

# Protobilly

THE MINSTREL AND TIN PAN ALLEY DNA  
OF Country Music



New-Sensational Different  
1892-2017  
3CD 81 TRACKS

**ZIP COON.**

A  
**FAMOUS COMIC SONG,**

as Sung by

**ALL THE CELEBRATED COMIC SINGERS,**

with

**WONDERFUL APPLAUSE,**

Composed and Arranged  
For the

**PIANO FORTE.**

New York: Published



**PROTOBILLY:  
The Minstrel & Tin Pan Alley DNA  
of Country Music 1892-2017**

~  
Produced by Henry H. Sapoznik,  
Dick Spottswood and David Giovannoni

Notes by Henry H. Sapoznik,  
Dick Spottswood and Dom Flemons

## THE PROVENANCE OF PROTOBILLY

PROTOBILLY's genesis lies with *Country Music Sources* (aka CMS, 2002), the late Gus Meade's unique combined bibliography-discography, that documents old country songs with origins in minstrelsy, vaudeville, Tin Pan Alley, ballads, ancient hymnals, deep-south blues, and other venerable popular music genres. Combining printed sources with early and recent recordings of individual songs summarizes current knowledge of each one.

With the family's permission, I took over Gus's work following his untimely death in 1991. Gus & Mary's son Doug added computer-based solutions to numerous problems and he patiently tutored me in computer basics, while creating automatic pagination, and preparing comprehensive artist and title indexes for the completed work. Originally Gus sought to highlight country-style performances, with selected versions from other music areas in abbreviated annotations. I've since taken the liberty of adding music from the worlds of jazz, blues, popular and, (of course) country, along with noting more recent records that reveal a song's broader history and point to further country music sources, an approach I brought to this reissue.

This anthology lets us hear how performance practices and old songs in various styles have evolved since 1877, when recorded sound first became storable and retrievable. Along with CMS, Hank & I have taken cues and inspiration from Norm Cohen's 1981 LP, *Minstrels and Tunesmiths*, and from Hank's Grammy nominated Charlie Poole anthology *You Ain't Talkin' to Me* (2005). Both pioneered in identifying and presenting pre-country performances of country songs. Thanks to David Giovannoni and Doug Benson's amazing work in sound restoration, there have been major advances in recovering realistic performances from early cylinders and discs. Hank and I are seriously grateful for their contributions, and we know you'll be, too.

Dick Spottswood

March 23, 2019



May Irwin as  
"The Bully"

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**MAY IRWIN'S GREAT COON HIT.**  
*A RAGTIME DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE.*

**I DON'T CARE  
TO BE  
YOUR LADY FRIEND  
NO MORE**

Words by  
**WILL D. COBB.**  
Music by  
**GUS EDWARDS.**  
Also Writers of  
"My Own Girl"  
You Are the Only Girl I'll Ever Care About  
Across the Hills to Georgia,  
Etc. Etc.

As Sung  
With  
GREAT SUCCESS  
IN  
HER NEW FARCE  
"SISTER MARY"  
BY  
GLENN MAC DONOUGH.

**MAY IRWIN.**

**THE ROGERS BROS. PUBLISHED BY**  
BROADWAY THEATRE MUSIC PUBLISHING CO.  
(B'way & 41<sup>st</sup> St.) NEW YORK.

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GRAYS JEWELRY & MUSIC CO.

## WELCOME TO THE TIME WARP

**PROTOBILLY:** The Minstrel and Tin Pan Alley DNA of Country Music introduces the listener to the birth of American popular music. The album presents a side by side comparison of songs written for the popular stage of the 1890s as recorded by performers of both the cylinder era (1890s-1920s) and the pre- and post-World War II 78 shellac era (1920s-1950s). The songs are all standards in the country & western, folk, bluegrass, old-time, Cajun, blues and jazz repertoires and many are still being performed today on stages across the world.

Being the center of popular music at the time, Tin Pan Alley, the row of song publishing offices in New York City, was at the peak of its commercial success producing wave after wave of talented songwriters. Songwriters partnered with publishers who pushed their songs to the big stars of Broadway. These songwriters and performers, black and white, performed in the streets, theaters, music halls, medicine shows and circuses of a budding America reimagining the American Dream through song. The songs reflected and exaggerated the social climate of the world at that time. Like the internet memes of the digital era, Tin Pan Alley was not limited to unapologetically featuring songs that included ethnic humor lampooning working class people whether they be Irish, Italian, Jewish, German, African-American or Asian-American for the amusement of a paying audience. But it would be blackface minstrelsy, the songs that lampooned the African-American experience, that would reach worldwide fame much to the chagrin of modern culture.

Sound recordings were introduced to the entertainment field in the 1890s, and by the turn-of-the-century began to develop on a parallel path with Tin Pan Alley. The wax



cylinder was first presented to the public in small coin-operated players along the boardwalk at Coney Island, and quickly became a national phenomenon. Within a few decades, the record companies began to develop Artist & Repertoire (A&R) departments focused solely on finding the right artist and the right song to make hit records. This allowed companies to record big name stars as a means of selling phonograph machine and the flat 78-RPM records they played.

The birth of the wind-up Victrola allowed the listener for the first time to enjoy a private concert from a musician far removed from their immediate environment. As a result, an A&R man like Ralph S. Peer, learned the power of community representation, having recently built a successful “Race” records catalog for Okeh Records which was marketed to Southern African-American audiences in 1920. Assuming the same formula would work for Southern working-class whites, he created the “Hillbilly” catalog and it proved to be a full-blown success as well. And while the method proved to be a more effective way to market music to a specific niche audience, it regrettably forced the music recorded by each of the artists to be relegated into racially designated genres.

As the United States began to enter into the later part of the 20th century, the “Race Records” and “Hillbilly Records” began to fade to make way for new forms of expression as the country progressed into the Post World War II era. However, as styles changed, the songs in many instances remained the same.

With the context provided, I will point out a few ideas for listening to this material.

Listen to the ways the sheet music arrangements are translated into downhome southern anthems. Many times, the changes are simply translations of the sheet music orchestration into folk styles and instrumentation. Another change happens through the modification of lyrics, especially songs that use offensive language or racist imagery. This is done by both black and white musicians. Black songsters pull songs of black buffoonery inside out and create humorous toasts of black ingenuity and excellency. Rural hillbilly singers take Broadway harmonies and give them “the high lonesome sound” of the Southern Mountains. Yet another translation comes from the use of the melody of the chorus to create foot-stompin’ square dance music completely removing all other parts of the song. While these are a few ways to approach listening to the material, this set captures some of the greatest performances of American music.

It is with great appreciation for the work of Hank Sapoznik and Dick Spottswood that we now pull back the curtain and present the reverberations of American song through the ages as it was and it continues to evolve into the present day.

Welcome to the Time Warp!

Dom Flemons  
The American Songster  
February 3, 2019

## MUSIC FROM TIN PAN VALLEY

From the 1890s on, record labels assiduously recorded every genre, every style and every ethnicity but one: vernacular southern black or white music. This puzzling indifference lasted until 1923 thanks to a curious parade of hillbilly musicians turning up uninvited at New York studios of Columbia and Victor demanding to be recorded. And they were. And what the record companies found were “there was gold in them thar hillbillies.”

What the discs revealed, was decades of aggressive one-way marketing of urban northern music to rural southern audiences. The music, written by big city composers for their urban/urbane northern audiences, were nonetheless seamlessly assimilated into the rural southern song bag alongside the more familiar hand-me-down hoary ballads and bespoke fiddle tunes.

This runs counter to the popular image of the flinty and isolated mountaineer armed with a muzzle loader rifle and resistant to change, southern music culture was in fact, curious and open to both repertoire and instrumentation (ukulele, steel guitar, tenor guitar, etc.) and easily balanced the seemingly disparate genres.

Many early hillbilly recording pioneers (Skillet Lickers, Uncle Dave Macon, Fiddlin’ John Carson, the Carter Family, etc.) dipped deeply into urban popular music rendering it with an unmistakable lived-in southern essence – a startling contrast to how contemporary country music now negotiates pop music. Even once popular urban banjo styles such as the minstrel playing of Charles A. Asbury – the only aspect of minstrelsy which reflected anything of the black Afro-Caribbean and American experience – and the subsequent





guitar inspired classic fingerstyle mastered by Harry C. Browne which had both fallen into disuse up north, had their country cousins as “frailing” in the hands of Grandpa Jones and Leslie Keith while the classic three finger style would find new interpreters in Mack Woolbright and Uncle Dave Macon en route to the more modern bluegrass banjo and the stylings of Don Reno and Eddie Adcock.

Despite the rise in the 1930s of grassroots southern composers and Tin Pan Alley inspired music publishers like Southern Music, the minstrel/Tin Pan Alley songbook would continue to find a place in all rural music genres.

It was not just in the country that nineteenth century popular music had a modern 20th century audience. The 1930s Communist Party used traditional American music as an organizing tool for its “Popular Front” with the resultant folk music movement an unexpected phenomenon in the 50s and 60s.

Traditional inspired music remained on the front lines of progressive banjoist/activist Pete Seeger who singlehandedly wholly recontextualized the banjo from a totemic symbol of minstrelsy’s Jim Crow to a front line symbol against the policies of Jim Crow.

However, it would be Seeger’s half-brother Mike and John Cohen, and others who forged an offshoot of the folk music pantheon with their interest in regional southern music. With the formation of The New Lost City Ramblers and the 1952 six-disc Folkways reissue *The Anthology of American Folk Music* by art eccentric Harry Smith a new window into American music was opened. The unexpected freshness and undimmed magnetism

of the old hillbilly and blues records were an *appel aux armes* to a new generation of “old time” and blues performers.

The old records not only revealed irresistible music, but for its new interpreters there was a quandary faced with the use of now acrid black terminology. Ubiquitous deracinating of some tune titles and song lyrics revealed that, detached from the texts, the music itself was still powerful and compelling and validated the enthusiasm which greeted both its inception and revival.

The music of these old records continues to hold a powerful attraction for successive generations and and players like Frank Corso and Dom Flemons and Guy Davis and many others to create an unbroken link from today to the founding of a free-standing American culture – a culture, which as the recordings on this anthology powerfully demonstrate, show us at both our worst and our best.

Henry H. Sapochnik  
21 June, 2019

**SINGING “ALABAMA BOUND,” HALF-CRAZED  
SLAYER HOLDS 100 POLICE AT BAY 7  
HOURS; CAPTURED IN GUN BATTLE**

*The Chicago Defender,*  
February 19, 1921

## CASEY JONES (1909)

(words: T. Lawrence Seibert, music: Eddie Newton)

John Luther Jones of Cayce, Tennessee, was an engineer on the Illinois Central Railroad who died on April 30, 1900 in Vaughan, Mississippi, when his train hit another one whose stalled rear end hadn't made it all the way onto a siding. He was eulogized in a song whose origins are obscure, though it's been attributed to black roundhouse worker, Wallace (Wash) Saunders.

This is supported in a September 10, 1911 *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* article where California composers T. Lawrence Seibert and Eddie Newton stated, "We wrote Casey Jones... from an old negro darky (sic) named Wallace Saunders working in a roundhouse and who started the 'Casey Jones' song."

Seibert and Newton's main contribution to the piece seems to be shifting the action from the Illinois Central/Mississippi Delta to the Transcontinental Divide railroad lines something more familiar to its intended California audiences. That, and the song's infectious, irresistible chorus.

### 1. CASEY JONES, Billy Murray Edison Blue Amberol 450 (cylinder) 1910

One-time minstrel Murray (1877-1954) was a prolific recording artist thanks to his pinpoint articulation and flawless pitch. He and the American Quartet recorded "Casey Jones" three times for Victor which kept it in their catalog through 1928.

### 2. CASEY JONES, Fiddlin' John Carson Okeh 40038 S-72014-B, November 7-8, 1923

Fiddlin' John Carson (1868-1949), noted Georgia performer and pioneering hillbilly recording artist combined the Billy Murray version with older verses and perhaps some of his own construction.





### 3. SOUTHERN CASEY JONES, Jesse James Decca 7213 (90761-A), June 3, 1936

Jesse James (thought to have been from Cincinnati) owed something to Furry Lewis's idiosyncratic "Kassie Jones" (1928), adding an older verse which hearkens back to railroad baron Jay Gould purposely eliminating "the blinds" a part of the train undercarriage which allowed hobos to ride safely.

## STEAMBOAT BILL (1910)

(words: Ren Shields, music: Leighton Brothers)

Vaudeville performers the Leighton Brothers popularized "Casey Jones" on stage and quickly penned a steamboat sequel about a lethal attempt to beat a speed record set on the Mississippi River by the Robert E. Lee in 1870. Co-writer Shields went on to pen several songs which crossed over in the hillbilly repertoire including "Come Take A Trip In My Airship," and, with the Leightons, "Frankie and Johnny, or You'll Miss Me In the Days To Come."

### 4. STEAMBOAT BILL, Arthur Collins U-S Everlasting 379-1 (cylinder), (1911)

Prolific baritone Arthur Collins is perhaps best known for his duets with Byron G. Harlan and for his 1905 black dialect song "The Preacher and the Bear."

### 5. CASEY BILL (Casey and Bill) Earl McDonald's Original Louisville Jug Band Columbia 14371-D (W143805-2), March 30, 1927

Invoking Jeffersonville, Indiana, across the Ohio River from Louisville, suggests a local origin for Earl McDonald's 1928 tongue-in-cheek encounter between Casey and Bill.

### 6. STEAMBOAT BILL BOOGIE, Delmore Brothers

King 1023 (K 3269), October 22, 1951

The Delmores' 1946 hit "Freight Train Boogie," inspired "Steamboat Bill Boogie" whose electric guitar shuffle beat makes the old Whippoorwill of the Leighton-Shields classic more speedboat than steamboat.

## RED WING (1907)

(words: Thurland Chattaway, music: Kerry Mills)

Frederick Allen ("Kerry") Mills (1869-1948) was a cornerstone composer for cakewalking America with dance tunes "At A Georgia Camp Meeting" (1897) and "Whistling Rufus" (1899), "Meet Me in St. Louis" (1904) and "When the Bees Are in the Hive" (1905) (B.12,13)

### 7. RED WING, Frank C. Stanley & Henry Burr Columbia 33163-2 (cylinder), 1907

Frank C. Stanley and Henry Burr were two of the most active singers in the early years of the phonograph. Stanley (1868-1910) was also a noted classic style banjoist who, it was reported, that in the delirium of a fatal case of pneumonia, he sang. Henry Burr (1882-1941) was in demand on records throughout the acoustic era and on WLS radio in Chicago in the 1930s.

### 8. RED WING, Doc and Cy Williams and the Border Riders

Wheeling DW 1008, 1949

Doc Williams' (1914-2011) and the Border Riders specialized in gentle songs of home and hearth, and they headlined the cast on WWVA's World's Original Jamboree from the 1930s through the 1990s. Their Wheeling label featured their own music exclusively, and they never recorded for anyone else. The success of "Red Wing" in 1907 created a vogue for western and Native American romantic songs. Its follow-ups included "Come Be My Rainbow" (1908), "Silver Bell" (1910), and "Snow Deer" (1913), all featured in later years by Doc Williams.



## BREAK THE NEWS TO MOTHER (1897)

(words and music: Charles K. Harris)

Charles K. Harris (1867-1930) composer of "After the Ball" self-published "Break the News to Mother" as a war song with lines like "the boys in blue" and Civil War scenes on the sheet music cover, only a few short months before the U.S. declared war on Spain on April 25, 1898, assuring its success. Harris is the world's heavyweight champion of Tin Pan Alley composers whose work has been covered by country performers, with over thirty titles on more than 150 recordings by Bill Boyd, Charlie Poole, the Carter Family, Kirk McGee, and more.

### 9. JUST BREAK THE NEWS TO MOTHER, George J. Gaskin Berliner 065, April 5, 1899

Born in Ireland, George Jefferson Gaskin (1863-1920) came to the US in 1880 and sang for records starting in 1891. According to Jim Walsh (*Hobbies*, October 1944), Gaskin chewed tobacco during recording sessions, and was known to expertly spit the juice into the throat of the horn. In 1898, *The Phonoscope* noted that Gaskin recorded "Just Break the News to Mother" thirty-six times.

### 10. TAKE THE NEWS TO MOTHER, Louvin Brothers

Capitol T769 (15220), May 3, 1956

The Louvin Brothers version had already gone through changes (Harris's line "the boys in blue" had long been changed to the "boys in France") when it was recorded in 1956, three years after a truce was declared in the Korean War, when memories of personal loss were still fresh.

## IN THE SHADOW OF THE PINES (1895)

(words: Hattie Lummis, music: G.O. Long)



The lyrics are by Pittsburg, Kansas teacher Luvena Buchanan (1874-1954) writing as “Hattie Lummis.” Luvena Buchanan was approached by the Wabash Railroad, seeking to attract women passengers through publicity in the popular *Godey Lady’s Book*. For \$1,000 (nearly \$30,000 today) Buchanan agreed to write a poem with the name “Wabash” as an acrostic in the first verse, as part of a short story called “A Feminine Device” published in June, 1895:

*We wandered in the shadow of the pines my love and I  
As the wind was blowing freshly from the sea;  
But a sudden fitful darkness stole across the summer sky  
And a shadow came between my love and me  
Some hasty words were spoken and then almost unawares  
Hasty answers to unthinking answers led.*

When sheet music sales surpassed 100,000 in 1897, reporters sought out “Hattie Loomis” only to find Luvena Buchanan relentlessly unwilling to acknowledge or discuss her song. Under the name Luvena Buchanan Vysekai, she would go on to become a noted West Coast portrait painter and muralist.

### **11. IN THE SHADOW OF THE PINES, Royal Fish & Vernon Archibald**

Edison Blue Amberol 2073, (cylinder) 1913

Church singer Royal Fish, like Vernon Archibald, recorded sentimental, religious and sentimental songs for a number of labels including Edison, Columbia, Victor and Zon-O-Phone during the acoustic era.

### **12. IN THE SHADOW OF THE PINE, Kelly Harrell**

Victor 20657, (BVE 38236-2), February 23, 1927

Kelly Harrell (1889-1942) was one of a group of Virginia/North Carolina mill worker/musicians, whose 1923-25 recordings helped establish the sound of early hillbilly 78s. Harrell reconfigures “In the Shadow of the Pines” with a new melody, new second and third verses and ending with a dramatic free meter passage theatrically underscoring the song’s tone.

## **ARE YOU FROM DIXIE? (‘CAUSE I’M FROM DIXIE, TOO!) (1915)**

(words: Jack Yellen, music: George L. Cobb)

Dan Emmett’s 1860 mega-hit “I Wish I Was in Dixie’s Land” not only created a *prêt-à-porter* national anthem for the imminently seceding south, but also a rock solid “Dixie” franchise in popular music from the 1870s (“I’ll Be Gwine Back to Dixie,” C.15, 16) into the 1920s. The prolific Jack Yellen (1892-1991) wrote lyrics to popular songs from the 1910s to the 1960s. His other notable collaboration with George L. Cobb (1886-1942) was “Alabama Jubilee,” also from 1915.

### **13. ARE YOU FROM DIXIE?, Billy Murray & Irving Kaufman**

Victor 17942 (B16901-2), December 15, 1915

Kaufman’s recorded output beginning in 1914 rivalled or even exceeded most artists from the acoustic era with some 1,000 titles.

### **14. ARE YOU FROM DIXIE, Grandpa Jones** King 847 (K2796), December, 1947

Grandpa Jones (b. Louis Marshal Jones 1913-1998), was an acolyte of Uncle Dave Macon, and kept his comic banjo act prominent in country music entertainment over the years as a member of the Grand Ole Opry and on television’s Hee Haw.

## HOME, SWEET HOME (1823)

(words: John Howard Payne; music: Sir Henry Bishop)

What may be the earliest song in this collection “Home, Sweet Home” is from the 1823 opera “Clari (or, The Maid of Milan”) which instantaneously eclipsed the opera becoming a cornerstone of western concert repertoire for generations. For the co-composers it would be their best known composition.

**15. HOME, SWEET HOME, Eleanora de Cisneros** Edison Blue Amberol 28145 (cylinder), 1913

Cisneros (1878-1934) full tilt performance affords the listener a powerful idea of what the composers had in mind for their opera. For the American born de Cisneros this would be her only English language recording.

**16. HOME, SWEET HOME, Don Reno** King 1474 (K 3965), April 25, 1955

At the time, a catchy version by banjoist Allen Shelton was getting a lot of regional airplay so Don Reno (1926-1984) contacted King Records to allow him to do a quick cover while Charlotte radio station WBT was off the air at night. With the aid of tape overdubbing – a technique guitarist Les Paul first perfected less than a decade before – Don Reno recorded himself on banjo, guitar, bass, snare drum, and three vocal parts. The record was soon in stores.

## THE PARTY THAT WROTE “HOME, SWEET HOME” NEVER WAS A MARRIED MAN (1908)

(words and music: Fleta Jan Brown)

Fleta Jan Brown (1883-1938) was one of the most prolific women ragtime-era composers who, alone, and with her husband Herbert Spencer, wrote some 100 songs between 1905 and 1927.

**17. THE PARTY THAT WROTE “HOME, SWEET HOME” NEVER WAS A MARRIED MAN, Ed Morton** Victor 5513 16758 (B 6265-1), June 11, 1908

Despite not being composed as a coon song it was marketed and performed as one by ex-Philadelphia policeman turned “Coon Shouter” Ed Morton (1870-1938) whose live performing style is accurately captured in this recording.

**18. THE MAN WHO WROTE HOME SWEET HOME NEVER WAS A MARRIED MAN, Charlie Parker & Mack Woolbright**

Columbia 15236-D (W 145194-1), November 10, 1927

George “Mack” Woolbright was a blind banjo entertainer and neighbor of Earl Scruggs’ family in Shelby, North Carolina. Earl was around six when he heard Mack play “Home, Sweet Home” in the key of C (“The G chord he played in this number was one of the most thrilling sounds I had ever heard.”) Scruggs would record it in 1961.

## I’M ALABAMA BOUND

(words and music: Robert Hoffman, 1909-10)

In 1938, Jelly Roll Morton told Alan Lomax that, “when I hit Mobile in 1905, I wrote “Alabama Bound,” and all my friends considered it very good.” Jelly’s claim notwithstanding, it’s almost certainly traditional and older, though he could well have customized or re-arranged it. Though he copyrighted it as “Don’t You Leave Me Here” in 1939,” the song had already been performed under that title. under that title.



**19. I'M ALABAMA BOUND, Prince's Orchestra** Columbia A901 (4552-2) 1910

Starting at Columbia in 1900, conductor/composer Charles Prince led a tight-as-a-drum orchestra on over 700 recordings for nearly 25 years creating a characteristic sound on a par with John Phillip Sousa.

**20. I'M ALABAMA BOUND, Charlie Jackson**

Paramount 12289 (2144-2) c. May 1925

Papa Charlie Jackson (1887-1938) a banjo playing songster, was one of the first self-accompanying black musicians to make records from 1924-1934, mainly on the Paramount label. An unrelated 1924 hit song, "Alabamy Bound," was the likely inspiration for Charlie Jackson's record "I'm Alabama Bound," made a few months later and which was published in the *Paramount Book of Blues* the company's songbook. Paramount producer J. Mayo Williams copyrighted and published the song for the company, Chicago Music.

## UNDER THE DOUBLE EAGLE

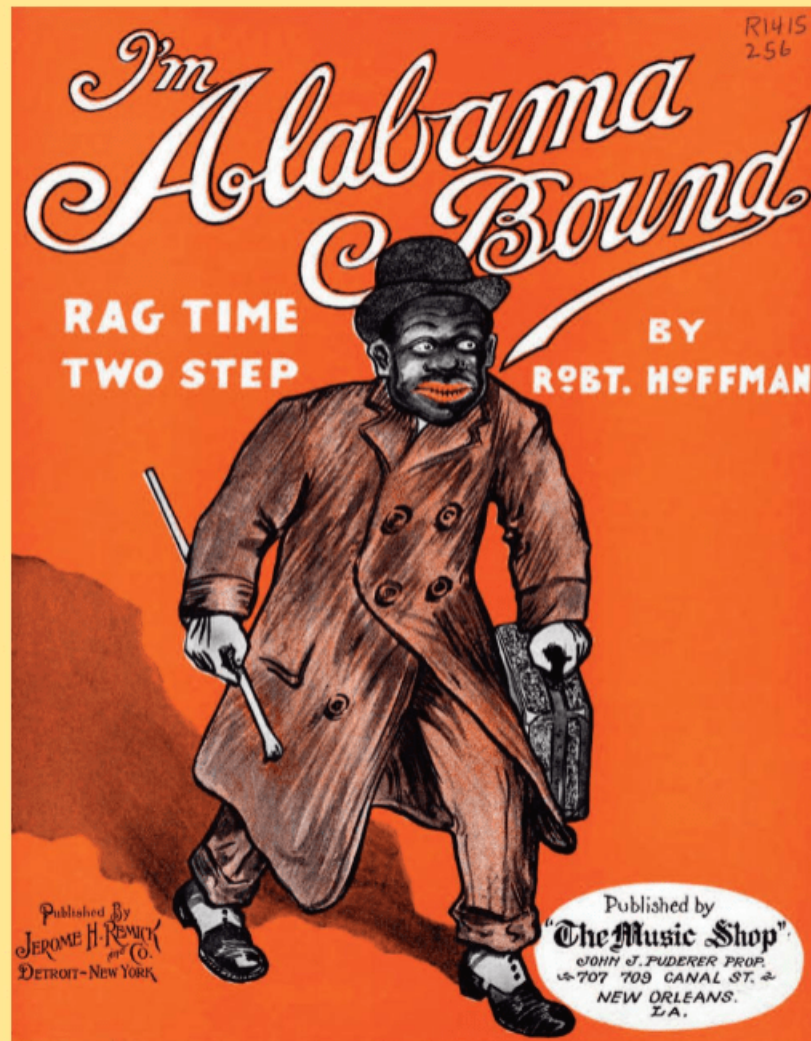
Josef Franz Wagner (op. 159), c. 1891

Josef Franz Wagner (1856-1908) sometimes known as the "Austrian March King" published "Unter dem Doppeladler" in Vienna around 1891 where it enjoyed instantaneous world-wide success, even reportedly being the favorite march of John Phillip Sousa.

**21. UNTER DEM DOPPELADLER, Olbrig's Zither Trio**

Victor V-6016, (BVE 48704-1) December 9, 1928,

Olbrig's Zither Trio recorded it for Victor's German catalog perhaps even using the zither arrangement from the 1891 Viennese sheet.





## 22. UNDER THE DOUBLE EAGLE, Bill Boyd's Cowboy Ramblers

Bluebird B-5945 (BVE 87727-1) January 27, 1935

Bill Boyd's 1935 version featured his flat-picked guitar lead and Art Davis's fiddle. It became a major best seller in the early years of western swing and received a new generation of fans when Doc Watson re-recorded it in 1978.

## BLUE BELL (1904)

(words: Edward Madden, music: Theodore F. Morse)

Edward Madden (1878-1952) a one-time Pinkerton operative, also wrote "By the Light of the Silvery Moon" (1909) and "Moonlight Bay" (1912). Theodore F. Morse (1873-1924) wrote "Hail, Hail, the Gang's All Here," (1917) and for Broadway shows from 1904-1927. Their other notable collaboration was "When We Were Two Little Boys" (1903), recorded by the Dixon Brothers (1937) and in 1961 by the Country Gentlemen, after banjo player Eddie Adcock learned it from Mickey and Roger Woodward, whose country band featured it at their Shamrock club in Washington.

## 23. BLUE BELL, Harry Macdonough and the Haydn Quartet

Columbia 32515-2 (cylinder), 1904

Harry Macdonough (1871-1931), born in Canada, began recording around 1898 for Detroit nickelodeons before becoming one of the most prolific of all acoustic era phonograph singers.

## 24. BLUE BELL, Merle Travis Capitol transcription G-11, December 7, 1945

"Blue Bell," was revived during World War I and again in the 1940s, when Merle Travis (1917-1983) played it as a solo in his profoundly original and oft-copied style.



**25. VIRGINIA BLUEBELL, Eddie Adcock** Patuxent CD-300, 1963

Eddie Adcock (b. 1938) is a veteran of the Smoky Graves, Bill Monroe, Mac Wiseman, Country Gentlemen, II Generation and Eddie & Martha Adcock ensembles, with whom he expanded the possibilities of the banjo as an ensemble and solo instrument. He transforms "Blue Bell" into a banjo tour de force, blending steel guitar harmonies with Travis licks and adding an improvised single-string chorus.

**FOOLISH FROG (1896)**

(words and music: Charles E. Trevathan)

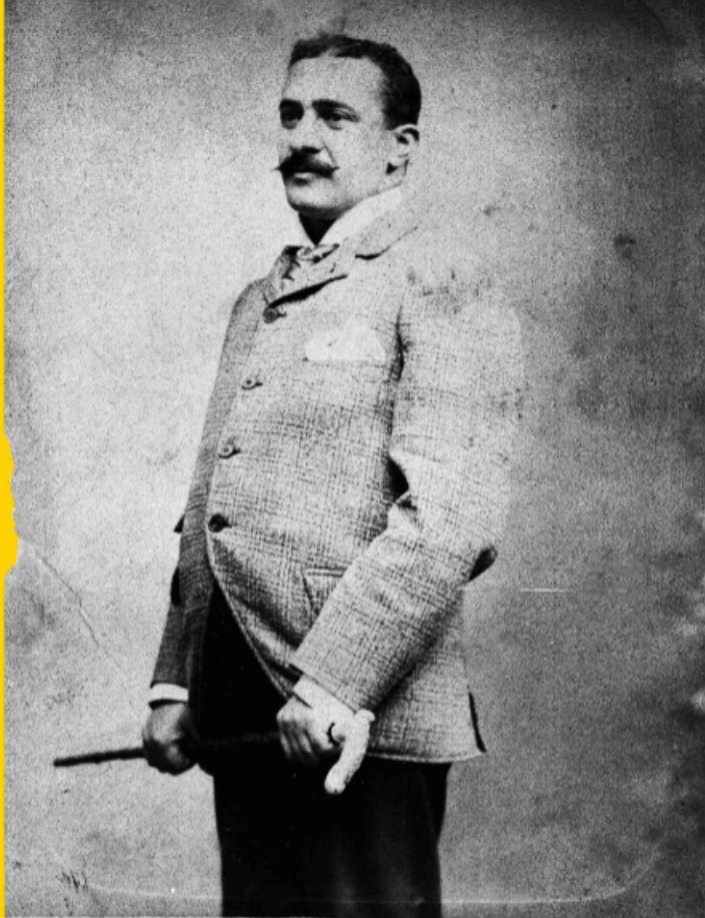
**26. MAY IRWIN'S FROG SONG, May Irwin** Victor 5156, 17253 (B 4515-1), May 21, 1907

Paired with Trevathan's other composition for May Irwin ("The Bully Song" C.1) this echoes the period rage for pseudo-religious black compositions called "Jubilee" songs probably named to spoof popular black groups like the Fisk Jubilee Singers. "The Frog Song" was lifted from blackface purgatory to become a beloved children's song through Pete Seeger. While he credits the song to May Irwin, Seeger transformed it into a folkie Aesop's fable ready for camp singalongs and hootenannies.

**27. FOOLISH FROG, Frank Corso** Flying Lady (no number), May 2017

Frank Corso learned it from a 1950s record by Blind Blake (Blake Alphonso Higgs) from the Bahamas, who was unrelated to the Blind [Arthur] Blake of the 1920s. Frank is a professional landscape painter who plays music when time permits, and his canvases are as good as his music.





Charles A. Asbury

*The World Portrait Studio*

**B**

## HAUL THE WOOD PILE DOWN

(words: Edward Harrigan, music: David Braham, 1887)

"Haul the Wood Pile Down" comes from an 1887 Harrigan-Braham's musical, called simply *Pete*. According to riverboat entertainer Hoyle Osborne, the song "probably refers to the common practice of steamboats picking up fuel (wood) supplies at little landings along the way, which gave folks the opportunity to make a little money selling wood to the boats." Edward Harrigan (1844-1911) a titan of mid-19th century New York theater was a one-time ship caulker whose performer roots were in blackface songs and minstrel banjo and which is how Harrigan premiered "Haul the Wood Pile Down" in *Pete* when it opened Act II. (A fragment of the original sung by a veteran of sailing ships survives on an early 1920s Robert W. Gordon cylinder at the Library of Congress.)

### I. HAUL THE WOOD PILE DOWN, Charles A. Asbury

New Jersey Phonograph Company (cylinder), c. 1891

The 1900 New York census lists Charles Adam Asbury (1861-1903) as born in Florida the son of Spanish immigrants and whose father, according to family genealogy, was Carlos Alvarez. In 1878, Asbury embarked on a twenty-year partnership with African-American performer Ella Robinson (1854-1933) as the "Virginia Duo," touring Europe and, in the United States, providing musical entr'actes in "Uncle Tom" shows. Asbury's last years were spent playing community concerts, organizing cakewalk contests and producing minstrel shows in both black and white communities. Asbury's voice and banjo – the only known period recording of minstrel stroke-style banjo – were ideal for performing the coon songs then in vogue and for which Asbury avoided black stage dialect. While it's not clear exactly when Asbury made this recording, newspaper ads confirm that Asbury recordings were part of nickelodeon concerts in music stores by February 1, 1892.



## 2. HOLD THAT WOOD-PILE DOWN, Uncle Dave Macon & His Fruit Jar Drinkers

Vocalion 5151 (E 4930) May 7, 1927

Dave Macon (1870-1952) grew up around Nashville where his ex-Confederate officer father ran a theatrical boardinghouse. It was there, thanks to the steady stream of vaudevillians, circus performers and repertory companies that Macon was exposed to the full catalog of American popular music in addition to his traditional and religious repertoire. Macon, who only began performing professionally in his 50s, enjoyed a long success on records and on WSM's Grand Ole Opry. By the time the de-contextualized "Haul the Wood Pile Down" got to Uncle Dave it had become "Hold That Wood-Pile Down." "Way down in Flo-REE-dah" (the setting of Harrigan's play) was gone, replaced with a repeat of "Hold the Wood Pile Down" amid a new supply of patented and colorful Maconian floating verses.

## DARLING NELLIE GRAY (1856)

(words and music: Benjamin Russell Hanby)

Religious and secular songs opposed to slavery were widely known years before the Civil War. Some of the best were narratives, evoking sympathy for separated lovers and families. Benjamin Russell Hanby (1833-1867), an Ohio preacher-composer, was inspired by an article about enslaved Nellie Gray, forcibly separated from her beloved Joseph Selby, another slave. Hanby submitted the song to Oliver Ditson, Boston's largest music publisher. After receiving no response, he assumed the song had been rejected. When he learned of its publication, Hanby wrote Ditson requesting his share of the profits and received a terse reply:

*"Nellie Gray is sung on both sides of the Atlantic. We have made the money and you the fame. That balances the account."*

Other than being sent a dozen copies of the sheet, Hanby was never paid.

## 3. DARLING NELLIE GRAY, The American Quartet

Lambert Indestructible 630 (cylinder), 1902

A number of "American Quartets" made early records. The best known was formed for Victor in 1909, with Billy Murray, Steve Porter, John Bieling and William F. Hooley, any of whom could be present on this performance. Its records appeared until the end of the acoustic recording era in 1925.

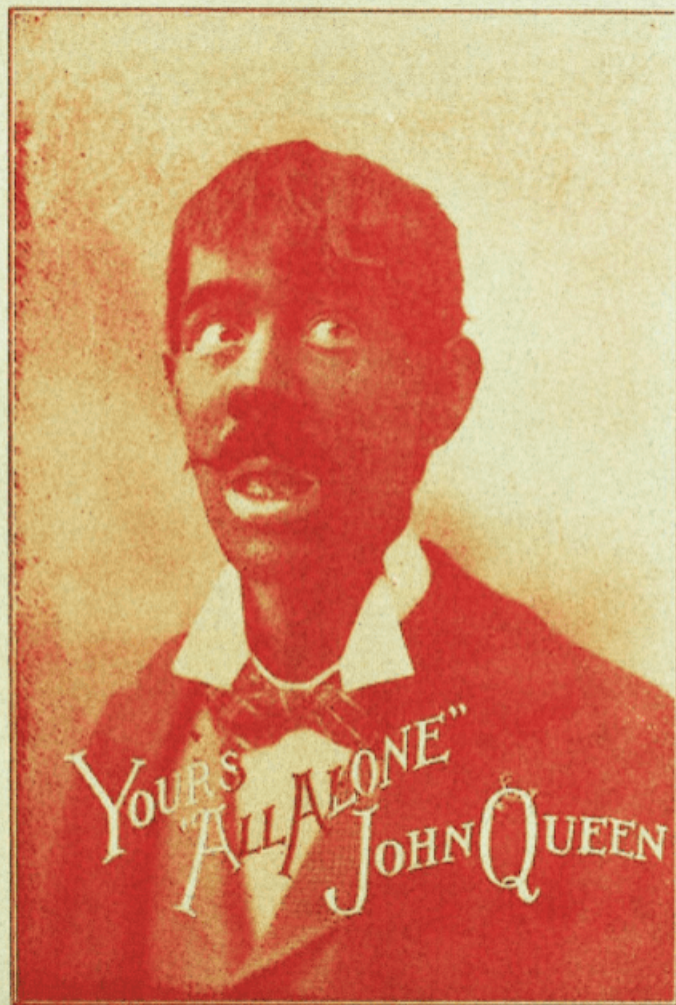
## 4. MEDLEY- DARLING NELLIE GRAY & LITTLE BROWN JUG, Roland Cauley and Lake Howard ARC 6-04-54 (15557-2), August 8, 1934

A 1922 notice in the *Kinston Free Press* (North Carolina) reported that Roland Cauley (1896-1968) won a local fiddle contest, adding that "he also won first prizes in the banjo and guitar contests. There was none other that versatile." This is Cauley's only issued performance on steel guitar. Lake Howard (1913-1954) was a fine singer and guitarist who recorded a small sample of pop songs, religious hymns and traditional items.

## 5. DARLING NELLY GRAY, Louis Armstrong and the Mills Brothers

Decca 1245 (62117-A), June 29, 1937

In 1937, Louis Armstrong and the Mills Brothers recorded a handful of early black themed pop songs ("Hand Me Down My Walking Cane," "The Old Folks at Home," "Carry Me Back to Old Virginny," and "Darling Nellie Gray"), staging them as hip romanticized recollections of the music of slavery days, in deceptively light-hearted performances that nonetheless hint at a deep understanding of their history.



John Queen

## I GOT MINE (1901)

(words: John Queen, music: Charlie Cartwell)

Burnt cork comic John Queen (183?- 1902) appeared with Haverly's Minstrels and the Primrose & West company. He wrote "Just Because She Made Dem Goo-Goo Eyes" (1900) with Hughie Cannon, whose "Bill Bailey, Won't You Please Come Home" followed in 1902, the year John Queen died. Both were among the most popular songs of the era. Vaudeville dancer Charlie Cartwell does not seem to have published anything else.

### 6. I GOT MINE, Arthur Collins & Joseph Natus Columbia (Climax) 597, 1902

Joseph Natus (1860-1917) also worked in 1880s minstrel troupes like Haverly's, Primrose, and Lew Dockstader. He recorded between 1892 and 1905 and made comic duets with Arthur Collins on Edison and Victor before Collins teamed permanently with Byron G. Harlan in 1902.

### 7. I GOT MINE, Frank Stokes Victor V-38512, (BVE 45422-2), August 27, 1928

Frank Stokes (1888-1955), Gus Cannon and Jim Jackson were born in the 1870s and 1880s and grew up with the rag and coon songs they remade in folk-style performances, mostly for Victor records in the late 1920s. Stokes keeps the basic Queen-Cartwell harmonic architecture and lyrics and elevates it to a sly and mildly rebellious comic recitation. Medicine show veteran Pink Anderson and folk performers Ry Cooder and Roy Book Binder recorded later versions.

## GO EASY, MABEL (1909)

(words: Ren Shields, Will D. Cobb & Ed Moran, music: Fred Helf)

"Go Easy Mabel" calls out a seemingly bottomless gourmand date in the mold of the 1906 coon song, "My Name Is Morgan but It Ain't J.P."



**8. GO EASY MABEL, Edward Meeker** Edison 10173 (cylinder), 1909

Ed Meeker (1874-1937) was born in Orange, New Jersey and employed as a day laborer at the Thomas Edison factory until Edison promoted him to be the announcer on early cylinders. Meeker later recorded comic and dialect songs into the early 1920s.

**9. GO EASY MABEL, Delmore Brothers** Bluebird B-8204 (BS 032678-1) February 5, 1939

While the versatile Delmore brothers relied primarily on Alton Delmore's exceptional songwriting skills, traditional songs and pop novelties like this one filled out their extensive 1930s-40s discography. Here they use a new melody, give Percival du Peyster a less imposing name, and substitute instrumental choruses for the song's second verse.

## THE SMOKE GOES UP THE CHIMNEY JUST THE SAME (1901)

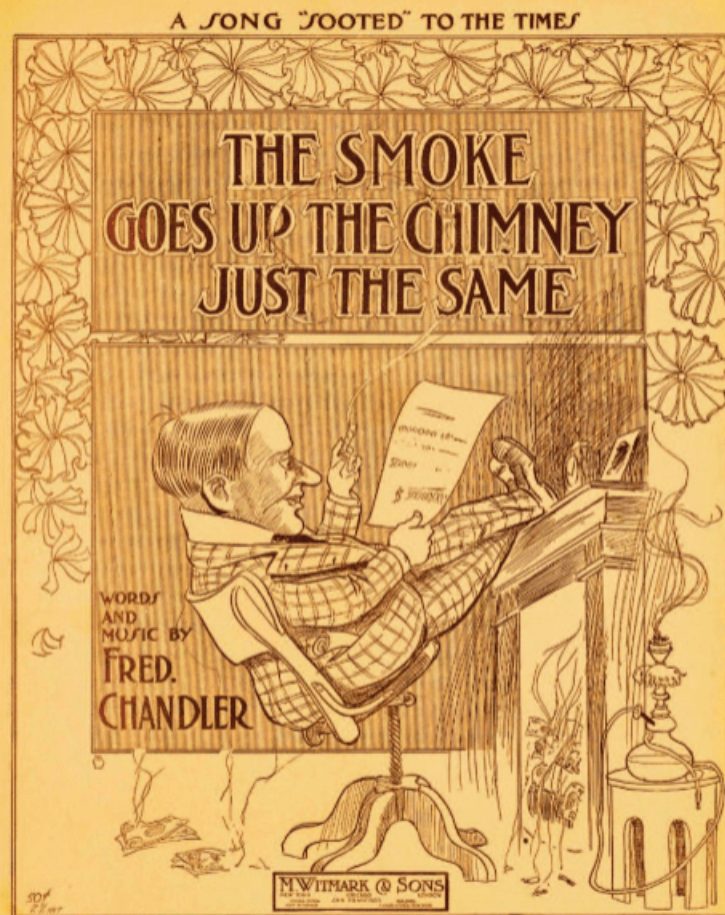
(words and music: Fred. Chandler)

Vaudeville performer Harry Connor claimed to have written this for a Philadelphia stockbroker, Frederick Chandler. As in "I Don't Care If I Never Wake Up" (C.23), there's a curious reference to Chinese and opium which might explain the pipe on the sheet music cover and the song's surreal images.

**10. THE SMOKE GOES UP THE CHIMNEY JUST THE SAME, Dan. W. Quinn**

Victor 1469, July 10, 1902

Leather-lunged Dan W. Quinn (1859-1938) recorded prolifically from 1892 through 1906, with encores in the 1910s.





**11. THE SMOKE GOES OUT THE CHIMNEY JUST THE SAME, Fiddlin' John Carson & His Virginia Reelers** OKeh 45186, (W 81750-A), October 11, 1927  
John Carson's Virginia Reelers included daughter Rosa Lee (aka Moonshine Kate) and Earl Johnson playing second fiddle.

## **WHEN THE BEES ARE IN THE HIVE (1904)**

(words: Alfred Bryan, music: Kerry Mills)

"When the (roses bloom again, bluebirds' nest again, snowflakes fall again etc.) I'll return to you" has been a familiar trope in popular songs since before the Civil War, though sometimes with bleak endings when promises are broken.

## **12. WHEN THE BEES ARE IN THE HIVE, Peerless Quartet**

US Everlasting 3791 (cylinder), 1911

Tim Gracyk calls the Peerless Quartet "the most successful and long-lived of all (vocal) groups that recorded during the acoustic era." Many male quartets made acoustic era (i.e. pre-1925) recordings. Barbershop vocal harmony was still popular, and four voices created a feeling of greater presence, reinforcing a new song's lyrics and making them easier to understand.

## **13. WHEN THE BEES ARE IN THE HIVE, Bill Monroe & His Blue Grass Boys**

Decca 74382 (NA 12030, 112152), April 26, 1962

Roy Harvey's 1927 record may be where Bill Monroe first heard it. Red Stanley and Benny Williams aren't often cited as great fiddlers, but their sympathetic backup is as pretty as you could ask for, underscoring the song's wistful lyric and Bill's sensitive delivery.



## I'M ALABAMA BOUND-2 (1909)

(words & music by Robert Hoffman)

By 1927, "I'm Alabama Bound" and "Don't You Leave Me Here" were both well-known titles for the same song. As noted above (A.19,20), Jelly Roll Morton claimed to have composed "I'm Alabama Bound," belatedly copyrighting it in 1939 under both titles. The popularity of the unrelated "Alabamy Bound" (1925) may have prompted the 1927 title change to avoid confusion.

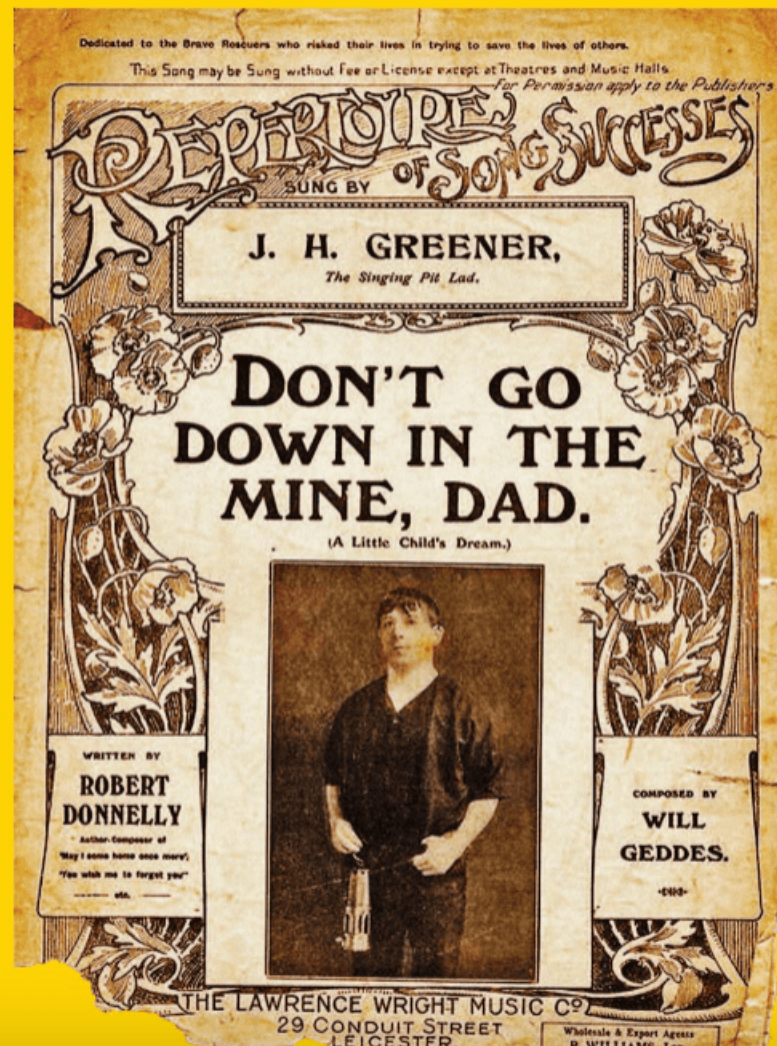
**14. DON'T YOU LEAVE ME HERE, Charles Johnson's Original Paradise Ten**  
Victor 20653 (BVE 38117-1), February 25, 1927

**15. I'M ALABAMA BOUND, Louis Jordan & His Tympany Five**  
Decca 7723 (67113-B), January 25, 1940

Charlie Johnson's is the first recorded jazz version of "I'm Alabama Bound," enhanced by Monette Moore's sparkling vocal and a Tom Morris cornet solo. The record label has no composer credit, and it marks the song's first appearance under its alternate title. Johnson's band performed regularly at Small's Paradise in Harlem through much of the 1920s and 30s, featuring Monette Moore in 1926-28. Decca Records producer Mayo Williams had placed Charlie Jackson's 1925 version with Paramount Records' Chicago Music company, and "Jackson" was still credited as sole composer on Louis Jordan's record in 1940. Jordan's popular combo served as a catalyst during the transition from 1930s blues-based small band swing to the rhythm & blues styles that flourished after the war.

## DON'T GO DOWN IN THE MINE, DAD (1910)

(words: Robert Donnelly, music: Will Geddes) (Andrew Jenkins, 1925)



In his book *Only a Miner* (1974), Archie Green devoted a chapter to “The Dream of the Miner’s Child,” speculating that the 1910 song was inspired by a 1907 mining disaster in South Wales. The song’s surprising popularity was enhanced by magic lantern sing along programs and “Don’t Go Down In the Mine, Dad” trading cards. Despite that, a February 26, 1923 article in *The Boston Globe* noted that composer Geddes had been reduced to washing windows for a living.

The song crossed the Atlantic in 1911 when Thomas Edison issued Stanley Kirkby’s British Blue Amberol cylinder in the US, and its text was printed in the *Journal of the United Mine Workers* on February 9, 1911. There does not appear to have been American sheet music. Blind Atlanta pastor/composer Rev. Andrew Jenkins’ 1925 “Dream of a Miner’s Child” kept most of the same words but changed the tune and title. Thanks to numerous recordings by Vernon Dalhart, it became a best-seller in 1925-26. Marty Robbins revived it in 1956 and it enjoyed another burst of popularity in the 1970s and 80s, when Keith Whitley and the Johnson Mountain Boys made memorable bluegrass versions.

#### **16. DON’T GO DOWN IN THE MINE, DAD, Stanley Kirkby** Regal G-6460, 1910

Baritone Stanley Kirkby (1878-1949) was a popular English music hall singer and prolific recording artist, known for tear jerkers, popular songs, Gilbert and Sullivan offerings and, during World War I, patriotic songs such as “It’s a Long, Long Way to Tipperary”. The Kirkby performance recorded in London is the earliest known version of “Miner’s Child,” and sold so well that Regal re-made it electrically in 1927 by another singer, and it remained in the catalogue until 1942.

#### **17. DREAM OF A MINER’S CHILD, Keith Whitley**

Rebel SLP-1504, June 29/30, 1971

Keith Whitley (1955-1989) and Ricky Skaggs performed with Ralph Stanley while they were still in school in 1970-71. “Dream of a Miner’s Child” comes from a record they made with members

of the Clinch Mountain Boys, evoking the Stanley sound of the 1940s and 50s and showing of Whitley’s great voice. After graduating to Nashville stardom, Whitley enjoyed several major hits before 1989 and his death at 33 from a drug overdose. At a 30th anniversary Keith Whitley Memorial concert in May 2019, Ricky Skaggs called this song one of Whitley’s favorites.

### **I LOVED YOU BETTER THAN YOU KNEW (1893)**

(words and music: Johnnie Carroll)

Johnnie Carroll (1862-1925) was a former prize fighter who migrated to the popular stage in the 1880s, becoming famous as a singer of Irish dialect songs (“Mick with a Pick”) and composer of sentimental ballads. “I Loved You Better Than You Knew” was published in numerous sheet music editions and reprinted in dozens of newspapers, while other sections of the newspaper described lovesick swains of both genders who referenced the song in suicide notes and/or murder confessions.

#### **18. I LOVED YOU BETTER THAN YOU KNEW,**

**Byron G. Harlan & Frank C. Stanley** Columbia 31343 (cylinder), 1900s

Byron George Harlan (1861-1936) is best remembered for comic duets with Arthur Collins, though he also recorded as a soloist.

#### **19. I LOVED YOU BETTER THAN YOU KNEW, The Carter Family**

Victor 23835 (BS 76283-1, BS 76706-1), June 17, 1933

This is one of the scarcest Carter Family titles on record, and one of their most moving performances. Whether by chance or intent, by 1933 Johnnie Carroll’s 19th century parlor lament evolved into a melody better suited to the Carter style.



**20. I LOVED YOU BETTER THAN YOU KNEW, Johnnie & Jack**

RCA Victor 20/47-6594 (G2-WVB-0256), March 23, 1956

Johnnie Wright claimed this as "one of my favorite songs." Though this is a further revised version of the melody, he remembered learning it from the Carter Family record.

**BY THE WATERMELON VINE (LINDY LOU) (1904)**

(words and music: Thomas S. Allen)

Boston resident Thomas S. Allen (1876-1919) was primarily a composer of instrumentals and dance tunes who had a hit in 1902 with a minor key rag/schottische "Any Rags?" while his galop "Whip and Spur" (1902) has survived in the circus/rodeo band repertoire and as a popular classic banjo solo. "By the Watermelon Vine (Lindy Lou)" was a modestly popular song recorded for competing phonograph companies in 1904-05. It became a barbershop quartet staple and was recorded with an up-to-date arrangement in 1940 by Benny Carter's big band with the Mills Brothers.

**21. BY THE WATERMELON VINE, Edison Male Quartette Edison 8905 (cylinder), 1905**

The Edison Male Quartet became the Haydn Quartet on Berliner, Zon-O-Phone and Victor records between 1897 and 1914 and recorded prolifically.

**22. LINDY, Proximity String Quartet**

Columbia 15333-D (W 147196-2), October 16, 1928

The Proximity String Quartet of Greensboro, North Carolina chose its name to represent the Proximity Cotton Mill & Print Works, where they were employed. They received local press coverage when entertaining at community events and were favorably cited for a "high class



program of music, songs, blackface comedy sketches and dancing.” (*Times News*, Burlington, NC, March 27, 1936.)

## WHO PICKED THE LOCK (1893)

(words and music: Monroe and Mack)

Alternately titled “Who Broke the Lock,” and “Who Stole the Lock,” the song was already in active repertoire of both black and white minstrel ensembles around the time of its publication. White performers Ned W. Monroe and William Kellar Mack began performing as Monroe and Mack around 1888 and, although billed as the “Burnt Cork Conversationalists,” they were routinely ballyhooed as “colored” or “negro.” An October, 1908 letter to the editor at *Variety* from Monroe addressed this:

*“We wish you would find a way to inform your correspondents of each town that Monroe and Mack are white men; not colored. After playing over all these circuits for twenty-one years we must do blackface work very good (sic) to deceive your representative.”*

### 23. WHO BROKE THE LOCK?, (Sam) Cousins and (Ed) De Moss

Berliner 3012, ca. 1898

This is one of two surviving recordings by African American minstrels Sam Cousins and Ed De Moss. It mirrors an 1895 cylinder by the Unique Quartet, the first black quartet to record commercially, and which included Ben Hunn, the brother of Charles Hunn who co-wrote “I’m The Father Of a Little Black Coon.”

David Giovannoni’s transcription of the Cousins and DeMoss lyrics (right) reveals colorful imagistic floating verses long detached by the time of the tamer Monroe and Mack version.

...  
...

*Last night I went to a fancy ball  
To have a good time, and that was all.  
All kinds of coons both the large and small  
Roun’ ... and went to the ball.*

*...a grand march that couldn’t be beat.  
Somewhere out back...  
I’ve never seen the likes since I was born  
Dressed to ... with ... on.*

*Wore-a patent leather shoes and feathers in their  
hats*

*... up and a little cravat*

...  
...

*My gal heard that I got beat  
Picked up her cap let it down to her feet  
Said to me ... wrong  
Well I didn’t say a word, but I sing this song.*

*Now, Who broke the lock? Oh I don’t know.  
Who broke the lock on the henhouse door?  
I’ll find out before I go  
Who broke the lock on the henhouse door.*

*I went down south to Tennessee  
Two police man arrested me  
Said to me...  
When they found out who it was, why they let  
me out.*

*I got a house in Baltimore  
Street cars running by the door  
I’ve been good to the neighbors sure  
But my hair I wear in a pompadour.*

*Old Jim Jackson was tall and light*

...

*Stepped on the ... board  
Said he was related to an English lord.*

*When I received him then I confessed*

...

*Every other coon might die alone  
I’m-a not good lookin’ but I wear good cologne.*



#### **24. WHO STOLE DE LOCK?, The Georgia Browns**

Melotone M12615 (12955-1), January 19, 1933

#### **25. WHO STOLE THE LOCK, Jack Bland & His Rhythmakers**

Melotone M12513 (12452-2), October 8, 1932

The Georgia Browns, with Curly Weaver, Fred McMullen, and Buddy Moss's harmonica, aren't stylistically far from the old agrarian spirit and sound of Cousins and De Moss. The hip Atlanta country blues supergroup even slyly add a mock snippet of "Yankee Doodle" for comic effect. Their exuberant chanting over a heavy blues guitar rhythm show the way that funk, hip-hop and trap music would later evolve out of the same communities. The hot, polished Rhythmakers spotlight Henry "Red" Allen's voice and trumpet, leaving room for Pee Wee Russell's clarinet, Tommy Dorsey's trombone and, of course, room for chicken romance back in the barnyard.

### **I'VE GOT THE LOVE-SICK BLUES (1922)**

(Words and music: Cliff Friend & Irving Mills)

Co-authored by sweatshop worker-cum-composer Irving Mills (1894-1985) better known for his later collaboration with Duke Ellington. When "Lovesick Blues" first appeared in 1922, it was covered by Irving Kaufman (Vocalion) and Elsie Clark (OKeh) but made no impact and would still be forgotten, had it not been for the southern blackface minstrel Emmett Miller (1900-1962) a veteran headliner of the Lou Dockstader Minstrels who recorded a work-in-progress version in 1925 and again in 1928 with the Dorsey Brothers' band.

#### **26. LOVESICK BLUES, Emmett Miller** OKeh 40465 (9325- ) c. September 1, 1925

Miller made genre bending recordings with Tommy and Jimmy Dorsey, Eddie Lang, Frank

Hutchinson, Gene Krupa and Fiddlin' John Carson. Other Miller songs that entered the country canon include "Right Or Wrong," and "I Ain't Got Nobody." His singing and maverick yodeling influenced Tommy Duncan, Merle Haggard, the Bailey Brothers and clearly, Hank Williams. Miller continued playing blackface long after mass culture tastes changed: A September, 1940 *Variety* review noted "...he performs in the best minstrelsy tradition using gags and skits which were scuttled in 1928."

#### **27. LOVESICK BLUES, Hank Williams**

Grand Ole Opry broadcast, June 18, 1949, Nashville, introduced by Red Foley

Hank Williams' first major hit was one of the few that he had no hand in writing. Hank's producer and publisher Fred Rose didn't like the song and Hank recorded it despite his protest. Williams stalwarts have plausibly denied that he'd ever heard Emmett Miller's original, claiming instead that he'd purchased an arrangement from Rex Griffin, whose 1939 Decca version sounds close to Hank's. Veteran composer/publisher Irving Mills was undoubtedly astonished when his forgotten song from 1922 spent sixteen weeks at #1 on the country charts in 1949. We can only guess at Fred Rose's reaction, but Mills wasted no time in creating a profit-sharing arrangement with the Nashville publisher Acuff-Rose.

### **I'M THE FATHER OF A LITTLE BLACK COON (1887)**

(words: Charles Hunn and George Golden, music: Gussie L. Davis)

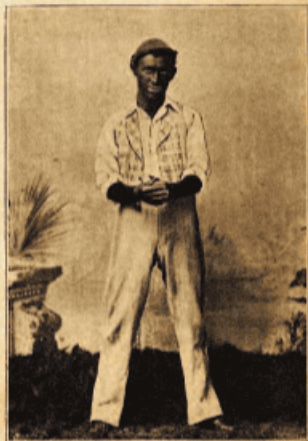
Though the word "coon" had long been associated with minstrelsy (C.8,9,10) by the early 1890s' the "coon song" became a marketing genre in the new post-Reconstruction minstrelsy as a repository for the new more jagged characterizations in blackface music. This song pre-dates that.

# I'M THE FATHER OF A LITTLE BLACK COON

WRITTEN BY  
*Charles Nunn & Geo. Golden*

COMPOSED BY  
*G.L. Davies.*

SUNG BY  
**EUGENE STRATTON.**



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LONDON.  
FRANCIS, DAY & HUNTER, 195 OXFORD STREET, W.  
Smallwood's Celebrated Pianoforte Tutor Smallwood's 55 Melodious Exercises, etc.  
NEW YORK  
T. B. HARMS & CO. 18, EAST 22<sup>ND</sup> STREET.

Price 4/-

Written by black professional songwriters, "I'm the Father Of a Little Black Coon" was one of the first attempts to humanize the black experience in composition. The success of this song pre-dated the coon song craze which became a far uglier form of entertainment. What made the earlier coon songs so important is that the writers experimented with song compositional style using the words as a means of distraction. The words reinforced the worst stereotypes of the day and were successful because of it. The music that fueled the songs, ragtime, would influence the world's culture paving the way for the Harlem Renaissance and its musical soundtrack, jazz. The words to coon songs, no longer acceptable to the "New Negro" were removed. "Ragtime" songs were then applauded for snappy wordplay over racial stereotypes paving the way for hokum, jive and scatting.

Charles Hunn (1854-1897) was a noted minstrel and vaudeville performer in the 1880s and 1890s. Gussie L. Davis (1863-1899) was probably the most influential African-American songwriter of the late nineteenth century. Davis compositions account for a significant part of the bedrock of country music including "In The Baggage Coach Ahead," "The Fatal Wedding," "Jack and May (Make Up and Be Lovers Again,)" "Maple On the Hill," among others.

**28. I'M THE FATHER OF A LITTLE BLACK COON, Charles A. Asbury**  
United States Phonograph Company (cylinder), c. 1895

The Asbury cylinder – newly identified in the Giovannoni collection in the course of this project – shows a slew of subtle changes Asbury brought to the five-year old pop song, including inverting lyrics, constructing new rhyme patterns, spoken asides and audience tested banjo novelties (playing behind the bridge, etc.) which reveal Asbury's trove of fully honed performance skills.





## BULLY OF THE TOWN (1896)

(words & music: Charles E. Trevathan)

Though sports writer Charles E. Trevathan claimed “Bully of the Town,” an 1895 edition predates the song he pitched to May Irwin then starring in the *The Widow Jones* on Broadway. It is curious why Trevathan approached Irwin who, already a star did not until then perform coon songs, nor did *The Widow Jones* have any black themes or plot points. However, the success of the song changed the trajectory of Irwin’s career making her the queen of the “Coon Shouters.”

Trevathan’s employer William Randolph Hearst not only issued a polychrome sheet music edition for “Bully” (right) but also convinced his friend Thomas Edison to film a segment of the show, which was released as “The Kiss,” a 22 second clip featuring Irwin and co-star John C. Rice.

### 1. THE BULLY (MAY IRWIN'S BULLY SONG), May Irwin

Victor 31642, 35050 (C 4511-1), May 20, 1907

Even though Irwin’s recording of “The Bully” came more than a decade after she first premiered the song and had sung it countless thousands of times, there is still an enthusiastic and powerful freshness in her signature muscular delivery. Irwin’s performance – like that of other Irish performers like Maggie Cline – presents an image of liberated and aggressive femininity only a few years before the Suffragette movement of the late teens.

### 2. BULLY OF THE TOWN, Gid Tanner & the Skillet Lickers with Riley Puckett

Columbia 15074-D (W 142035-1), April 17, 1926

On Gid Tanner’s infectious record, Clayton McMichen and Gid played the fiddles while Riley Puckett repeated a memorable single verse and chorus, making “Bully” an instant country classic, and making the Skillet Lickers the premier string band of the era.



### 3. FILLE DE LAVILLE, Vin Bruce

Columbia 20923 (NASH 1423, CO 47686), February 13, 1952

Tanner's band clearly inspired Vin Bruce's Cajun honky-tonk treatment a generation later, when Tommy Jackson and Grady Martin played the fiddles, Bob Foster handled the steel guitar, and Owen Bradley played piano. Grady handled the mandolin chorus too.

*Après chercher pour cette fille, cette fille de village,  
Après chercher pour cette fille qu'aurais pas du s'en aller,  
Après chercher pour cette fille, cette fille de village.*

*Quand tu m'vois après pleurer chere,  
Après pleurer pour cette fille qui s'en a été hier,  
Elle est la plus belle femme dans l'avillage,  
Mais, j'connais j'va la r'voir une journée.*

*Searching for this girl, this girl of the village,  
Searching for this girl, that shouldn't have left,  
Searching for this girl, this girl of the village.*

*When you see me crying dear,  
Crying for this girl who was here yesterday,  
She is the most beautiful woman in the village,  
Well, I know I'll see her again one day.*

## TURKEY IN THE STRAW (c. 1832)

(words and music: Bob Farrell)

There is unclear authorship of the original song, but the earliest documentable print reference

is to white circus equestrian performer/minstrel Bob Farrell in an 1832 concert advertisement. It is also unclear when the song title morphed into the better known "Turkey In the Straw." There is some evidence that it might have occurred in the mid-1860s with its first appearance in print in *O'Neill's Music of Ireland* (1903).

### 4. TURKEY IN THE STRAW, Billy Golden Edison 8293 (cylinder), January 1903

This was one of pioneer record maker Billy Golden's signature tunes, recorded for most, if not all, companies between 1895 and 1921. In his May 1945, *Hobbies* column, writer Jim Walsh noted that in the pre-Master days each cylinder sold was an original, unique performance by Billy Golden. Each cylinder eventually would wear down and a new cylinder had to be created. To keep up with the demand, Billy Golden needed to sing "Turkey in the Straw" as many times as the company needed him to do so. On this recording, he features his specialty laugh and comic whistling, another technique from his minstrel show days. In the 1920 *Victor Records* catalog it notes, "Billy Golden, comedian. No Negro specialty records have ever been so popular as those of Billy Golden. No one could ever approach him in this kind of work – in fact, the hearer forgets all about Golden and hears only a jolly old darkey with an infectious laugh."

### 5. TURKEY BUZZARD BLUES, Peg Leg Howell & Eddie Anthony

Columbia 14382-D (W 147343-1), October 30, 1928

Peg Leg Howell and his gang's old-time Atlanta version of "Turkey in the Straw" takes the melody apart and creates a pastiche of improvised verse over a heavy square dance rhythm. The old-time "frolics" of the Southern black communities created a space for hard working people to enjoy their Saturday nights and enjoy good food and drink. A song like "Turkey in the Straw" harkened back to the early days of blackface minstrelsy but in the context of Peg Leg Howell it almost becomes a "sample" used by group of MCs.



## OLD DAN TUCKER (1843)

(words & music: Dan Emmett)

“Old Dan Tucker” by the founding father of minstrelsy, Dan Emmett, was an immediate sensation on its premier in 1843, not long after forming his ensemble the Virginia Minstrels. The free-wheeling modular nature of the malapropistic and surreal lyrics enabled the flexible and pragmatic Emmett to introduce and replace lyrics as circumstances warranted and propelled the melody and structure to house parodic political songs for the coming years.

### 6. OLD DAN TUCKER, Harry C. Browne Columbia A1999 (46644-2), March 16, 1916

Harry Clinton Browne (1878-1954) sprang from the New England blue bloods of minstrel banjo. In 1916 – just as minstrelsy and coon songs were starting to fade from popular taste – Columbia hired Browne where, for more than a decade, he produced the supernova of minstrel and coon songs as the last Northern five string fingerstyle banjoist/singer to record commercially. While Browne’s banjo is played in the late 19th century fingerstyle, his obvious knowledge of stroke/minstrel style (such as played by Charles A. Asbury) make his recordings invaluable documents of the strong continuity of foundational banjo styles.

Browne himself had a fascinatingly diverse career from blackface banjo entertainer, Spanish-American War vet, touring stock company leading man, Broadway musical comedy star, pioneering film actor, Columbia record label A&R man, CBS radio producer/director/actor and finally, forsaking popular culture, head of the Church of Christian Science until his death. Browne’s “Old Dan Tucker” patterns closely to the 1843 sheet music down to its long discarded instrumental opening and bridge and many of its original verses. It would appear on the flip side of “Nigger Love a Watermelon Ha, Ha, Ha,” Browne’s revisited “Zip Coon/Turkey in the Straw” from his first recording session.

### 7. OLD DAN TUCKER, Gid Tanner & His Skillet Lickers with Riley Puckett & Clayton McMichen Columbia 15382-D (W 147255-1), October 22, 1928

The Skillet Lickers approach to “Old Dan Tucker” mimics their “Bully Of the Town” (C.2) which, while it makes room for Riley Puckett’s mellifluous tenor makes room for the piston-powered fiddle engine of the band right down to its cheeky ragtime-era tag “shave and a haircut, two bits” conclusion.

## ARKANSAS TRAVELER

(words: Mose Case, c. 1852, music: c. 1847)

Composer credit usually goes to Confederate veteran and Arkansas favorite son Colonel Sandford (“Sandy”) C. Faulkner (1806 -1874), who it is said was inspired by a character he met while stumping the Arkansas’ backwoods in the 1840s. Arkansas artist Edward Payson Washburn’s paintings “The Arkansas Traveler” and “The Tune Revealed” (ca. 1855) were inspired by Faulkner, whose creator bona fides were burnished by a popular engraving dedicated to him. The image found an even wider audience in 1870 when Currier and Ives reissued it without the Faulkner dedication.

Then there is the albino African-American songster Mose Case (1825?-1885). An 1840 Clark County, Indiana census lists a black Case family; Mose was born near the town of Charleston. A newspaper reminiscence described the Case family with ten or twelve children including Mose, and a brother and sister who also were albino. In 1846, he fought in the Mexican-American War and, by the 1850s, Case moved to New York’s Niagara region and married the Irish-born Katherine Martin. Their son Charley became a noted blackface minstrel and vaudeville monologist.



Only known  
image of Mose  
Case (left)

By 1852, Case was a traveler himself, working as performing guitarist and comic singer, and already identified with the Arkansas Traveler. The December 11 *Buffalo Daily Republic* wrote, "Mose Case, the Albino... will send the Arkansas traveler t'other side of Jordan" (alluding to a well-known minstrel song).

In March 1860, a Buffalo, New York composer and publisher J. R. Blodgett issued "Arkansas Traveler" with both melody and skit credited to Case. The skit without music reappeared in *Mose Case's War Songster* (1863), a collection of pro-Union lyrics set to popular melodies, with an extended account of his comic misadventures as a "waitboy" (aide/cook) in the 3rd Indiana Volunteers during the Mexican-American War. Mose Case entertained professionally in the western New York-New England area until 1880, when he abandoned his family and moved to New York City, where he died of cirrhosis in 1885. Case's "Arkansas Traveler" bragging rights continued into the 21st century. In the early 1900s, the QRS piano roll company issued "Arkansaw Traveler" (#12178), with credit to Case, and it stayed in the catalog until QRS ceased piano roll production in 2009.

#### 8. THE ARKANSAS TRAVELER, Len Spencer Edison 8202 (cylinder), 1902

Spencer's stentorian gifts were revealed as a result of his family's involvement with the business application of the early Phonographs and Graphophones later known as "Dictaphones." He continued to portray both the haughty traveler and the snarky fiddler for several record companies from 1902-1909.

#### 9. THE ARKANSAW TRAVELER, Jilson Setters (J.W. Day)

Victor 21635 (BVE 42492-1), February 27, 1928

"Jilson Setters" was the stage name of fiddler James William Day (1861-1942), promoted by



folklore fabulist Jean Bell Thomas as an “authentic” throwback to rural Kentucky’s supposedly Elizabethan cultural roots. Day’s straight-faced “Arkansaw Traveler” – with a breathless recitation of both sides of the dialog as if it were one long sentence – is probably the funniest of them all.

#### 10. ARKANSAS TRAVELER, Clayton McMichen & His Georgia Wildcats

Crown 3397 (1823-2), August 30, 1932

Clayton McMichen was Gid Tanner’s lead fiddler with the Skillet Lickers before successfully taking his Georgia Wildcats on the road in the 1930s. When they recorded with Jimmie Rodgers in 1932, the singer/songwriter Bob Miller found them extra work with Crown Records, a budget label for whom they recorded 28 titles, including several with Miller.

### THE GIRL I LOVED IN SUNNY TENNESSEE (1899)

(words: Harry Braisted, music: Stanley Carter)

Braisted and Carter were a song writing team who specialized in love songs with state names, a genre they triggered with their 1898 hit “She Was Bred in Old Kentucky.” This song would have ruled the charts had there been any. (*The San Francisco Dramatic Review* (May-July, 1901) noted that to date 300,000 copies of the sheet music had been sold netting \$12,000 (\$300,000 in today’s amount.) It was recorded numerous times for Edison, Berliner and Victor (including by Braisted in 1901 for Columbia) and was still in the Victor light catalog as late as 1924, the year before Charlie Poole recorded it for Columbia.

#### 11. THE GIRL I LOVED IN SUNNY TENNESSEE, S.H. Dudley & Harry Macdonough Zon-O-Phone 506, ca. 1901

“S.H. Dudley” (Samuel Holland Rous, 1866-1947) Rous’ nom du-disque, was inadvertently taken



from the name of an African-American minstrel performer causing much confusion. The real S.H. Dudley and his show “the Smart Set” would be the employer of acts such as Mamie Smith, Ma Rainey and Perry Bradford. Harry Macdonough (John S. MacDonald, 1868-1931) was a name well known to early record buying public and who, after he stopped recording in the 1920s, his titles were remade by other singers in his style.

## 12. SUNNY TENNESSEE, Floyd County Ramblers

Victor V-40307 (BVE 63613-2), August 29, 1930

The Floyd County (Virginia) Ramblers’ with their fiddle-harmonica harmony playing and sweet voices give us an idea of how this song would sound in a southern parlor.

## NIGGER BLUES (1912)

(words & music: Leroy (“Lasses”) White)

“Nigger Blues” was one of the first published 12-bar blues, constructed from floating folk verses well known in the south. In a February 26, 1927 letter to *Billboard* Leroy (“Lasses”) White (1888-1949) lays claim to composing “Nigger Blues” in January 1910. White copyrighted it in 1912 as the relatively benign “Negro Blues” but, when was published the next year as “Nigger Blues” it was received as being distasteful and White profited from the controversy. It is worth noting that the offending word in the title is not in the actual lyric.

The November 1912 version would be the last blues published for the black vaudeville stage in a landmark year after “The Blues”, Chris Smith (January), “Baby Seals Blues” (August 3), “Dallas Blues” (August 6), and “The Memphis Blues”, W.C. Handy (September). *The Indianapolis Freeman* notes the introduction of Southern vaudeville blues to Northern audiences came when husband and wife team Butler “String Beans” and Sweetie May premiered in Chicago in May 1911.

## 13. NIGGER BLUES, George O’Connor Columbia A2064 (46920-3), July 18, 1916

George O’Connor was a Washington DC lawyer who was noted for his informal blackface performances among the elected set. His vocal style in some ways has a tonality similar to Charles Asbury as he is clearly not singing with Negro dialect. O’Connor even strains to sing “blue” notes in his stilted Victorian elocution. The first “Race” records would appear in only four short years.

## 14. THE BLUES AIN’T NOTHIN’ BUT...??? Georgia White

Decca 7562 (91545-A), October 21, 1938

In 1924, Ida Cox called it “Blues Ain’t Nothin’ Else But!” on a Paramount record, feminizing the lyric and adapting it to her distinctive style. Her producer J. Mayo Williams claimed an arrangement, and later shared fictitious composer credits with Georgia White (1903-c.1980) when they revived it in 1938. Discographers think Ms. White probably provided her own piano accompaniment. J. Mayo Williams’ A&R work started with Papa Charlie Jackson and he discovered such acts as Ida Cox, the Harlem Hamfats, Louis Jordan, Sister Rosetta Tharpe and Baby Face Leroy Trio featuring the first commercial recordings of Muddy Waters.

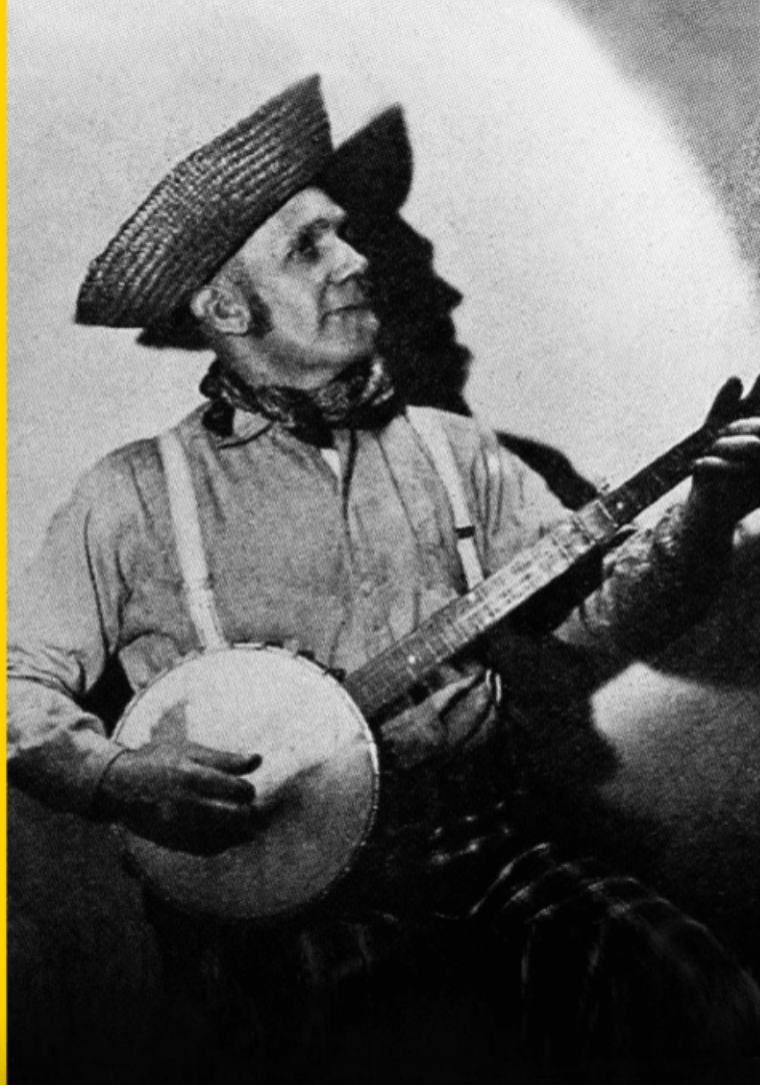
## I’SE GWINE BACK TO DIXIE (1874)

(words and music: C.A. White)

C.A. White (1829-1892) was a versatile composer in both art and parlor songs favoring morose ballads about children in Dickensian circumstances and curiosities such as “Down With the Mormons!” (1870). White’s first hit, “Put Me In My Little Bed” (1869,) like “I’s Gwine Back to Dixie,” would end up in the rural recording repertoire. By 1874, post-war Reconstruction reforms were under attack, and songs romanticizing the pre-war South were proliferating and



Uncle Dave Macon



songs like this aging black man's nostalgia for slavery times became popular.

**15. I'SE GWINE BACK TO DIXIE, Brilliant Quartet**

Berliner 860, June 11, 1896

The white Brilliant Quartette seems to have lived in Washington, DC, where it made seven-inch Berliner discs and Columbia cylinders in the 1890s.

**16. I'SE GWINE BACK TO DIXIE, Uncle Dave Macon & His Fruit Jar Drinkers**

Vocalion 5157 (E 4952), May 9, 1927

Macon's read of "I'se Gwine Back to Dixie" hews closely to the original sheet music even to the use of the title's black stage dialect but Macon de-racializes the song and the last verse, replacing its religious tone with endearing food-themed autobiography.

**BABY MINE (1859)**

(words: Charles Mackay, music: Archibald Johnston 1875)

Dr. Charles Mackay (1814-1889) author of *Extraordinary Popular Delusions and the Madness of Crowds* (1841) was a Scottish journalist, poet, anthologizer, novelist, essayist, and war correspondent. "Baby Mine" evolves from being a cooing hushed lullaby to a raucous, hell-raising galloping travelogue thanks to its irresistible "baby mine" hook when, in the mid-1890s the term "baby" slipped into popular vernacular as slang for a lover.

**17. BABY MINE, Elizabeth Spencer** Edison 2383 (cylinder), 1911

Elizabeth Spencer (1871-1930) was a classical soprano and exclusive artist of Edison Records. She recorded an impressive 660 sessions for Edison Standard Records between 1910 and 1916.

**18. GOING AROUND THIS WORLD, Leslie Keith & The Blue Sky Boys,  
introduced by Bill Bolick**

Around 1913 the song was published as "Going Around This World" in a booklet of songs assembled by the blind singer and banjo player Dick Burnett of Monticello, Kentucky. Leslie Keith's version echoes a popular 1944 recording of "Banjo Pickin' Girl" by the Coon Creek Girls.

**ALL NIGHT LONG (1912)**

(words and music: Shelton Brooks)

Ontario, Canada-born Shelton Brooks (1886-1975) was a prolific black songwriter, whose compositions are all jazz standards and whose early successes included Sophie Tucker's long-time theme song "Some of These Days" (1910), "The Darktown Strutters' Ball" (1917), and this one from 1912. The tune may originate from the Spanish-American War and the satirical "Battleship of Maine." It belongs to a family of tunes that includes "Boll Weevil," "Bloody War/That Crazy War," "If I Lose, Let Me Lose," and "My Clinch Mountain Home." All but the last are twelve-bar melodies from the years before blues became popular in the 1910s.

**19. ALL NIGHT LONG, Anna Chandler** Edison Blue Amberol 1739 (cylinder), 1913

Anna Chandler (1884-1957) was a vaudeville singer and impressionist, whose modest cache of records later included an early "Lovesick Blues" in 1922.

**20. ALL NIGHT LONG, Roy Acuff & his Crazy Tennesseans**

ARC 7-01-60 (C 1597-2), October 22, 1936

Roy Acuff's later cover of "All Night Long" features his own fiddling, and it's from his first record session in 1936.





## LAUGHING RAG (1921)

(music: Sam Moore & Harry Skinner)

**21. LAUGHING RAG, Sam Moore-Horace Davis** Victor 18849 (B 25543-1), August 24, 1936

Sam Pasco Moore (1887-1959) was a popular vaudeville and radio novelty instrumentalist. From 1931-1939 Moore and his wife were on NBC "Dixie Memories" as "Sambo and Mandy" in a program of minstrel and popular songs. Moore's aggressive mainland verve stands halfway between Hawaiian and the 1920s country guitar rags of Sam McGee, Blind Blake, Roy Harvey, and Sylvester Weaver. The eight stringed Hawaiian guitar, the Octachorda, played on this recording was Moore's invention. It would only be heard on record by its creator and his protégée, Roy Smeck, who plays one on his own record of "Laughing Rag" in 1928.

**22. MEXICAN RAG, (Tom) Darby & (Jimmie) Tarlton**

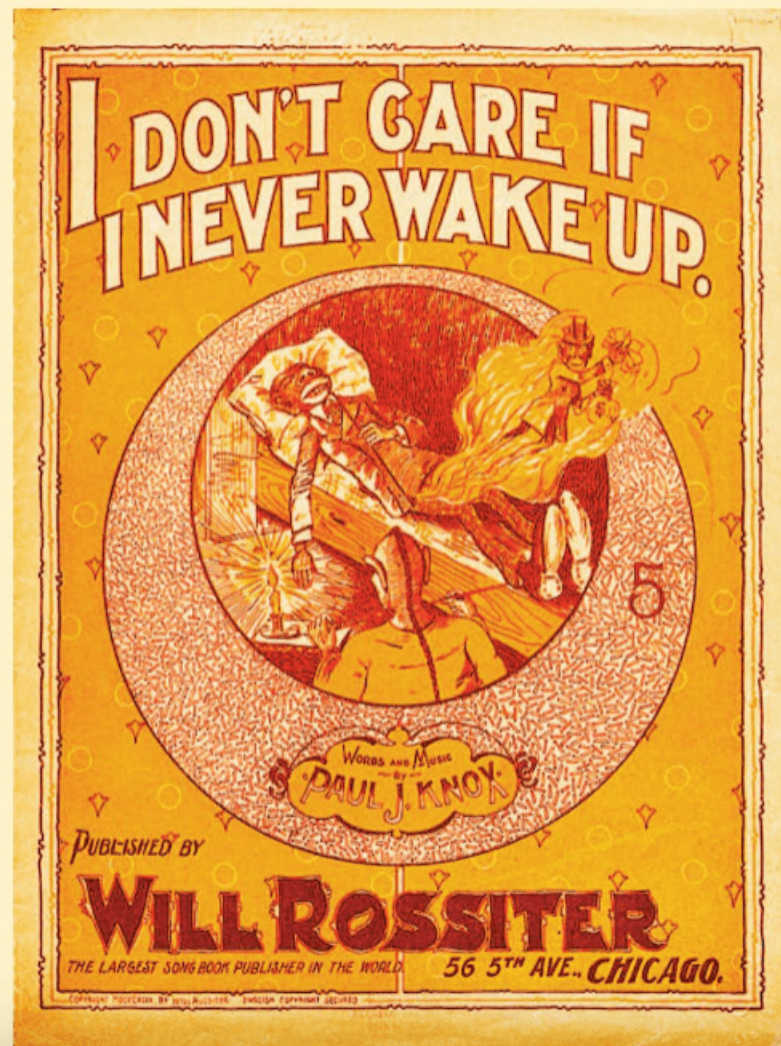
Columbia 15319-D (W 146049-2), 12 April 1928

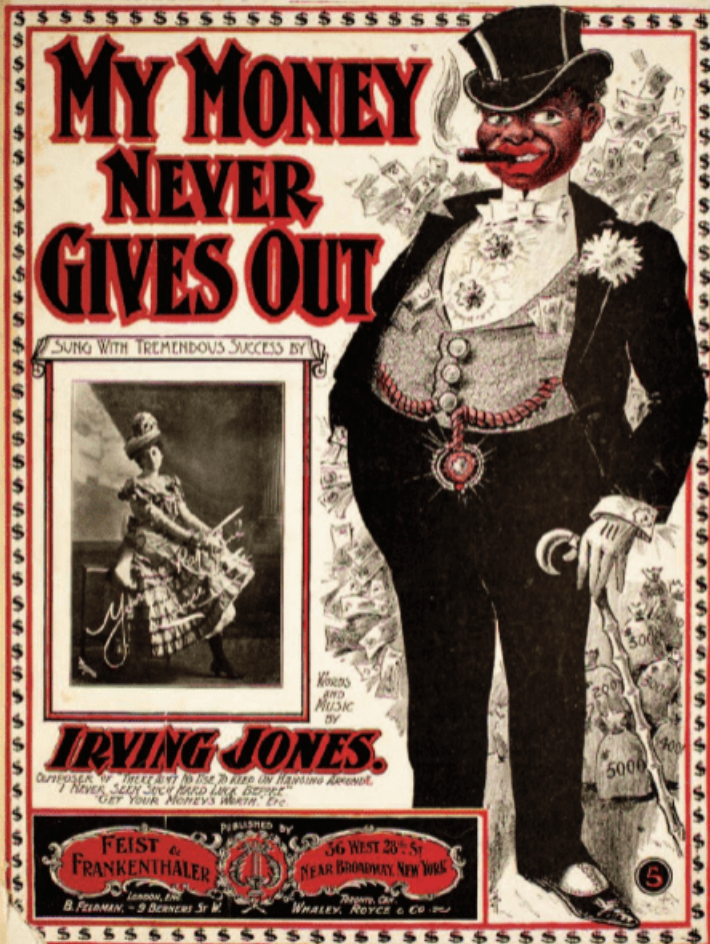
Jimmie Tarlton was another steel (or slide) guitar pioneer, whose vocal/instrumental duets with guitarist Tom Darby included major best sellers. Their whimsical lyrics could well be their own.

*Get up gal, go wash your face, put on your Sunday clothes  
Comb your hair and curl your bangs down at Shady Grove  
When I first saw that pretty little girl, she's all dressed in red  
I looked down at the pretty little girl, wished my gal was dead*

## I DON'T CARE IF I NEVER WAKE UP (1899)

(words and music: Paul J. Knox)





## MY MONEY NEVER GIVES OUT (1900)

(words and music: Irving Jones)

Paul Knox published a handful of songs between 1899-1903 with "I Don't Care If I Never Wake Up" being his most successful. Irving Jones, (c. 1874-c.-1932) was an African-American singer and comedian popular in vaudeville and minstrel shows and a rare black composer whose sizeable output was primarily coon songs including "You Don't Handle Nuff Money For Me" (1898), "Dangerous Black Man" (1899) and "Saint Patrick's Day Is A Bad Day For Coons" (1901).

### 23. I DON'T CARE IF I NEVER WAKE UP, Silas Leachman Victor 795, May 14, 1901

Silas Field Leachman (1859-1936) was one of the most prolific of the earliest recording artists. Billed as the "King Of the Coon Shouters" newspapers reported on Leachman's "studio" (a remote shack on the northwest edge of the Chicago trainyards) where, providing his own piano accompaniment, he would singlehandedly produce dozens of one-off cylinders daily (at his height of popularity Leachman was making \$50 a day (\$1,500 in today's money.) After Leachman's recording career ended, he briefly attempted a stage comeback in a blackface act with his trained eight legged horse before becoming a clerk of the Illinois state Supreme Court and a Chicago ward politician.

### 24. MY MONEY NEVER GIVES OUT, Arthur Collins Edison 7607 (cylinder), 1901

One of the most peculiar parts of the early recordings of coon songs is that white performers like Arthur Collins were the first recording artists to feature songs written by black composers in their repertoire. The popularity of these records would pave the way for the first black recording artist, George W. Johnson and later Bert Williams.



## 25. MY MONEY NEVER RUNS OUT, Banjo Joe (Gus Cannon)

Paramount 12604 (20149-2), ca. November 1927

Gus Cannon (1884-1979) seamlessly blended two 1901 financial fantasy hits when he revived them in 1927 for Paramount and in 1930 for Victor, as Cannon's Jug Stompers. A blackface medicine show comedian of a decade earlier, Cannon was one of the few black five string banjo songsters to make recordings. His repertoire reveals a portrait of black vaudeville, ragtime jazz and blues played on the banjo in a variety of styles including slide banjo. Paramount paired him with Blind Blake, one of the era's great guitarists, and left time for a second verse of the first song. Cannon lived long enough to enjoy a lengthy old age and receive royalties when his old song "Walk Right In" was popularized in 1963, at the height of the folk revival. As a result he would record his only LP on the fledgling Stax label's first release.

## 26. MY MONEY NEVER GIVES OUT, Dom Flemons and Guy Davis

DixieFrog – DFGCD 8771 January 27, 2014

Dom Flemons (b.1982) is an active musician, entertainer and scholar, who specializes in reimagining old songs in new ways. Known as "The American Songster" he travels the world reminding 21st century audiences of their history and heritage. Here, he echoes Cannon on plectrum banjo and Guy Davis recreates Blind Blake's bass runs. The lyric has evolved making the song about a man who gives a toast to denounce his detractors. Flemons also extends the structure allowing he and Guy Davis plenty of room to strut.



Left to right: Burt Grant, Sadie Jones, Irving Jones

## CREDITS

**Produced by Henry H. Sapoznik, Dick Spottswood and David Giovannoni**

Notes by: Henry H. Sapoznik, Dick Spottswood and Dom Flemons

Remastering engineer: Doug Benson [www.CommodoreStudio.com](http://www.CommodoreStudio.com)

Design by: Andrew Roberts

Cover art: Taylor Rushing

Graphics Research: Rich Remsberg

Minstrel, Tin Pan Alley, hillbilly cylinders and discs from the collection of David Giovannoni.

Additional recordings from the collections of: Eddie & Martha Adcock, Doug Benson, Tim Brooks, Jay Bruder, Joe Busam Sr., Norman Field, Mark Freeman and Rebel Records, Cary Ginell, John Heneghan, Iain Johnson, Alan Justice, Mike Kieffer, Matt Lafferty, Tom Mindte, Rich Nevins, Gary Reid, Ricki Ricardi and the Louis Armstrong Archives, Tony Russell, Henry H. Sapoznik, David Seubert/UCSB Cylinder Audio Archive, Dick Spottswood, Christian Stanfield, John Tefeller, Adrian Wisnicki and Marshall Wyatt.

Thanks: Greg Adams, Doug Benson, Bob Berkman, Sid Campbell, Norm Cohen, Bill Edwards, Wade Falcon, Vania Kinard, Vince Giordano, Joel Hooks and the American Banjo Fraternity, Bill Dean-Myatt, Dan Peck, Gary Reid, Mark Ross, Tony Russell, Jack Stanley, Cookie Segelstein/MacMama, John Stedman/JSP Records, Harvey Varga, and Protobilly descendants Debbie Trice (Charles A. Asbury) and Bill Bush (Mose Case.)

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