

### ***South Carolina: Got the Keys to the Kingdom***

The Gullah enclave of Murrells Inlet, South Carolina, was home to a distinctive tradition of deeply moving unaccompanied spirituals and work songs that the Lomaxes recorded onto aluminum and acetate discs in the 1930s. Included with them here are children's songs and songs from the parallel traditions that thrived in the state prison system.

### ***Deep River of Song***

These field recordings of African-American music were made by Alan Lomax and John A. Lomax for the Library of Congress from 1933 to 1946. They capture a transformative period when black singers of the South and the Caribbean created a new musical language and thousands of brilliant songs that would captivate people throughout the world.

### ***The Alan Lomax Collection***

The Alan Lomax Collection gathers together the American, European, and Caribbean field recordings, world music compilations, and ballad operas of writer, folklorist, and ethnomusicologist Alan Lomax.

**Recorded between 1934 and 1939 by John A. Lomax, Ruby T. Lomax, and Alan Lomax. Compiled by Alan Lomax and Peter B. Lowry. Notes by Aaron McCullough. Series Editor: David Evans, Ph.D.**

1. **RUN, MARY, RUN** 3:17 Martha Wright, Lillie Cogswell Knox, and Albertina Keith
2. **JOHN WRITE A LETTER THIS MORNING** 2:04 Hannah Besselieu and Mittie Docter
3. **KEEP WORKIN' ON A BUILDING** 1:11 Martha Wright and Lillie Cogswell Knox
4. **HEAVEN IS A BEAUTIFUL PLACE, I KNOW** 1:32 Hannah Besselieu and Mittie Docter
5. **RIGHT DOWN HERE** 1:47 Michael Maybank, John White, Francis Gadsden, and Esau Sands
6. **EZEKIEL AND THE DRY BONES** 4:12 John Simmons, Michael Maybank, John White, Francis Gadsden, and Esau Sands
7. **DANIEL IN THE LION'S DEN** 2:07 Lillie Knox and Thelma Knox
8. **LEPROSY (NICODEMUS)** 1:06 Zack Knox
9. **A LONG GRAVE AND A SHORT GRAVE** 2:46 Zack Knox
10. **LISTEN TO THE ROLL** 1:26 Zack Knox
11. **WHEN THE ROLL IS CALLED AGAIN** 1:30 Martha Wright, Lillie Knox, and the Congregation of Jerusalem Baptist Church
12. **DEAD AND GONE** 2:32 Elsie Jenkins and the Pearson's Funeral Home Choir
13. **GONNA TAKE A RIDE ON THE CHARIOT WHEEL** 1:48 D. W. White and the Pearson's Funeral Home Choir
14. **GOT THE KEYS TO THE KINGDOM** 1:57 Lillie Knox
15. **(SOME OF THESE DAYS) I'M GOING DOWN TO THE RIVER OF JORDAN** 2:17 Zack Knox
16. **WANTS TO BE IN HEAVEN WHEN THE FIRST TRUMPET SOUNDS** 2:53

Lillie Knox and Thelma Knox

17. **I HAVE A MOTHER GONE TO GLORY OVER YONDER'S OCEAN** 2:01

Minnie Floyd and John A. Lomax

18. **I'M TROUBLED ABOUT MY SOUL** 2:19 Lillie Knox

19. **BYE-O-BABY** 1:29 Tina "Mom" Russell

20. **SHOO ROBIN** 0:43 Cecil, Martha, Edmond, and Robert Owens

21. **TEN POUND HAMMER** 1:27 Mike Maybank, John White, Francis Gadsden, and Esau Sands

22. **OH LORDY ME, OH LORDY MY** 1:42 J. M. Williams and group

23. **I SURE CAN'T STAND IT LONG** 2:54 Luther Mack, Tommy Miller, William Long, and Julius Harmon

24. **LOOK DOWN THAT LONG LONESOME ROAD** 1:19 unknown group

25. **TALLY RALLY DEVIL** 2:14 Willie James Skinner

26. **THE DOWNWARD ROAD** 2:11 Jim Williams and group

27. **WHERE IS THE GAMBLING MAN?** 2:51 Jim Williams and group

28. **AIN'T BUT THE ONE TRAIN RUN THIS TRACK (ALL NIGHT LONG)** 3:12 D. W. White and the Pearson's Funeral Home Choir

29. **HONEY IN THE ROCK** 2:12 D. W. White and the Pearson's Funeral Home Choir

John A. Lomax recorded most of these songs on aluminum and acetate discs during four successive visits to one remote location on the South Carolina coast, in 1936, 1937 (two trips), and 1939. Except on tracks 12, 13, 20, and 22–29, the voices rising from this newer silver disc are from Murrells Inlet, South Carolina. It is easy to understand why anyone, especially a pioneering folklorist, would choose this place to work. At the time, Murrells Inlet was as isolated as any place in the United States that a person could hope to find. The closest population center, some twenty miles distant, was Georgetown, which was typical of Southern towns hardest hit by the Great Depression. Myrtle Beach, just a few miles north, and Pawley's Island, just a few miles south, had not yet been developed. And the titanic rice plantations — Brookgreen, Laurel Hill, The Oaks, Waverly, Longwood, Oatland, Richmond Hill, Turkey Hill, and Wachesaw — though under new Yankee ownership, stood as powerful reminders of aristocratic hegemony and slavery during the antebellum era.

In addition to its scenic features and romantic relics, Murrells Inlet also hosted an older, living history: the Gullah culture of its African-American inhabitants — people who had labored on the rice plantations, who had taught their white owners how to cultivate the very cash crop that made its planters rich, and who had managed to keep their own folkways thriving despite decades of repression. Gullah itself is a unique language developed along the coasts of South Carolina, Georgia, and northern Florida by first-generation slaves drawn from different parts of West Africa. Thrown together irrespective of their origins, they needed to understand each other and the orders shouted at them by their masters. Although Gullah appears superficially to be a dialect of English, much of its vocabulary, syntax, and grammar evolved from a mix of African tongues: Ewe, Fante, Efik, Ibibio, Igbo, Yoruba, Kimbundu, Tshiluba, Bambara, Vai, Hausa, Wolof, Kikongo,

Temme, Twi, and Mandinka. Once established, Gullah became a tool both for synthesizing and retaining a shared African-American culture and for resisting categorical domination by white influence. As Charles Joyner describes it:

*Thriving on ambiguity and para-linguistics, Gullah speakers proved their language to be as adept in impeding communication as facilitating it. Gullah could reveal, but it also could conceal; and slaves had a stake in concealing information from the masters. By cloaking African words with their African meanings behind English words with similar sounds, slaves may have constructed a code through which they could communicate with one another while keeping the masters uninformed.*

The geographical isolation of Murrells Inlet (especially of such remote spots as Sandy Island) and its largely African-American population favored the preservation and maintenance of the Gullah language and way of life long after the period of its greatest utility.

According to Charles Joyner and Patricia Jones-Jackson, Gullah communities have always been tightly knit. Part of what strengthened their social fabric was the value they placed on group activity. Gullah tradition developed and retained elaborate singing and storytelling repertoires performed in a group context. This community, protected in so many ways from the psychic influence of white culture, was just the kind of source the Lomaxes were looking for. As they wrote in their introduction to *American Ballads and Folksongs*, the folklorists regarded isolation, such that they had found in prisons, as favorable for the survival of the most authentic folkways:

*Our purpose was to find the Negro who had had the least contact with jazz, the radio, and with the white man. Both on the farms and in the lumber camps, the proportion of whites to Negroes was approximately 100 to one. In the prison farm camps, however, the conditions were practically ideal. Here the Negro prisoners were segregated, often guarded by Negro trustees, with no social or other contact with the whites, except for the occasional official relations. The convicts heard only the idiom of their own race.*

In Murrells Inlet, African-Americans and whites were not strictly segregated. Instead, both groups, largely cut off from the authorities on so-called Standard English, had adopted Gullah as their own shared idiom. Charles Joyner notes that many “of the white plantation children perhaps learned their first language from a Gullah-speaking nurse, thus becoming native speakers of Gullah, and learned English as a second language.” This is not to suggest that African-American Gullah speakers and white Gullah speakers shared equal social status, but it is safe to say that the African-American Gullah speaker, even as he or she mingled with and worked for local whites in the area, was inclined to retain a rich linguistic and musical heritage and not to “quickly abandon the musical nuances that make his [or her] music what it is.” In fact, for men and women like Lillie Knox and her brother-in-law Zack Knox, the old songs and stories were a vital part of daily life, as was revealed in the work of John Lomax’s friend, Genevieve Willcox Chandler.

Lomax was introduced to Chandler by their mutual friend, Mabel Montgomery, then director of the South Carolina branch of the WPA's Federal Writers' Project. The introduction and subsequent friendship proved fortunate, as it gave Lomax access to a remarkable and insular group of people and helped him to locate interesting, talented singers among them who performed at their ease, much in the way his relationship with Ruby Pickens Tartt had worked in Alabama (see *Alabama: From Lullabies to Blues*, Rounder 1829 in the "Deep River of Song Series"). Like Tartt, Genevieve Chandler was an exceptional woman for her era and perhaps for any era: she was strong, professional, and had an uncommon emotional investment in African-American people and their culture. Chandler, whose cousin was the Pulitzer Prize-winning novelist Julia Peterkin, had had some success publishing short stories about her region in *Mademoiselle* and *Scribner's*. Following her husband Thomas' untimely death in 1936, she had been left to raise her five children alone during the Great Depression. In order to get by, she became an early prototype for the American single, working mother. Mabel Montgomery, with whom she had grown up in Marion, South Carolina, hired her to interview her black and white working-class neighbors for the Federal Writers' Project. Genevieve Chandler was quickly recognized as a standout among her peers in the program. Charles Joyner noted that her transcription of Gullah speech offers "tantalizing glimpses of [Gullah] vocabulary and its pronunciation and an opportunity to discover its grammatical rules." Other noted scholars also praised her work, among them South Carolina historian Walter B. Edgar, who called her a folklore pioneer, and William A. Stewart, professor of linguistics at the City University of New York, who called her "a great folklorist."

Unlike many of the albums in the Lomaxes' *Deep River of Song* series, this album features no performers of popular acclaim. Likewise, it contains few secular songs. What John A. Lomax found in abundance in Murrells Inlet were deeply affecting spirituals transmitted through the Gullah idiom. In the words of Lomax's biographer, Nolan Porterfield: "Mrs. Genevieve Chandler of Murrell's Inlet, South Carolina . . . became one of [Lomax's] more valuable contacts for Negro spirituals." The inhabitants were devout Christians, and in keeping with their faith they didn't feel comfortable singing anything but songs sanctioned by the church into the Lomaxes's machine. Reticence was prudent, for, as elsewhere in the rural South, churches in Murrells Inlet punished dancing and "sinful" singing with severity. Of the 166 songs John A. Lomax recorded there, none belongs to blues or "fiddle song" tradition, and the handful that do stray from religious subject matter are typically children's party songs, lullabies (see track 19), or work songs (see tracks 5 and 21), and even one of the work songs (track 5) contains religious imagery. Chandler's informants did in fact know more controversial songs, as this transcription of a discussion between Lillie and Zack Knox makes clear:

**Zack:** *That piece you put in there belong to a fiddle song. I'll sing anything for that's fitten to sing. I can't hinder other people, you know.*

**Missus:** *Is it a disgraceful song?*

**Zack:** *Don't know it's so disgraceful. It's sufficient for me I know it's gainst my religion. My religion don't low me to handle such language.*

**Lillie:** *Jimmy uses bad language 'fore the preacher, too!*

**Zack:** *Jimmy chuckle! Jimmy chuckle! Reb [Zack's pet name for the Reverend] say 'Woman's religion laid on a stump till they get through talking. Go right to church, take the sacrament and go right on off and wash it down with corn likker, moon-shine, and monkey rum! God going get tired of you foolishness some of these days. You can't play with that TABLE! Mustn't drink that whiskey behind it. Some woman's burn most as much of it as a man.'*

**Lillie:** *Zackie, they is worser things than drinking moon-shine!*

**Zack:** *Town girl I wuz messing up with ax me where I can get some likker. I tell her I'd go get her some. And I take my pay and gone RIGHT ON to Mr. Tom store and buy my grocery! She say, "Mister, you ain't marry, is you?" I tell her, "Yes, I got a raggy wife and five raggy chillun waiting on me!"*

**Lillie:** *Sing the bestest verse for the Missus!*

**Zack:** *I ain't going to sing that! Ain't going to sing no fiddle song! Reckon part come off a record nohow. I not particular bout learning fiddle songs. Sometimes I get to rambling off and get myself tangle. Best go plow you yard and plow them peas under!*

But these “disgraceful” songs were left at home when the man from the Library of Congress came to the Inlet.

Of songs on this disc that were not recorded in Murrells Inlet, four are from Columbia (tracks 12, 12, 28, and 29), one is from Clemson (track 20), and six are from Reid State Prison Farm in Boykin. Little is known about the individual singers in any of these locations. Five of the Boykin recordings (tracks 22–27) date from John and Alan Lomax's 1934 folksong collecting trip (tracks 22, 23, 24, 26, and 27), during which Huddie “Leadbelly” Ledbetter acted as their driver and assistant. There is also one (track 25) from a subsequent trip John Lomax made to Boykin in 1936. Those from Columbia are from 1937 and probably correspond to John and Ruby Terrill Lomax's southeastern travels together in that year. The one from Clemson is one of the few included on this disc recorded during the last leg of a trip John and Ruby Terrill Lomax took together in 1939, a trip that was complicated by a polio epidemic that prevented them from recording children's play songs and by other unexpected events. On this occasion, some of the Lomaxes's favorite adult singers in Murrells Inlet were unable to perform: “Lillie Knox was not well and was having family troubles; she was in a ‘not appreciated’ mood and would not sing her spirituals for us, as she had done previously in her own delightful and impressive way . . . . Zackie also refused.” They also had trouble getting the large Presto recording machine and its batteries into remote areas like Sandy Island. In Clemson, while staying with Ben Robertson, they recorded what Ruby Terrill Lomax called a “‘joke,’ unintentional.” An all-white quartet, when asked to perform one of their favorite hymns, produced their rendition of an African-American spiritual. It was ironic, as Ruby's field notes register, inasmuch as John “had just recorded hundreds of genuine spirituals from the Negroes themselves.” Finally on this trip, the Lomaxes came face-to-face with some unsettling realities in a prison camp outside of Clemson. Ruby Terrill Lomax remembered the event thus:

*At a country road camp we saw a sight that shocked us all — eighty Negroes tied by ankle chain to a long large common chain. The fellows were very good-natured about it, and when the singers moved, the whole group made no complaint at having to move too... Mr. Robertson and a young reporter who was with us did not know that such a custom existed in South Carolina and they immediately made resolutions. As guests of the state, John Avery and I, of course, can make no public statement about our reactions.*

Despite Ruby's final disclaimer, she and John were so appalled by the conditions under which the prisoners were kept that John wrote a letter of complaint to South Carolina Governor Burnet Maybank.

In all, as with the myriad other folksong recordings collected by the Lomaxes, the songs on this disc represent a kind of aural snapshot of a unique and disappearing cultural landscape. All of the tracks here, and especially those recorded in Murrells Inlet, exist as telling fragments of the much larger, more homogenized entity we now call American music. Though their texts usually drew heavily on New World theological discourse, in their purely aural character the songs here bear the freight of African traditions and beliefs only sparsely represented elsewhere in contemporary American, or African-American, culture.

## **SONG NOTES**

### **1. RUN, MARY, RUN (910 B1)**

Sung by Martha Wright, Lillie Cogswell Knox, and Albertina Keith. Recorded on the lawn of Genevieve W. Chandler in Murrells Inlet, South Carolina, by John A. Lomax and Ruby Terrill Lomax on January 2, 1937.

This is a fitting song to open this collection, for it features some of the most haunting voices from Murrells Inlet. The rich, raspy lead voice belongs to Martha Wright. The higher part of the response harmony is given by Lillie Knox (see notes to tracks 7, 14, 16, and 18); the lower part by Albertina Keith.

This kind of spiritual is called a "shout" and, like other Murrells Inlet spirituals, has a noticeable affinity with the chanteys and spiritual anthems of the Bahamas (see *Deep River of Song: Bahamas 1935*, Rounder 1822, and a forthcoming second Bahamian *Deep River of Song* volume). The Sea Islands of South Carolina, Georgia, the Northern Florida coast, and parts of the West Indies served as settings for the earliest concentrations of slaveholding in the English-speaking New World. Remote from the influences of mainstream American culture, they long maintained strong vestiges of West African tradition in their evolving folk idioms. Charles Joyner even remarked that the rice coast of South Carolina from the beginning of the state's settlement "in everything but the strictest geographic sense . . . might be considered the northernmost of the British West Indies."

Gullah shouts and Caribbean chanteys and anthems all feature a call-and-response style

wherein a lead singer (or “rhymer” as he or she is called in the Bahamas) sings an enthusiastic, variable, and often highly improvised line, backed by a repeated, syncopated one (called “bassing” in the Bahamas). Typically, the tempo accelerates as the song progresses, often leading to trance-like states. In both Caribbean and Gullah traditions, “folk versions of Christianity retained the earliest . . . styles of singing spirituals, in which the African religious phenomenon of spirit possession remained vividly linked with prayer, music, and bodily movement.”

According to Genevieve Chandler’s interviews, Martha Wright was in her seventies at the time of this recording. There is a Martha Wright listed in the 1910 census as having been born in 1880, which would have made her 57, if this is the same Martha Wright (the discrepancy could very well be due to the relative carelessness with which the census accounted for African-Americans in those days). In any case, Wright lived in the former home of one Tom Pryor who had allegedly “died a bad death” and who haunted her to the point she reported herself “wreck-minded.”

*Run, Mary, run.*

*The sun ’most down.*

*Run, Mary, run, my Lord.*

*My Lord’s gone to Galilee (Repeat above 4 lines.)*

*My Lord’s gone to Galilee,*

*My Lord’s gone to Galilee,*

*Oh, my Lord’s gone to Galilee,*

*My Lord’s gone to Galilee.*

*Gone to try on the robe.*

*Galilee, my Lord’s gone to Galilee,*

*Gone to try on the robe.*

*Galilee, my Lord’s gone to Galilee,*

*Gone to die no more.*

*Galilee, my Lord’s gone to Galilee.*

*Gone to die no more.*

*Galilee, my Lord’s gone to Galilee.*

*Jesus has risen from the dead.*

*Galilee, my Lord’s gone to Galilee.*

*Risen from the dead.*

*Galilee, my Lord’s gone to Galilee.*

*Tell me the trumpet’s gonna sound.*

*Galilee, my Lord’s gone to Galilee.*

*Tell me the dead gonna rise.*

*Galilee, my Lord’s gone to Galilee.*

*Tell me my Lord’s gone.*

*Galilee, my Lord’s gone to Galilee.*

*Gone to try on the robe.*

*Galilee, my Lord’s gone to Galilee.*

*Gone to try on the robe.  
Galilee, my Lord's gone to Galilee.  
Gone, my Jesus died.  
Galilee, my Lord's gone to Galilee.  
Gone to die no more.  
Galilee, my Lord's gone to Galilee,  
Gone in Galilee.  
Galilee, my Lord's gone to Galilee.  
Gone in Galilee.  
Galilee, my Lord's gone to Galilee,  
Tell me the trumpet's gonna sound.  
Galilee, my Lord's gone to Galilee.  
Tell me the dead gonna rise,  
Galilee, my Lord's gone to Galilee.  
Tell me the dead gonna rise.  
Galilee, my Lord's gone to Galilee.  
Tell me the horn gonna blow.  
Galilee, my Lord's gone to Galilee.  
Tell me the horn gonna blow.  
Galilee, my Lord's gone to Galilee.  
Gone to die no more.  
Galilee, my Lord's gone to Galilee.  
Gone to try on the robe.  
Galilee, my Lord's gone to Galilee.  
Tell me the angel was amazed [cf. Mark 16:8, in which the women at the tomb were  
"amazed"].  
Galilee, my Lord's gone to Galilee.  
Oh, the angel was amazed.  
Galilee, my Lord's gone to Galilee.  
Tell me they don't be sad.  
Galilee, my Lord's gone to Galilee.  
Tell me they don't be sad.  
Galilee, my Lord's gone to Galilee.  
See, the dead gonna rise.  
Galilee, my Lord's gone to Galilee.  
Oh, my Lord's gone,  
Galilee, my Lord's gone to Galilee.  
Yeah, my Lord's gone.  
Galilee, my Lord's gone to Galilee,  
Risen from the dead.  
Galilee, my Lord's gone to Galilee.  
Risen from the dead.  
Galilee, my Lord's gone to Galilee,  
Gone in Galilee.  
Galilee, my Lord's gone to Galilee.*



*Gone in Galilee.*  
*Galilee, my Lord's gone to Galilee.*

## 2. JOHN WRITE A LETTER THIS MORNING (834 B3)

Sung by Hannah Besselieu and Mittie Docter. Recorded at Jerusalem Baptist Church in Murrells Inlet, South Carolina, by John A. Lomax on August 30, 1936.

Another spiritual in the shouting tradition. The performance of this song vacillates subtly between tonal cohesiveness and idiosyncratic vocalizing. Unlike the classic call-and-response, this song features two vocalists singing in occasional parallelism. At times, they seem to sing “with one voice,” although frequently their voices diverge, as one extemporizes very briefly while the other goes silent. Little is known about the singers, Hannah Besselieu and Mittie Docter.

*John write a letter this mornin' — uh huh, uh huh.*  
*John write a letter this mornin',*  
*In the gettin'-up mornin' — uh huh.*

*There'll be no more slippin' and a slidin' — uh huh, uh huh.*  
*No more slippin' and a slidin',*  
*In the gettin'-up mornin' — uh huh.*

*There'll be no more peepin' and a-dodgin' — uh huh, uh huh.*  
*No more peepin' and a-dodgin',*  
*In the gettin'-up mornin' — uh huh.*

*There'll be no more trial and crosses — uh huh, uh huh,*  
*No more trial and crosses,*  
*In the gettin'-up morning — uh huh.*

*Well, say, John write a letter this mornin' — uh huh, mm hmm.*  
*John write a letter this mornin',*  
*In the gettin'-up mornin' — uh huh.*

*Well, he writin' to my father — oh, ooh,*  
*Writin' to my father,*  
*In the gettin'-up morning — uh huh.*

*And my father could not read it — oh, ooh.*  
*Father could not read it,*  
*In the gettin'-up morning — uh huh.*

*And he write it to my mother — uh huh, uh huh.*  
*Mother could not read 'em,*  
*In the gettin'-up mornin', uh huh.*

**John A. Lomax (spoken):** *Oh, I can't read it.*

**Genevieve Chandler:** *Want me to read it?*

**Lomax:** *Yes, read it.*

**Chandler:** *This song was sung at the Jerusalem Baptist Church near Murrells Inlet, South Carolina, by Harold [sic] Besselieu and Mittie Docter. The song is entitled "John Write a Letter This Morning."*

**Lomax:** *Sung for the benefit of the Lib —*

**Chandler:** *Sung for the benefit of the Library of Congress on August 30, 1936.*

### 3. KEEP WORKIN' ON A BUILDING (946 B2)

Sung by Martha Wright and Lillie Cogswell Knox. Recorded on the lawn of Genevieve W. Chandler in Murrells Inlet, South Carolina, by John A. Lomax and Ruby Terrill Lomax on January 2, 1937.

Another spiritual in the shouting style. Martha Wright again is the dominant, deeper voice and Lillie Knox the brighter, second voice. The singers switch between unison, parallelism, and heterophony, with hand-clapping and foot-patting rhythms typical of this style.

*Building in the morning,  
I know, I have another building,  
I know, not made by hand.  
Let me tell you,  
I know, I have another building,  
I know, not made by hand.  
Let me tell you,  
I know, I have another building,  
I know, not made by hand.*

*Some people pray and they don't pray right,  
Not made by hand.  
Build in the morning, not at night,  
Not made by hand.  
Some people pray and they don't pray right,  
Not made by hand.  
Build in the morning, not at night,  
Not made by hand.  
Tell me, I know, I have another building,  
I know, not made by hand.  
Children, I know, I have another building,  
I know, not made by hand,*

### 4. HEAVEN IS A BEAUTIFUL PLACE, I KNOW (834 A1)

Sung by Hannah Besselieu and Mittie Docter. Recorded at Jerusalem Baptist Church in

Murrells Inlet, South Carolina, by John A. Lomax on August 30, 1936.

Another spiritual performed by Besseliu and Docter. Like “John Write a Letter This Morning,” (track 2), this song shifts between unison (or heterophony) and harmony, as the singers either follow the same melodic vocal line or match different but complementary melodic lines. Sometimes one improvises a quick-time vocal flourish while the other remains silent. These variations give the song an urgency in keeping with its visionary subject matter. The sometimes harsh, strident vocal tone here captures the spiritual enthusiasm of the shout in a sincere and deeply affecting way.

*Oh, heaven is a beautiful place, I know,  
Oh, heaven is a beautiful place, I know.  
If you want to go to heaven on time,  
God knows, you got to plumb the line.  
Heaven is a beautiful place, I know.*

*Children, heaven is a beautiful place, I know,  
Oh yes, heaven is a beautiful place, I know.  
If you want to go to heaven on time,  
God knows, you got to plumb the line.  
Heaven is a beautiful place, I know.*

*Well, sir, ain't no liars there, I know,  
Yes, there ain't no liars there, I know.  
If you want to go to heaven on time,  
God knows, you got to plumb the line,  
Heaven is a beautiful place, I know.*

*Well, sir, it ain't no drunkards over there, I know,  
Well, sir, ain't no drunkards over there, I know.  
Well, if you want to go to heaven on time,  
God knows, you got to plumb the line.  
Heaven is a beautiful place, I know.*

*Yes, and I got a mother over there, I know,  
Yes, I, I got a mother over there, I know.  
If you want to go to heaven on time,  
God knows, you got to plumb the line.  
I got a mother over there, I know.*

*Well, sir —*

##### **5. RIGHT DOWN HERE (1035 A2)**

Sung by Michael Maybank, John White, Francis Gadsden, and Esau Sands. Recorded on the lawn of Genevieve W. Chandler in Murrells Inlet, South Carolina, by John A. Lomax

and Ruby Terrill Lomax on January 12, 1937.

Mike Maybank, the lead singer of this song, led the work crew that paved Highway 17 through Murrells Inlet in 1934 and also the W.P.A. ditching crew responsible for excavating a network of ditches to drain the inland swamps of Waccamaw Neck. Draining the formidable Mission Swamp of Murrells Inlet near Genevieve Chandler's home was one of the ditchers' primary tasks. The ditches Maybank's crew dug for the W.P.A. are still in use, draining into the creek.

Maybank's bright tenor voice is well suited to carrying over the sound of pickaxes and shovels. As is typical in work songs, the song lyrics shy away from narrative, allowing the leader to keep adding verses (thus prolonging the song) according to his and the group's needs. Here the lyrics also manage to create an ambivalent space between religious and secular domains as they address the hard physical labor at hand, the spiritual labor for which that work serves as analogy, and vice versa.

*Right down here,  
Oh, right down here.  
Oh, we got this work to do  
Right down here.  
Fellahs,  
Right down here.  
Oh sisters,  
Right down here.  
Oh, we got this work to do,  
Right down here.  
Tell the truth,  
Right down here.  
Oh yes,  
Right down here.  
Oh yes,  
We got this work to do,  
Right down here.  
Do right,  
Right down here.  
All right,  
Right down here.  
Oh yes,  
We got this work to do,  
Right down here.  
Pray right,  
Right down here.  
Oh yes,  
Right down here.  
Oh yes,*

*We got this work to do,  
Right down here.  
On the cross,  
Right down here.  
On the cross,  
Right down here.  
Oh, we got this work to do,  
Right down here.  
Take me down,  
Right down here.  
Oh, take me,  
Right down here.  
Oh, we got this work to do,  
Right down here.  
Charlie and David,  
Right down here.  
Oh, yes,  
Right down here, [yeah (?).]  
We got this work to do,  
Right down here.  
My mother,  
Right down here.  
She's gone,  
Right down here.  
Oh, yes,  
We got this work to do,  
Right down here.*

#### **6. EZEKIEL AND THE DRY BONES (1035 B)**

Sung by John Simmons, Michael Maybank, John White, Francis Gadsden, and Esau Sands. Recorded on the lawn of Genevieve W. Chandler in Murrells Inlet, South Carolina, by John A. Lomax and Ruby Terrill Lomax on July 12, 1937.

Another work song sung by Mike Maybank's crew, this time led by John Simmons, about whom little is known. As with "Right Down Here" (track 5 above), a religious text has been adapted to a cadence suited to physical labor. The lines about the bones connecting to one another also occur in jubilee and gospel treatments of a related spiritual, "Dry Bones." Again, the leader has a good bit of flexibility for textual improvisation.

*Well, it's Ezekiel in the valley — yea, Lord, (3x)  
Time is rollin' on.*

*Yes, he's preaching to the dry bones — yea, Lord, (3x)  
Time is rollin' on.*

*Yea, the dry bones — yea, Lord, (3x)*  
*Time is rollin' on.*

*Yes, it's a miracle, Lord — yea, Lord, (3x)*  
*Time is rollin' on.*

*Oh-oh-ye, dry bones — yea, Lord, (3x)*  
*Time is rollin' on.*

*Yes, Ezekiel in the valley — yea, Lord, (3x)*  
*Time is rollin' on.*

*Yes, he's preaching to the dry bones — yea, Lord, (3x)*  
*Time is rollin' on.*

*Then I heard a mighty shouting — yea, Lord, (3x)*  
*Time is rollin' on.*

*Well, the bone connect to the bone — yea, Lord, (3x)*  
*Time is rollin' on.*

*Well, the neck bone to the shoulder bone — yea, Lord,*  
*Well, the arm bone to the shoulder bone — yea, Lord,*  
*Well, the back bone to the head bone — yea, Lord,*  
*Time is rollin' on.*

*Well, the hip bone to the leg bone — yea, Lord,*  
*Well, the leg bone to the thigh bone — yea, Lord,*  
*Well, the ankle bone to the leg bone — yea, Lord,*  
*Time is rollin' on.*

*I said, open up, you grave — yea, Lord, (3x)*  
*Time is rolling on.*

*Says, I call grave to [come in you (?)]— yea, Lord, (3x)*  
*Time is rolling on.*

*Then he shall live — yea, Lord, (3x)*  
*Time is rolling on.*

#### **7. DANIEL IN THE LION'S DEN (1034 A1)**

Sung by Lillie Knox and Thelma Knox. Recorded on the lawn of Genevieve W. Chandler in Murrells Inlet, South Carolina, by John A. Lomax and Ruby Terrill Lomax on July 12, 1937.

Lillie Knox worked as a maid in Genevieve Chandler's home at Murrells Inlet. Due in part to her ready accessibility, she became Chandler's favorite and most voluminously interviewed informant. The two women were also life long friends.

Lillie Knox's life was marked by hardship and tragedy, but she is remembered in the community as a generous, hopeful, and loving woman. Her father died when she was 12. She gave birth to a son at age 16, soon after which her mother precipitously passed away, leaving Lillie to raise her own son and her three younger siblings. Lillie went to work for Genevieve Chandler's parents, the Willcoxes. Not long after, Lillie's little sister, Geneva, drowned in a salt marsh. Ultimately, Lillie married Richard Knox and had several healthy children with him, although one of their babies was stillborn, and another, "ill-formed" as Lillie reported it, died not long after birth.

Knox continued to work for the Willcoxes, and then for and with Genevieve Chandler (who had been maid of honor at Knox's wedding). Lillie Knox finally had to leave Murrells Inlet when her husband Richard was placed on the chain gang for manslaughter, having accidentally shot a woman to death during a brawl in the bar he ran at the time.

In this spiritual, Knox's supple, high alto leads a simple, repetitive melodic line through the quasi-narrative of Daniel from the Old Testament into the looser, more lyrical territory of Christian personal testimony ("look what Jesus done for me").

The hardships of Knox's life story stand in powerful contrast to her calm, plaintive delivery. Clearly, Murrells Inlet's singers were no strangers to the troubles that befell other African-Americans at the time. Still, the blues never really took hold here; songs like this one that conformed at least nominally to the religious mores of the time served many of the same functional needs, however different stylistically.

*Daniel in the lion's den, (2x)*  
*Lying in there safe and not harmed.*

*Sleep on, Daniel, take your rest (3x)*  
*Lying in there safe and not harmed.*

**[Etc., as above]:** *My Lord locked the lion's jaw. // Look what Jesus done for me. // Healed the sick and raised the dead. // Sleep on, Daniel, take your rest. // Daniel in the lion's den. // My Lord locked the lion's jaw.*

#### 8. **LEPROSY (NICODEMUS)** (1031 B2)

Sung by Zack Knox. Recorded on the lawn of Genevieve W. Chandler by John A. Lomax and Ruby Terrill Lomax on July 13, 1937 in Murrells Inlet, South Carolina.

This is the first of four songs on this disc performed in Zack Knox's mournful, confident voice. All four were recorded by the Lomaxes during the same visit in 1937.

These songs show Zack Knox's solemn, pious side, but in the Murrells Inlet community Knox was known for his spirited personality, his jokes, his tales, and his love of pleasure. In a letter to her family, Ruby Terrill Lomax refers to Zack as Lillie Knox's cousin. This is not entirely accurate: Zack had been abandoned as a child, and Richard Knox's parents had raised him as their own. Thus, Zack was the foster brother of Lillie Knox's husband.

Like Lillie, Zack worked in and around the Chandler household and was thus readily available, but as in the case of Lillie, Zack's charm and depth would have made him a highly appealing source for interviews regardless of proximity.

*In my name, in my name,  
Go clean the leprosy  
In my name.  
In my name, in my name,  
Go clean the leprosy  
In my name.*

*There was a man from the Pharisees,  
His name was Nicodemus,  
And he didn't believe.  
Nicodemus went to Christ,  
Lord, just by night,  
Said he wanted to be taught  
Out of human sight.  
Christ told Nicodemus as a friend,  
"Man, you must be born again.  
Woman or man if he want to be wise,  
[Re]pent and believe and be baptized."*

*You go, in my name, in my name,  
Go clean the leprosy  
In my name.  
In my name, in my name,  
Go clean the leprosy  
In my name.*

#### **9. A LONG GRAVE AND A SHORT GRAVE (1037 A1)**

Sung by Zack Knox. Recorded on the lawn of Genevieve W. Chandler in Murrells Inlet, South Carolina, by John A. Lomax and Ruby Terrill Lomax on July 12, 1937.

Though not made explicit, the images in this song of the two graves, one long and one short, suggest the ever-present memory of lost loved ones, perhaps of wife and child. Zack Knox's expressive voice conveys a message of a desperate loneliness that can be relieved only by reunion after death.



*There's a long grave and a short grave  
Everywhere I go,  
Everywhere I go.  
There's a long grave and a short grave,  
Everywhere I go.  
Ahh, ah, Lord, remember me.*

*When I get up in heaven,  
I want you to be there too,  
Want you to be there too.  
When I get up in heaven,  
Want you to be there too.  
Ahh, my Lord, remember me.*

*When I cry out "holy,"  
Want you to say so too,  
Want you to say so too.  
When I cry out "holy,"  
Want you to say so too.  
Ahh, my Lord, remember me.*

*When I meet my mother,  
Want you to meet yours too,  
Want you to meet yours too.  
When I meet my mother,  
Want you to meet yours too.  
Ahh, my Lord, remember me.*

*There's a long grave and a short grave,  
Everywhere I go,  
Everywhere I go.  
There's a long grave and a short grave,  
Everywhere I go.  
Ahh, ah, Lord, remember me.*

*When I cry out "amen,"  
I want you to say so too,  
Want you to say so too.  
When I cry out "amen,"  
Want you to say so too,  
Ahh, my Lord, remember me.*

*When I cry out "holy,"  
Want you to say so too,  
Want you to say so too.*

*When I cry out "holy,"  
Want you to say so too.  
Ahh, ah, Lord, remember me.*

**10. LISTEN TO THE ROLL (1038 A1)**

Sung by Zack Knox. Recorded on the lawn of Genevieve W. Chandler in Murrells Inlet, South Carolina, by John A. Lomax and Ruby Terrill Lomax on July 12, 1937.

Another solemn number from Zack Knox, "Listen to the Roll" complements "A Long Grave and a Short Grave" (track 9 above). This song speaks of the final judgment from beyond the grave. Again, the outlook is one of abject isolation, offering a vision of being caught between two worlds — the earthly with its yawning grave and the heavenly with its obligatory accounting. The stress is on the irreducible nature of human responsibility. Though frightening, the prospect of "answering" for oneself (as opposed to being answered for) conferred a sense of autonomy at the spiritual level that was too often denied in this world to African-Americans from the time of slavery until the period of civil rights.

*I listened to the roll,  
And the roll was calling,  
There was nobody there  
For to answer for me.  
Lord, I had to answer for myself.*

*Well, I listened to the grave  
And the grave was howling.  
There was nobody there  
For to answer for me.  
Lord, I had to answer for myself.*

*I listened to the roll,  
And the roll was calling.  
There was nobody there  
For to answer for me.  
Lord, I had to answer for myself.*

*I listened to the grave,  
And the grave was howling.  
There was nobody there  
For to answer for me.  
Lord, I had to answer for myself.*

**11. WHEN THE ROLL IS CALLED AGAIN (946 A3)**

Sung by Martha Wright, Lillie Knox, and the Congregation of Jerusalem Baptist Church. Recorded in Murrells Inlet, South Carolina, by John A. Lomax and Ruby Terrill Lomax

on January 12, 1937.

This “shouting” song, led by Martha Wright’s powerful alto, with Lillie Knox singing a wavering higher line and the Jerusalem Baptist Congregation adding a considerable ambient dimension, revisits the subject of final judgment of “Listen to the Roll” (track 10 above). Here the emphasis is on the joyful reunion of souls, reflected in the song’s pace, the push of its repetitions, and the raucous charge of Wright’s independent “when we will meet you over in heaven.”

*When the roll is called again,  
When the roll is called again,  
We will meet you over in heaven.  
We will meet you over in heaven  
When the roll is called again. (Etc.)*

**12. DEAD AND GONE (1025 B1)**

Sung by Elsie Jenkins and the Pearson’s Funeral Home Choir. Recorded by John A. Lomax and Ruby Terrill Lomax in Columbia, South Carolina, on July 9, 1937.

In contrast to the shouts heard previously, this and the following (track 13) are examples of the congregational style (see also tracks 28 and 29, recorded by the same group). The choir here sings the same part in harmony, with a bit of rhythmic heterophony but with no call-and-response.

*I have a mother, she’s sleepin’ in Jesus.  
All the friend I have dead and gone.  
Sleep on, mother, sleep on, mother.  
All the friend I have dead and gone.*

*Dead and gone, dead and gone.  
All the friend I have dead and gone.*

*My old father sleepin’ in Jesus.  
All the friend I have dead and gone.  
Sleep on, father, sleep on, father.  
All the friend I have dead and gone.*

*Dead and gone, dead and gone.  
All the friend I have dead and gone.*

**(Humming chorus.)**

**13. GONNA TAKE A RIDE ON THE CHARIOT WHEEL (1027 B1)**

Sung by D. W. White and the Pearson’s Funeral Home Choir. Recorded by John A. Lomax and Ruby Terrill Lomax in Columbia, South Carolina on July 9, 1937.

This is the same group, but the leader this time is D. W. White, who made a deep impression on John A. Lomax.

He described the recording session in this way:

*D. W. White, a Negro laborer, worked two days to bring his group of singers together in the chapel of the Funeral Home, where they were accustomed to sing for any funeral managed by the Home. Here their singing was spontaneously unaffected.*

*'What will you sing first tonight?' I asked the leader. 'I never knows till I stand up,' he explained.'*

*I'm gonna ride on the chariot wheel, on the chariot wheel  
I know I wanna ride, oh, Lord.  
Oh, ain't got no time to tarry, Lord.  
Gonna take a ride on the chariot wheel.*

*My mother took a ride on the chariot wheel, on the chariot wheel.  
My mother took a ride, oh, Lord.  
Oh, ain't got no time to tarry, Lord.  
Gonna take a ride on the chariot wheel.*

*I know you want to ride on the chariot wheel, on the chariot wheel.  
I know you wanna ride, oh Lord.  
Oh, ain't got no time to tarry, Lord.  
Gonna take a ride on the chariot wheel.*

#### **14. GOT THE KEYS TO THE KINGDOM (1041 A1)**

Sung by Lillie Knox. Recorded by John A. Lomax and Ruby Terrill Lomax in Murrells Inlet, South Carolina on July 13, 1937.

Lillie Knox's haunting voice is ideally suited to this song, whose mournful melody is belied by its hopeful message. It is a stunning performance.

Bessie Johnson and Washington Phillips made commercial recordings of "Got the Keys to the Kingdom" in 1929, but this variant by Lillie Knox is independent of theirs.

#### **Chorus:**

*I got the keys to the kingdom,  
The world can't do me no harm.  
I got the keys to the kingdom,  
The world can't do me no harm.*

*Go Gabriel, get the trumpet,  
Move on down to the sea.*

*Don't you sound that trumpet,  
'Til you hear from me. (Chorus)*

*Take old John on the island,  
Placed him in the kettle of oil.  
Angel came from a-heaven down,  
And told him that the oil wouldn't boil. (Chorus)*

*Take old Paul and Silas,  
Place 'em in jail below.  
Angel came from heaven down,  
Unlocked the prison house door. (Chorus)*

*When I get in trouble,  
Know I done no crime,  
Stand up — Ring up Central in glory,  
Jesus come to the phone. (Chorus)*

*Got the keys in my bosom,  
Carry it everywhere I go.  
Got the keys in my bosom,  
And the world can't do me no harm.*

**15. (SOME OF THESE DAYS) I'M GOING DOWN TO THE RIVER OF JORDAN**  
(1044 B2)

Sung by Zack Knox. Recorded by John A. Lomax and Ruby Terrill Lomax in Murrells Inlet, South Carolina, on July 13, 1937.

Here as elsewhere, Zack Knox's performance is confident, strong, and warm. It features thrilling shifts in tempo — as Knox deftly draws out long vowels, slowing the song's narrative, and then picks up the pace without a hitch. His dynamic and rhythmic flexibility mirrors the song's refrain, which “returns” to the river of Jordan and its eddies and flows. Alabama harmonica player Jaybird Coleman made a commercial recording of this spiritual in 1927, but it does not appear to have influenced Knox's version.

*I'm going down to the river of Jordan,  
I'm going down to the river of Jordan, one of these days, a-hallelujah.  
Says, I'm going down to the river of Jordan,  
I'm going down to the river of Jordan some of these days.*

*I'm gon' tell my Lord how you treat me,  
I'm gon' tell my Lord how you treat me, one of these days, a-hallelujah.  
Says, I'm gon' to tell my Lord how you treat me,  
I'm gon' tell my Lord how you treat me one of these days.*

**[Repeat stanza one]**

*And I'm gonna eat off the welcome table,  
I'm gonna eat off the welcome table, one of these days, a-hallelujah.  
Says, I'm gonna eat off the welcome table,  
I'm gonna eat off the welcome table one of these days.*

*I'm gonna eat on milk and honey,  
I'm gonna feast on the milk and honey, one of these days, a-hallelujah.  
Says, I'm gonna feast on milk and honey,  
I'm gonna feast on milk and honey some of these days.*

*And I'm going down —*

**16. WANTS TO BE IN HEAVEN WHEN THE FIRST TRUMPET SOUND (1034  
A2)**

Sung by Lillie Knox and Thelma Knox. Recorded by John A. Lomax and Ruby Terrill  
Lomax in Murrells Inlet, South Carolina, on July 12, 1937.

Thelma Knox was 15 when this song was recorded. Her precise relation to Lillie Knox is not known, but she was likely a niece by marriage. Thelma's voice roughly doubles Lillie's in this performance.

*Where shall I be when that first trumpet sound?  
Where shall I be when it sound?  
God knows, it sound so loud 'til it wake up the dead.  
Where shall I be when it sound?*

*I wants to be in heaven when the first trumpet sound,  
Wants to be in heaven when it sound.  
God knows, it sound so loud 'til it wake up the dead.  
Where shall I be when it sound?*

*I wants to meet my mother when the first trumpet sound.  
Wants to meet my mother when it sound.  
God knows, it sound so loud 'til it wake up the dead.  
Where shall I be when it sound?*

*I wants to meet my father when the first trumpet sound.  
Wants to meet my father when it sound.  
God knows, it sound so loud 'til it wake up the dead.  
Where shall I be when it sound?*

*I wants to meet my Jesus when the first trumpet sound.  
Wants to meet my Jesus when it sound.  
God knows, it sound so loud 'til it wake up the dead.*

*Where shall I be when it sound?*

*Wants to try on my robe when the first trumpet sounds.*

*Wants to try on my robe when it sounds.*

*God knows, it sound so loud 'til it wake up the dead.*

*Where shall I be when it sound?*

*Want to try on my band when the first trumpet sounds.*

*Want to try on my band when it sounds.*

*God knows, it sounds so loud 'til it wake up the dead.*

*Where shall I be when it sound?*

*Wants to be in heaven when the first trumpet sound.*

*Wants to be in heaven when it sound.*

*God knows, it sound —*

**17. I HAVE A MOTHER GONE TO GLORY OVER YONDER'S OCEAN (1044 A2)**

Sung by Minnie Floyd and John A. Lomax. Recorded by John A. Lomax and Ruby Terrill Lomax in Murrells Inlet, South Carolina, on July 13, 1937.

Minnie Floyd was an elderly Anglo-American woman living in the Murrells Inlet community. It is interesting to note the similarities and differences between this folk song and those previous and following (tracks 16 and 18). All three have eschatological subject matter (more precisely, they imagine the reunion or separation of family members after death), and all trace fairly simple melodies. This text of this song is more abstract, however, and Minnie Floyd's vocal quality is shriller, with nasalized vowels, locating her performance style in a very different emotional and cultural space from that of most of the others on this disc. John A. Lomax's own variant of the song demonstrates that the scholar and collector was himself a product of a folk cultural upbringing in Texas.

*Happy fathers over yonder,*

*Happy fathers over yonder,*

*Happy fathers over yonder,*

*Over yonder's ocean.*

*By and by we'll go and see them,*

*By and by we'll go and see them,*

*By and by we'll go and see them,*

*Over yonder's ocean.*

*Won't that be a happy meeting,*

*Won't that be a happy meeting,*

*Won't that be a happy meeting,*

*Over yonder's ocean?*

*Happy mothers over yonder,  
Happy mothers over yonder,  
Happy mothers over yonder,  
Over yonder's ocean.*

*By and by we'll go and see them,  
By and by we'll go and see them,  
By and by we'll go and see them,  
Over yonder's ocean.*

**John A. Lomax (spoken):** *Mrs. Floyd, here's the way we used to sing this in Texas — the same song:*

**Sings:**  
*I [coughs] —  
I have a mother gone to glory,  
I have a mother gone to glory,  
I have a mother gone to glory,  
On the other shore.*

*By and by I'll go and see her,  
By and by I'll go and see her,  
By and by I'll go and see her,  
On the other shore.*

*Won't that be a happy meeting,  
Won't that be a happy meeting,  
Won't that be a happy meeting,  
On the other shore?*

**Minnie Floyd:** *Well, it's pretty much — you know, uh — the same song. Just a little different. Now this song, they used to sing it Dutch . . . [?] I heard a girl sing it, uh —*

#### **18. I'M TROUBLED ABOUT MY SOUL (1300 B3)**

Sung by Lillie Knox. Recorded by John A. Lomax and Ruby Terrill Lomax in Murrells Inlet, South Carolina, on July 12, 1937.

This is another moving performance by Lillie Knox, whose purposeful delivery and tone convey deep emotion and faith.

Commercial recordings of this spiritual were made prior to 1937 by the Thankful Quartette of Atlanta, Frank Palmes of Alabama, and Charley Patton and Bertha Lee of Mississippi, but Lillie Knox's version appears to be uninfluenced by them.



*Wonder where my mother; wonder where she's gone,  
Somewhere sittin' in the kingdom, she won't be worried no more.*

*Lord, I'm worried, worried, worried all about my soul,  
Just as soon as my feet strike Zion, I won't be troubled no more.*

*Lord, I'm troubled, troubled, troubled all about my soul,  
Just as soon as my feet strike Zion, I won't be troubled no more.*

*Father, he got worried, worried all about his soul,  
Just as soon as his feet strike Zion, he won't be worried no more.*

*Wonder where my sister; wonder where she's gone.  
Somewhere sittin' in the kingdom, she won't be worried no more.*

*Lord, I'm troubled, troubled, troubled all about my soul.  
Just as soon as my feet strike Zion, I won't be troubled no more.*

*Wonder where my brother; wonder where he's gone.  
Somewhere sittin' in the kingdom, he won't be troubled no more.*

*Lord, I'm troubled, troubled, troubled all about my soul.  
Just as soon as my feet strike Zion, I won't be troubled no more.*

**John Lomax (spoken):** *This song was sung by Lillie Knox at the home of Mrs. Tom Chandler at Murrells Inlet, South Carolina, July the twelfth, nineteen-hundred-and-thirty-seven, for the benefit of the Library of Congress in Washington.*

19. **BYE-O-BABY** (1033 B1)

Sung by Tina "Mom" Russell. Recorded by John A. Lomax and Ruby Terrill Lomax in Murrells Inlet, South Carolina, on July 12, 1937.

A lullaby similar to this one can be heard on the Alabama volume of the "Deep River of Song" series (Rounder1829).

*Bye, oh, baby, bye,  
Bye, oh, baby, bye,  
Mamma's gone to the mailboat,  
Mamma's gone to the mailboat,  
Bye.*

*Go to sleepy, baby, bye,  
Go to sleepy, baby, bye,  
Mamma's gone to the mail boat,  
Mamma's gone to the mail boat,*

*Bye.*

**[Repeat stanza 2, repeat stanza 1]**

**Woman (possibly Ruby Terrill Lomax or Genevieve Chandler):** *This dodo was sung by “Mom” Tina Russell at Murrells Inlet, South Carolina., July the twelfth, nineteen-thirty-seven, at the home of Mrs. Chandler, for the benefit of the Library of Congress, Washington.*

20. **SHOO, ROBIN** (2723 A3)

Sung by Cecil, Martha, Edmond, and Robert Owens. Recorded by John A. Lomax and Ruby Terrill Lomax on June 10, 1939, in Clemson, South Carolina.

After a disappointing visit to Murrells Inlet in June 1939, John and Ruby Lomax traveled to Clemson, S.C., where they stayed at the home of the journalist Ben Robertson, Jr., who took them to a singing festival in Toccoa Falls, Georgia. This recording of the Owens family (listed in Dixon, Godrich, and Rye as the Owens Quartet) dates from this time. It appears to be a stylized quartet arrangement of a children’s or play-party song. The list of other titles that this family group recorded suggests that they specialized in this sort of material.

*Shoo, Robin, shoo, my Lord.*

*Shoo, Robin, shoo, my Lord.*

*Shoo, Robin, shoo, my Lord.*

*Shoo, Robin, shoo, my Lord.*

*Robin gone, won’t come no more.*

*Shoo, Robin, shoo my Lord.*

*Robin won’t come no more.*

*Shoo, Robin, shoo my Lord.*

*Shoo, Robin, shoo my Lord.*

*Shoo, Robin, shoo my Lord.*

*Shoo, Robin, shoo my Lord.*

*Shoo, Robin, shoo, my Lord.*

*Bird won’t come no more.*

*Shoo, Robin, shoo my Lord.*

*Bird won’t come no more.*

*Shoo, Robin, shoo, my Lord.*

*Shoo, Robin —*

21. **TEN POUND HAMMER** (1037 B2)

Sung by Mike Maybank, John White, Francis Gadsden, and Esau Sands. Recorded by John A. Lomax and Ruby Terrill Lomax in Murrells Inlet, South Carolina, on July 12,

1937.

Another fine example of the kind of work song sung by Mike Maybank and his ditching crew. Here and in the work songs on tracks 22, 23, and 24, the expression “hanh” is used to mark time and suggest the physical exertion of the work.

**Sung:**

*This is the hammer —*

**Mike Maybank (spoken):** *Don't stop till he say.*

**John A. Lomax:** *Go ahead.*

**Mike Maybank:** *Go ahead, John.*

**Sung:**

*This is the hammer — hanh —*

*Killed my partner — hanh —*

*Wouldn't kill me, buddy — hanh —*

*It wouldn't kill me.*

*Let's take this hammer — hanh —*

*Go 'round the mountain, yeah,*

*Comb your head, buddy, yeah,*

*Comb your head.*

*When you make a dollar — hanh —*

*Save you a quarter — hanh —*

*It gonna be cold, buddy,*

*And it's gonna be cold.*

*Now darling Cora — yeah,*

*When yuh comin' over — yeah,*

*Next pay day, buddy — yeah,*

*Next pay day.*

**Singer:** *Sing 'em right on.*

*This is the hammer — hanh —*

*Killed my partner — hanh —*

*Oh, it wouldn't kill me, buddy — hanh —*

*And it wouldn't kill me.*

*It's a ten pound hammer — hanh —*

*Killed John Henry — yeah —*

*It wouldn't kill me, buddy — hanh —*

*And it wouldn't kill me.*

22. **OH LORDY ME, OH LORDY MY** (265 B2)

Sung by J. M. Williams and group. Recorded by John A. Lomax and Alan Lomax at Reid State Farm in Boykin, South Carolina, on December 19, 1934.

Nothing is known about the performers of this prison work song. Their individual voices are so distinctive, however, that each one remains identifiable even as they blend in a rich harmony. (These prison inmates are all male, despite the presence of a strong, very high tenor in the mix.)

John A. Lomax recorded another version of this song four days earlier at a Georgia state prison farm (See *Georgia: I'm Gonna Make You Happy*, Rounder 1828–2, in the “Deep River of Song” series). The despair of the long-time prisoner is evident in this South Carolina version, in which the singers plead with the sun to *low down* (set) and end their work day.

*[... ] down, low down.*

*Lordy, my knees was sinking, and my shoulder done got sore.*

*Oh, black gal, (hanh) you don't know (hanh) the poor boy's mind (hanh).*

*Oh, black gal, (hanh) you don't know (hanh) the poor boy's mind (hanh).*

*And it's oh, Lordy me (hanh,) and oh (hanh), a-Lordy my (hanh).*

*Oh, black gal (hanh), you don't know (hanh) a-my mind (hanh).*

*Low down (hanh), please, sun (hanh), low down (hanh).*

*Lordy, my knees (hanh) was sinkin' (hanh),*

*And my shoulder got sore (hanh).*

*Low down (hanh), please, sun (hanh), low down (hanh).*

**John A. Lomax (spoken):** *This song was sung by the same group, but led by J. M. Williams, for the use of the Library of Congress in Washington, through the courtesy of Captain Glenn in South Carolina on December the nineteenth, nineteen-hundred-and-thirty-four.*

23. **I SURE CAN'T STAND IT LONG** (265 A2)

Sung by Luther Mack, Tommy Miller, William Long, and Julius Harmon. Recorded by John A. Lomax and Alan Lomax at Reid State Farm, Boykin, South Carolina, on December 19, 1934.

This work song belongs to the category of songs that developed in conjunction with such work as, “corn-husking, cotton-picking, hoeing, plowing, pea-picking, rice-thrashing, raising and carrying, rowing, [and] churning.” It utilizes the 12-bar AAB blues form but without the standard blues harmonic changes. The last syllable of each line is extended to replace the blues’ usual instrumental response, and the final line is the same in every

stanza, functioning as a refrain.

[ . . . ] *Blues run down on me.*

*It was late last night when the blues run down on me (hunh!).*

*Cryin' lovin', lovin' babe, I sho' can't stand it long (hunh-uh!).*

*Lawd, it's train time here, babe, the track's all outta line (hunh-uh!).*

*Yeah, the train-time here, babe, the track's all outta line (hunh!).*

*Cryin' lovin', lovin' babe, I sho' can't stand it long (hunh-uh!).*

*Lawd, [ if ] the third don' bring her, forty better not run, (hunh-uh!).*

*Yeah, if the third don' bring her, forty better not run, (hunh!).*

*Cryin' lovin', lovin' babe, I sho' can't stand it long (hunh-uh!).*

*Now, come here, rider, sit on your daddy's knee, (hunh-uh!).*

*Now, come here, rider, sit on your daddy's knee, (hunh!).*

*Cryin' lovin', lovin' babe, I sho' can't stand it long (hunh-uh!).*

*Said a freight train comin', the headlights swingin' low, (hunh-uh!).*

*Lord, a freight train comin', the headlights swingin' low, (hunh!).*

*Cryin' lovin', lovin' babe, I sho' can't stand it long (hunh-uh!).*

*It was late last night when the blues run down on me, (hunh-uh!).*

*It was late last night when the blues run down on me, (hunh!).*

*Cryin' lovin', lovin' babe, I sho' can't stand it long (hunh-uh!).*

*Lawd, I left my rider standin' in the back door cryin', (hunh-uh!).*

*Lawd, I left my rider standin' in the back door cryin', (hunh!).*

*Cryin' lovin', lovin' babe, I sho' can't stand it long (hunh-uh!).*

**Alan Lomax (spoken):** *These songs were sung on the Reid Farm, South Carolina, through the courtesy of Captain Glenn. The singers were: leader, Luther Mack, assisted by Tommy Miller, William Long, and Julius Harmon, linemen on that camp. December the nineteenth, nineteen-thirty-four.*

#### **24. LOOK DOWN THAT LONG LONESOME ROAD (267 B1)**

Sung by an unidentified prison group. Recorded by John A. Lomax and Alan Lomax at Reid State Farm in Boykin, South Carolina, on December 19, 1934.

Unlike “The Downward Road” (track 25, below) the text of this “road” song is less focused, reflecting the open-ended work-song style of composition, with verses that are not necessarily connected but drawn from a communal stock of poetic imagery or improvised on the spot. Versions of this song have been widely performed, variously as a gospel song, a blues, a popular inspirational tune, and a work song. Gene Austin had a very popular recording of it in 1927, but it appears to have existed in folk tradition earlier.

The version heard here is substantially different from Austin's.

*[...] my time, time so long.*

*Look down, look down, that long lonesome road,  
Where you and I, I must go.*

*Stand back, stand back, all you five, -ten cent men,  
Got a man knockin' on, on your door.*

*Hattie Belle, Hattie Belle, she's my own, own true love.  
Darlin', what have, have I done?*

**John A. Lomax (spoken):** *Good job!*

**25. TALLY RALLY DEVIL (705 A2)**

Sung by Willie James Skinner. Recorded by John A. Lomax at Reid State Farm in Boykin, South Carolina, on May 18, 1936.

An unusual prison song that shows traces of Appalachian or British influence in the line "I'm gonna buy me a tally rally devil," which bears an aural resemblance to the chorus of the play party song "Jennie Jenkins."

*Can you wear the tam? Shake a chain, oh, chain. [Var.: over there]*

*Can you wear the tam? Shake a chain.*

*If you can't wear the tam,*

*Put your curlers 'round your hand, [sometimes he sings "curlers on/in/back your hand"]*

*I'm gonna buy me a tally-rally devil, oh deacon says,*

*Come in the world, man. Chain, chain, oh, chain.*

**26. THE DOWNWARD ROAD (266 A2)**

Sung by Jim Williams and group. Recorded by John A. Lomax Reid State Farm in Boykin, South Carolina, on December 19, 1934.

A variant of this song was recorded by W. C. Elkins and his Dextra Singers in 1928, though perhaps without the urgency that these prisoners bring to it. It continued to be recorded in later years by the Staple Singers and other gospel groups. This version expresses the Christian's alienation from "the world," even from close family (only the singer's mother escapes censure).

**Chorus:**

*Well, the downward road is crowded, crowded, crowded,*

*Well, the downward road is crowded, with unbelievin' souls.*

*Now, my old father thought he was doin' mighty well,  
But when he come to find out, he done made up a bed in hell. (Chorus)*

*Now, look at my old lyin' sister, thought she was doin' mighty well,  
But when she come to find out, she done made up her bed in hell. (Chorus)*

*Now, look at my old cussin' brother, thought he was doin' mighty well,  
But when he come to find out, he done made up a bed in hell. (Chorus)*

*Now, look at my old dancin' cousin, thought he was doin' mighty well,  
But when he come to find out, he done made up a bed in hell. (Chorus)*

**John Lomax (spoken):** *All right. This song was led by Jim Williams, assisted by the same group that we've announced on two or three other records, which will be kept along with these for the use of the Library of Congress in Washington. The songs were sung on December the nineteenth, nineteen-thirty-four, on the prison state farm in charge of Captain Glenn of South Carolina.*

#### **27. WHERE IS THE GAMBLING MAN? (266 A1)**

Sung by Jim Williams and group. Recorded by John A. Lomax and Alan Lomax at Reid State Farm in Boykin, South Carolina, on December 19, 1934.

This song on a widespread folk theme was recorded by the Norfolk Jubilee Singers of Norfolk, Virginia in 1927, but the version heard here is uninfluenced by their recording. The song is particularly poignant coming from the mouths of men who had probably been no strangers to the gambling table.

*Well, a mother heard that her son was dyin',  
Said, "Lord, let me go."  
That boy done broke his mother heart.  
And she fell dead on the floor.*

#### **Chorus:**

*Cryin', Where is the gambling man?  
Tell me where the poor boy's gone.  
Tell me, "Where is the gambling man?  
Tell me where the poor boy's gone.*

*Now boys, oh boys, who have stood by me  
In all kinds of games,  
Say, now if you go and leave me,  
Well, you ought to be ashamed. (Chorus)*

*Well, the man, he gambled both night an' day;  
He gambled till the break of day;*

*Then he throwed his cards away,  
And these was the gambling words he said. (Chorus)*

*Well, a mother heard that her son was dyin';  
Said, "Lord, let me go."  
That boy done breaked this mother heart.  
And she fell dead on the floor. (Chorus)*

*Now boys, oh boys, who have stood by me  
All kinds of games  
Say, now, if you go and leave me,  
Well, you ought to be ashamed. (Chorus)*

*Now, this man, he gambled,  
Till the break of day.  
He got ashamed and throwed away,  
His dice and cards away. (Chorus)*

*Now boys, oh boys, who have stood by me  
All kinds of games,  
Said, now, if you go and leave me,  
Well, you ought to be ashamed. (Chorus)*

*These dice and card is burnin' my hand,  
I reknow [sic] it well.  
If you don't stop your gamblin' ways,  
I'll see you when you come in hell. (Chorus)*

**28. AIN'T BUT THE ONE TRAIN RUN THIS TRACK (ALL NIGHT LONG) (1026 B1)**

Sung by D. W. White and the Pearson's Funeral Home Choir. Recorded by John A. Lomax and Ruby Terrill Lomax in Columbia, South Carolina, on July 9, 1937.

A version of this song with a similar melody and refrain but completely different verses was recorded by Alan Lomax, Mary Elizabeth Barnicle, and Zora Neale Hurston in the Georgia Sea Islands in 1935. (See *Georgia, I'm Gonna Make You Happy*, Rounder 1828-2, in the "Deep River of Song" series).

*Ain't but the one train run this track, all night long,  
Ain't but the one train run this track, all night long,  
Oh, there ain't but the one train run this track, all night long.  
And who shall deliver poor me?*

*Run up to heaven and it run straight back, all night long (3X)  
And who shall deliver poor me?*



*Ain't but the one train run this track, all night long, (3X)  
And who shall deliver poor me?*

*Run up to heaven and it run straight back, all night long, (3X)  
And who shall deliver poor me?*

*Bought me a ticket and the train done gone, all night long, (3X)  
And who shall deliver poor me?*

*Ain't but the one train run this track, all night long, (3X)  
And who shall deliver poor me?*

**29. HONEY IN THE ROCK (1028 A1)**

Sung by D. W. White and the Pearson's Funeral Home Choir. Recorded by John A. Lomax and Ruby Terrill Lomax in Columbia, South Carolina, on July 9, 1937.

A. C. and Blind Mamie Forehand recorded a version of this spiritual in Memphis in 1927 for Victor Records. The Lomaxes made three other field recordings of versions in South Carolina.

In *Adventures of a Ballad Hunter*, John A. Lomax described this recording session:

*"Don't forget that I want another record of 'Honey in the Rock,' "* I told him. *"I'll git to that," he said; but it took him a long time.*

*More than two years before, Miss Terrill and I had recorded several spirituals sung by the Funeral Choir. It was a stifling hot night in August. The machine was in need of repair, the singers listless. But I had not forgotten the thrill of "Honey in the Rock."*

*The singers, twelve women and seven men, remained seated while they sang. Suddenly the leader stood up and raised his hand. Silence instantly followed. Without announcing the song, he blared forth on "Gonna Be a Time," with choir following close behind. Nowhere in my experience have I found so powerful a voice as D. W. White's. He led twelve songs at its tip-top. I returned to the far corner of the room with my microphone, yet still the needle slammed crazily about. Nor were matters helped much when I turned the face of the microphone away from him. Naturally the choir followed him and sang out too loud for my small microphone.*

*Yet I have always found that suggestions to folksingers, changes in their manner of rendition, are unfortunate — sometimes disastrous. It is better to turn them loose. At least you capture the spirit of their singing. In this instance, my patience was rewarded.*

*Finally, after ten new spirituals, the choir leader gave "Honey in the Rock." D. W. White said that his choir could sing more than a hundred spirituals. In this regard, it is*

*noteworthy that this unique group comes entirely from working people, including several Negro washerwomen, and they use no books.*

**Choir sings:**

*Honey in the rock. (It's honey in the rock.)*

*Honey in the rock. (It's honey in the rock.)*

*Well, I know it is honey in the rock.*

*Well, come and taste it, see what the Lord has done.*

*Oh, Lord, I know, it is honey in the rock.*

**John A. Lomax (spoken):** *That's perfect.*

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## **CREDITS**

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Every effort has been made to make these historic recordings sound as good as they did when they were made in the field. All transfers were made from the original source materials using the Prism 20-bit A-to-D converters and the Prism 20-bit Noise Shaping System.

## **DEEP RIVER OF SONG**

*Deep River,*

*Deep River, Lawd,*

*Deep River, Lawd,*

*I want to cross over in a ca'm time.*

—From *American Ballads and Folk Songs*, by John A. Lomax and Alan Lomax

More than half a century separates us from the performances in this series, and nearly all of the artists who gave them to us have “crossed over” in that time, leaving us these treasures in trust so that we might be delighted, informed, and edified by them. Each song tells its own story, but together they form an epic of a people seeking to ford a turbulent river of oppression and disadvantage, who gave us another life-giving river of untold depth and riches: a deep river of song from which all may draw.

It was this that John Lomax and his son Alan sought to preserve and document when they began their field recording for the Archive of American Folk Song at the Library of Congress in 1933. It was this same river that Alan Lomax sought to replenish when he and Peter B. Lowry reviewed more than a thousand field recordings of black music made by the Lomaxes in the South, the Southwest, Haiti, and the Bahamas.

Alan Lomax spent the summer of 1978 in Mississippi with John Bishop and Worth Long, shooting the program *Land Where the Blues Began*. “I discovered to my consternation that the rich traditions which my father and I had documented had virtually disappeared,” he wrote. “Most young people, caught up by TV and the hit parade, simply did not know anything about the black folklore that their forebears had produced and which had sustained and entertained generations of Americans. I resolved to try and do something about this situation, so far as I could.”

Lomax and Lowry eventually compiled 12 albums at the Library of Congress, with more planned; these were “organized in a way that might help to show blacks and other Americans the beauty, variety, the regional traits and African characteristics of this great

body of song.” These albums bear witness to a transformative moment when a new singing language, new musical forms, and thousands of songs that belong in the first rank of human melodies were created. They evoke now vanished musical worlds, showing how black style developed as settlement moved westward from the Carolinas to Texas and how regional styles branched forth along the way.

“[This music is] a thing of very great beauty—a monument to the extraordinary creativity of the black people of North America,” Lomax wrote. “No song style exists anywhere that can surpass this material for sheer variety, originality, and charm. Yet its most genuine aspects are little known today and are fast fading out of currency under the pound of the media.” He hoped that this series could help “restore to the American consciousness, and especially African-Americans, a heritage that is about to be altogether lost.” Perhaps now, as we have crossed over into the twenty-first century, we are close enough to the “ca’m time” of songs and dreams for this restoration to take place.