

Notes on Selected Songs

For a complete alphabetical listing of all the songs in this book, see the Table of Contents on page 2.

A

- All the Good Times, p. 8:** An eloquent description of the despair lost love can bring.
- Amazing Grace, p. 9:** Probably the greatest hit of spiritual music, it appeals to people with a wide variety of beliefs.
- Angel Band, p. 10:** I love the comforting message of “Angel Band.” Quite a different point of view from “He Will Set Your Fields on Fire.” (p. 94)
- Angelina Baker, p. 11:** Probably the source for the instrumental “Angelina Baker.” This vocal version is quite happy and peppy considering that the story is about a slave who’s sweetheart has “gone away,” no doubt sold to another owner. Like many songs of the pre-Civil War period, this one idealized slave and plantation life. “Darling Nellie Gray” (p. 54) has a very similar story but is much more somber in tone.
- Angels Rock Me To Sleep, p. 12:** Another comforting image of death.
- Are You From Dixie?, p. 14:** One of a vast repertoire of songs that idealize the sunny south including “Sweet Sunny South,” (p. 234) “My Old Kentucky Home,” “Blue Ridge Mountain Blues,” (p. 26) “The Girl I Loved in Sunny Tennessee.” (p. 76) These types of songs, some from the mid-1800s, some as recent as the latest pop country hit, have resonated across the US and throughout the world. Of course we’re not all from the south but we all have a mother, maybe a sweetheart, or a warm concept of home. That might explain the enduring popularity of these types of songs.
- Are You Washed in the Blood of the Lamb?, p. 16:** This one, along with many other great old time gospel songs, comes from my worn Baptist hymnal “Tabernacle Hymns.” You can still find these for a dollar or two or three in used books stores.
- Arkansas Traveller, p. 17:** You probably sang this as “Bringing Home a Baby Bumble Bee” as a kid. My dream is to play “Arkansas Traveller” for Bill Clinton. It’s probably been done.
- As I Went Down in the Valley to Pray:** See “Down in the Valley to Pray.” (p. 65)
- Aunt Dinah’s Quilting Party, p. 18:** Sometimes titled “Seeing Nellie Home.”
- Away in a Manger, p. 19:** One of my favorites since childhood. Peaceful and reassuring. Makes a good bluegrass Christmas song.

B

- Banks of the Ohio, p. 20:** I love the melody to this grisly but popular murder ballad. There must be hundreds of versions of it with a variety of different lyrics. On some the chorus is, “Only say that you’ll be mine/And in no other’s arms entwine.” In the version in this book the third verse makes little sense. Suddenly we’re talking about the sea instead of the Ohio River. No matter, it’s still a powerful song and a good example of the “folk process” where lyrics are repeated, misheard, changed, repeated, etc.
- Beautiful Life, A, p. 21:** Who could argue with the sentiments expressed in this song? It’s usually performed in an intricate vocal quartet arrangement. Like several other similar songs, I’ve simplified the arrangement in this book for clarity and the sake of space. Listen to one of the original recordings to hear the vocal arrangement.
- Beautiful Star of Bethlehem, p. 22:** One of the prettiest Christmas songs and one often performed by bluegrass bands.
- Bile Them Cabbage Down, p. 24:** There are several songs with similar verses about one mammal in a tree, the other on the ground imploring him to “shake some ’simmins (persimmons) down.” Wendy Whitford of the Goose Island Ramblers always sang “Shake them *cinnamons* down.”
- Black Eyed Susie, p. 25:** Compare this song with “Blue Eyed Verdie” and some of the verses in “Pig in a Pen,” (p. 199) among other songs with similar lyrics.
- Blue Ridge Mountain Blues, p. 26:** This song is unusual in that subsequent choruses have alternate lyrics. Some singers also fit in lyrics that include “Want to see my old dog Trey.”
- Bluebirds are Singing for Me, The, p. 27:** Usually performed with a “call-and-response” chorus with repeated or echoed lines: “There’s a bluebird singing” / “*There’s a bluebird singing*” / “In the Blue Ridge Mountains” / “*In the Blue Ridge Mountains*,” etc.
- Bound to Ride, p. 28:** When I hear this song, I imagine a young bachelor riding the train, far away from home and sweetheart, eating saltine crackers because they’re so cheap. I remember in my own youth when Kraft Macaroni and Cheese could be had for \$.25 a package. Tough to prepare and eat in a moving vehicle though.
- Bright Morning Stars, p. 29:** Often performed a capella. This arrangement is shown with accompanying chords.
- Bring Back to Me My Wandering Boy, p. 30:** Bill Monroe’s version of this song is called “Out in the Cold World.”
- Buffalo Gals, p. 31:** Another one we sang as kids. Of course that was during “The Enlightenment” when most public schools had art and music classes.
- Bully of the Town, The, p. 32:** A great song then and now! We’ve still got bullies coming out of the woodwork and heroes ready to take ‘em on. A G diminished chord can be substituted for the Gb chord.
- Bury Me Beneath the Willow, p. 34:** One of the first folk or old time songs players learn. A “must know.”

C

- C-H-I-C-K-E-N, p. 36:** Originally a pop song from 1902.
- Can’t You Hear Me Callin’?, p. 38:** Also the title of a comprehensive biography of Monroe, *Can’t You Hear Me Callin’: The Life of Bill Monroe, Father of Bluegrass* by Richard D. Smith (Warner Books). The chorus is often sung as “I loved you best,” but “Bess” was Monroe’s long time companion and bass player Bessie Lee Mauldin. You decide how to sing it.
- Careless Love, p. 39:** A standard in the folk, bluegrass, and jazz repertoires. I first heard the “in the family way” lyrics when I discovered them while doing research for this book. The song makes much more sense in this light.

Children Go Where I Send Thee, p. 40: Reminiscent of “The Twelve Days of Christmas” with the numbers and repetitions of characters. Listen to the CD to hear how the chorus grows upon repetition. Great bluegrass Christmas song.

Church in the Wildwood, The, p. 41: I remember my grandmother Nellie Bruce singing this to us grandkids. The chorus is often performed with multiple parts. My grandmother would crack us up singing the bass part, which was a chant below the melody on the chorus: “Oh come, come, come, come...”

Cindy, p. 42: Another I learned in grade school music class. I was pleasantly surprised to discover it in the bluegrass repertoire.

Cold Jordan: See “Jordan.” (p. 132)

Columbus Stockade: See “Columbus Stockade Blues.” (p. 43)

Columbus Stockade Blues, p. 43: This one makes a great hard country or rockabilly song.

Come All Ye Fair and Tender Ladies: See “Fair and Tender Ladies.” (p. 70)

Coo Coo, The: See “Cuckoo, The” (p. 49)

Cotton-Eyed Joe, p. 44: A standard for fiddlers in all types of country and old time music.

Crawdad Song, The, p. 46: Makes a wonderful kids’ bluegrass song.

Cripple Creek, p. 47: Most often played as an instrumental but when it is sung, the lyrics are usually only sung on part one. Also known as “Shootin’ Creek.”

Cuckoo, The, p. 49: I love the verses, melancholy mood, and varied verses of “The Cuckoo,” alternately titled “The Coo Coo.”

D

Daniel Prayed, p. 50: I’d heard “Daniel Prayed” for years but really got into it when I transcribed a Doc Watson recording with three vocal parts, lead, tenor, and bass, for my Doc Watson and Clarence Ashley book (MB97056) published by Mel Bay. It’s a wonderful old time gospel trio arrangement. Check it out. The version in this book is simplified and written with just the lead voice. The Watson/Ashley book is packed with songs that have become “greatest hits” of old time and bluegrass.

Danny Boy, p. 52: Often played as an instrumental, this song’s lyrics are haunting and beautiful. War takes its toll on all those involved in it but surely mothers bear the greatest burden.

Darling Corey, p. 53: Notice the close similarity in lyrics between “Darling Corey” and “Little Maggie.” (p. 156) Many of the songs in *The Parking Lot Picker’s Songbook*, and indeed in the greater traditional American music repertoire, share lines, whole verses, or themes with other songs. Credit the “folk process” of hearing songs, adding verses, swapping lyrics or melodies, mixing the whole thing up and serving it new as each individual singer adapts a song.

Darling Nellie Gray, p. 54: One of the most powerful songs I’ve ever heard. When Jim Nunally and I perform it, an older listener invariably comes up to tell us they’d learned the song in grade school, but had never heard verse four. “Darling Nellie Gray” has been a popular song for generations, for obvious reasons, published again and again, but that particular verse, the one that gave the lyric its power and the song its meaning, was censored. Many people mistakenly assume this is a Stephen Foster composition when in fact it was composed by B.R. Hanby. I hear a similarity in the movement and tone of the melody between this and Bob Wills’ classic “Faded Love.”

Darling Will You Ever Think of Me?, p. 56: I wanted to include a few of my own compositions in *The Parking Lot Picker’s Songbook*. Here’s one that I hope you’ll enjoy.

Deep Elem Blues, p. 57: I first learned this when I played in Frank Wakefield’s band in the late 1970s. It’s a comical look at the bad part of town.

Diamonds in the Rough, p. 58: Worth learning for the metaphor alone. Performed in both 4/4 (as written) and 6/8 (on CD).

Didn’t He Ramble: See “Oh, Didn’t He Ramble.” (p. 184)

Do Lord, p. 60: The C#7 and F#m chords in measure eleven are enclosed in parenthesis noting that they are optional. In the process of collecting the songs for this book, I consulted several hymnals. To my surprise I found that the harmonies in my old Baptist hymnal often included these somewhat “modern” sounding chords, the three dominant and the six minor.

Don’t Let Your Deal Go Down, p. 61: This arrangement combines elements from different old time and more modern bluegrass sources. Compare these lyrics with “Storms are on the Ocean.”

Don’t You Hear Jerusalem Moan?, p. 63: A fun and funny song that’s slightly “crooked” with an extra vocal phrase. And, could we ever have enough songs that make fun of preachers and authority in general? Here’s another set of lyrics:

- 1) Well I went to church last Sunday morning/Don’t you hear Jerusalem moan?/ Heard all them sinners just a moaning and a groaning/Don’t you hear Jerusalem moan?
- 2) I’m gonna get down on my knees today,
Don’t you (etc.)
Let Jesus wash my sins away, (etc.)
- 3) There’s many souls lost here in sin,
Don’t you go and talk to them, (etc.)

Down Among the Budded Roses, p. 64: One I learned from Wendy Whitford and the Goose Island Ramblers and a “true” song with a perfect image that says it all. As the others are coming into the bloom of life, the singer’s own life seems over due to a lost love. Compare with “Wildwood Flower” (p. 275) and “Little Rosewood Casket.” (p. 159)

Down in the Valley to Pray, p. 65: This song is performed as “Down to the River to Pray” in the film “O Brother Where Art Thou?”

Down in the Willow Garden, p. 66: I'm not sure what "burglar's wine" is, unless it's a mickey. Some people sing "burgundy wine."
Down the Road, p. 67: Country Gazette performed this with an added chorus: "Down the road, down the road, Got a little pretty girl down the road." Flatt & Scruggs left the chorus out. You can fill in your own name in the lyric "Old man (or woman) _____ (insert your name here)"
Down to the River to Pray: See "Down in the Valley to Pray." (p. 65)

E

East Virginia Blues, p. 69: This is a truly epic story and there are several versions of it that are sung in old time and bluegrass circles. Compare it with "Katy Dear." (p. 139) The lyrics to "East Virginia Blues" vary according to version. For example, in verse two, some versions have white lilies on her breast and in verse #4, the second and third lines are also sung "Where she lies on her bed of rest, For in her hand she holds a dagger," The order and number of verses varies widely.
End of My Journey: See "Let Me Rest at the End of My Journey." (p. 146)

F

Fair and Tender Ladies, p. 70: Lots of great songs came to bluegrass from the folk revival of the 1960s. These types of songs were often performed by the more "modern" bluegrass groups like the Osborne Brothers and the Country Gentlemen.
Fathers Have a Home Sweet Home, p. 71: Often performed with lead, tenor, and bass vocal parts.
Feast Here Tonight, p. 72: Sometimes called "Rabbit in a Log," this song is a classic. The definitive version was recorded by the Monroe Brothers.
Footprints in the Snow, p. 74: Bill Monroe's version sets the bluegrass standard for this song.

G

Girl I Left in Sunny Tennessee, The: See "Girl I Loved in Sunny Tennessee, The" (p. 76)
Girl I Loved in Sunny Tennessee, The, p. 76: The original source of this song is a sentimental pop song from 1899. It's often called "The Girl I *Left* in Sunny Tennessee."
Give Me Oil in My Lamp, p. 78: From the Baptist canon.
Give Me the Roses While I Live, p. 79: A popular theme in several different traditional and old time songs. It's as true today as it was a hundred or more years ago. Don't let someone slip away without them knowing of your love or admiration. It can happen in the blink of an eye.
Going Down This Road Feeling Bad, p. 80: Also known as "Lonesome Road Blues" and the basis of Earl Scruggs' instrumental of the same name. It's sometimes performed with an Em chord in measure twelve over the lyrics "Lord/And I."
Going Up Cripple Creek: See "Cripple Creek." (p. 47)
Going Up Home to Live in Green Pastures: See "Green Pastures." (p. 95)
Grandfather's Clock, p. 82: Long a hit with banjo pickers and guitar fingerpickers, this one also makes a wonderful vocal with its eerie story.
Green Pastures, p. 85: Another Stanley standard with a beautiful, peaceful view of the great beyond.
Groundhog, p. 86: Red Allen repeats the word "groundhog" twice more as a kind of chorus.

H

Hallelujah! I'm Ready, p. 87: A few of the songs in *The Parking Lot Picker's Songbook* are written with basic two part vocal arrangements. In the case of this "call and response" duet, I've omitted the tablature stems to make it easier to read. You can hear the arrangement on the accompanying CD.
Hand Me Down My Walking Cane, p. 88: Long a favorite among folkies, Norman Blake does a great old time version of this song.
Handsome Molly, p. 89: Every generation updates traditional music. My favorite update of "Handsome Molly" is a kind of Latin-Reggae romp by the Extended Playboys. Try to find that on your iTunes! In one of Doc Watson's earlier versions of "Handsome Molly" he sings "I wish I was in London/or some other *depot* town."
Hard Times, Come Again No More, p. 90: This is still a very popular song among folk singers, especially at group sings.
He Was a Friend of Mine, p. 92: I first heard a version of this on a Byrds' LP where it was rewritten about John F. Kennedy's assassination. Since that time in the mid-1960s, I've heard it performed in several folk contexts including bluegrass and traditional blues.
He Will Set Your Fields on Fire, p. 94: Talk about your fire and brimstone! This one is usually performed with an intricate, multi-voice arrangement.
High on a Mountain, p. 96: One incredible song by Ola Belle Reed. The image, melody, modal chord movement, story, and tone of it all make it a classic and a "must-know" song.
Highway of Sorrow, p. 97: Bill Monroe had a reputation as a gruff, tough and stubborn curmudgeon. When I interviewed him in the early 1980s, I found this to not be the case, exactly. While reserved and private, he also showed a great sense of humor and a playful streak. He was expansive on many subjects from his own legacy to his thoughts about rock and jazz as well as his views on life. It's amazing to me that he revealed himself as much as he did in compositions like "Highway of Sorrow," "It's Mighty Dark to Travel," (p. 122) and "Can't You Hear Me Calling." (p. 38) He was truly a great artist.
Hills of Roane County, p. 98: For me, a cryptic verse like: "Sweet Martha was grave but Corey was better/There's better and worse, although you can see," kicks this song into greatness. It's mysterious, beautiful, unknowable.
His Eye is on the Sparrow, p. 100: From "Tabernacle Hymns." Singer and actress Ethel Waters sang "His Eye is on the Sparrow"

beautifully and soulfully as part of the Billy Graham Crusades in the 1950s and 1960s.

Hold Fast to the Right, p. 101: In this case I believe “right” refers to the “correct way” as opposed to any far-flung node in the political spectrum.

Hold to God’s Unchanging Hand, p. 102: Soothing words for modern life.

Home Sweet Home, p. 103: This song has been a hit for well over a hundred years. Jim Nunally and I play it quite often and audiences still love it.

Hop High Ladies, p. 106: Also know as “Mrs. McCleod’s Reel.”

Hot Corn, Cold Corn, p. 108: Wonderful goofy song that seems to have something to do with John Barleycorn.

How Can You Treat Me So?, p. 109: I had Bill Monroe’s voice in mind as I wrote this one.

I

I am a Man of Constant Sorrow: See “Man of Constant Sorrow.” (p. 167)

I Know You Rider, p. 111: Originally a blues, this one has been adapted by rock groups and “modern” bluegrass bands, most notably The Seldom Scene.

I Ride an Old Paint: See “Old Paint.” (p. 192)

I Shall Not Be Moved, p. 113: From the gospel repertoire and popular in old time gospel, jazz, bluegrass, and folk circles. It was an important and symbolic marching song during the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s.

I Wonder How the Old Folks Are at Home, p. 114: Good old pop song from 1909. Popularized in bluegrass by Mac Wiseman.

I’ll Be All Smiles Tonight, p. 116: I first heard this from Wendy Whitford of the Goose Island Ramblers. It’s a wonderful take on the woman’s point of view of a breakup. It’s sung by both men and women. See also “Little Rosewood Casket” (p. 159) and “Wildwood Flower.” (p. 275)

I’ll Fly Away, p. 118: Everybody’s favorite gospel/bluegrass song.

I’m Ready: See “Hallelujah! I’m Ready.” (p. 87)

I’m Sitting on Top of the World: See “Sitting on Top of the World.” (p. 228)

I’m Standing in the Need of Prayer: See “Standing in the Need of Prayer.” (p. 231)

In the Garden, p. 120: From “Tabernacle Hymns.”

In the Pines, p. 121: Another great bluesy standard of bluegrass and old time music.

It’s Mighty Dark to Travel, p. 122: Bill Monroe overheard the phrase “it’s mighty dark to travel” in a barber shop as someone mentioned that they had a long way to travel in the dark of night. Monroe turned the phrase into a bluegrass standard.

J

Jesse James, p. 124: If you’re gonna be an outlaw, you’d better have somebody write a sympathetic folk song about you. This song is all about primitive attempts at “spin.” Woody Guthrie wrote a similar but politically charged song about “Pretty Boy Floyd.”

Jimmie Brown, the Newsboy, p. 126: A sentimental parlor tune from the late 1800s. Like much of their repertoire, the Carter Family adapted it to fit their style in the late 1920s. Flatt & Scruggs version from the early 1950s brought this great song into the bluegrass repertoire.

John Hardy, p. 128: See “Jesse James” (p. 142) above. Hardy didn’t get quite the treatment in song that Jesse did. I say, pay the extra few bucks, get a good songwriter.

John Henry, p. 130: There must be over a hundred different versions of “John Henry.” It’s been so popular over the years because it so dramatically tells the story of automation and human against machine.

Jordan, p. 132: The chorus to “Jordan” is often performed with the bass voice taking the lead on the first clause of each phrase of the chorus. Bass solo: “Now look at that,” ensemble joins in “cold Jordan,” etc.

Just a Closer Walk with Thee, p. 134: This one is popular in many musical genres from gospel and blues to dixieland and bluegrass.

Just as I Am, p. 135: You mature youngsters may remember this theme from the televised Billy Graham crusades of the 1950s and beyond. Willie Nelson recorded a beautiful instrumental version for his *Red Headed Stranger* LP.

Just Over in the Gloryland, p. 136: Another song whose popularity spans many musical genres from gospel and blues to dixieland and bluegrass.

K

Katy Dear, p. 139: Compare the lyrics of this “Romeo and Juliet”-type tale with “East Virginia Blues” (p. 69) and “Silver Dagger.”

Keep on the Sunnyside, p. 140: An old song the Carter Family adopted as their theme song. What better advice for life?

Knoxville Girl, p. 142: A murder ballad similar to “Banks of the Ohio” (p. 20) but perhaps even more gory and disturbing.

L

Late Last Night, p. 144: Also known as “Way Down Town,” I first heard this from Doc Watson on the *Will the Circle be Unbroken* project from the early 1970s. That historic three LP set introduced traditional music and traditional and bluegrass musicians to the rock-oriented youth culture of the era.

Leave it There, p. 145: I heard this on a 1920s recording by Washington Phillips and it really grabbed me. Not only is it filled with great sentiment, I realized I recognized it from somewhere. Turns out it was from the old Baptist hymnal “Tabernacle Hymns.”

Let Me Rest at the End of My Journey, p. 146: One of many cowboy-themed songs that ended up in the bluegrass repertoire.

Letter Edged in Black, The, p. 147: When I was a callow youth learning this repertoire from the older generation, songs like “The Letter Edged in Black” struck me as overly sentimental and dramatic. I was more drawn to the hot and fast material. I guess it was because I hadn’t yet experienced the loss of a parent. Now, as I’ve gotten older and lived more of life, I’ve come to love

these songs and appreciate their eloquence in dealing with the life and death issues that we all face.

Life is Like a Mountain Railway: See “Life’s Railway to Heaven.” (p. 148)

Life’s Railway to Heaven, p. 148: Even if you’re not religious, this song is an apt description of the journey of life.

Li’l Liza Jane, p. 150: Another folk song they taught us in grade school.

Little Annie, p. 151: I first heard this great song from Vern Williams, California’s most important contribution to old time bluegrass. “Little Annie” marks the beginning of the massive “Little” section, ironically the largest section in this book, which spans the old time musical horizon from “Annie” to “Willie.” (One could argue that “Li’l Liza Jane” belongs here as well, but it’s in the “Li’l” section, not the “Little.”) For size, the “Old” section is a close rival.

Little Bessie, p. 152: As I mentioned above in “The Letter Edged in Black,” my perception of these songs has changed with my age. Being the father of a beautiful twenty-one year old daughter (as of 2005), I find it impossible to sing “Little Bessie” without breaking down in tears.

Little Birdie, p. 154: This arrangement is simplified from the way it’s typically performed. Singers usually stretch out syllables like the first “birdie…” an extra measure or longer. The band has to pay attention to the singer!

Little Georgia Rose: See “My Little Georgia Rose.” (p. 178)

Little Maggie, p. 156: As with “Little Birdie,” (p. 154) singers often stretch lyrics beyond their written time values.

Little Old Log Cabin in the Lane, p. 158: If you can find it, listen to Fiddlin’ John Carson’s version. It was one of the first “country” or “hillbilly” recordings made in the early 1920s. It’s just him singing, with his fiddle, and it’s haunting.

Little Rosewood Casket, p. 159: Not about what you might think it’s about. Compare with “I’ll Be All Smiles Tonight” (p. 116) and “Wildwood Flower.” (p. 275)

Little Sadie, p. 160: Both this and “Little Willie” (p. 161) are epic story songs where a lot goes on. Both have similarities to “Banks of the Ohio,” (p. 20) “Knoxville Girl,” (p. 142) and “Pretty Polly.” (p. 202) May not be suitable for younger listeners.

Little Willie, p. 161: A brutal and graphic song but a true representation of real events.

Lonesome Reuben: See “Reuben’s Train.” (p. 214)

Lonesome Road Blues: See “Going Down This Road Feeling Bad.” (p. 80)

Long Journey Home, p. 163: Check out the Monroe Brothers definitive version.

Lord, I’m Coming Home, p. 164: After hearing this for years by artists like the Stanley Brothers and loving it, I discovered “Lord, I’m Coming Home” in one of my worn old hymnals.

M

Mama Don’t Allow, p. 166: A well-known and loved song that pops up in a variety of musical styles including jazz and country. It’s a proven crowd pleaser.

Man of Constant Sorrow, p. 167: The most famous version of this song is from the film “O Brother, Where Art Thou?” sung by the mythical Soggy Bottom Boys. Their version is based on one recorded by the Stanley Brothers which features a repeat of each verse’s last line as in “I have no friends to help me now/He has no friends to help him now.”

McKinley: See “White House Blues.” (p. 269)

Methodist Pie, p. 170: Another tongue-in-cheek look at religion.

Midnight on the Stormy Deep, p. 172: The classic recording of this song is by Bill Monroe in the mid-1960s. Peter Rowan sings it in duet with Monroe.

Milwaukee Blues, p. 173: If you don’t know the music of Charlie Poole, run to the store right now and buy one of the new CD box sets. He’s one of the true pioneers of old time and bluegrass music with a repertoire and style that influenced all that came after him. Charlie Poole made great, entertaining music. In the last verse, “Santa Fe” rhymes with “be.”

Molly and Tenbrooks, p. 174: One of the all-time hits of bluegrass based on much earlier sources.

More Pretty Girls Than One: See “There’s More Pretty Girls Than One.” (p. 238)

Mrs. McCleod’s Reel: See “Hop High Ladies.” (p. 106)

My Home’s Across the Blue Ridge Mountains, p. 176: Sometimes sung as “My Home’s Across the Smoky Mountains.”

My Little Georgia Rose, p. 178: The true story behind this Bill Monroe composition can be found in his biography “*Can’t You Hear Me Callin’: The Life of Bill Monroe, Father of Bluegrass*” by Richard D. Smith (Warner Books).

My Walking Cane: See “Hand Me Down My Walking Cane.” (p. 88)

My Wandering Boy: See “Bring Back to Me My Wandering Boy.” (p. 30)

N

Nellie Gray: See “Darling Nellie Gray.” (p. 54)

New River Train, p. 180: Another classic from the Monroe Brothers.

Nine Pound Hammer, p. 181: You gotta learn this one! It’s one of the ten or twenty songs played by ALL Parking Lot Pickers.

Nobody’s Business, p. 182: There are a variety of versions of this basic song in bluegrass, old time, blues, and jazz. It may be even more well-known in blues than in bluegrass. As far as I know, the Stanley Brothers brought it into the bluegrass lexicon.

O

Oh Death, p. 183: Another great song featured in the film “O Brother, Where Art Thou?” It’s usually sung unaccompanied, with no instrumental backup, in a *rubato* (loose, drawn out rhythm) style. It’s written here with backup chords, so you can hear the tonality, and in standard rhythm. The B7s in parenthesis are optional. Be sure to listen to Ralph Stanley’s recording.

Oh! Didn’t He Ramble, p. 184: Another old pop song appropriated by Charlie Poole. Also popular with Dixieland jazz bands.

Old Dan Tucker, p. 186: One they taught us in grade school.

Old Joe Clark, p. 190: Check out the less than proper lyrics. Good taste is timeless! Fiddlers usually play this in the key of A.

Old Man at the Mill, p. 191: Also known as “Same Old Man,” I first heard this old time song in a bluegrass context by the Dillards. The flatted seven chord, in this case an F natural, gives the song its modal flavor.

Old Paint, p. 192: It always gets back to just a cowboy and his horse. See also “Let Me Rest at the End of My Journey.” (p. 146)

Old Rugged Cross, The, p. 193: The A diminished chord in measure one is a little unusual in old time and bluegrass music. Though it comes straight out of the hymnal, in practice it’s often played as an Ab chord.

On and On, p. 195: Another very popular Monroe-penned classic of life on the road without your sweetheart.

Out in the Cold World: See “Bring Back to Me My Wandering Boy.” (p. 30)

Over the Hills to the Poorhouse, p. 196: A pre-Social Security song that may have renewed resonance in the next few years, especially for baby boomer bluegrass musicians. It’s a true song, if slightly dramatic.

P

Pass Me Not, p. 197: Beautiful melody, comforting lyrics.

Pig in a Pen, p. 199: Different versions of this song feature different combinations of the same basic lyrics. And you’ll find verses from “Pig in a Pen” in a variety of other songs.

Poor Ellen Smith, p. 200: Sometimes this song is performed with the one line chorus “Nobody knows how I loved Ellen, nobody knows.”

Poor Nellie Gray: See “Darling Nellie Gray.” (p. 54)

Poor Wayfaring Stranger: See “Wayfaring Stranger.” (p. 225)

Precious Memories, p. 201: I love the dreamy imagery and moving poetry of this song. It’s often mistaken for a gospel song though there’s nothing overtly religious about it.

Pretty Polly, p. 202: Another murder ballad done so well by Ralph Stanley.

Put My Little Shoes Away, p. 204: The lyric “Won’t he look so nice and cunning” always confused me. Webster’s Dictionary of 1913 explains, “Pretty or pleasing; as, a cunning little boy.”

R

Rabbit in a Log: See “Feast Here Tonight.” (p. 72)

Railroad Bill, p. 206: I learned this one from my brother-in-law Rick March when he was teaching me to fingerpick.

Rain and Snow, p. 207: This song has a kind of nebulous tonal center rocking between the Am and the D chord. That gives it a modal feel and the unresolved lyrics add to the song’s sense of mystery.

Rank Strangers to Me, p. 208: One of the Stanley Brothers all-time hits that’s become a bluegrass standard. The chorus is typically performed in a “call and response” format.

Red Rocking Chair, p. 210: Slightly unusual in that it has an Em or six minor chord in it.

Red Wing, p. 212: One of the most widely known tunes in American music. It’s a pop song from the early 1900s, part of a group of songs that idealized native Americans. Because of its popularity, the melody to “Red Wing” has been adapted again and again to other sets of lyrics. An anonymous writer used it as the basis for “Charlie Chaplin,” a children’s old time song about the famous tramp, and Woody Guthrie used it for his labor song “Union Maid.” The main theme of “Red Wing” is based on Schumann’s “The Happy Farmer” from 1849.

Reuben’s Train, p. 214: This one shows up with many alternate titles including “Train 45,” “Lonesome Reuben,” and just plain old “Reuben.”

Roll in My Sweet Baby’s Arms, p. 216: You gotta know this one if you’re going to play bluegrass. Especially for bluegrass bakers.

Roll on Buddy, p. 217: Another great one from the Monroe Brothers song bag. By the way, did you get one of the Monroe Brothers CD box sets yet?

Roving Gambler, p. 218: Another from the folk bag that’s slipped into the bluegrass repertoire. Listen to the Country Gentlemen’s version.

S

Sally Goodin, p. 221: Probably best known as a fiddle tune, “Sally Goodin” also has some funny lyrics, which are usually sung over the first part. The second part is played instrumentally.

Same Old Man: See “Old Man at the Mill.” (p. 191)

Seeing Nellie Home: See “Aunt Dinah’s Quilting Party.” (p.18)

Shady Grove, Bluegrass style, p. 222: “Shady Grove” is performed with a variety of arrangements and lyrics. Here’s a version often played by bluegrass bands. An old time version follows. Lyrics are shared between the two and you’ll notice one verse that’s also in “Pig in a Pen.” (p.199)

Shady Grove, Old Time style, p. 223: See “Shady Grove, Bluegrass style.” (p. 222)

Shall We Gather at the River, p. 224: Learned in church from “Tabernacle Hymns.”

She’s My Little Georgia Rose: See “My Little Georgia Rose.” (p. 178)

Short Life of Trouble, A, p. 225: Kind of a depressed look at life brought on by a failed love. The theme of verse six is common in traditional music: “You broke my heart, it killed me, plant some flowers on my grave so everybody’ll know what a rat you are.” Like that would happen!

Shortening Bread, p. 226: A very popular traditional song that fits well into the old time/bluegrass format.

Silver Threads Among the Gold, p. 227: A sentimental old parlor song dating from the late 1800s if not earlier. I’ve collected several different sheet music versions of the song. Similar to “When You and I Were Young, Maggie,” (p. 266) “Silver Threads” has beautiful, moving, and poetic lyrics about true love that seem all the more meaningful as I age.

Sitting on Top of the World, p. 228: From the blues repertoire.

Softly and Tenderly, p. 229: This one reminds me a bit of “Just as I Am,” (p. 135) “Angel Band,” (p. 10) and some of the other songs in this collection that offer a reassuring view of the inevitable.

Somebody Touched Me, p. 230: A great old gospel rouser.

Standing in the Need of Prayer, p. 231: Ditto “Somebody Touched Me.” (p. 230)

Sugar Hill, p. 232: I learned this from the Goose Island Ramblers. Guitarist Wendy Whitford usually sang, “Shake them cinnamons down” instead of “Shake them ’simmons down.”

Swing Low, Sweet Chariot, p. 235: Another popular song that appears in many different genres from gospel to blues to country.

T

Take Me Home: See “Sweet Sunny South.” (p. 234)

Take This Hammer, p. 236: Similar in theme to “Nine Pound Hammer” (p. 181) and other mining songs, “Take This Hammer” has the added edge of forced labor and confinement. I love the verse: “If he asks you was I running/Tell him I’s flying.”

Take Your Burden to the Lord and Leave it There: See “Leave it There.” (p. 145)

Talk About Sufferin’, p. 237: This is another song that’s typically performed a capella. It’s written here with accompaniment chords and fermatas.

Tenbrooks and Molly: See “Molly and Tenbrooks.” (p. 174)

That’s the Way to Spell Chicken: See “C-H-I-C-K-E-N.” (p. 36)

There’s More Pretty Girls Than One, p. 238: This song is also performed in 4/4. Check out Tony Rice and Ricky Skaggs’ version on “Skaggs and Rice,” one of the most beautiful duo recordings ever set to wax.

They Gotta Quit Kicking My Dawg Around, p. 240: Another from the Goose Island Ramblers and a pop song from the early 1900s. I’ve collected the original sheet music, or at least most of it. The cover of my copy is missing.

This Little Light of Mine, p. 242: From Sunday school.

This Train, p. 243: Another one learned in grade school.

This World is Not My Home, p. 244: *The Parking Lot Picker’s Songbook* includes a lot of songs about death. I guess that’s because, like love, it’s a universally mysterious subject we all have difficulty dealing with. “This World is Not My Home” speaks to the fact that we’re not here for a very long time; we’re only passing through.

Train, Train, Train, p. 246: A new song by Dix Bruce. Never recorded by anybody. You could be the first!

Train 45: See “Reuben’s Train.”

Train That Carried My Girl From Town, The, p. 248: I suppose the singer’s hate of the train, its engineer and fireman, is somewhat misplaced, but that’s what makes the song interesting.

’Twas Midnight on the Stormy Deep: See “Midnight on the Stormy Deep.” (p. 172)

Two Dollar Bill: See “Long Journey Home.” (p. 163)

U

Unclouded Day, The, p. 249: This song would not be near as interesting if it had been titled “The Clear Day.”

W

Wabash Cannonball, p. 250: This is one of the true classics of American folk music. There must be hundreds of variations. Some singers use the lyrics “rumor and roar” in the chorus. One of my favorite songs loosely based on “Wabash Cannonball” is Chuck Berry’s “Promised Land.”

Walk in Jerusalem Just Like John, p. 252: You’ll notice the similarity of the last verse to one in “Swing Low, Sweet Chariot.” (p. 235)

Walking in My Sleep, p. 254: “Walking in My Sleep” is a great old time song with wonderfully entertaining lyrics like verse one: “If you see that gal of mine tell her if you please/Fore she goes to make my bread to roll up her dirty sleeves.” That’s art, man!

Way Downtown: See “Late Last Night.” (p. 144)

Wayfaring Stranger, The, p. 255: A beautiful standard played many different ways in a variety of genres.

What a Friend We Have in Jesus, p. 257: Learned in Sunday school from “Tabernacle Hymns.”

When I Die, p. 258: Here’s one I wrote. I was walking through the woods one day and suddenly felt the presence of my dear departed grandmother, the one who used to sing “The Church in the Wildwood” (p. 41) to me. The song puts words to my thoughts about the incident.

When I Lay My Burden Down, p. 259: Note the similarity of this melody to that of “Will the Circle Be Unbroken.” (p. 276)

When My Race is Run, p. 260: Another of mine. I’ll show her! Wait ’til I’ll die!

When Springtime Comes Again: See “Little Annie.” (p. 151)

When the Roll is Called Up Yonder, p. 261: One more from the old Baptist hymnal.

When the Saints Go Marching In, p. 262: You’re probably most familiar with this as a New Orleans jazz tune.

When the Work’s All Done This Fall, p. 264: A cowboy song that’s worked its way into the old time and bluegrass repertoire.

When You And I Were Young Maggie, p. 266: Another moving take on love and aging similar to “Silver Threads Among the Gold” (p. 227) and “Sweet Sunny South.” (p. 234)

Where the Soul Never Dies, p. 267: I just had to write out both parts to this great duet. On the verses, the tenor sings the same lyrics as the lead adding “of man” into the phrase “Where the soul never dies.” On the chorus the voices are in counterpoint to

one another. You can hear it on the CD. I split the TAB from the music so each would fit on one page.

Whitehouse Blues, p. 269: Doctors are better now, especially with their bedside manner. The last verse made the rounds in the late 1960s.

Who Broke the Lock?, p. 270: Learned from Wendy Whitford of the Goose Island Ramblers.

Who Will Sing for Me?, p. 272: Another ponderous song about death.

Wild Bill Jones, p. 274: Another good “bully” song.

Wildwood Flower, p. 275: This song, probably the best known of all guitar melodies, has wonderful and poetic lyrics which so beautifully express the feelings of the composer. Compare the sentiments to “I’ll Be all Smiles Tonight,” (p. 116) and “Little Rosewood Casket.” (p. 159) The Carter Family sings lyrics that are a bit different here and there. They may have “mis-heard” the names of some of the flowers mentioned.

Will the Circle Be Unbroken?, p. 276: One of the greatest hits of old time and bluegrass music.

Willie My Darling, p. 278: Beautiful song with bang-up, unexpected tear-jerker-ending. A classic of the “anti-flirting” genre.

Working on a Building: See “I’m Working on a Building.” (p. 119)

Worried Man Blues, p. 279: You may have heard the hit version of this in the early 1960s. It goes back much further than that, probably to slavery times.

Wreck of the Old 97, The, p. 280: You will need to know several train wreck songs if you intend to play bluegrass. Here’s a good one that also happens to be quite popular.

Y

You’re a Flower Blooming in the Wildwood, p. 281: Lost love and death. A perfect summation of the main themes of this collection of songs. Not a word about taxes, politics, gas prices, or cell phones. If you ask me, the writers of all these songs knew what was important.

You’re Drifting Too Far From the Shore: See “Drifting Too Far From the Shore.” (p. 68)

You’ve Got to Walk That Lonesome Valley: See “Lonesome Valley.” (p. 162)