

1941

Singing Games and Songs from Southern Illinois

David S. McIntosh

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This book is a collection of singing games and songs collected by Mr. and Mrs. David S. McIntosh, who at the time was a member of Department of Music at Southern Illinois State Normal University. It provides a record of Southern Illinois folk music and customs. The book includes the music and lyrics for the songs as well as instructions on how to play the accompanying games.

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SINGING GAMES AND SONGS

from
SOUTHERN ILLINOIS



Pomona Natural Bridge—Illinois.

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Collected by
MR. AND MRS. D. S. McINTOSH

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SINGING GAMES AND SONGS OF SOUTHERN ILLINOIS

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SINGING GAMES AND SONGS OF SOUTHERN ILLINOIS

Introduction

These singing games and songs are representative of many which we have collected during the last eleven years from folks living in that part of Southern Illinois known as "Little Egypt." These folks, almost without exception, are descended from early settlers who came into Southern Illinois from Kentucky, Tennessee and Ohio before 1830. On checking the facts relating to the population of Illinois, we find that between the years 1810 and 1830 there was an increase from 12,000 to 161,000 mostly by immigration. Professor Troy Felts who lived in Southern Illinois all his life, told me that he remembered his grandmother at the age of seventy joining with the grand-children in the singing games and entering into the spirit of the play with as much zest as the children.

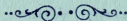
In a letter from Mr. Robert Wilson, who gave me several of the games and songs in this book, there was this paragraph that gives a good picture of life in the early days "Social Life was of the pioneer type; hard and exacting, and limited to the usual log-rollings, house raisings, neighborhood dances, etc. My father was an old time fiddler and in the winter time the folks of the neighborhood would often gather at our house for a party and dance. The big room at our log house would be crowded with young folks, some coming for miles."

NOTES ON FOLK MUSIC

In talking with Mrs. Hopper concerning recreation in Southern Illinois in her younger days, she told me the following story. "At every party you had to break the ice. We used to play 'higher up the cherry tree the riper grows the cherry.' This was a kissing game something like snap or post office. We used to meet along a country road and play singing games, after we had been at some meeting. People could hear the singing two miles away. What would people think if they found a group of young people dancing out in the middle of the hard roads nowadays? Our folks wouldn't let us dance and didn't much like these playing and kissing games. We used to play 'Go down to Rowser's to get some logger beer.' We used to gather in to work at an 'apple peel', and after peeling apples we would play singing games."

Mrs. Hopper's parents lived in Fredonia which was a village between Carbondale and Carterville. At the present time there is nothing to show that there ever had been a village in this place. To give an idea of the difficulties of travel in Southern Illinois Mrs. Hopper said that it took two weeks for the trip to St. Louis with ox team and that her grandmother once made the trip by herself. This was a distance of slightly over one hundred miles.

Mr. and Mrs. D. S. McIntosh.



COVER DESIGN

The drawing on the first page of this booklet was done by Mildred Gellerman of Carbondale, Illinois. It is the Pomona Natural Bridge located about three miles northwest of Pomona in Southern Illinois. This sandstone bridge is eighty five feet long, eight feet wide and nine feet thick, with an overall length of one hundred twenty feet.

THE GIRL I LEFT BEHIND ME

First gent out to the la-dy on the right, And
three hands round and mind you, And don't for-get to
swing that girl, The girl you left be-hind you.

The image shows a musical score for the song "The Girl I Left Behind Me". It consists of three staves of music in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. The lyrics are written below the notes. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a 4/4 time signature. The melody is simple and rhythmic, with lyrics: "First gent out to the la-dy on the right, And". The second staff continues the melody with lyrics: "three hands round and mind you, And don't for-get to". The third staff concludes the melody with lyrics: "swing that girl, The girl you left be-hind you." The music is written in a clear, hand-drawn style typical of early 20th-century educational materials.

The boys choose partners: the game is played in circle formation with the girl to the boy's right.

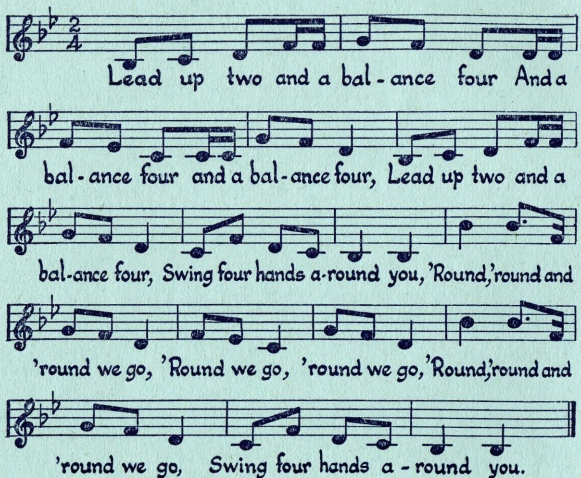
We'll call the couple who starts the game the head couple. The boy of the head couple starts by taking the couple to his right by the hands. The three of them go around in a circle as they sing the first verse. When they sing "And don't forget to swing that girl—the girl you left behind you," the boy goes back to his partner and swings her around once or twice, as long as it takes to sing the lines.

The same boy goes on to the second couple to the right—as they sing, "On to the next," "The lady follow up," the girl (his partner) takes the first couple (the one the boy has already taken) and they form a circle. These two groups are going around in small circles at the same time. Again when they sing—"And don't forget, etc., the head couple are back together and swing. This couple continues around the large circle, counter-clock wise, taking each couple in a small circle—the girl always one couple behind her partner. When the head couple has gone completely around the circle, the couple to their right may start out, boy first, followed by the girl, in the same manner, etc.

Extra: It seems that sometimes when the head couple were together in the center of the large circle—that each boy would swing his own partner in their places—that is as they sang, "And don't forget to swing that girl—the girl you left behind you." This may have been an addition of our own. You may do as you wish about that part.

Mrs. Mona Jones, Sparta, Ill.

BALANCE FOUR



Lead up two and a bal-ance four And a
bal-ance four and a bal-ance four, Lead up two and a
bal-ance four, Swing four hands a-round you, 'Round,'round and
'round we go, 'Round we go, 'round we go, 'Round,'round and
'round we go, Swing four hands a - round you.

2. Around, round and round we go,
3. Lady pass thru' with do-si-do
4. Round, round and round we go,

This game is usually started with two couples. These four form a circle with the girls on the right of their partners. At the beginning of the song, the two couples move to the right skipping as they sing. They sing and skip until the beginning of the verse, "Lady pass thru' with do-si-do." Now each boy reaches over and gently takes his partner's left hand with his left hand. She passes in front and around him. When she has passed in front and around him, he releases her hand and moves forward, presenting his right hand to the right hand of the girl who is standing on his left. He gently leads her in front of him. He then moves back to his partner taking her left hand and letting her pass in front of him. Again he moves to the girl on the left and uses the same procedure he used the first time. This is kept up until the words "Round, round and round we go." Then all join hands and circle to right.

When the song has been completed another couple, boy and girl, join the circle and sing the same song with the

exception of the first verse which is changed now to "all hold fast and balance to next." The same dance procedure is used as was used before. They keep joining, couple at a time, until everyone has played that wants to and the game is ended.

Joe Simmons, Recorded July 31, 1940.
Carbondale, Ill., by D. S. McIntosh.

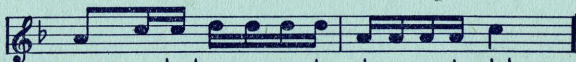
HAPPY IS THE MILLER



Hap-py is the mil-ler who lived by him-self,



All the bread and cheese he got he laid up on the shelf.



Hand on the hop-per and the oth-er on the slab,
Hand on the hop-per and the oth-er on the rack,



Ev-'ry time the mill turns, grab, boys, grab.
La-dies step for-ward and the gents step back.

This is a marching game with a circle of partners with the men on the inside of the circle, and ladies on their right, everyone facing in a counter-clock-wise direction. There is one extra man who is in the center of the circle who is to attempt to steal a partner when all partners are changed. This changing of partners occurs on the line "Every time the mill turns grab, boys, grab" or on the line "Ladies step forward and the gents step back" which is substituted at the whim of the one who is leading the dance. The man who fails to obtain a partner goes to the center and on the next change tries to supplant some other fellow.

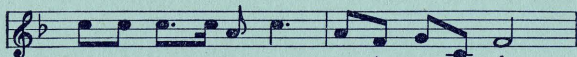
On the line "Every time the mill turns grab, boys, grab," everyone must change partners; this change can be with any other fellow in the circle. These marching games were played when the crowd got tired of the more strenuous games according to a statement by Mr. Robert Wilson who gave me a version of this game which has for its tune one which is quite similar to this one by Mrs. Hopper.

From Mrs. Marshall Hopper, Jan. 25, 1941.

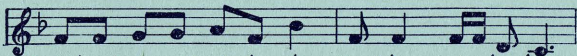
GOING DOWN TO CARIO



Go - ing down to Cai - ro, Good - bye and a bye bye,



Go - ing down to Cai - ro, Good - bye Li - za Jane;



Black them boots and make them shine, Good - bye and a bye bye,



Black them boots and make them shine, Good - bye Li - za Jane.



Prom - e - nade on the in - side ring.

2

Oh, how I love her, goodby and a bye bye.

Oh, how I love her, good by Liza Jane.

The old cow died and how I cried, good bye and a bye bye.

The old cow died and how I cried, good bye Liza Jane.

Single circle of couples with girl on boy's left. On the first verse, the entire circle moves counter clock-wise and each player following behind the player on the right. Each player should be facing the back of the individual who is in front of him.

On the second verse the grand right and left is started with the men going to the right and girls moving toward the left. This grand right and left is done until each player goes a complete circle back to his partner. After the grand right and left is completed, each boy swings each girl in the circle starting with his partner and ending with his partner. The boy swings the girl only one complete time around until he gets to his partner at the end of the game and he swings her two times around.

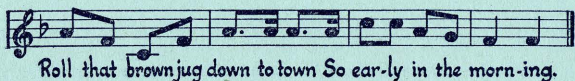
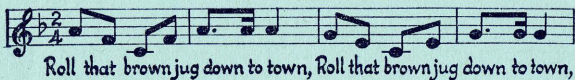
Remember that in the grand right and left, each boy goes around the circle until he comes to his partner and then the

boys swings each girl in the circle one time around, the girls still moving to the left and the boys moving to the right.

When the verses are completed just start back at the beginning again and sing in this manner until the game is completed. The end of the game when the boys swing their partners the second time, everyone sings "Promenade in the inside ring."

Joe Simmons, Recorded July 31, 1940.
Carbondale, Ill., by D. S. McIntosh.

ROLL THAT BROWN JUG



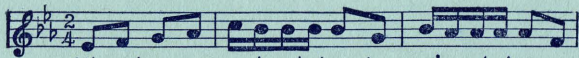
2. It'll come back with a waltz around. (Repeat as in 1st verse.)
3. Do-si ladies by the right. (Repeat as in 1st verse.)
4. First to the right and then to the left. (Repeat as in 1st verse.)
End each verse with "So early in the morning."
(When this song has been sung thru' as it has been sung now, the dance and game is over.)

As in the game "Going Down to Cairo" each boy has his partner on his right and all form a single circle.

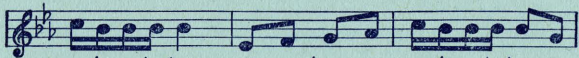
On the first verse, the group join hands and skip around counter-clock-wise in a circle. On the second verse, "It'll come back," etc, all will drop hands and walk in the opposite direction. On the third verse, each man joins right hands with the girl on his left. He then moves around her one complete turn and presents his left hand to his partner. He moves around her one complete circle, and again presents his right hand to the girl on his left going around her and to the girl on his right again, keeping this up until the song is completed.

Joe Simmons, Recorded July 31, 1940.
Carbondale, Ill., by D. S. McIntosh.

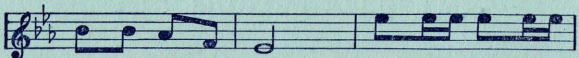
ALL JOIN HANDS AND CIRCLE TO THE LEFT



All join hands and cir-cle to the left, And cir-cle to the left, and



cir-cle to the left, All join hands and cir-cle to the left and



swing them all a - round. 'Round and a-round and a-



round we go; 'Round and a-round and a-round we go;



'Round and a-round and a-round we go to swing them all a-round.

Four couples, form a circle. At the start of the song they join hands and circle to the left, dancing to the rhythm of the music. At the close of the refrain,—“And swing them all around,” the dancers are supposed to be in the position they were at first. They will have time to circle two times around.

Second figure,—“First couple out—” The couple agreed upon as first couple dance round in front of the couple on the right, gentleman leading. The four join hands and dance “Circle to the left,” till the end of the refrain.

Figure three,—“Gent to the right and the lady to the left,” the gentleman dances to the next couple on the right, the lady remains in front of the first couple. These dance in two groups of three, to the end of the refrain, “Three hands round.”

Fourth figure,—Same as third, gentleman dancing with last couple, lady with next to last.

Then the concluding promenade,—This is danced to the word,

Old Gray Goose came flying home,
Flying home, Flying home,

Old Gray Goose came flying home,
A Gander by her side.
Round-and-a-round-and-a-round we go etc.

From Robert Wilson, McLeansboro, Ill.

STAND THERE



Stand there, stand there, you big fool you; Stand there,



stand there, you big fool you; Stand there, stand there, you



big fool you; Skip to my Lou my dar - ling.

2. I'll get me another and prettier too.
3. Take her and go with her you big fool you;
4. If I can't get a red bird, a black bird will do.
5. Fly in the butter milk two by four.
6. You shan't have her and I'll show you.
7. I'll get her back that's what I'll do.

Each line is repeated as in the 1st. verse, each line three times; ending with the phrase "Skip to my Lou, my darling."

2

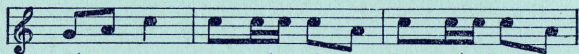
A single circle of boys and girls is formed in which each boy has a girl for his partner except one boy who is to be the fool. When the song starts, the fool skips across the ring and gets a girl for his partner and returns with her to his original position in the ring. While he is doing this, one verse should be sung by the group. At the beginning of the second verse the boy who had his girl taken from him goes and gets a partner returning to his original position. The third boy without a partner gets a girl, etc. The game is over when the group gets tired and wants to play something else.

Joe Simmons, Recorded July 31, 1940.
Carbondale, Ill., by D. S. McIntosh.

OLD DAN TUCKER



Old Dan Tuck-er went to town Swing-in' the la - dies



all a - round, First to the right, and then to the left, And



then to the one that you love best. Prom - e - nade,



Old Dan Tuck-er, Prom-e-nade, Old Dan Tuck-er, Prom-e-nade,



Old Dan Tuck-er, Came too late to get your sup-per.

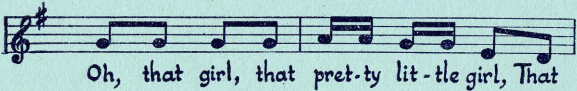
This is a marching game with a circle of partners with the men on the inside of the circle, and ladies on their right, everyone facing in a counter-clock-wise direction. There is one boy in the center of the circle who is old Dan Tucker: during the turning of the ladies by the men he takes the place of one of the men, who become Old Dan Tucker during the "promenade" and he in turn tries to get a partner during the next turning of the partners.

The directions for the game are in the words of the song. On the line "first to the right" the man should give his right hand to his partners right hand and walk around her. On the line "and then to the left," he should give his left hand to the lady on his left and walk around her. On the line "And then to the one that you love best" he should swing his partner. At the words "Promenade," he should walk around the circle in a counter-clock-wise direction holding hands with his partner. During this part of the game old Dan Tucker has taken the place of one of the men if he is clever.

Old Dan Tucker's a very fine man,
He washed his face in a frying pan,
Combed his hair with a wagon wheel,
And died with the tooth-ache in his heel.

From Mr. Robert Wilson, McLeansboro, Ill.

"FIRST OLD GENT"



Form a single circle, all facing the center; the lady on the right of her partner.

At the first note of the song some man chosen by common agreement to be the "First Gent," skips across the circle to any lady he selects and turns her once around by the right hand. He then skips back to his partner and turns her once around by the left hand. He then steps back beside the lady who was on his left and promenades with her holding hands in skating position in a counter clock-wise direction. During the promenade everyone sings "Oh, that girl that pretty," etc.

The game is continued by each man skipping across the circle in turn. The second, third and fourth verses beginning, "Next gent out to the opposite lady," etc.

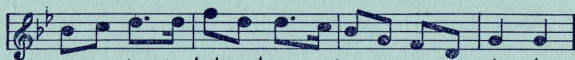
From Robert Wilson, McLeansboro, Ill., 1939.

WEEV'LY WHEAT

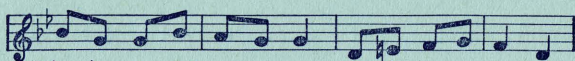
(Original Virginia Reel)



I'll have none o' your wee-v'ly wheat, I'll have none o' your bar-ley; I



want some flour 'na half an hour, To bake a cake for Char-ley.



Char-ley is a fine young man, Char-ley is a dan-dy,



Char-ley is a fine young man, He feeds the girls on can-dy.

Mr. Wilson gave me the following information about this singing game.

"Several different tunes were sung for the dance but Weev'ly Wheat was used more than any other. In this dance, which I always knew as the original Virginia Reel, as many couples could be used as could get on the floor. They were arranged in two parallel lines, the boys on one side, girls on the other, facing each other, in partners. As the singing started, the couple at the head would clasp hands and dance down between the lines and back half way. Here they would break and swing by the right, the girl going to the foot of the boys' line, the boy to the head of the girls' line, swing by the left, back to the center by the right, back to the second boy and girl,—repeating until each boy and girl had been swung by the left, partners by the right each time. Then the couple clasped hands, danced to the head and back to the foot, where they took their places, and the second couple swung into the dance.

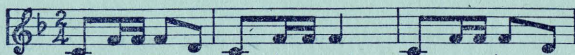
From Robert Wilson, McLeansboro, Ill.

SHOOT THE BUFFALO

Oh rise you up my dear-est dear and pre-sent to
me your hand, - We'll ral-ly thru the cane brake to some far and
dis-tant land, To some far and dis-tant land, to some far and
dis-tant land, - We'll ral-ly thru the cane brake to some far and
dis-tant land, Oh the hawk caught the chick-en and the chick-en
caught the crow, - We'll ral-ly thru the cane brake and - shoot the
buf-fa-lo, Oh we'll shoot the buf-fa-lo and we'll shoot the
buf-fa-lo, Oh we'll ral-ly thru the cane brake and we'll shoot the
buf-fa-lo, Oh it's do si do si do and home we will go,
Oh we'll ral-ly thru the cane brake and we'll shoot the buf-fa-lo.

Directions were not available for this game.

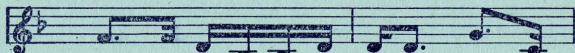
"OLD YELLOW FOX"



Old Yel-low Fox, one moon-shin-y night, Stood on his hind feet



just a-bout right, "Some meat, some meat, some meat I must



have, Be-fore I leave this good old town - e -



o. Be-fore I leave this good old town - e - o."

2

The old Fox went to the farmer's gate
And there he spied an old gray goose.
"Old Drake, Old Drake, come and go along with me,
I'm an honest old fellow in this town-oo,
A nice old fellow in this town-oo."

3

The goose squatted still and the word cried,
"No!" (This is spoken in and takes the time of the second
phrase)
"If you never get your meat till you get your meat o' mine,
: You'll never get your meat in this town-oo.":

4

The old Fox went to the farmer's gate
And there he spied an old black drake.
"Old Drake, Old Drake, come and go along with me,
I'm an honest old fellow in this town-to,
An honest old fellow in this town-oo."

5

The Drake squatted still and the word cried,
 "No!" (Spoken as in third verse,
 "If you never get your meat till you get your meat o' mine,
 : You'll never get your meat in this town-eo."):

6

The Old Fox took a back tack back,
 And grabbed that Gray Goose by the neck;
 Her wings went flipple-flopplle over her head,
 : And her heels went dingle-dangle down-eo.:

7

Old Mother Tipple-Topple lying in the bed,
 And down out the window she poked her head.
 "Old Man, Old Man, our Gray Goose is gone."
 "Why?" (Spoken in the time usually taken by the fourth
 phrase)
 : Don't you hear her going 'Quink-quonk-eo?":

8

The old Man riz in a mighty rage,
 His pipe in his mouth and his mouth full of steam.
 "Old Fox, Old Fox, you'd better get away,
 Or you'll have a mighty music all around you-o,
 You'll have a mighty music all around you-o."

9

The Old Fox went back to his den,
 And out came the little ones—nine or ten—
 "Oh, Pappy, Oh Pappy, Oh where have you been?
 : Sure, you've been to the good old town-eo.":

10

"Yes, but I'm hanged if I'll ever go again!" (Third phrase
 music)
 "Why?" (Spoken but the fourth phrase of music follows)
 : "Don't you hear the music all around me-o.":

From Mary Craig Morris, Creal Springs, Ill.
 Recorded July 19, 1941, by D. S. McIntosh.

"LONESOME GROVE"



As I walked down yon lone-some grove, A-
drink-ing of sweet wine, There I es-pied a
pret-ty fair maid Who broke this heart of mine.

Chorus

Hush up, dear girl, don't break my heart,
I hate to hear you cry;
The best of friends must sometimes part,
And so must you and I.

2

Oh, don't you see yon lone turtle dove,
A-setting on the vine;
Lamenting for its own true love,
Like I lament for mine. (Chorus)

3

Oh, don't you see yon lone black cloud,
A-changing its color to light,
If I prove false to you, my love,
The day shall turn to night. (Chorus)

4

If I prove false to you, my love,
The rocks shall melt with the sun,
And time shall cease and never more be,
And the raging sea shall burn. (Chorus)

From Mr. Robert Wilson, McLeansboro, Ill., 1939.

