Trio, Bob Seger, Country Joe McDonald, the New Lost City Ramblers, Bascom Lamar Lunsford, Ry Cooder, Burl Ives, Van Morrison, and Roy Rogers with the Sons of the Pioneers. Pete Seeger's version can be found on *A Link in the Chain* and several other collections.

Mrs. McGrath

Very popular with the Irish Republicans, particularly during the Easter Rising of 1916, "Mrs. McGrath" is much older, dating to the Napoleonic Wars. It is known from a Dublin broadside of 1815. (A broadside was a cheaply printed edition of a song's lyrics, usually with a well-known tune suggested as the melody, a practice that developed in the 1500s and lasted well into the nineteenth century.) The foreign war in which Tom McGrath loses his legs therefore would have been not World War I, as commonly supposed, but the Peninsular Campaign of 1808-1814, part of the Napoleonic Wars. It was part of a whole stream of anti-recruiting songs that encouraged young men to resist entering the British Army. "Mrs. McGrath" survives in part because of what Burl Ives called "the use of wit to paint a tragedy and make the telling bearable."

The song is sometimes known as "Mrs. McGraw"—in Irish, McGrath is pronounced McGraw.

"Mrs. McGrath" has mostly been recorded by Irish singers such as the Clancy Brothers, the Dubliners, and Tommy Makem, although some American folksingers, including Ives and Ed McCurdy as well as Pete Seeger, both solo and with the Weavers, have done versions of it. Seeger's solo version is on *A Link in the Chain* and *We Shall Overcome: The Complete Carnegie Hall Concert.*

Oh, Mary Don't You Weep

One of the most important Negro spirituals, predating the Civil War. The Mary of this song is not Mary the Blessed Virgin or Mary Magdalene, but Mary of Bethany who, with her sister Martha, pleaded with Jesus to raise their brother Lazarus from the dead, their grief so great that Jesus wept himself at the sight of it (John 11: 28-35). A very common version of the song begins: "Oh Mary, don't you weep / Oh Martha, don't you mourn.

But the bulk of this version of the song is drawn from the Old Testament book of Exodus, especially the terrifying reassurance of the chorus that "Pharoah's Army got drown-ded" (always sung this way). The last verse here reaches even further back, all the way to the story of Noah in Genesis, to God's covenant, expressed in the "rainbow sign" that he will never again use a flood to destroy mankind (Genesis 9: 9-17). That the alternative apocalypse is fire is pure but potent folklore. James Baldwin took this image from "O Mary Don't You Weep" as the title of his most enduring account of American racial relations, *The Fire Next Time.*

Baldwin did so appropriately because, from slavery times down through the Southern civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s, these images represent the struggle against bondage and the hope of liberation. "O Mary Don't You Weep" is the

first of three songs on this album that were sung during the civil rights movement as "freedom songs."

Many of the verses here, particularly the first three, also crop up in other spirituals. These are called "floating verses." Almost all such verses are freedom metaphors.

The most famous recording of "O Mary Don't You Weep" is undoubtedly by the Swan Silvertones; an interpolation by that group's leader, Claude Jeter, inspired Paul Simon to write "Bridge Over Troubled Water." The earliest recording was made by the Fisk Jubilee Singers in 1915, and it has been recorded by innumerable gospel quartets and soloists since then, notably the Golden Gate Quartet with Josh White, the Soul Stirrers with Sam Cooke, in addition to the Swans. But not only by them: Mississippi John Hurt, Nat "King" Cole, Burl Ives, Roger McGuinn, Aaron Neville, Bobby Darin and Jimmy Witherspoon have all recorded it. Pete Seeger's version of the song is on various records from the 1964 Newport Folk Festival; it is also contained on *American Favorite Ballads Vol. 1.*

John Henry

"John Henry" must be one of the most recorded of all American folk songs. It's also one of the songs that seems least likely to be based on a real incident but it was.

This true story of man versus machine combat occurred during the building of Eastern railroads in the late nineteenth century.

The purpose of the steel-drivers was not to pound spikes into the ground, securing the track. John Henry and men like him were driving holes in the faces of mountains into

which explosive charges would be placed, as the railroads blasted locomotive tunnels. In the 1880s, it became possible to do this work with steam drills and, like all automation, that meant throwing a lot of people out of work: Not only the driver but also his "shaker," the man who held the wedge or spike that the sledgehammer forced into the rock.

John Henry met this challenge by offering to race the drill, to see which of them could open a deeper hole in the mountain in a given period of time. The site of this race is not known for certain, but many believe it happened during the blasting of the tunnel through Big Bend Mountain in West Virginia. Or maybe some other Big Bend Mountain.

A fascinating case is made by John Garst of the University of Georgia that the events took place at the Coosa or Oak Mountain tunnel of the C&W Railroad (now the Norfolk Southern) in Alabama on September 20, 1887. (You can read it at www.ibiblio.org/john_henry/alabama.html .) According to this version, John Henry was a black man, born a slave, who came from Crystal Springs, Mississippi. He beat the steam drill by driving 27 and a half feet to its mere 21, then expired on the spot.

The details are less important than the outline, because this is a legend. Railroads were the most important instrument of America's westward expansion and there was virtually no place they didn't touch. Wherever railroads were built, a variety of hammer songs (the other notable one being "Take This Hammer") came along.

"John Henry" was the best of the batch because it carried the most complex set of messages. It is a protest song, sometimes against human expendability, sometimes against over-work (in one version, "This old hammer killed John Henry / But it won't kill me, it won't kill me"). It also a song about the love of work (one version says "John Henry kissed his hammer / Kissed his hammer with a groan"). It's the archetypal tale of man

versus machine, and at another level, a tale of the unity of men and their tools. Since John Henry is understood to be a black man—menial occupations on the railroad were racially distributed—it is a story about the strength and courage of the African-American people. It is a story about the callousness of the bosses and of the whole power structure that works men to death without blinking. In the version Pete and Bruce sing, it is a story about marital fidelity and female strength, too.

The first printed version of "John Henry" appeared in 1900, but by then, it had been circulating aurally for years. In 1924, Fiddlin' John Carson cut the first record of it; Ragtime Henry Thomas made the first version by a black artist in 1927. Since then, it has been recorded hundreds of times by dozens of well-known performers including Dock Boggs, Big Bill Broonzy, Odetta, the New Lost City Ramblers, Charlie Daniels, Arlo and Woody Guthrie, Ronnie Hawkins with the group now called The Band, John Lee Hooker, Leadbelly, Erskine Hawkins, Jerry Lee Lewis, Bill Monroe, Van Morrison, Paul Robeson, Blind James Campbell, and Porter Waggoner. Pete Seeger's version is on *The Essential Pete Seeger, American Favorite Ballads, Vol. 1* and *Clearwater Classics,* among others.

Erie Canal

Written in 1905 by Thomas S. Allen as "Low Bridge, Everybody Down," but now as much a folk song as if it had been written anonymously eighty years earlier when the canal was America's most important highway.

The Canal, constructed at huge expense from 1817 to 1825 to link New York City and the East with Buffalo and what was then the West, was America's first great national

thoroughfare. It remained important until the heyday of the railroad, and after being enlarged from 1903-1918, remains in operation today, although now used mostly for recreation.

Travel was slow, in the early years on barges drawn by horses, and there were also long layoffs that inspired a whole range of recreations, including frog racing, drinking contests and fist fights. An entire genre of canal songs also developed: songs about the canal, songs that were popular at the inns and bars en route, songs sung by canal workers, songs by and for travelers.

By 1905, when Thomas Allen wrote his song, canal traffic was motor-powered and the idea of a mule-drawn barge tapped into nostalgia. "Low Bridge" reflects some knowledge of how the canal actually operated though, because as it passed through cities, the Canal did pass under some very low spans. And fifteen miles would have been a realistic pace for those early days, too.

"Erie Canal" remains a song most commonly known from parties and in play groups but a few folksingers like Glenn Yarborough and the Weavers have recorded it. The Sons of the Pioneers did a western version. Dan Zanes recently made a version for one of his children's albums, with Suzanne Vega singing lead. Pete's version can be found on several discs, including *American Favorite Ballads, Volume 3.*

Jacob's Ladder

A Negro spiritual based on Genesis 28:11-19, best known as a Sunday School tune. It refers to the prophetic dream given to Jacob at Beth-El, while he is fleeing his brother, Esau, whom Jacob has cheated out of his inheritance. In the dream, angels are ascending

and descending a ladder to heaven. While they do this, God promises Jacob that his seed "shall be as the dust of the earth" and spread throughout the world.

Slaves related to the dream powerfully, because it ended with a covenant that promised liberation: "I will not leave thee, until I have done *that* which I have spoken to thee of." (This is consistent with the Midrash interpretation of the steps of the ladder as the exiles that the Jews would suffer.)

"Jacob's Ladder" is another song that is much more commonly sung than recorded. Arlo Guthrie, Jane Siberry and Greg Brown made contemporary versions. There are vintage roots recordings by, among others, Hylo Brown, E.C. Ball, and Paul Robeson and gospel renditions by the Staple Singers, Bernice Johnson Reagon, Doris Troy and the Clara Ward Singers. Pete Seeger's version can be found on *Singalong: Live at the Sanders Theater, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1980*.

My Oklahoma Home

Written with her brother Bill by Agnes "Sis" Cunningham, organizer for the Southern Tenant Farmers Union, member of the Almanac Singers, co-editor of *Broadside* magazine, and herself a Dust Bowl refugee.

"My Oklahoma Home" is one of the most neglected contemporary folk songs. Prior to this recording, only Pete Seeger (via a 1961 recording included on the 1996 anthology, *Link in the Chain)* recorded it commercially. According to the information reprinted in the notes to *The Best of Broadside: 1962-1988*, Bill wrote the lyrics around the time Pete recorded the song. Sis Cunningham published it in 1967, a few months

after her brother's death, in *Broadside* issue in #80, with a fascinating half-spoken opening that essentially places the whole song in quotation marks.

Sis and her brother, as well as Sis's husband, Gordon Freisen, experienced the Oklahoma Dust Bowl first-hand. Bill Cunningham led the Federal Writers' Project in the state during the 1930s. After the Cunningham family lost its farm in Watongo, Sis moved to Oklahoma City and married Friesen. Both openly belonged to and agitated for the Communist Party. In 1941, Sis Cunningham and Freisen were basically run out of town in a vicious Red scare. They joined up with the Almanac Singers in New York City and Sis sometimes toured with Woody Guthrie, who esteemed her song, "How Can You Keep on Movin' Unless You Migrate." But after World War II, the couple were blacklisted and became virtually destitute, often living on welfare, with their home in a dilapidated housing project. Sis worked for a time in the 1960s as Pete Seeger's secretary.

Broadside, whose founders were Seeger, songwriter Malvina Reynolds and Cunningham, was hardly a business. The editors focused on songs about political topics, material that the leading folk music journal, *Sing Out*, almost always ignored. *Broadside* became the place where many important singer-songwriters, most notably Bob Dylan and Phil Ochs, first published their material. *The Best of Broadside,* a 5 CD box set, is the best place to hear and read about the magazine. It contains Sis Cunningham's original recording of "My Oklahoma Home." Sis told her story in *Red Dust and Broadsides,* published in 1999.

Eyes on the Prize

A Holiness hymn also known as “Gospel Plow,” “Paul and Silas,” “Keep Your Hand on the Plow,” and “Hold On.” Although it was composed well before World War I, the freedom song version done here was written by civil rights activist Alice Wine in 1956. Wine graduated from one of the first voter education school on John’s Island, South Carolina, a project that helped initiate the Southern civil rights movement.

“Eyes on the Prize” proved specially meaningful for the freedom riders and the sit-in students, who faced long spells of being “bound in jail,” up to and including Mississippi’s notoriously brutal Parchman Prison farm.

The Biblical basis for the original lyric, “keep your hand on the plow,” is Luke 9:62 in which Jesus says, “No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God,” and 1 Corinthians 9:10 where St. Paul writes, “For our sakes, no doubt, this is written: that he that ploweth should plow in hope; and that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope.” “Eyes on the prize” derives from Paul, who twice describes the struggle for salvation as the fight for a prize—in the movement, the prize was freedom from the Jim Crow system of white supremacy.

Like “Oh Mary Don’t You Weep,” “Eyes on the Prize” uses many “floating verses,” that are found in other gospel songs and spirituals. Thus, the song ranges across the Bible, Old Testament and New. The unique part of the song’s lyric is its reference to Paul and Silas, who were imprisoned in Phillipi in 49 A.D. for casting a demon out of an enslaved fortune teller, thus robbing her owner. (Acts 16:11-40) As much as any song except perhaps the spiritual “O Freedom,” “Eyes on the Prize” seems in many ways custom built for the civil rights movement.

Recordings of "Eyes on the Prize" are not numerous but some are extraordinary, particularly the version Mahalia Jackson performed, as "Keep Your Hand on the Plow," with the Duke Ellington Orchestra at the Newport Jazz Festival in 1958. Bob Dylan sings it as "Gospel Plow" on his 1962 debut album but without any movement lyrics. Pete Seeger recorded it live with the SNCC Freedom Singers at his 1963 Carnegie Hall concert, released as *We Shall Overcome: The Complete Carnegie Hall Concert*, and also included on the *Link in the Chain* anthology.

Shenandoah

An American pioneer's homesick and lovelorn lament, from very early in the country's history, probably the first two decades of the 19th century. It probably started as a riverman's chantey (work song), and was then adapted both by other seamen and as a popular ballad.

This version is very trim; others have many more verses. Some recount the love of a young woman for an Indian chief named Shenandoah. This possibly descends from a tale about the love of Sally, a daughter of Shenandoah, who fell in love with a white Missouri trader. (There was an Oneida chief named Skenandoah who allegedly brought corn to Washington's troops at Valley Forge.)

The song's geography is confusing—the Shenandoah River runs through Virginia and West Virginia, about a thousand miles from the wide Missouri. Some folk song historians believe that the song originated on land in the Missouri or Mississippi River Valley, then was adopted by marine workers; others believe the route ran the other way and that the song's rolling rhythm perhaps indicates that it was sung first by French-

Canadian voyageurs. The website of Richard Thompson, who included it in his *1000 Years of Popular Music* album, proposes that the song refers to Shenandoah, Iowa, which is twenty miles east of the Missouri.

The song's height of popularity, around the 1830s, came at the apex of the clipper ship era. Sailors sang it while winding the capstan, the winch wheel that raised the heavy anchor. "Shenandoah" was also sung by the American cavalry, whose soldiers knew it as "The Wild Mizzourye."

"Shenandoah" has been recorded by, among many others, Bob Dylan, Paul Robeson, Harry Belafonte, the Statler Brothers, Daniel Lanois (on the *Sling Blade* soundtrack, with Emmylou Harris singing), Judy Garland, the Chieftains with Van Morrison, and Roger McGuinn. Instrumental versions of the melody abound, from Duane Eddy to The New York City Fire Department Emerald Society Pipes and Drums. Pete Seeger made a version for Folkways, available on *American Favorite Ballads, Vol. 3.*

Pay Me My Money Down

A much more rousing sea chantey. "Pay Me" originated as a protest song of the black stevedores in Georgia and South Carolina ports. Unscrupulous ship captains would often insist that their ships be loaded or unloaded upon arrival, then say they'd pay the workers the next day. That night, they'd slip out of the harbor, stiffing the stevedores. The song got picked up by other sailors, who created verses about daily life on the ship and the longing for shore leave. "Pay Me" circulated widely with a calypso rhythm, often described as a Bahamian or West Indian folk song, which is the mode in which the

Kingston Trio did their popular folk revival version in 1958. Dan Zanes recently had a children's hit with "Pay Me" in calypso style.

The song was collected by Lydia Parrish, wife of painter Maxfield Parrish, in her book, Slave Songs of the Georgia Sea Islands. Parrish obtained the copyright by publishing the song first (the habit of folklorists until recently), but she was not the writer, nor could the song have emerged from the slave era since it has black workers demanding to be paid. Parrish helped give a better sense of what the song might have initially sounded like by helping establish the great Georgia Sea Island Singers. (The Georgia Sea Islands, which are off the coast of South Carolina, were largely populated by escaped slaves, and the music and other culture of the area is especially important because it has many more African retentions than anything on the U.S. mainland.)

Pete Seeger recorded "Pay Me My Money Down" with the Weavers; it's available on *The Weavers at Carnegie Hall* and the Weavers' box set, *Wasn't That a Time!*

We Shall Overcome

The most important political protest song of all-time, sung around the world wherever people fight for justice and equality. It was often sung as the final song at mass meetings during the civil rights movement. It is said that every meeting of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), the most militant group in the Southern movement, ended with "We Shall Overcome," whether the meeting was among three or three hundred. It defined purpose; it spoke to fears; it brought hope; and it invoked the spirit of what the Movement called, and SNCC lived, "the beloved community." So great was the song's importance, journalist Pat Watters believed, that "in nearly every place where the

song was heard in those years when it was the anthem of the movement, people… believed it originated there."

"We Shall Overcome" is probably a merger of Charles Tindley's "I'll Overcome Someday" and an older hymn called "I'll Be All Right." Tindley was the most prolific and beloved writer of African American religious music, author of, among others, "Stand By Me," "We'll Understand It Better By and By" (which contains the line "We will tell a story of how we overcome"), and "The Storm is Passing Over." He based "I'll Overcome Someday" on Galatians 6:9, "And let us not be weary in well doing; for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not." He certainly took the tune from "I'll Be All Right," which is still commonly sung in the Georgia Sea Islands and was in the repertoire of gospel-blues singer Rev. Gary Davis and of modern blues-folk singer Taj Mahal, both South Carolinians.

The song's political history passes through the Southern Tenant Farmers' Union in Arkansas, where it was adapated by Rev. Claude Williams, grandfather of Lucinda Williams, according to Lee Hays of the Weavers, who worked with Williams and the STFU. From there it passed on to the Highlander Folk School in Tennessee, whose music leader, Zilphia Horton, had also been involved with Claude Williams.

To this point, "I Will Overcome" was an uptempo, rhythmic song, often accompanied by handclaps on the backbeat. The striking workers at a cigar warehouse in Charleston, South Carolina sang it on strike in 1945-46. The workers carried picket signs, so they didn't clap. One of them, Lucille Simmons, adapted the tune to the much slower "long meter" or Dr. Watts style, with eight syllables to each line. "They called it surge singing. It's like the waves of the ocean.," Lee Hays told Pete Seeger.

Simmons went to Highlander and taught her union's version there. Horton taught it in this style to Pete Seeger, who changed "Will" to "Shall"—he's not sure why. Pete taught it to several people. The most important were Frank Hamilton, who went on to found Chicago's Old Town School of Folk Music, and Guy Carawan, the true Johnny Appleseed of movement folk song who became the music leader at Highlander after Horton died and spent much of the movement period traveling from city to city, spreading songs and especially, teaching people "Eyes on the Prize" and "We Shall Overcome."

"We Shall Overcome" is what Pete Seeger calls a "portfolio" song—it easily accommodates new verses, including ones made up on the spot. The great verse, "We are not afraid" was made up spontaneously during a mid-'50s police/Ku Klux Klan raid on Highlander by 14 year old Jamilla Jones, who was there from the Montgomery, Alabama movement. Other verses came and went during the various localized freedom movements that made up the overall civil rights movements. This is one of the main reasons why the song travels so well to other kinds of movements. It was widely sung during the South African movement to end apartheid.

The song is now credited, for publishing purposes, to Horton, Carawan, Seeger and Hamilton. This is obviously inaccurate but the credit is particularly important for two reasons: Harold Leventhal, the folk music sage who managed the Weavers and Seeger, knew the copyright would be claimed by some music industry sharpie if the movement didn't step in. Also, the royalties, initially assigned to SNCC, have, since that group's demise, gone to the Highlander Center where they are distributed in small grants for cultural expression to African-American groups working in the South.

Pete Seeger's best recording of this song is from the 1963 Carnegie Hall Concert, where he performed it with the SNCC Freedom Singers, led by the now-legendary Bernie Johnson Reagon. It is the title track of *We Shall Overcome: The Complete Carnegie Hall Concert.*

Froggie Went a-Courtin'

The most ancient tune here. The earliest version we've seen mentioned came from Scottish shepherds in a book published in 1549. David Highland collected lyrics to 170 verses at http://home.earthlink.net/~highying/froggy/froggy.html. (This site lists only a verse with bread and cheese, not a mention of cornbread, so perhaps Pete created verse 171.) Highland's site is hilarious and entirely serious at the same time.

"Froggie" sometimes goes under assumed names: On *The Anthology of American Folk Music,* it is featured in a version by Chubby Parker from 1928 under the title, "King Kong Kitchie Kitchie Ki-Me-O." (Doc Watson also sings this version, although he calls his "Froggie." Nick Cave calls his "King Kong Kitchee Kitchee Ki-Mi-O.") And it pops up in the damnedest places: A Tom and Jerry cartoon, for instance. But then, as a contributor to the folk music discussion group, Mudcat Café (www.mudcat.org) wrote, "It is a perfect children's song. It has unnatural sex, disgusting food and a bloody finale." (Bruce has generously omitted the bloody finale and the weird stuff about furry tadpoles resulting from the interspecies marriage.)

Bob Dylan recorded "Froggie." There's an absurdist rehearsal take on Elvis's *Walk a Mile in My Shoes: The Essential '70s Masters*. It's also been done by Hylo Brown, Woody Guthrie with Sonny Terry and Cisco Houston, Jim Nollman with 300

turkeys, Roy Rogers and the Sons of the Pioneers, Spider John Koerner, Tex Ritter, Jean Ritchie, Burl Ives and the Mormon Tabernacle Choir (who of course do the "Kemo-Kimo" version).

Pete Seeger has done three different versions of "Froggie." They are on *American Folk Songs for Children; American Folk, Game and Activity Songs for Children; Birds, Beasts, Bugs and Fishes, Little and Big; American Favorite Ballads, Volume 2,* and *Stories and Songs for Children.*

Bonus tracks:

Buffalo Gals

"Buffalo Gals" sounds like it's a song of the wild west but it is not. It's a song about Buffalo in the days of the Erie Canal, the Buffalo Gals being the hookers parading on Canal Street, which was lined with brothels (and, since it was the end of the Canal line, lavish corporate headquarters of rail and shipping companies).

The tune, originally known as "Lubly Fan," and attributed to one of the first black-faced minstrels, Cool White (John White), clearly was not written by White. As "Midnight Serenade," some of the same versions and the tune appeared in print in 1839. It has been traced to an English song, "Pray, Pretty Miss," and to an older German music hall song, "Im Grunewald, im Grunewald ist Holzauktion." The "Buffalo Gals" lyric came about when the tune was used for a canal song, and some speculate that the words became "New York Gals," "Rochester Gals," or whatever town the canalmen happened to be passing through. In parts of Virginia and West Virginia, it's called "Round Town

Gals." There was also an early hillbilly version called "Alabama Gals." Alan and John Lomax found a version called "As I Walked Down on Broadway."

White copyrighted the song in 1844. Exactly a century later, it became a hit as "Dance with the Dolly." Two years later, Jimmy Stewart and Donna Reed sang it while prancing down the street in *It's a Wonderful Life.*

Almost forty years later, Sex Pistols impresario Malcolm McLaren and the World's Famous Supreme Team did a very early hip-hop version whose video featuring kids from the Bronx helped initiate the break-dancing craze of 1982.

Among those who've recorded "Buffalo Gals" are Roy Acuff, Rosemary Clooney and Bing Crosby (as a duet), Woody Guthrie, Arlo Guthrie, Oscar Brand and Eliza Gilkyson. Pete Seeger's rendition is on *American Favorite Ballads* (not to be confused with *American Favorite Ballads Vol. 1, 2* or *3*.)

How Can I Keep from Singing?

A hymn perhaps sung in slavery days by abolitionist Quakers. It is more appropriately attributed to Robert Lowry, a Pennsylvania Baptist minister of the mid-nineteenth century. Lowry, who also wrote the hymn "Shall We Gather at the River," first published "How Can I Keep from Singing?" in 1869 in the collection, *Bright Jewels for the Sunday School.* (Given the musical priorities of the day, it is not unlikely that the song had been sung during the Civil War, long before it happened to be published.)

Pete Seeger learned the song from North Carolinian Doris Plenn, whose family had long sung it; that version was published in *Sing Out* in 1957. After that, he sang it

frequently enough and so stirringly that it qualifies as one of his statements of purpose. David King Dunaway used it as the title of his 1990 Seeger biography.

Enya sang a version (mistakenly identified as an old Shaker hymn) on her *Shepherd Moons.* Others who have recorded it include Eva Cassidy, Judy Collins, Noel Paul Stookey, John McCutheon, Laurel Masse, Peter Paul and Mary, and Glenn Yarbrough. Pete can be heard singing "How Can I Keep from Singing?" on *Precious Friend,* his 1982 album with Arlo Guthrie, and on his 1996 album, *Pete*.

These notes were written in memory of my friend and mentor, Harold Leventhal.

–Dave Marsh

Many thanks to Matt Orel, who supplemented my efforts with considerable additional research.

Additional Notes for the "American Land" edition

American Land

Springsteen wrote "American Land" and performed it in New York and New Jersey. The song was inspired by "He Lies in the American Land," a poem by a Slovakian immigrant steelworker that Pete Seeger later translated and set to music.

How Can A Poor Man Stand Such Times and Live

About "How Can A Poor Man Stand Such Times and Live," Bruce Springsteen said, "This song was written by Blind Alfred Reed and recorded a month after the crash of '29 that heralded the Great Depression. I first heard it on Ry Cooder's self-titled debut album

(1970). To his arrangement we owe a debt. I kept the 'doctor' first verse by Reed then wrote three others with a mind to the great trials the people of New Orleans have faced this year

Bring 'Em Home

Penned by Pete Seeger during the Vietnam War, "Bring 'Em Home" quickly acquired anthemic power in the anti-war movement. Springsteen first recorded the song in January 2006 and added a final lead vocal during his European tour, at a studio in Oslo, Norway. His poignant rendition, performed frequently on the Seeger Sessions tour, adds several new verses and connects the song to a much earlier topical song, "When Johnny Comes Marching Home." "Bring 'Em Home" was written in 1965 and originally released on Seeger's 1971 Columbia album, 'Young vs. Old.'