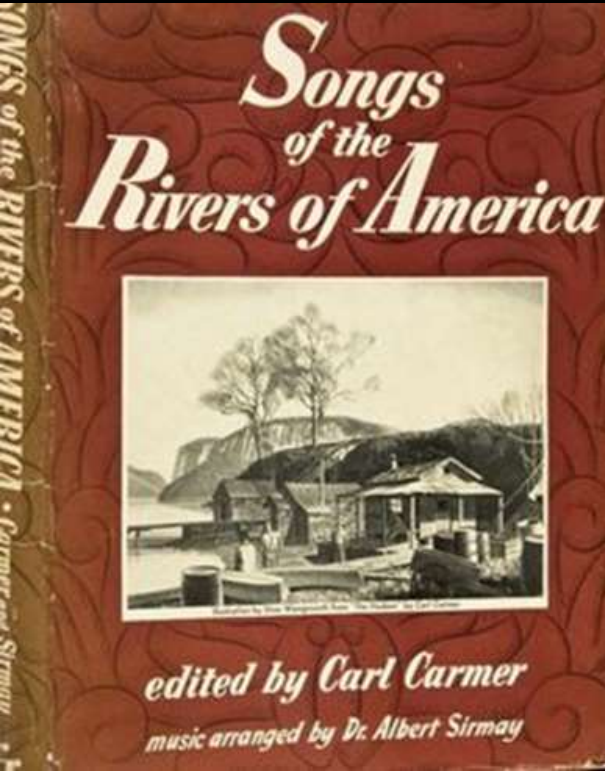




# Water Music: American Music and Rivers

Kevin M. Anderson, Ph.D.  
Austin Water – Center for Environmental Research



# Bayou Home

William Grant Still  
Arranged by Lisa Still



# Classical Music?

William Grant Still  
Afro American Symphony  
Kaintuck' • Dismal Swamp

Olly Wilson: Expansions III

Richard Fields, piano  
Cincinnati Philharmonia Orchestra  
Jindong Cai, conductor



CRC 2331



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LONDON *ffrr*  
STEREO Treasury SERIES

## THE BLUE DANUBE

STRAUSS

VIENNA PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA/KRIPS



# British Music?

## Riverman - Nick Drake 1969

Going to see the river man  
Going to tell him all I can  
About the ban  
On feeling free.

If he tells me all he knows  
About the way his river flows  
I don't suppose  
It's meant for me.

Oh, how they come and go  
Oh, how they come and go.



# “American” Music – Latin America?

“The Waters of March” (Aguas de Março) 1972

Antônio Carlos Jobim (1927 – 1994)

Afloat, adrift,  
A flight, a wing,  
A hawk, a quail,  
The promise of spring  
And the riverbank talks  
of the waters of March,  
It's the promise of life  
It's the joy in your heart

A sliver of glass,  
A life, the sun,  
A knife, a death,  
The end of the run

And the riverbank talks  
of the waters of March,  
It's the end of all strain,  
It's the joy in your heart.



# North American Music and Rivers

- Genres
- (Classical)
- Work Songs
- Prison Songs
- Spirituals/Hymns
- Blues
- Cowboy
- Folk
- Old Time/Traditional
- Jazz
- Bluegrass
- Country
- Americana
- Rock



# Human/Cultural Geography of Rivers

- Flowing
- Flooding
- Crossing
- Wading
- Baptizing
- Washing
- Swimming
- Drowning
- Sitting
- Fishing
- Hunting
- Boating
- Rafting
- Drifting

- Bottomland
- Bed
- Banks
- Levees
- Canals
- Boats
- Ferries
- Rafts
- Bridges



## Smithsonian Folkways Recordings Classics Series



# The Geography of Flowing Water

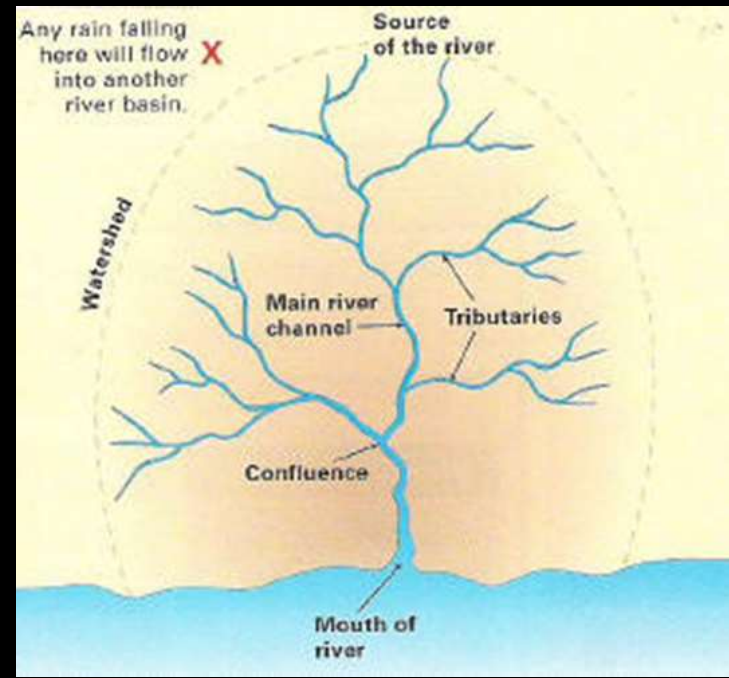
## Watershed – Across the Great Divide

Kate Wolf (1942 – 1986)

He's gone away in yesterday  
Now I find myself on the mountainside  
Where the rivers change direction  
Across the Great Divide

The finest hour that I have seen  
Is the one that comes between  
The edge of night and the break of day  
It's when the darkness rolls away

And it's gone away in yesterday  
Now I find myself on the mountainside  
Where the rivers change direction  
Across the Great Divide



# Fluvial Language - River Names and Naming

“American Rivers” 2009

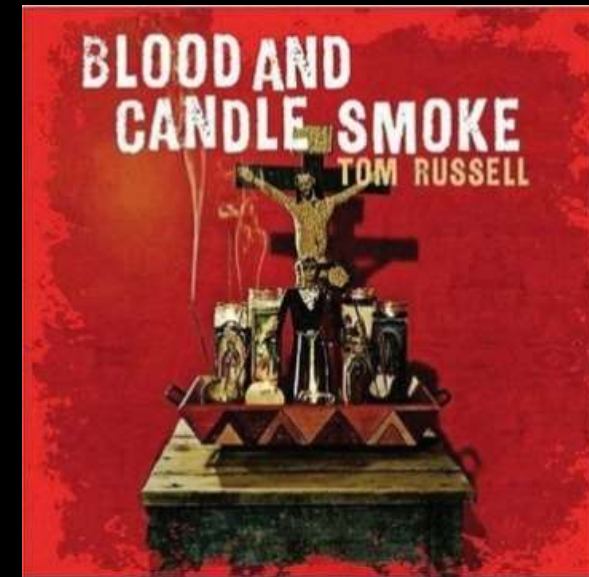
Tom Russell

We named'em for Indians, our guilt to forsake  
The Delaware, the Blackfoot, the Flathead and Snake  
Now they flow past casinos and old hamburger stands

Past towns gone to bankers past fields gone to seed  
All cut up and carved out so divided by greed  
And old grandfather catfish with his whiskers so long  
And his life in a struggle cuz the oxygen's gone

And it's mama I miss you, I woke up and screamed  
American rivers roll deep through my dreams  
Colorado, Allegheny, Shenandoah, Sus-qua-hay-nee  
And the Wabash and the Hudson and the brave Rio Grande  
I was a kid there, asleep in sand, near your waters...

Tom Russell - “Rivers are something mystical that cut through the hard landscape. They come from up above and go somewhere else. Rivers seem to be like a good melody. They're always moving. The river runs by; our problems are transient. Our problems are like sticks in the river.”



# Naming – Songs as Maps “The Texas Rivers Song” (Down by the Brazos)

Lend me your hand  
Li, li, li, le, le, le  
Lend me your hand  
There's many a river  
That waters the land  
Now the fair Angelina  
Runs glossy and gliding  
the crooked Colorado  
Runs weaving and winding  
The slow San Antonio  
Courses and plains  
But I never will walk  
By the Brazos again

She kissed me and she hugged me  
And she called me her dandy  
The Trinity's muddy  
But the Brazos quick sandy  
She kissed me and she hugged me  
And she called me her own  
But down by the Brazos  
She left me alone

We crossed the wild Pecos  
We forded the Nueces  
We swum the Guadalupe  
And we followed the Brazos  
Red River runs rusty  
The Wichita clear  
But down by the Brazos  
I courted my dear

Butch and Rory Hancock



Rivers of Song:  
Musical Stories  
Flow Through  
Texas Waterways  
December 2015





# The Brazos

## Ain't no more cane on the Brazos

Oh, oh, oh, oh...

Its all been ground down to molasses

Oh, oh- oh, oh- oh...

You shoulda been on the river in 1910

They were driving the women

Just like they drove the men.

Go down old Hannah, don'cha rise no more

Don't you rise up til judgment day's for sure

Ain't no more cane on the Brazos

Its all been ground down to molasses

Captain, don't you do me like you done poor old shine

Well ya drove that bully til he went stone blind

Wake up on a lifetime, hold up your own head

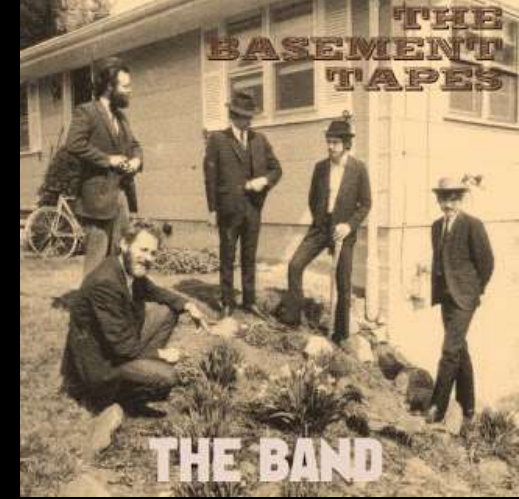
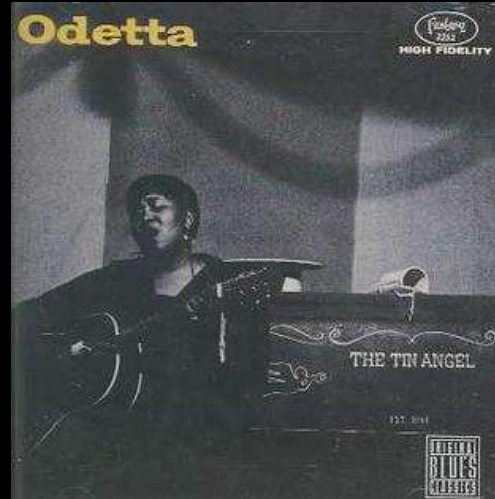
Well you may get a pardon and then you might drop dead

Ain't no more cane on the Brazos

Its all been ground down to molasses.

Jimmy LaFave - Texas River Songs Webpage

Texas Parks and Wildlife Magazine



# The Brazos and American Music

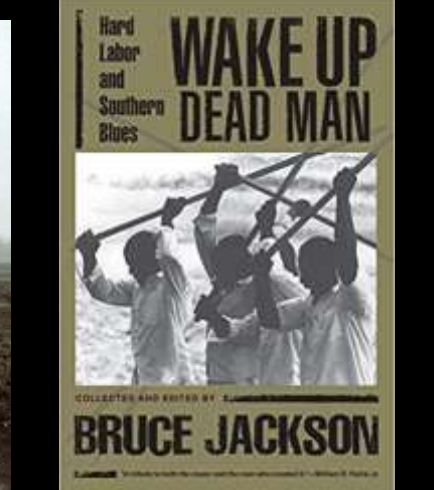
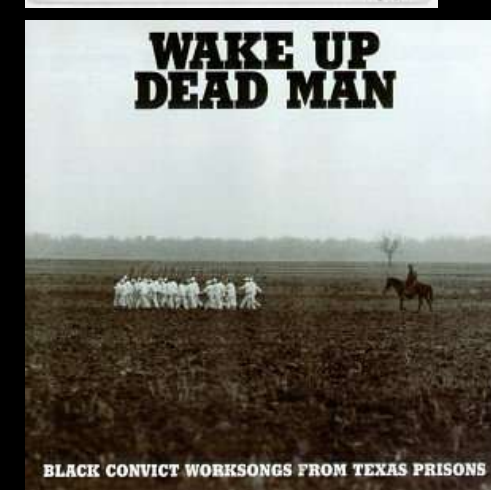
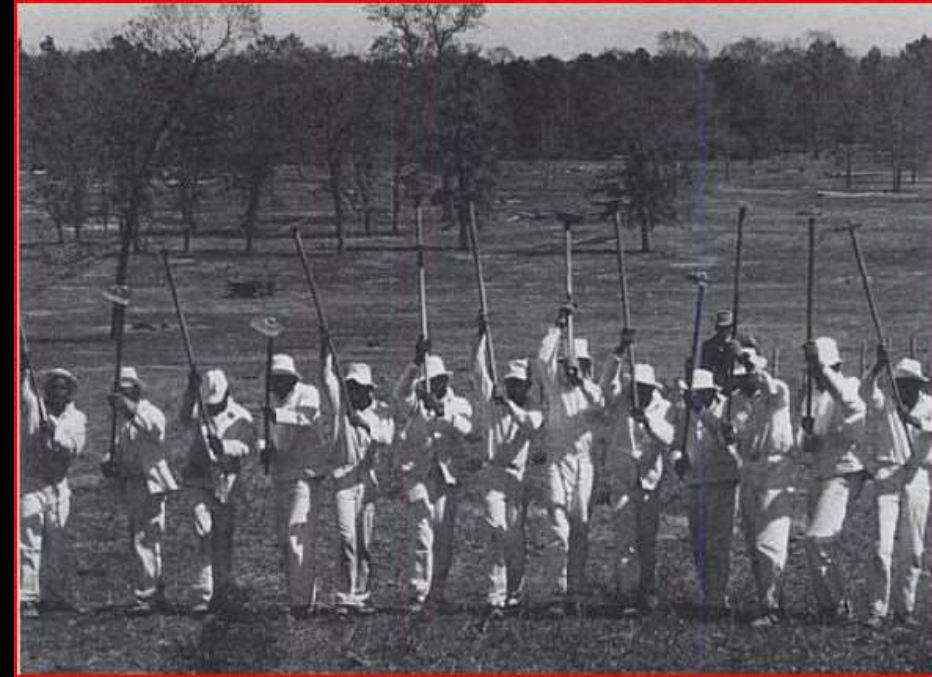
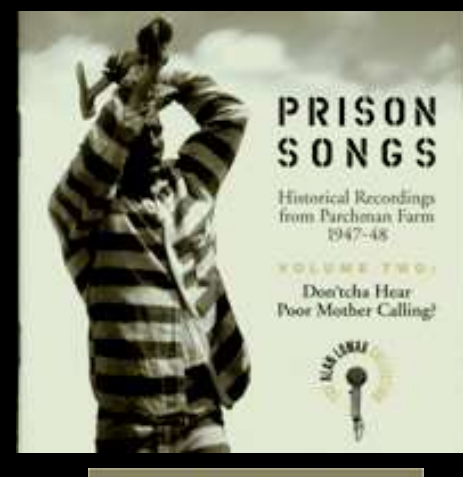
## Texas Prison and Work Songs

John A. Lomax (1867-1948)  
and, his sons, John Jr. and Alan Lomax

African American Prison Songs and Work Songs

*Deep River of Song* subset of Rounder Records  
Alan Lomax Collection series

*Deep River of Song: Big Brazos*  
*Texas Prison Recordings, 1933 and 1934*  
Rounder Records



# Naming – Which River is Which?

## “Another Colorado”

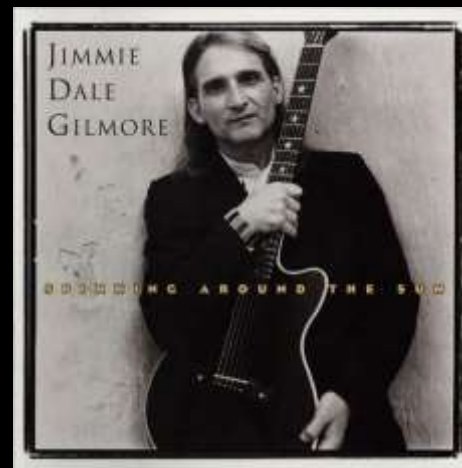
Jimmie Dale Gilmore

Down by the banks of the Colorado  
My true love and I one night did lie  
And we laughed and played and made fun  
Of the entire world spinning 'round the sun  
Down by the banks of the Colorado

Up from the banks of the Colorado  
Night watchmen stood guard 'round the wagon yard  
And I took a pillar for a sign  
That the salt of the earth was surely mine  
Up from the banks of the Colorado

There is another Colorado  
Wise men have told me, wise women too  
That I may find sweet El Dorado  
Down by the banks of one sweet Colorado

Down by the banks of the Colorado  
The years flowed softly before my eyes  
And the circus joined me in my quest  
And stayed with me throughout my test  
Down by the banks of the Colorado



1993



# Human/Cultural Geography of American Rivers - History and Folkways

## *The Rivers of America Series 1937-1974*

Catalogue - 64

### *Rivers of America Series*



*Burkwood Books*

Box 172, Urbana, IL 61803

## *The Rivers of America Series 1937-1974*

"The natural rhythm moving the pioneer life of America forward was the rhythm of flowing water. It is as the story of American rivers that the folk sagas will be told."

- Constance Lindsay Skinner creator of the Rivers of America series

Initiated in the mid-1930s during the depth of the Great Depression, the series planned to trace the history and folkways of the United States through its great rivers.

Initially projected as a series of twenty-four volumes, it developed into a series of 64 titles from the first title in 1937 to the last title in 1974.



(1942)

Published along with the series making it the 65<sup>th</sup> book.

# *Songs of the Rivers of America*



Illustration by Stow Wengenroth from "The Hudson" by Carl Carmer

*edited by Carl Carmer*  
*music arranged by Dr. Albert Sirmay*

# The Geographer's Dilemma – Regions and Topics

Regional focus – East, South, West (but no North)

- Puts the Mississippi in South
- Puts the Ohio in West

Topical categories

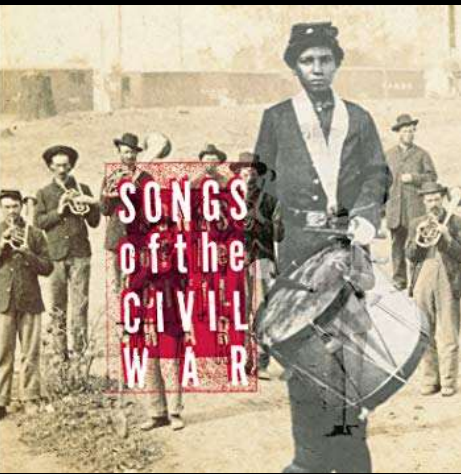
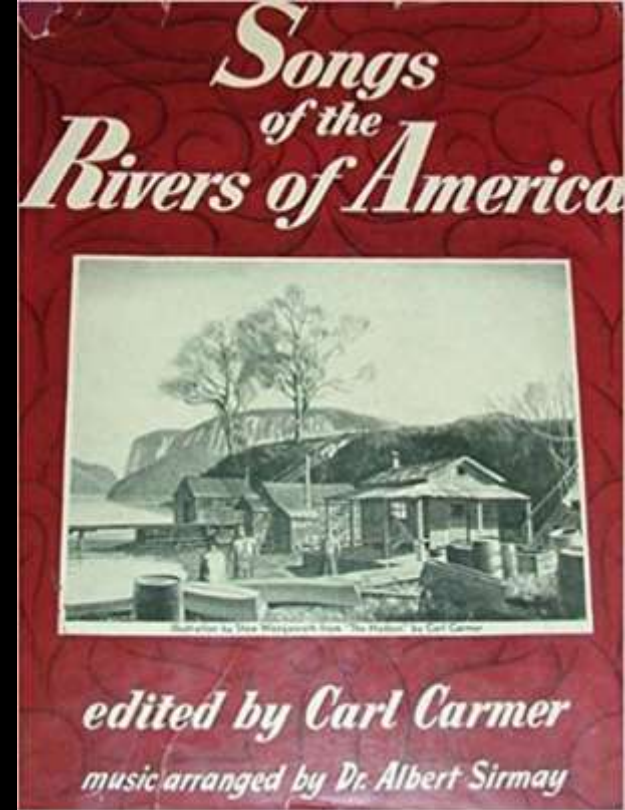
- Folk songs about work, crimes, floods
- Songs of “nostalgic yearning” *Red River Valley*
- Songs of “historical content” battles, people
- Minstrel songs – Stephen C. Foster *Old Folks at Home*

Way down along the Swanee (Suwanee) river

Far, far away

There's where my heart is turning ever

There's where the old folks stay



Stephen C. Foster  
1826-1864



M. 456 870

**CHRISTY'S MELODIES**

AS COMPOSED AND SUNG BY THEM,  
OF THEIR COMPANY, WITH DISTINGUISHED SUCCESS.

*E. P. Christy*

NEW YORK: Published by LEWIS & CLARK, 149 NASSAU ST. BROTHERS, 183 Broadway.

Printed by Wm. C. Brown, 183 Broadway.

1. MISS MARY JENNINGS DE LAY  
2. CHAS. COOK POLKA  
3. MARSHALL LARKIN  
4. MR. POLLYY GULLER 1ST  
5. ANDREW DUFFY 2ND  
6. LITTLE OF THE HILLARY

7. JIMMY'S WALKING  
8. MY PRETTY VIRGINIA GAL  
9. DANCE TO ALABAMA  
10. BIRD'S NEST  
11. WALK IN THE PARKER  
12. CHRISTY'S NEW SONG TO THE BRIDE  
13. CHRISTY'S POLKA  
14. FREDDY'S POLKA

1854  
234

FIFTEENTH EDITION.

**Old Folks at Home,**  
ETHIOPIAN MELODY,  
AS SUNG BY  
**CHRISTY'S MINSTRELS.**  
WRITTEN AND COMPOSED BY  
**E. P. CHRISTY.**

DO & MA. P. 20.

NEW YORK:  
PUBLISHED BY FIRTH, FOND & CO., No. 1 FRANKLIN SQUARE,  
PITTSBURGH, B. KLEBER.

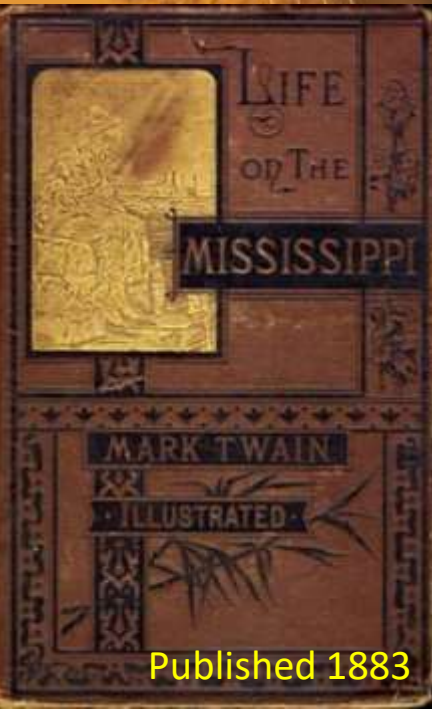
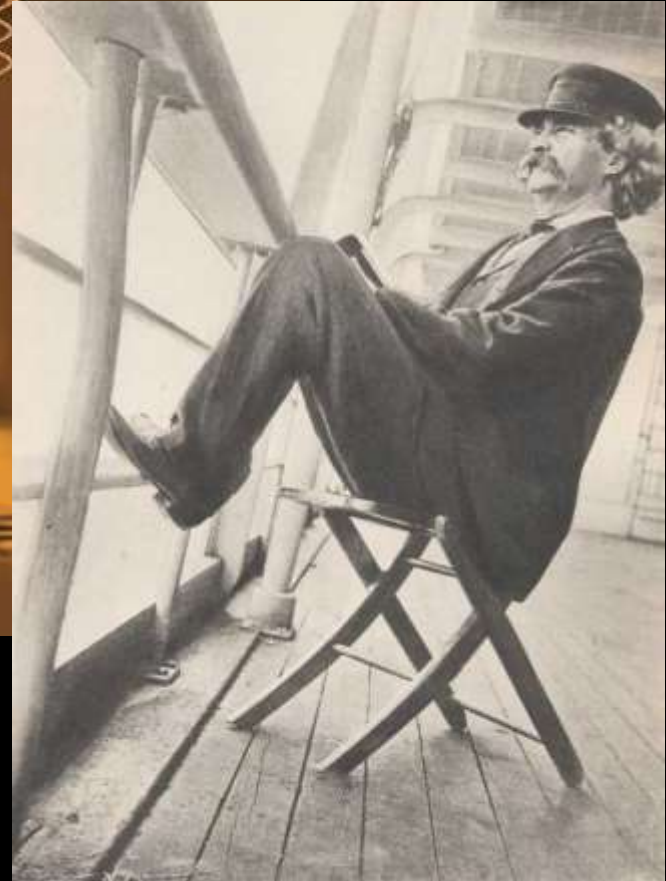
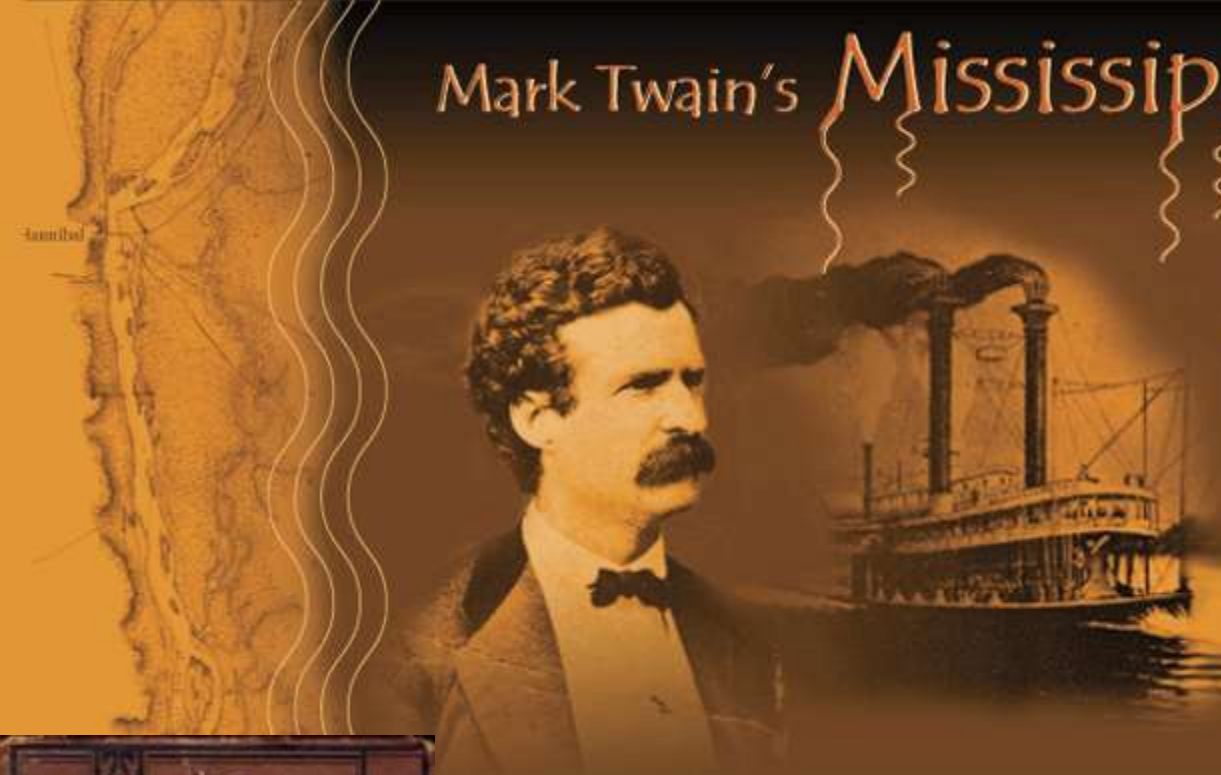
Entered according to Act of Congress, in 1854, by E. P. Christy, in the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the Southern District of New York.





# Mark Twain's *Mississippi*

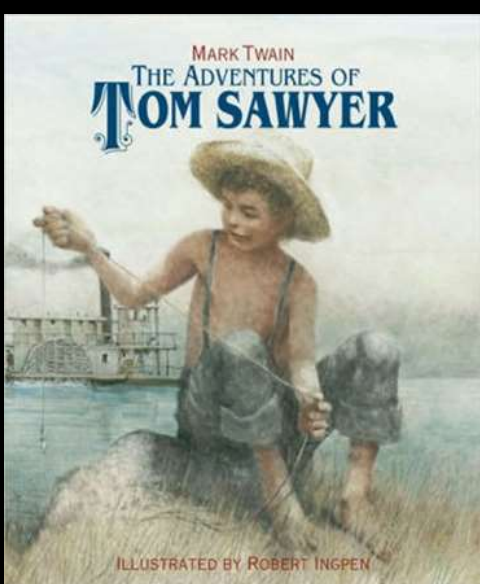
Mark Twain 1835-1910



## River of Innocence and Experience

“BUT the basin of the Mississippi is the BODY OF THE NATION. All the other parts are but members, important in themselves, yet more important in their relations to this.”

Published 1883



# Innocence - The Raft and Drifting

Black Water – The Doobie Brothers 1974

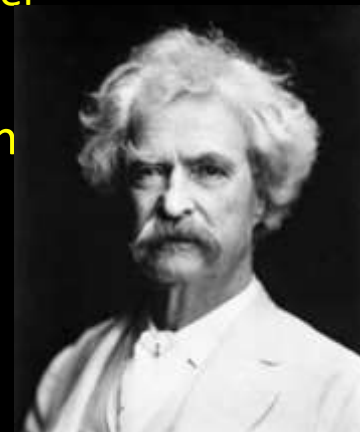
Written and Sung by Patrick Simmons "my childhood imaginings of the South from reading Huckleberry Finn and Tom Sawyer"

Well, I built me a raft and she's ready for floatin'  
Ol' Mississippi, she's callin' my name  
Catfish are jumpin'

That paddle wheel thumpin'  
Black water keeps rollin' on past just the same

Old black water, keep on rollin'  
Mississippi moon, won't you keep on shinin' on me  
Yeah, keep on shinin' your light

Gonna make everything, pretty mama  
Gonna make everything all right  
And I ain't got no worries  
'Cause I ain't in no hurry at all



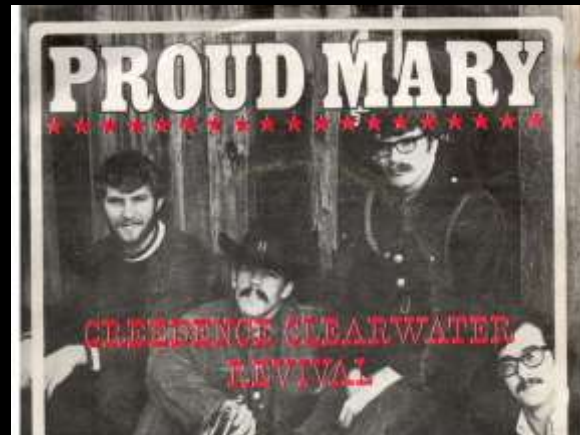
# Experience - Steamboats and Rivers

## “Proud Mary”

Written by John Fogerty - Creedence Clearwater Revival, *Bayou Country* 1969

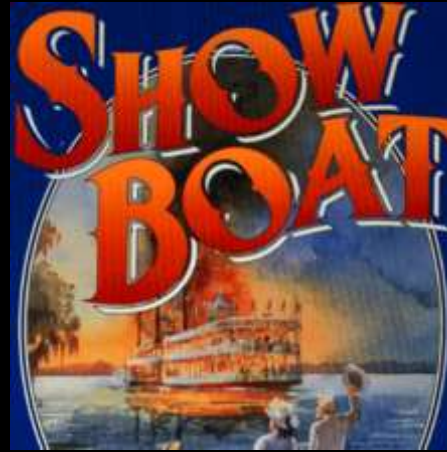


If you come down to the river  
Bet you gonna find some people who live  
You don't have to worry  
'cause if you got no money  
People on the river are happy to give  
Big wheel keep on turnin'  
Proud Mary keep on burnin'  
Rollin', rollin', rollin' on the river



# Broadway – Show Boat 1927

- Jerome Kern and Oscar Hammerstein follows the lives of the performers, stagehands and dock workers on the Cotton Blossom, a Mississippi River show boat, from 1887 to 1927
- It "was a radical departure in musical storytelling, marrying spectacle with seriousness"
- Boldly portrayed racial issues and was the first racially integrated musical and to seriously depict an interracial marriage
- The character Joe, the stevedore who sings "Ol' Man River", was written specifically by Kern and Hammerstein for Paul Robeson
- Paul Whiteman Orchestra's 1928 recording of "Ol' Man River" with Paul Robeson on vocals



Ol' man river  
That ol' man river  
He don't say nothing  
But he must know something  
Cause he just keeps rolling  
He keeps rolling along  
Rollin' along

I gets weary  
Sick of trying  
I'm tired of living  
Feared of dying  
But ol' man river  
He's rolling along

# Early (White) Jazz, Rivers, and American Popular Music

## Paul Whiteman Orchestra

"Riverboat Shuffle", recorded by Bix Beiderbecke, which became a staple of jazz and Hoagy Carmichael's first recorded song.



Up a lazy river by the old mill run  
Lazy, lazy river in the noon day sun  
Linger awhile in the shade of the tree  
Throw away your troubles,  
Dream a dream of me  
(lyrics by Sidney Arodin)



## Moon River 1960

Music Henry Mancini  
Lyrics Johnny Mercer

*(I'm An Old Cowhand from the Rio Grande 1936)*

Moon River, wider than a mile,  
I'm crossing you in style some day.  
Oh, dream maker, you heart breaker,  
Wherever you're going, I'm going your way.  
Two drifters off to see the world.  
There's such a lot of world to see.  
We're after the same rainbow's end,  
Waiting 'round the bend,  
My huckleberry friend,  
Moon River and me.

# African American – Spirituals, Peace and Rivers

Deep river, my home is over Jordan  
 Deep river, Lord, I want to cross over into campground  
 Oh, don't you want to go to that Gospel-feast?  
 That Promised Land, where all is peace?

Down by the riverside;  
 Going to lay down  
 my sword and shield,  
 Down by the riverside,  
 Going to study war no more.

*Respectfully dedicated to Miss Mary Jordan*

## Deep River

Old Negro melody  
 Arranged by  
 H. T. BURLEIGH

*Lento*

Voice

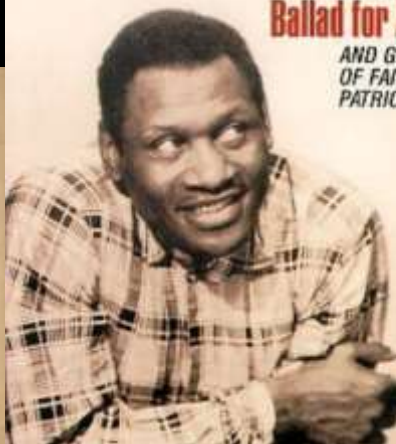
Piano

Deep riv - er, my  
 home is o - ver Jor - dan, Deep  
 riv - er, Lord, I want to cross o - ver it - to camp-ground.

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## PAUL ROBESON

THE ORIGINAL RECORDING OF  
**Ballad for Americans**  
 AND GREAT SONGS  
 OF FAITH, LOVE AND  
 PATRIOTISM



## Louis Armstrong

### Down By The Riverside



## Down by the Riverside

Traditional African-American Spiritual  
 Arranged by ROLLO DILWORTH

Upbeat Gospel Swing (♩ = 132) (♩ = 3/4)

Repeat 3 times  
 Sing 1st and 3rd times

Part 1 *mf*

Gon - na lay down my sword and shield, down by the  
 join hands with ev - 'ry - one, down by the  
 riv - er - side, down by the riv - er - side, down by the  
 riv - er - side, down by the riv - er - side,  
 Gon - na lay down my sword and shield,  
 Gon - na join hands with ev - 'ry - one,  
 down by the riv - er - side, and stud - y war no more,  
 down by the riv - er - side, and stud - y war no more.  
 I ain't gon - na stud - y war no more, I ain't gon - na  
 stud - y war no more, stud - y war no  
 more, I ain't gon - na stud - y war no more, I ain't gon - na  
 stud - y war no more, stud - y war no  
 more.

1, 2 Sing 3rd time 3  
 more (Gon - na) more

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# Spirituals – “Down in the River to Pray”

As I went down in the river to pray  
 Studying about that good old way  
 And who shall wear the starry crown  
 Good Lord show me the way  
 Oh sisters let's go down  
 Let's go down come on down

Oh sisters let's go down  
 Down to the river to pray

As I went down in the river to pray  
 Studyin' about that good ole way and who  
 Shall wear the robe and crown good lord show me the way  
 O brothers let's go down, let's go down come on down  
 Come on brothers let's go down, down in the river to pray



**DOWN IN THE RIVER TO PRAY**  
*Gospel*  
 J.B. Voines

F C F

1. As I went down in the ri-ver to pray Stu-dy-ing a-bout that good old way And  
 who shall wear the star-ry crown Good Lord show me the way Oh sis-ters let's go down  
 Let's go down come on down Oh sis-ters let's go down Down in the ri-ver to pray

2. As I went down in the river to pray  
 Studying about that good old way  
 And who shall wear the robe and crown  
 Good Lord show me the way  
 Oh brothers let's go down  
 ...

3. As I went down in the river to pray  
 Studying about that good old way  
 And who shall wear the starry crown  
 Good Lord show me the way  
 Oh fathers let's go down  
 ...

4. As I went down in the river to pray  
 Studying about that good old way  
 And who shall wear the robe and crown  
 Good Lord show me the way  
 Oh mothers let's go down  
 ...

5. As I went down in the river to pray  
 Studying about that good old way  
 And who shall wear the starry crown  
 Good Lord show me the way  
 Oh sinners let's go down  
 ...

6. As I went down in the river to pray  
 Studying about that good old way  
 And who shall wear the robe and crown  
 Good Lord show me the way



# Spirituals – “Wade in the Water” (Traditional)

Perhaps instructions to fugitive slaves on how to avoid capture and the route to take to successfully make their way to freedom - leaving dry land and taking to the water as a strategy to throw pursuing bloodhounds off one's trail.



Wade in the Water, Wade in the Water, Children.  
Wade in the Water. God's gonna trouble the water.

If you hear tell of me dying, I don't want nobody to cry.  
All I want you to do for me is just to close my dying eyes

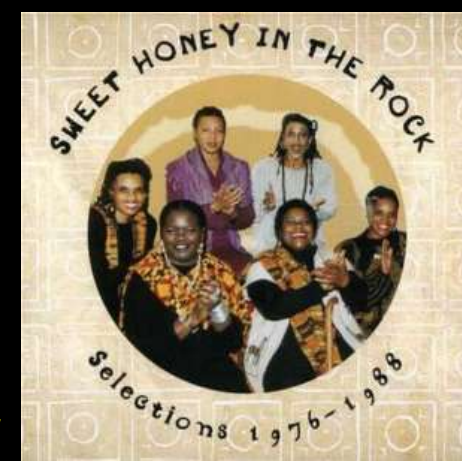
In my dying hour, I don't want nobody to mourn.  
All I want you to do for me is just give that bell a tone.

When I'm getting lonely. Well, I'm gonna shake my mother's hand  
I'm gonna tell her all about my troubles while travelling through this land

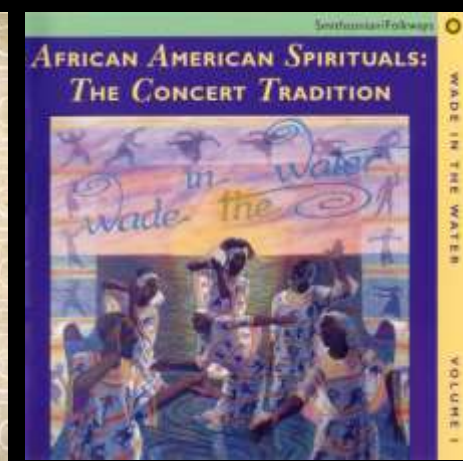


1995

Bernice Johnson Reagon  
Sweet Honey in the Rock 1976



Smithsonian Folkways – Wade in the Water Series  
African American Sacred Music Traditions Vol. I-IV





# The Sacred River

## River Hymn – The Band 1971

The ladies would put the baskets on the table  
And the men would sit beneath a shady tree  
The children would listen to a fable  
While something else came through to me  
The river got no end, just roll around the bend  
Then pretty soon the women would all join in  
On the river hymn...

The whole congregation was standing  
on the banks of the river  
We are gathered here to give a little thanks

The voice of the rapids will echo  
And ricochet like an old water well  
Who'd ever want to let go  
Once you sit beneath its spell  
It's dark and wide and deep,  
towards the sea it creeps  
I'm so glad I brought along my mandolin  
To play the river hymn...



# Sacred and Secular "Take Me to the River" 1974

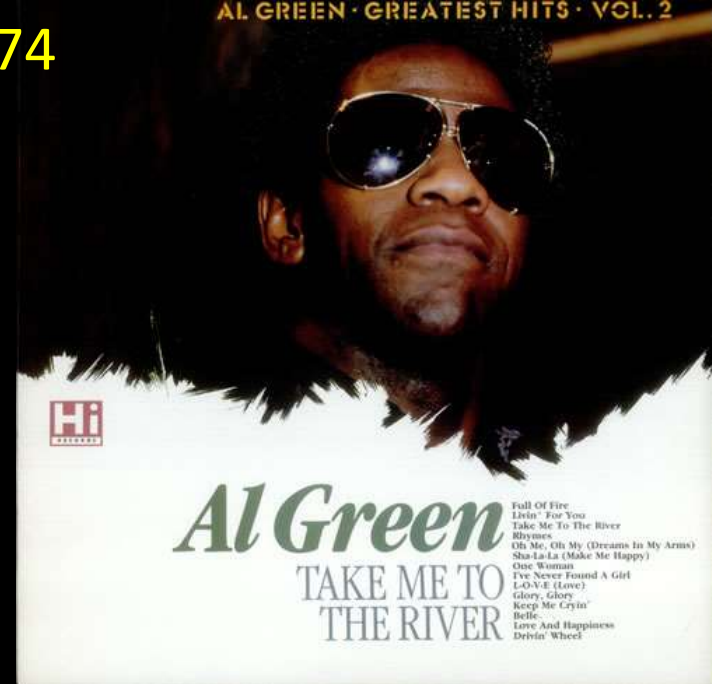
Al Green and Mabon Hodges

I don't know why I love you like I do  
 After all these changes that you put me through  
 You stole my money and my cigarettes  
 And I haven't seen hide nor hair of you yet

Take me to the river  
 And wash me down  
 Won't you cleanse my soul  
 Put my feet on the ground

I don't know why I love you like I do  
 After all the things that you put me through  
 The sixteen candles burning on my wall  
 Turning me into the biggest fool of them all

I wanna know  
 Oh won't you tell me  
 Am I in love to stay?  
 Won't you wash me in the water  
 Wash me in the water



# River Journey – Life and Love

“Many Rivers to Cross” 1969



Many rivers to cross  
And it's only my will that keeps me alive  
I've been licked, washed up for years  
And I merely survive because of my pride

And this loneliness won't leave me alone  
It's such a drag to be on your own  
My woman left me and she didn't say why  
Well, I guess I'll have to cry

Many rivers to cross  
But just where to begin I'm playing for time  
There have been times I find myself  
Thinking of committing some dreadful crime

Yes, I've got many rivers to cross  
And I merely survive because of my will...

# River Journey – Love, Heartbreak and Rivers

## “Big River” 1958

Now I taught the weeping willow how to cry,  
And I showed the clouds how to cover up a clear blue sky.  
And the tears that I cried for that woman  
are gonna flood you Big River.

Then I'm gonna sit right here until I die.

I met her accidentally in St. Paul (Minnesota).

And it tore me up every time I heard her drawl, Southern drawl.

Then I heard my dream was back Downstream cavortin' in Davenport,  
And I followed you, Big River, when you called.

Then you took me to St. Louis later on (down the river).

A freighter said she's been here but she's gone, boy, she's gone.

I found her trail in Memphis, but she just walked up the block.

She raised a few eyebrows and then she went on down alone.

Now, won't you batter down by Baton Rouge, River Queen, roll it on.

Take that woman on down to New Orleans, New Orleans.

Go on, I've had enough, dump my blues down in the gulf.

She loves you, Big River, more than me.



# River Metaphor – Life and Love

## The Female Response

“Cry Me a River”

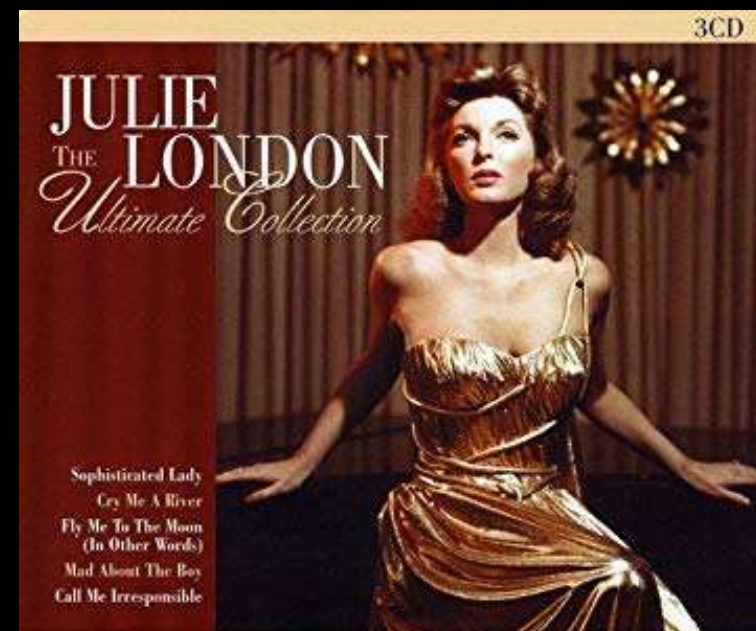
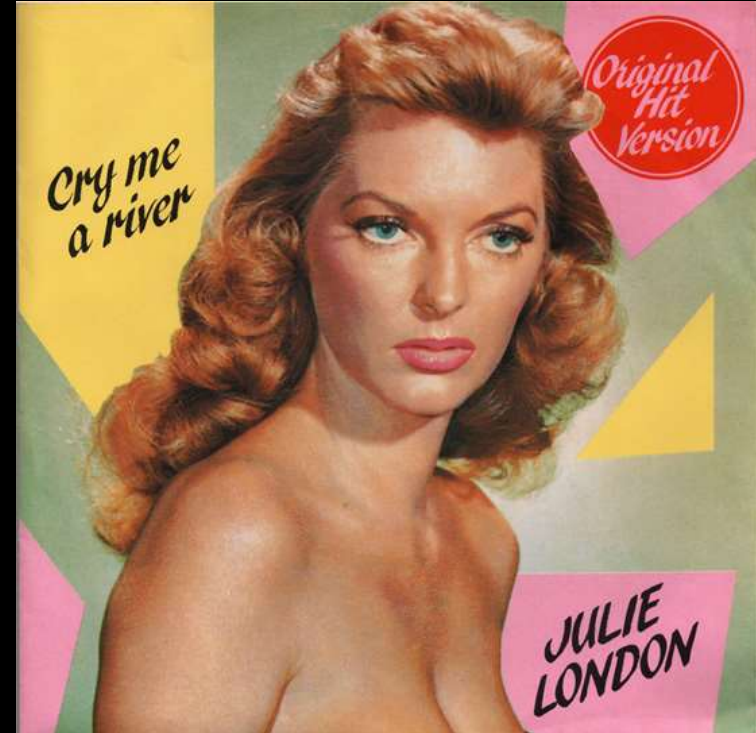
Written by Arthur Hamilton 1953

Julie London, 1955

Now you say you're sorry  
For being so untrue  
Well, you can cry me a river, cry me a river  
I cried a river over you

You drove me, nearly drove me out of my head  
While you never shed a tear  
Remember, I remember all that you said  
Told me love was too plebeian  
Told me you were through with me and

Now you say you love me  
Well, just to prove you do  
Come on and cry me a river, cry me a river  
I cried a river over you



# River Metaphor – Self Destructive Male Response

## Life and Love and Whiskey

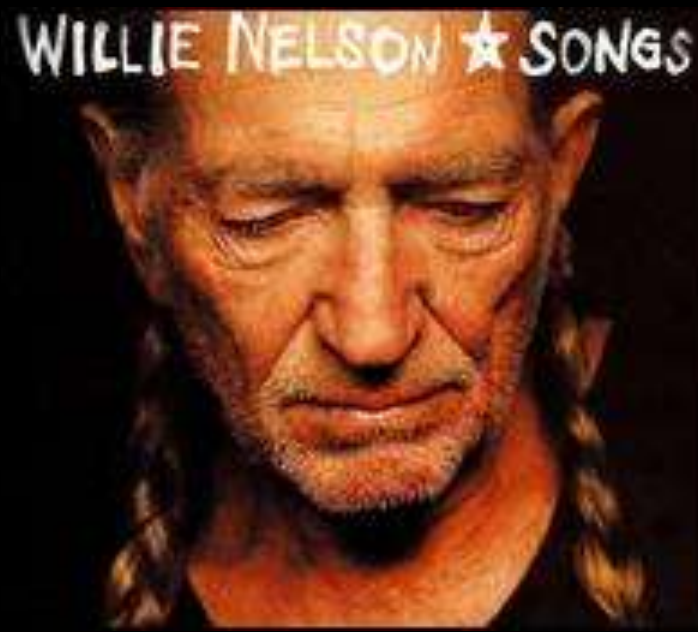
“Whiskey River” 1972

Songwriter - Johnny Bush

Whiskey River take my mind  
Don't let her memory torture me  
Whiskey River don't run dry  
You're all I've got, take care of me

I'm drowning in a whiskey river  
Bathin' my memory's mind in the wetness of its soul  
Feeling the amber current flowing from my mind  
To a warm and empty heart you left so cold

Whiskey River take my mind  
Don't let her memory torture me  
Whiskey River don't run dry  
You're all I've got, take care of me



# A Shadowed Place – Self Destructive Response Drowning

“Going to the River” 1953

Fats Domino and Dave Bartholomew

I'm goin' to the river,  
Gonna jump overboard and drown  
Because the girl I love  
She just done let me down

Now when she left me,  
I bowed my head and cried  
When she left me,  
I bowed my head and cried  
I never thought I would be,  
I would be the one to cry

If you see my mama,  
Tell her good-bye for me  
If you see my mama,  
Tell her good-bye for me  
I'm tired of livin'  
Livin' in misery

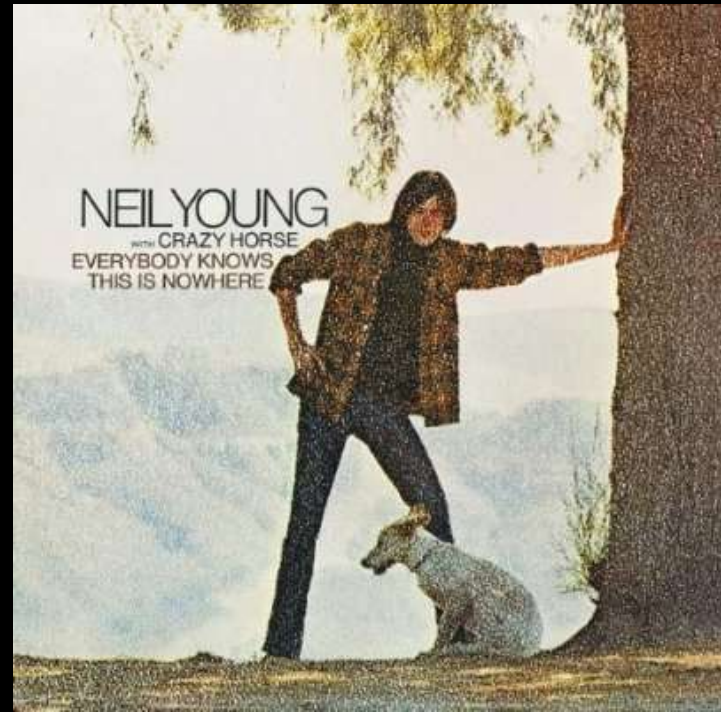
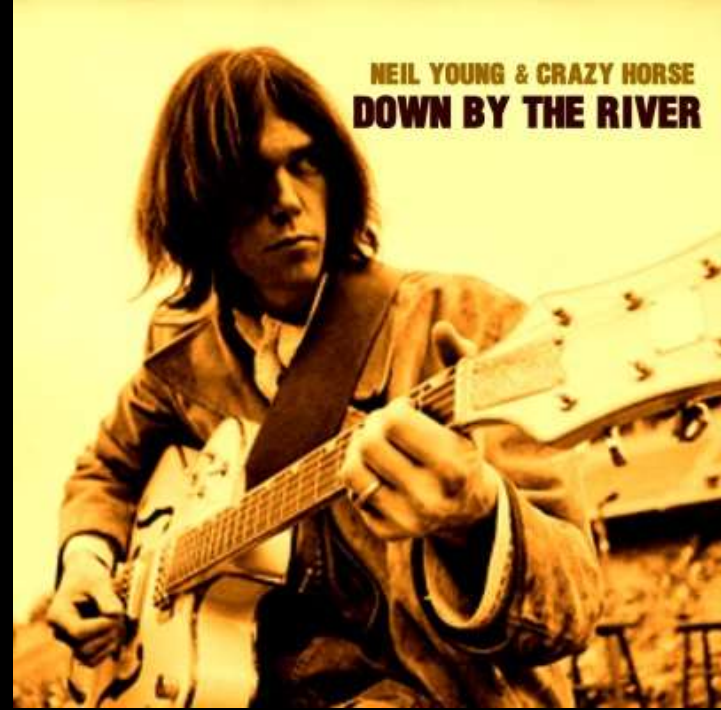


# Shadowed Place – Love and Murder

“Down By The River” – Neil Young 1969

Be on my side, I'll be on your side, baby  
There is no reason for you to hide  
It's so hard for me, staying here all alone  
When you could be taking me for a ride  
Yeah, She could drag me over the rainbow  
And send me away  
Down by the river  
I shot my baby  
Down by the river

You take my hand, I'll take your hand.  
Together we may get away.  
This much madness is too much sorrow.  
It's impossible to make it today.

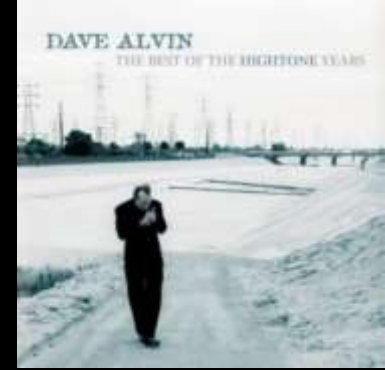






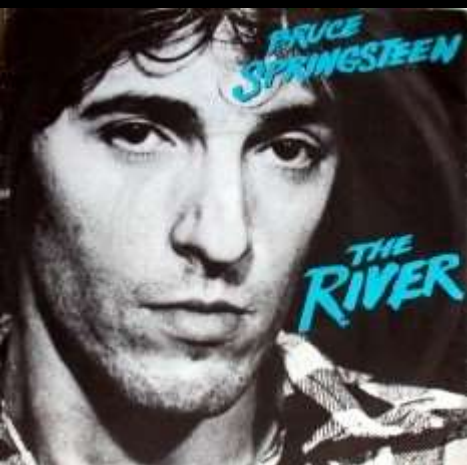
I was born by a river, but it was paved with cement  
Yeah I was born by a river,  
but it was paved with cement  
Still I stand out in that old dry river,  
and wish that I was soaking wet

Someday it's gonna rain, someday it's gonna pour  
Someday this old dry river, it well, won't be dry anymore



Down on the riverbed  
I asked my lover for her hand  
A red tailed hawk circled overhead  
The church on the hill, was what she said

## Shadows - Love, Marriage, Sadness, Loss



Is a dream a lie if it don't come true  
Or is it something worse  
that sends me down to the river  
though I know the river is dry  
That sends me down to the river tonight  
Down to the river  
my baby and I  
Oh down to the river we ride

I wish I had a river so long,  
I would teach my feet to fly.  
Oh, I wish I had a river I could  
skate away on.

I made my baby say goodbye.

Joni Mitchell "River"



# Love, Madness, Loss, and the Supernatural – “La Llorona”

In Mexican and Mexican American folklore, a woman was abandoned by her husband, and so she drowned their children in a river and then she, too, dies in the river. La Llorona (The Weeping Woman) is a tall, thin spirit said to be blessed with natural beauty and long flowing black hair. Wearing a white gown, she roams the rivers and creeks, wailing into the night and searching for children to drag, screaming to a watery grave in rivers, creeks, and lakes.

Chavela Vargas  
(1919 –2012)



Todos me dicen el negro,  
Llorona

Negro pero cariñoso

Todos me dicen el negro,  
Llorona

Negro pero cariñoso

Yo soy como el chile verde,  
Llorona

Picante pero sabroso

¡Ay de mí!, Llorona,  
Llorona llévame al río



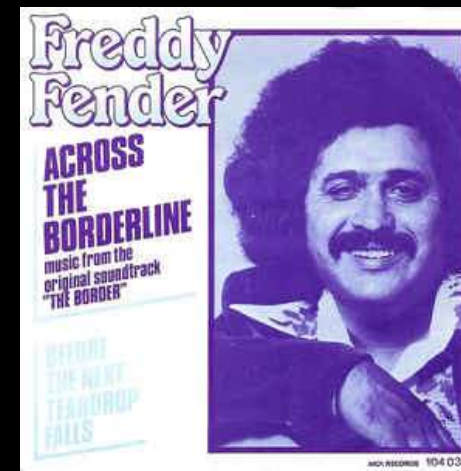
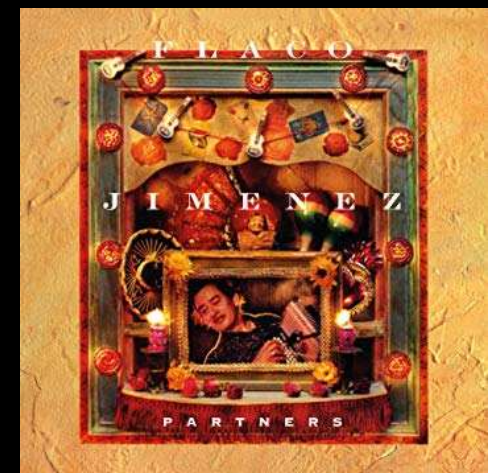
# Shadowed Place and Politics - The River as Border

"Across the Borderline" Ry Cooder, John Hiatt, and Jim Dickinson 1982

There's a place where I've been told  
Every street is paved with gold  
And it's just across the borderline  
And when it's time to take your turn  
Here's a lesson that you must learn  
You could lose more than you'll ever hope to find

When you reach the broken promised land  
And every dream slips through your hands  
Then you'll know that it's too late to change your mind  
'Cause you've paid the price to come so far  
Just to wind up where you are  
And you're still just across the borderline

Up and down the Rio Grande  
A thousand footprints in the sand  
Reveal a secret no one can define  
The river flows on like a breath  
In between our life and death  
Tell me who's the next to cross the borderline



# Politics and History – “Waist Deep in the Big Muddy” - Pete Seeger 1967

[Made more famous because of its censorship from The Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour]

It was back in nineteen forty-two,  
I was a member of a good platoon.  
We were on maneuvers in Louisiana,  
One night by the light of the moon.  
The captain told us to ford a river,  
That's how it all begun.  
We were knee deep in the Big Muddy,  
But the big fool said to push on.

The Sergeant said, "Sir, are you sure,  
This is the best way back to the base?"  
"Sergeant, go on! I forded this river  
'Bout a mile above this place.  
It'll be a little soggy but just keep slogging.  
We'll soon be on dry ground."  
We were -- waist deep in the Big Muddy  
And the big fool said to push on.



Well, I'm not going to point any moral;  
I'll leave that for yourself  
Maybe you're still walking, you're still talking  
You'd like to keep your health.  
But every time I read the papers  
That old feeling comes on;  
We're -- waist deep in the Big Muddy  
And the big fool says to push on.

# Politics and Environmental History

## Woody Guthrie – The Columbia River and Dams

In 1941, Woody age 28, was hired by the Bonneville Power Administration in Portland, Oregon to write music for a film about the Columbia River and public power.

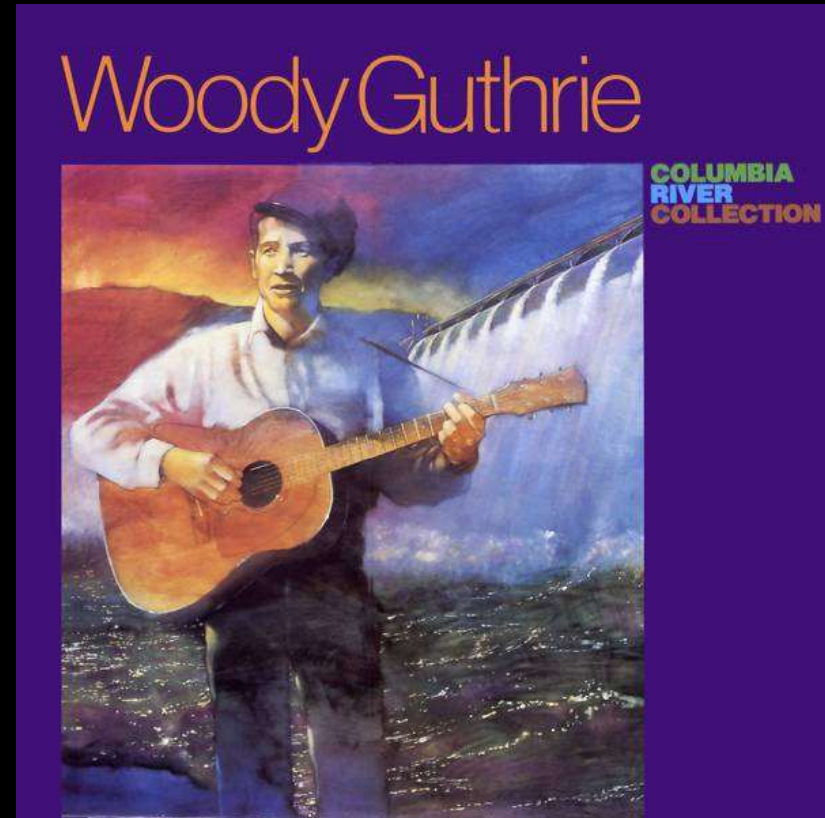
### “Roll On, Columbia”

At Bonneville now there are ships in the locks  
The waters have risen and cleared all the rocks  
Shiploads of plenty will steam past the docks  
So roll on, Columbia, roll on

These mighty men labored by day and by night  
Matching their strength 'gainst the river's wild flight  
Through rapids and falls, they won the hard fight  
So roll on, Columbia, roll on

### “The Grand Coulee Dam”

Well, the world has seven wonders, the travelers always tell  
Some gardens and some towers, I guess you know them well  
But the greatest wonder is in Uncle Sam's fair land  
It's that King Columbia River and the big Grand Coulee Dam



# Politics, History, and River Floods “Louisiana 1927”

Randy Newman 1974

The story of the Great Mississippi Flood of 1927 that left 700,000 people homeless in Louisiana and Mississippi.



What has happened down here is the wind have changed  
Clouds roll in from the north and it started to rain  
Rained real hard and rained for a real long time  
Six feet of water in the streets of Evangeline

The river rose all day  
The river rose all night  
Some people got lost in the flood  
Some people got away alright  
The river have busted through  
Cleared down to Plaquemines  
Six feet of water in the streets of Evangeline

Louisiana, Louisiana  
They're tryin' to wash us away

RANDY NEWMAN

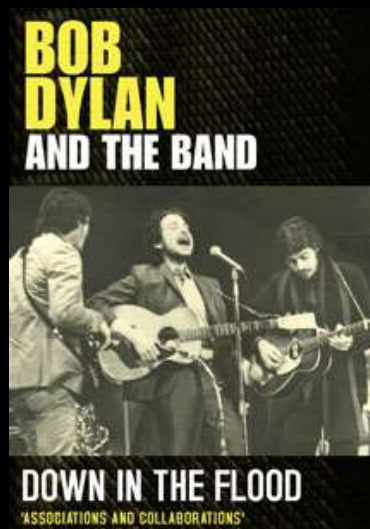


GOOD OLD BOYS

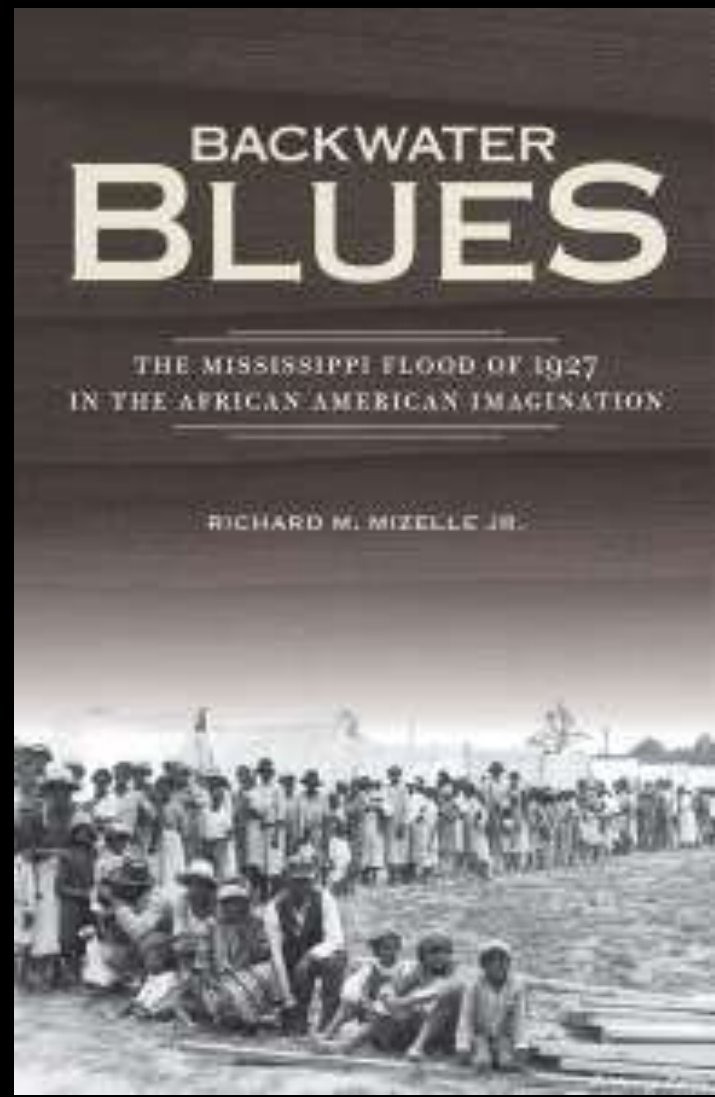
# The 1927 Flood and Loss – “Down in the Flood” 1971

Crash on the levee, mama  
Water's gonna overflow  
Swamp's gonna rise  
No boat's gonna row  
Now, you can train on down  
To Williams Point  
You can bust your feet  
You can rock this joint  
But oh mama, ain't you gonna miss your best friend now?  
You're gonna have to find yourself  
Another best friend, somehow.

Now, don't you try an' move me  
You're just gonna lose  
There's a crash on the levee  
And mama, you've been refused  
Well, it's sugar for sugar  
And salt for salt  
If you go down in the flood  
It's gonna be your own fault  
Oh mama, ain't you gonna miss your best friend now?  
You're gonna have to find yourself  
Another best friend, somehow.



Bessie Smith, Backwater Blues  
Lonnie Johnson's "Broken Levee Blues"  
Charlie Patton's "High Water Everywhere."  
Many, many more



# River Disasters and Steamboats

## “The Sultana” – Son Volt (Jay Farrar) 2009

Sultana was a Mississippi River side-wheel steamboat that exploded on April 27, 1865 in the greatest maritime disaster in United States history.

An estimated 1,800 of her 2,427 passengers died when three of the boat's four boilers exploded and she burned to the waterline and sank near Memphis.

“April 27, 1865 the worst American Disaster of the maritime  
No one knows the count of lives lost

The soldiers, civilians and the sisters of charity

\$5 a head Captains Mason and Hatch

Boarded 6 times the legal load of the Sultana

Leaving Vicksburg bound for Cairo

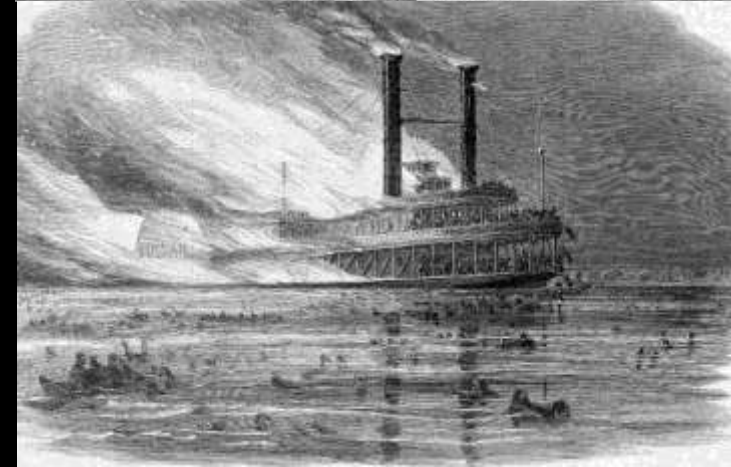
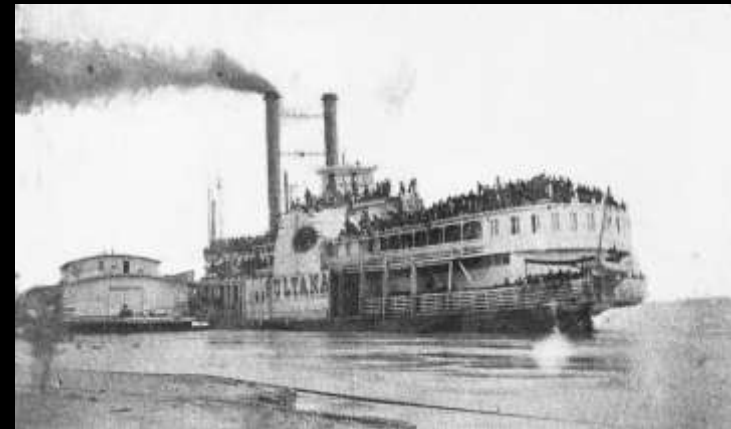
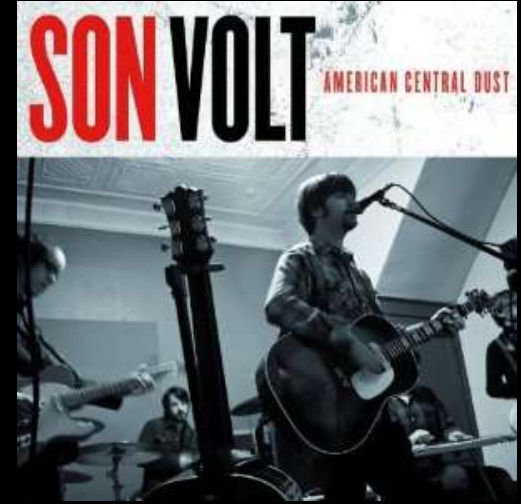
Memphis was the tragic last port of call of Sultana

The worst American disaster on water

The Titanic of the cold Mississippi was the Sultana

Hell was a better place that night

Titanic of the cold Mississippi was the Sultana”



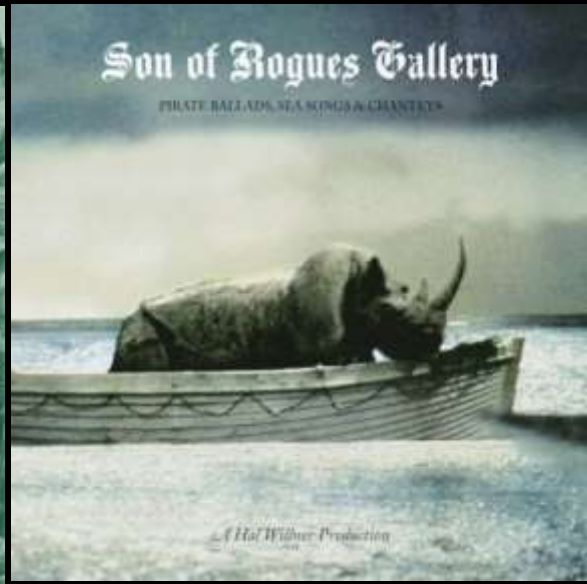
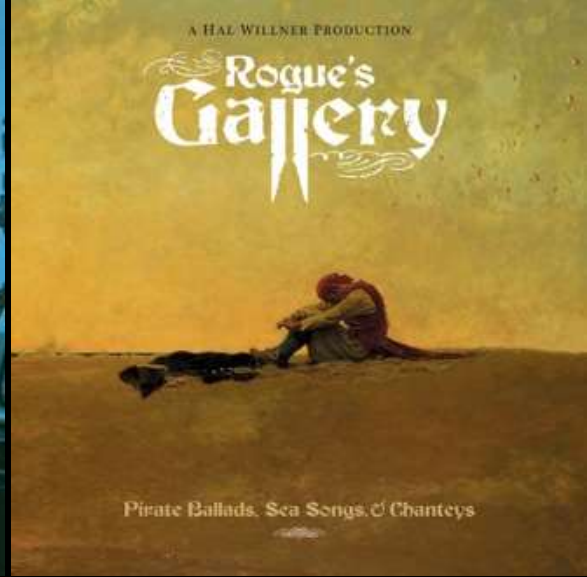
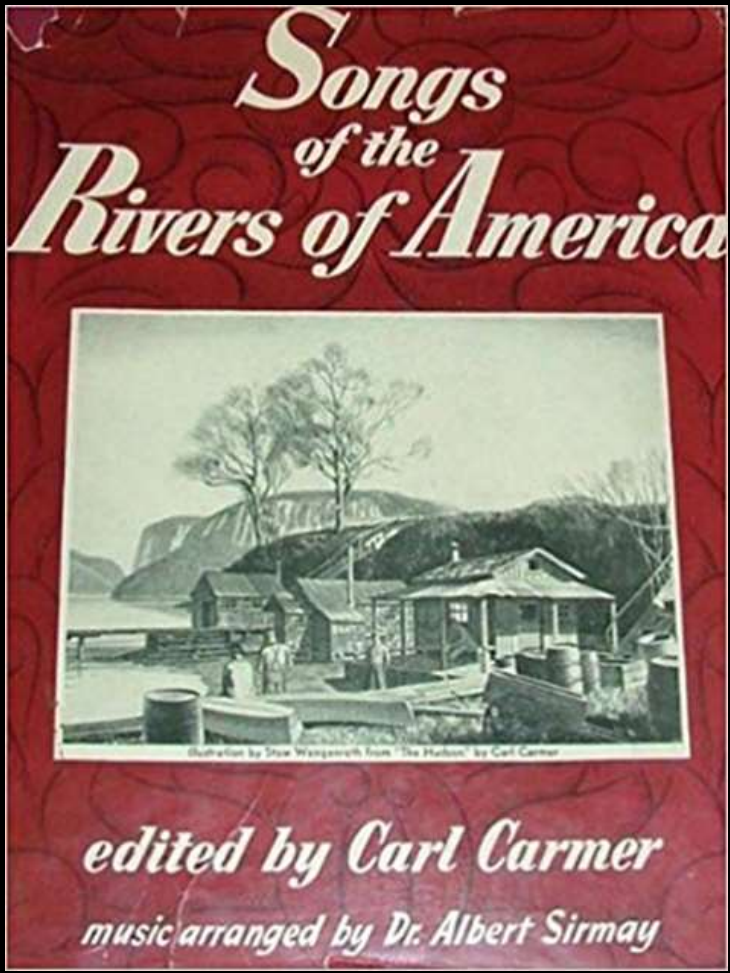


# River Work Songs - River Boats, Canal Boats, Ferries

Connection to Pirate Ballads and Sea Shanties

*Rogue's Gallery: Pirate Ballads, Sea Songs and Chanteys* 2006

*Son of Rogues Gallery* 2013



# River Work Songs – Folk Songs and River Boatmen

*Shenandoah* or *Across the Wide Missouri* is a traditional American folk song of uncertain origin, dating at least to the early 19th century. Originally used by river boatmen on the Ohio and Missouri rivers.

Oh, Shenandoah, I long to hear you.  
Away, you rolling river!  
Oh, Shenandoah, I long to hear you,  
Away, I'm bound away,  
'Cross the wide Missouri.

Oh, Shenandoah, I love your daughter,  
Away, you rolling river!  
For her I've crossed the stormy water,  
Away, I'm bound away,  
'Cross the wide Missouri.

Farewell, my dear, I'm bound to leave you.  
Away, you rolling river!  
Oh, Shenandoah, I'll not deceive you,  
Away, I'm bound away!  
'Cross the wide Missouri.



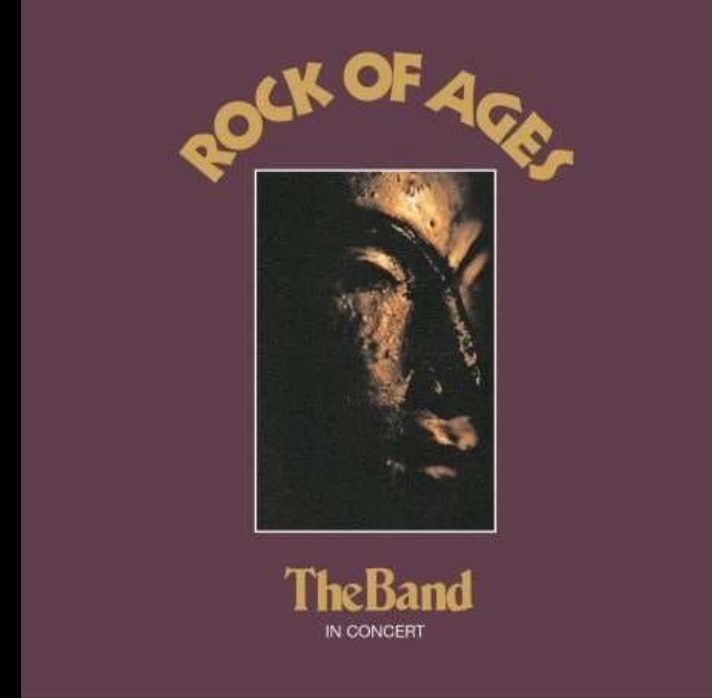
For huge sets of menhaden, purse boat crews from two steamers would work together to harden the net, with up to three score fishermen chanting as they pulled the bunkers to the water's surface.

# River Work Songs - River Ferry

Get Up Jake – The Band 1972

Get up Jake, it's late in the mornin'  
The rain is pourin' and we got work to do  
Get up Jake, there's no need lyin'  
You tell me that you're dyin' but I know it's not true  
Now me and Jake, we work down on the river  
On the ferry 'Baltimore'

And when Jake don't rise up in the mornin'  
People lined up all along the shore  
Get up Jake, it's late in the mornin'  
The rain is pourin' and we got work to do  
Get up Jake, there's no need lyin'  
You tell me that you're dyin' but I know it's not true



# American Canals, Canal Boats “The Erie Canal Song”

I've got a mule and her name is Sal  
Fifteen miles on the Erie Canal  
She's a good old worker and a good old pal  
Fifteen miles on the Erie Canal

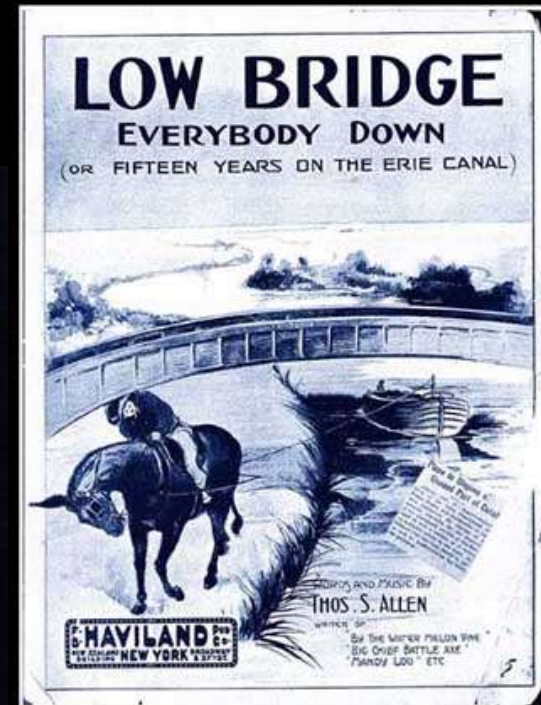
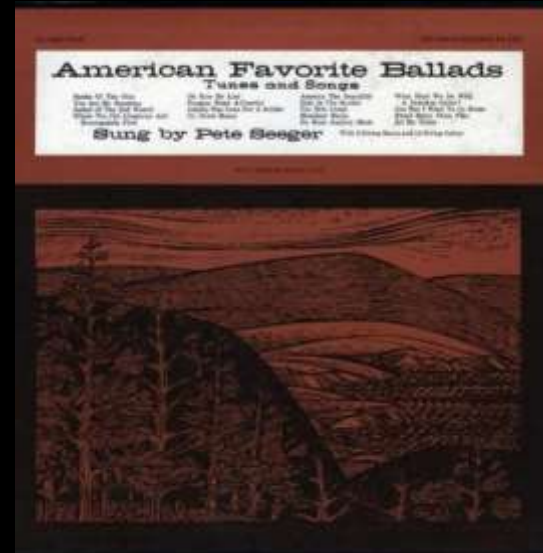
We haul'd some barges in our day  
Filled with lumber, coal, and hay  
We know every inch of the way  
From Albany to Buffalo

Low bridge, everybody down  
Low bridge, yeah we're coming to a town  
And you'll always know your neighbor  
And you'll always know your pal  
If ya ever navigated on the Erie Canal

*The Erie Canal Song*, as it is commonly known by today, was written in 1905 under the title *Low Bridge, Everybody Down* about life on the Erie Canal.

The song memorializes the years from 1825 to 1880 when the mule barges made boomtowns out of Utica, Rome, Syracuse, Rochester, and Buffalo, and transformed New York into the Empire State.

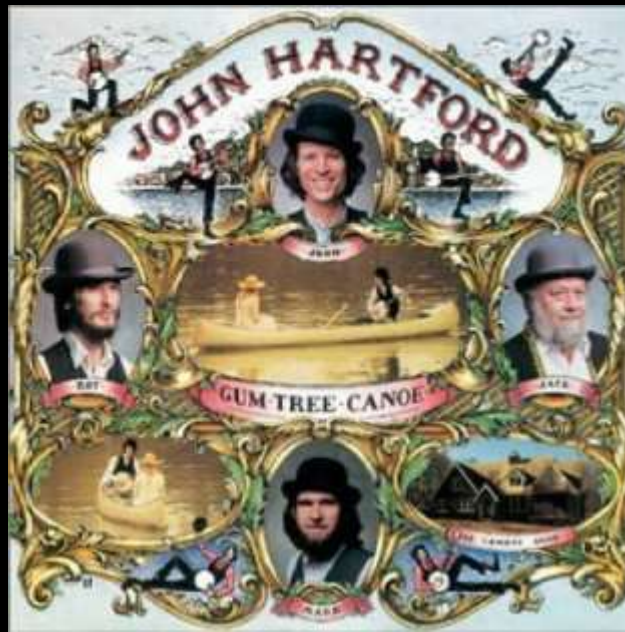
Travelers would typically ride on the roof of boats when the conditions allowed, but the low bridges along the route would require that they either duck down or get off the roof to fit under bridges.



# Steamboats and Rivers

John Hartford 1937- 2001

Gentle on My Mind



## Steamboats – “The Julia Belle Swain”

Oh, the Julia Belle Swain is a mighty fine boat,  
got a mighty fine captain, too  
Got a big red wheel that goes around and around  
and a bunch of old hippies for a crew  
Well, I can't stay here; well, I gotta get away;  
I'm Chattanooga Tennessee bound  
Gonna get my banjo and put it on my back  
when the Julia Belle comes down

Well, I sure do love the Tennessee River,  
the Ohio and the Illinois  
And I love the old Mississippi River;  
it's a good old place for a boy  
Just to step on board the steamboat,  
ride all the way to the sea  
Where else but a muddy old river  
would a person want to be  
Would a person want to be?



ON CHRISTMAS EVE  
JOHN HARTFORD

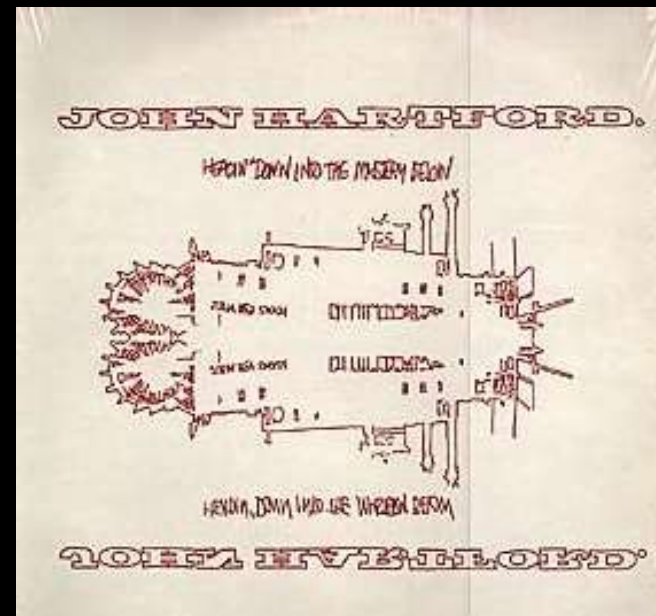


Bonfire on the bank, hard bend to the right  
On the lower Mississippi, full moon tonight  
Where the Spanish moss, hangs from the trees  
Down in Louisiana on Christmas Eve

That muddy water, (that muddy water)  
Never quite comes clear, (never quite comes clear)  
When I try to give a reason, (when I try to give a reason)  
Why I wanta be here, (why I wanta be here)

Ain't ya got no family, (ain't ya got no family)  
No place to be, (no place to be)  
Out on the river, (out on the river)  
On Christmas Eve, (on Christmas Eve)

Album: Headin' Down into the Mystery Below  
Released: 1978



# “Long Hot Summer Day”

For every day I work on the Illinois river  
I get a half a day off with pay  
Towboat picking up barges  
On a long hot summer day

Well we put a man off in Beardstown  
When we come down yesterday  
I'm gonna get off down at Alton  
On a long hot summer day

For every day I work on the Illinois River  
Get a half a day off with pay  
Towboat picking up barges  
On a long hot summer day

1977 *Mark Twang* won the  
Grammy Award for Best  
Traditional Folk Recording



MISSISSIPPI RIVER BARGE (USDA.US.GOV)





# River Reverie

## Skippin' in the Mississippi Dew

Well I dream of a girl and a steering wheel steamboat  
A pilothouse stove and engine room brass  
Hanging on a post by the main deck stairway  
Long hair skippin' in the Mississippi dew

Oh the river run wide, run deep, run muddy  
The river run long after I am gone  
With the steamboat wheeling on a big wide bend  
Just skippin' in the Mississippi dew

Well I went up the river come way last Sunday  
Twelve feet of water on the Memphis gauge  
Wouldn't be home without the muddy water rolling  
Paddle wheel skippin' in the Mississippi dew



ME OH MY, HOW THE TIME DOES FLY

A John Hartford Anthology

Over 60 minutes of music

# River Therapy – “Watching the River Flow”

Bob Dylan 1971

People disagreeing everywhere you look  
Makes you want to stop and read a book  
Why only yesterday I saw somebody on the street  
That was really shook

But this ol' river keeps on rollin', though  
No matter what gets in the way  
and which way the wind does blow  
And as long as it does I'll just sit here  
And watch the river flow

Watchin' the river flow  
Watchin' the river flow  
But I'll sit down on this bank of sand  
And watch the river flow



# River Reverie

“Brokedown Palace” The Grateful Dead 1970  
Jerry Garcia and Robert Hunter

Going to leave this brokedown palace,  
On my hand and knees, I will roll, roll, roll.  
Make myself a bed in the waterside,  
In my time, I will roll, roll, roll.

In a bed, in a bed, by the waterside I will lay my head.  
Listen to the river sing sweet songs, to rock my soul.

River going to take me, sing sweet and sleepy,  
Sing me sweet and sleepy all the way back home.  
It's a far gone lullaby, sung many years ago.  
Mama, mama many worlds I've come since I first left home.

Going to plant a weeping willow on the banks green edge  
it will grow, grow, grow  
Sing a lullaby beside the water  
Lovers come and go - the river roll roll roll

Fare you well, fare you well  
I love you more than words can tell  
Listen to the river sing sweet songs to rock my soul



# River Therapy and Naming

“The River Knows Your Name”

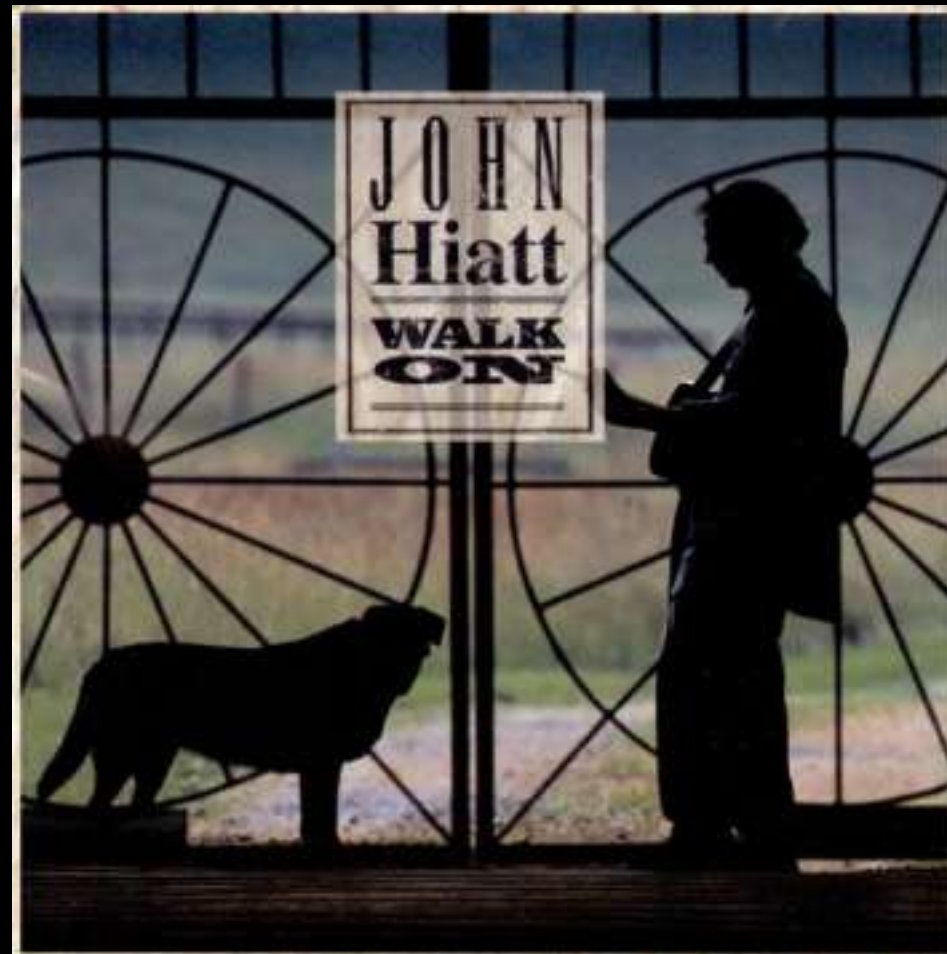
John Hiatt 1995

Oh the river knows your name  
And your tears falling like the rain  
All around you suffering and pain  
Oh the river knows your name

And the river hears you cry  
As the lightning cracks the open sky  
As your momma sings a lullaby  
Oh the river she knows why

Let the river wash you down  
Beneath the surface with a rushing sound  
Like a freight train passing through a town  
Let the river wash you down

Let the river take away  
All the words you and I could never say  
In the silence darling let us pray  
Let the river take it all away



Oh the river she knows your name  
From the Brazos to the Wabash to the Seine  
No two journeys are ever quite the same  
But the river knows your name  
Oh the river knows your name

# River Names

## "American Rivers"

### Tom Russell

And it's mama I miss you, I woke up and screamed  
American rivers roll deep through my dreams

Colorado, Allegheny, Shenandoah, Sus-qua-hay-nee  
And the Wabash and the Hudson and the brave Rio Grande  
I was a kid there, asleep in sand, near your waters...

