

Songs of the West sung by Dave Fredrickson / Folkways Records FH 5259



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SIDE I
Band 1: FRENCHMAN'S RANCH
Band 2: LONE STAR TRAIL
Band 3: FAREWELL, FAIR LADIES
Band 4: BILLY THE KID
Band 5: PRETTY BOY FLOYD
Band 6: MOLE IN THE GROUND
Band 7: HANG ME
Band 8: GEORGE CAMPBELL (Child #210)
Band 9: MORE PRETTY GIRLS THAN ONE

SIDE II
Band 1: JACK OF DIAMONDS
Band 2: AUSTIN'S FAIR CITY
Band 3: GYPSY DAVY (Child #200)
Band 4: BONNIE BLUE EYES
Band 5: THE GIRL I LEFT BEHIND
Band 6: THE FAIR MAID FROM THE PLAINS
Band 7: LETTER EDGED IN BLACK
Band 8: COWBOY'S LIFE IS A VERY DREARY LIFE
Band 9: BIG CITY JAIL

Songs of the West

SONGS OF THE WEST

sung by Dave Fredrickson

by ROGER ABRAHAMS

Dave Fredrickson is a unique folksinger in that he is half real folk and half urban folksinger. He brings to his songs the style of the old cowboy singers such as Ken Maynard and a repertoire that includes songs learned from traditional singers, including some in his own family, from old cowboy records, from recent Folkways and Library of Congress releases and from books. This kind of variety is what characterizes Frederickson's life, but on this score, he shall speak for himself. Recently, he wrote of himself in a letter:

"I was born in Berkeley, California in 1927 but moved to Redwood city, a suburb of San Francisco, when I was about 5 or 6. Moved back to Berkeley in 1944 to start college and except for a year in the Navy and 3 or 4 in Walnut Creek (a suburb of Oakland) have been in Berkeley ever since. My father ran and still runs a small one-man business repairing typewriters and my mother is a registered nurse. Both however come from rural backgrounds, my father from Wyoming, Colorado, Nevada where he was a cowboy and agricultural worker until he joined the Navy in WW I, my mother from the San Joaquin Valley in California where her family was one of the early settlers. As a boy my primary social ties were with my mother's extended family (I had dozens of cousins) and I spent just about every vacation period, summer, winter, spring, since I was old enough to be away from home by myself on a farm of one of my uncles. I ended up learning a little bit about dairy farming, but much more about music, for the San Joaquin Valley was one of the areas settled by the migrants from the dust bowl regions in the 30's, hence the music was all around me and I was singing since very young. I sang unaccompanied most of the time, until about 1947 when I hauled out my father's old mail-order guitar (as a young man he played guitar, mandolin, and fiddle at country dances) and learned a few chords. When I started college in 1944, I learned that "Okie" music as it was called, was not much in favor, and I turned to folk music, starting with Burl Ives, naturally. Suddenly I discovered Woody Guthrie on record and went back to my "Okie" and "hillbilly" and "cowboy" singing, but equipped, I believe, with more taste and discrimination. I do not consider myself to be a folk-singer; more I am a singer of old-time songs. They were the songs I grew up with (some even old-time then) and as time passed they have become old-time. New songs I learn (new for me) are almost all from the older days (the songs and days aren't actually so old, but no longer as popular as they once were.) I graduated in anthropology in 1948, did a year or two of graduate work, quit school, drove a taxi-cab for five years, drove trucks off and on for three, alternating with being a helper for a fellow who sprayed insecticide, shrubs and plants and weed-killer on weeds (he was a pacifist). For the past couple of years I have been self-employed, doing odd jobs, modelling for art classes, giving guitar lessons and occasionally singing a job for pay. I am married and have two girls ages five and seven and a half. I have been singing for my own pleasure for twenty-five years or more, and some of these years I like to believe that some other people got some pleasure from it. But regardless of who listens, it is highly probable that twenty-five years from now, granted the physical possibility, I'll still be singing for my own pleasure."

Anything else of importance, Fredrickson's singing will be able to tell you. I first heard Dave on a week-end junket he made to sing at a club in Aspen, Colorado. The quiet warmth of his personality, the almost other-worldly moral core, the integrity of the man, all these strike one on meeting him, and it is some of these qualities that infest his singing. Consistently, comments on his songs when complimented upon them, would be, "You should hear Ken Maynard sing that one" or "Have you heard Woodie's version of that one." Dave, I think you will agree, quietly takes his place beside anyone with whom you might compare him.

In the notes references will be made to the following books: Laws, Malcolm, Native American Balladry, Philadelphia, 1950. Laws, Malcolm, American Balladry from British Broad-sides, Philadelphia, 1957. Coffin, Tristram P., The British Traditional Ballad in North America, Philadelphia, 1950.

Lomax, John, Cowboy Songs, New York, 1930 edition
Thorp, N. Howard, Songs of the Cowboys, Boston and N.Y., 1921.
Randolph, Vance, Ozark Folksongs, Columbia, Mo., 1950.

SIDE I, Band 1: FRENCHMAN'S RANCH

Learned from Eddie Wallace, a cousin by marriage, near Merced, California, several years ago. He had learned it from his mother, the family having come from Oklahoma in 1939.

While camping on a prairie, on a Frenchman's one night
With heads upon the saddle and campfires burning bright

Someone telling stories, someone singing songs,
And some were softly smoking as the hours rolled along.

And as they came to talking of their distant friends
so dear
This boy hung his head from his saddle and his eyes
were filled with tears.

They asked this boy the reason why he was compelled
to roam
They also asked him the reason why he was at home
no more.

He raised his head, brushed away the tears and he
looked the vast crowd o'er
Oh boys I'll tell you the reason why I am at home
no more.

I fell in love with a neighbor girl her cheeks
were soft and white
Another fellow loved her too and it ended in a fight.

This fellow's name was Thomas Smith we had been
friends from boys,
We always shared each other's love and had each
other's joys.

I remember the night Tom and I first fought I
stabbed Tom with my knife,
He fell to the ground, the crimson flood was flowin'
from his side.

I could Tom say though in his dreams as he lay there
on the ground,
Oh boy you will be sorry of this when you see me
lyin' dead.

Home, home, home sweet home, I'd give my pony and
saddle to be at home sweet home.

SIDE I, Band 2: LONE STAR TRAIL

This is a lyric version of the song found in Lomax,
310. Many of the verses are found in other songs
describing cowboy life. Learned from the Ken
Maynard Record. (Columbia 2310 D). (See Anthology
of American Folk Music, Volume 3, #84, Folkways
FP 253.)

I am a lonely cowboy I'm off on the Texas claim,
My trade is cinching saddles and pulling bridle reins
I can twist a lasso with the greatest skill and ease
I can rope and ride a bronco most anywhere I please.

I love the rolling prairie that's on the trail and
strife,
Behind a bunch of longhorns I'll journey all my
life,
But if I had a stake boys married I would be
The sweetest girl in this wide world has fell in
love with me.

Now when we get on the trail boys and dusty billows
rise,
Fifteen miles from water the grass is scorchin' dry
The boss is mad and rainy you often plainly see,
I'll have to follow the longhorn I'm a cowboy here
to be.

But when it comes to rain boys what of the gentle kind,
When lakes are full of water the grass is wavin' fine,
The boss will shed his frown then and a pleasant smile
you'll see,
I'll have to follow the longhorn I'm a cowboy here to
be.

Now when we get them bedded, we think down for the
night,
Some horse 'll shake his saddle it'll give the herd
a fright
They'll bound to their feet boys and madly stampede
away
And then you'll know it's time boys you can hear the
cowboys say:

Now when we get them bedded we feel most inclined
When a cloud'll rise in the west boys and a fire'll
play on their horns,
The old boss rides around then your pay you'll get
in gold,
I'll have to follow the longhorn until I am too old.

SIDE I, Band 3: FAREWELL, FAIR LADIES

One of the many beautiful night-herding songs. This
is closely related to "Doney Gal" and the many
different versions of "Good-bye Old Paint", (see
Thorp, 118). Learned from the Library of Congress
disk, AAFS L 28, as sung by Jess Morris at Dalhart,
Texas.

Farewell fair ladies I'm a leavin' Cheyenne
Farewell fair ladies I'm a leavin' Cheyenne
Good-bye my little donie, my ponie, hand-stand, old
Paint
Old Paint, I'm a leavin' Cheyenne
Good-bye old Paint I'm a leavin' Cheyenne
Old Paint's a good pony and he paces when he can.

In the middle of the ocean there grows a green tree
I'll never prove false to the girl that loves me
Old Paint, Old Paint, I'm a leavin' Cheyenne
Good-bye Old Paint, I'm a leavin' Cheyenne
Old Paint's a good pony and he paces when he can.

We spread down our blankets on the green grassy
ground
The horses, the cattle they were grazin' all
around
Old Paint, Old Paint I'm a leavin' Cheyenne.

Old Paint had a colt down on the Rio Grande
The colt couldn't pace so they called her Cheyenne
Old Paint, Old Paint, I'm a leavin' Cheyenne
Good-bye Old Paint, I'm a leavin' Cheyenne
Old Paint's a good pony and he paces when he can.

My foot in my stirrup, my bridle in my hand
Good-bye my little donie, my pony can't stand
Old Paint, Old Paint, I'm a leavin' Cheyenne
Good-bye Old Paint, I'm a leavin' Cheyenne
Old Paint's a good pony and he paces when he can.

Now the last time I seen her t'was late in the
fall
She was riding Old Paint she was leading old Ball
Old Paint, Old Paint, I'm a leavin' Cheyenne.

Fair well fair ladies I'm a leavin' Cheyenne
Fair well fair ladies I'm a leavin' Cheyenne
Good-bye my little donie, my pony can't stand
Old Paint, Old Paint, I'm a leavin' Cheyenne
Good-bye Old Paint, I'm a leavin' Cheyenne
Old Paint's a good pony and he paces when he can.

SIDE I, Band 4: BILLY THE KID

This is one of the vital impressionistic Western
songs halfway between a lyric and a ballad. For
its various printings see Laws (NAB), 263. Learned
at an early age, perhaps from the radio.

I'll sing you a true song of Billy the Kid
Sing of the desperate deeds that he did
Way out in New Mexico long long ago
Where man's only friend was his old 44.

When Billy the Kid was a very young lad
In old Silver City he went to the bad
Way out in the West with a gun in his hand
At the age of 12 years he killed his first man.

Young Mexican maidens play guitars and sing
Songs about Billy, their boy bandit king
How there's a young man who had reached its sad end
Had a notch on his pistol for 21 men.

It was on the same night when poor Billy died
He said to his friends I'm not satisfied
There are 21 men I have put bullets through
Sheriff Pat Garritt must make 22.

Now this is how Billy the Kid met his fate
The bright moon was shining the hour was late
Shot down by Pat Garritt who once was his friend
The young outlaw's life had now reached its sad end.

Now there's many a lad with a face fine and fair
Who starts out in life with a chance to be square
But just like poor Billy they wander astray
They lose their life in the very same way.

SIDE I, Band 5: PRETTY BOY FLOYD

One of the most famous of recent ballads, written
by Woody Guthrie, learned in this case from a tape
of Bun Kinsey, of Dry Creek, Georgia.

Now Pretty Boy was born in the Oklahoma hills
Where the beautiful flowers grow wild
He was christened Charles Arthur by parents so proud
Who thanked God for their beautiful child.

By the side of his cradle his mother would sing
Never dreaming the sorrows he'd bring
But a mother's heart is broke when a boy grows to
man
It's been ever true since time first began.

Now Pretty Boy was 20 when he married his young
wife
She was only 16 summers old
Then he went to work in a bakery shop out there
But he drifted away from the fold.

Left his young wife in Dixie in 1924
Went to Kansas to try to earn more
Then he went to St. Louis got in bad company
And wound up in a penitentiary.

He served his time went to Ohio
Killed a man and was sentenced again
He didn't serve the time the jury gave to him
For he jumped from a fast-speeding train.

Kansas City was the next he took it on the run
Killed two brothers with his careless gun
He killed Mr. Byrd and a man named Wilson
And he left Kansas City on the run.

Ohio again, he killed Mr. Chestewart
Spreading fear all along his crooked path
Then he went back home got into another row
Killed the sheriff who stirred up his wrath.

T'was the last trip to Ohio for that wicked fool
He was shot dead 8 miles to Liverpool
Pretty Boy will learn on that great Judgement Day
That a life filled with crime does not pay.

SIDE I, Band 6: MOLE IN THE GROUND

Fredrickson's adaptation of the song as sung by
Bascom Lamar Lunsford, (see Anthology of American
Folk Song, Folkways FP 253, #63 and Smoky Mountain
Ballads, FP 40).

I wish I wuz a mole in the ground
Yes, I wish I wuz a mole in the ground
If I wuz a mole in the ground, I'd rip that mountain
down
And I wish I wuz a mole in the ground.

Campy wants a 9 dollar shawl
Campy wants a 9 dollar shawl
When I come around that hill with a 40 dollar bill
It's baby where you been so long?

I've been in the bin so long
I've been in the bin so long
I've been in the bin with the rough and rowdy men
And it's baby where you been so long?

I wish I wuz a lizard in the spring
Yes I wish I wuz a lizard in the spring
If I see a lizard in the spring I would hear my Campy
sing
And I wish I wuz a lizard in the spring.

Oh Campy let your hair roll down
Campy let your hair roll down
Let your hair roll down and your bangs curl around
Oh baby where you been so long.

Back to the first verse.

SIDE I, Band 7: HANG ME

Randolph (III, 261-2) reports this as a gypsy song.
Learned originally from Randolph and changed with
time.

My father was a gambler he taught me how to play
My father was a gambler he taught me how to play
Says "son don't go a beggin' while he's got that
ace and trey."

CHORUS:
Hang me oh hang me and I'll be dead and gone
Hang me oh hang me and I'll be dead and gone
I wouldn't mind the hangin' it's layin' in
the grave so long.
Layin' in the grave so long.

I was down in old Missouri just as sick as I could
be
Down in old Missouri, sick as I could be
Receiving all the letters says "Son come home to me."

(CHORUS)

Now if I had minded mama I would not be here today
If I had minded mama I would not be here today
But I was young and foolish and easy talked away.

(CHORUS)

My father and mother and sister make three
Father and mother little sister make three
Marchin' to the gallows to see the last of me,
To see the last of me.

They threw the rope around his neck they drew
him very high
They threw the rope around his neck they drew
him very high
The last words they heard him say, "Won't be long
now til I die."

(CHORUS)

SIDE I, Band 8: GEORGE CAMPBELL

This is Child ballad, 210 as reworked into an American
setting by Harlan Kinsey of Berkeley, California.
Learned almost the day it was composed. The melody
is similar to "Hang Me." For a further history of
the song in this country, see Coffin, 128.

George Campbell lived in Texas with his mother and
his wife
George Campbell lived in Texas with his mother and
his wife
Two little children to make a hard hard life.
Two little children to make a hard hard life.

Well, Georgie left his mother, his children and his
wife
Georgie left his mother, his children and his wife
For to get some money to find a pleasant life.
For to get some money to find a pleasant life.

He rambled he gambled he rambled all around
He rambled he gambled he rambled all around
Til he met up with a gambler who shot the poor boy
down.
He met up with a gambler who shot the poor boy
down.

Two women cryin' children walkin' 'round
Two women cryin' children walkin' 'round
Waitin' for the dead man to come from the town
Waitin' for the dead man to come from the town.

Home come the saddle home come old Dan
Home come the saddle home come old Dan
Home come the saddle but never come the man
Home come the saddle but never come the man

Who'll plough my meadow, who'll hoe my corn
Who'll plough my meadow, who'll hoe my corn?
Two little children and a baby yet unborn
Two little children and a baby yet unborn.

Georgie's mother's weepin' his wife is the same
Georgie's mother's weepin' his wife is the same
Two little children to curse the gambler's game
Two little children to curse the gambler's game.

SIDE I, Band 9: MORE PRETTY GIRLS THAN ONE

Another fine old cowboy lyric, with "floating"
type verses. Learned from Library of Congress
record AAFS L 28, as sung by Wayne Dimwiddie at
Visalia, California.

There's more pretty girls than one
There's more pretty girls than one
In every town I've rambled around
There's more pretty girls than one.

My mama told me last night
She gave me good advice
Says, "Quit your ramblin' around Pretty Boy
And marry you a lovin' wife." \

Look down that lonesome road
Before you travel on
I'll sing to you this lonesome song
To hear before you're gone.

There's more pretty girls than one, etc.

Look down that lonesome road
Hang down your little head and cry
For thinking of those pretty little girls
And hoping I never would die.

There's more pretty girls than one, etc.

SIDE II, Band 1: JACK OF DIAMONDS

This common gambling lyric, in an uncommon form,
as learned from an old record by Jules Verne
Allen.

Jack of Diamonds, Jack of Diamonds, I know you of old
You've robbed my poor pockets of silver and gold.

It's whiskey villain, you've been my down-fall
You've kicked me, you've cuffed me but I love you
for all.

Oh baby oh baby I've told you before
You make me pallet I'll lay on the floor.

Your parents don't like me they say I'm too poor,
They say I'm not worthy to enter your door.

They say I drink whiskey but my money's my own,
And if they don't like me they can leave me alone.

It's beefsteak when I'm hungry rye whiskey when
I'm dry
Greenbacks when I'm hard-up and heaven when I die.

Rye whiskey, rye whiskey, rye whiskey I cry,
If I can't get rye whiskey I surely will die.

Oh baby oh baby I've told you before
To make me a pallet, I'll lay on the floor.

I'll build me a castle on yonder mountain high
Where my true love can see me as she goes ridin'
by.

Where my true love can see me and help me to mourn
For I'm just a young cowboy and a long way from
home.

If the ocean was whiskey and I was a duck
I would dive to the bottom to get one sweet sup.

But the ocean ain't whiskey and I ain't no duck,
So I'll play Jack of Diamonds and try to change
my luck.

Oh baby oh baby I've told you before
To make me a pallet I'll lay on the floor.

I've rambled I've gambled all my money away
So it's on the old cow-trail now Molly I must stay.

It's on the old cow-trail now Molly I must roam
For I'm just a young cowboy and a long way from
home.

Jack of diamonds, Jack of diamonds, I know you
of old,
You've robbed my poor pockets of silver and gold.

Rye whiskey, rye whiskey, rye whiskey I cry
If I don't get rye whiskey I know I must die.

Oh baby oh baby I've told you before,
To make me a shake down I'll lay on the floor.

SIDE II, Band 2: AUSTIN'S FAIR CITY

This was learned from an old Ken Maynard record.

In Austin's fair city, Austin's fair city
Austin's fair city, t'was early one day,
I spied a young cowboy a handsome young cowboy
All wrapped in white linen as cold as the clay.

I see by your outfit that you are a cowboy
These words he did say as I boldly stepped by
Come sit down beside me and hear my sad story
For I'm shot in the breast and I know I must die.

Oh beat the drum slowly or play the fife lowly
Oh play the dead march as you carry me along
Carry me to the graveyard and throw the sod o'er me
For I'm only a young cowboy, I know I've done wrong.

My friends and relations, they live in the nation
They know not where their boy has gone,
I first come to Texas, got hired to a ranch man
Got shot in the breast and I know I've done wrong.

Someone write a letter to my gray-headed mother
Then to my sister my sister so dear
But there is another far dearer than mother
Who would bitterly weep if she knew I was here.

Oh beat the drum slowly oh play the fife lowly
Oh play the dead march as you carry me along
Carry me to the graveyard and throw the sod o'er
me
For I'm only a young cowboy, and I know I've done
wrong.

It was once in the saddle I used to go dashing
It was once in the saddle I used to ride gay
I first took to drinking and then to card-playing
Got shot by a gambler, I'm dyin' today.

Someone go bring me a drink of cold water
A drink of cold water the poor cowboy said
But before we could get it his soul had departed
His soul had departed the cowboy was dead.

Beat the drum slowly oh play the fife lowly
Oh play the dead march as you carry me along
Carry me to the graveyard and throw the sod o'er me
For I'm only a young cowboy, I know I've done wrong.

SIDE II, Band 3: GYPSY DAVY

Child 200, as distilled through Woody Guthrie and
Cliff Carlisle. For other U.S. versions, see
Coffin, 120.

It was late last night when the boss come home
Asking about his lady
The only answer he received "She's gone with the
Gypsy Davy
Gone with the Gypsy Dave.

Go saddle for me my buckskin horse with the 100
dollar saddle
Point out to me their wagon tracks and after them
I'll travel,
After them I'll ride.

Well I had not rode til the midnight moon when I
saw the campfire gleaming
I heard the notes of the big guitar and the voice
of the gypsy singing
The song of the Gypsy Dave.

There in the line of the cracklin' fire I saw her
fair face beaming
Her heart in tune with the big guitar and the
voice of the gypsy singing
The song of the Gypsy Dave.

Have you forsaken your husband dear, have you
forsaken your baby?
Have you forsaken your fine fine home to go with
the Gypsy Davie
To sing with the Gypsy Dave?

Yes I've forsaken my husband dear to go with the
Gypsy Davie
I've forsaken my mansions high but not my blue-
eyed baby
My pretty little blue-eyed babe.

She smiled to leave her husband dear to go with
the Gypsy Davie
But the tears come a tricklin' down her cheek when
she thought of the blue-eyed baby,
Pretty little blue-eyed babe.

Take off take off your buck-skin gloves, made of
Spanish leather
Give to me your lily-white hand, we'll ride back
home together,
We'll ride home again.

No, I won't take off my buckskin gloves made of
Spanish leather
I'll go my way from day to day and I'll ride with
the Gypsy Dave
Sing with the Gypsy Dave.

Last night she slept on a fine feather bed by the
side of her husband and baby
Tonight she'll sleep on the cold ground by
the side of the Gypsy Dave
By the side of the Gypsy Dave,
Singin' with the Gypsy Dave,
The song of the Gypsy Dave.

SIDE II, Band 4: BONNIE BLUE EYES

Learned from the Randolph Collection (IV, 209-10)
with verses added from "My Last Gold Dollar" (IV,
114.)

Good-bye little bonnie blue eyes
Good-bye little bonnie blue eyes
I'll see you again but God knows when
Good-bye little bonnie blue eyes.

I'm leavin' on the railroad train
I'm leavin' on the railroad train
Oh I love you God knows I do
But I'm leavin' on the railroad train.

I'm goin' out west this fall
I'm goin' out west this fall
I'm goin' out west I'll leave the one that I love
best,
Little bonnie don't ya weep for me.

I'll sail on the ocean blue
I'll sail on the ocean blue
On the ocean blue I'll think about you
But I'll sail on the ocean blue.

Good-bye little bonnie blue eyes
Good-bye little bonnie blue eyes
I'll see you again but God knows when
Good-bye little bonnie blue eyes.

I must travel on down the line
I must travel on down the line
I love you my dear and I want you near
But I must travel on down the line.

Put your hand in mine
Just put your little hand in mine
If you love me like I love you
Just put your little hand in mine.

My last gold dollar is gone
My last gold dollar is gone
My board bill's due and my whiskey bill is too
But my last gold dollar is gone.

Back to first verse.

SIDE II, Band 5: GIRL I LEFT BEHIND

This is the cowboy version of this old broadside
ballad. Learned from the Dick Reinhart record,
(Brunswick BL 59001, a reprint). For versions
collected throughout this country, see Laws
(Broadside), P. 1B.

There was a wealthy old farmer
Who lived in the country near-by
He had a lovely daughter
On whom I cast an eye.
She was lovely, fair, the fairest one
Indeed so very fair
There was no other girl in the county
With her I could compare.

I asked her if she would be willin'
For me to cross over the plain
She said would make no difference
If I returned again.
She said, she would prove true to me
Til death should prove unkind
We kissed, shook hands, we parted
I left that girl behind.

Out in a western city boys, a town we all know well
Where everyone was friendly and to show me all around
Where work and money was plentiful and the girls to
me proved kind
But the only object on my mind was the girl that I
left behind.

As I was rambling around one day all down at the
public square
The mail coach had arrived and I met the mail boy
there
He handed to me a letter which gave me to understand
That the girl I left in Texas had married another
man.

I turned myself all around and vowed not knowing
what else to do
I read on down a piece further to see if those
words proved true
It's drinking I throw over, card-playing I resign
For the only girl that I ever loved was the girl
that I left behind.

Come all you rambling gambling boys and listen
while I tell
Does you no good kind friends I'm sure it will do
you no harm
If ever you court a fair young girl just marry her
while you can
For if ever you cross over the plain, she'll marry
some other man.

SIDE II, Band 6: THE FAIR MAID FROM THE PLAINS

Another version of "Ranger's Command" learned from
the Bun Kinsey, Dry Creek, Georgia tapes.

There once lived a maiden far out on the plain
She'd help herd the cattle through cold stormy
rain
She'd help herd the cattle through the long
round up
She'd take a drink with me from the cold bitter
cup.

She'd drink the red liquor that affects a man so
She's fair as the lily and as white as the snow
I taught her the comrade the cowboy's command
To use a 6 shooter in each of her hands.

To use a 6 shooter and never to run
While there was a load left in each of her guns
We camped in a canyon in the fall of the year
The season to stay with a herd of the steers.

The Indians broke upon us they did every night
We rose from our warm beds a battle to fight.
We rose from our warm beds oh how she cry
Come all you brave cowboys fight here for your
life.

Come all you brave cowboys fight here for your
life
The Redskins have murdered my dear little
wife,
I jumped to my saddle a gun in each hand
Come all you brave cowboys let's win this fair
land.

I'm far from my comrades I'm far from my home
Far out on the prairie I'm dying alone,
No father to cheer me no sweetheart to sigh
No mother to weep o'er the place where I lie.

SIDE II, Band 7: LETTER EDGED IN BLACK

Though many folklorists would like to overlook the
fact, this song may be the one most commonly known
to the folk. It has managed to creep into many
collections, usually found in practically the same
form. Fredrickson probably learned this by word-of-
mouth, he thinks.

I was standin' by my window yesterday mornin
Without a thought of worry or of care
When I saw the postman coming up the pathway
With such a happy face and carefree air.

He rang the bell and whistled as he waited
Then he said, "Good morning to you Jack"
But he little knew the sorrow that he brought me
When he handed me that letter edged in black.

With trembling hands I took that letter from him
I broke the seal and this is what it said:
"Come home my boy your dear old father wants you,
Come home my boy your dear old mother's dead."

"The last words your mother ever uttered
Were 'Tell my boy I want him to come back,'
My eyes are dimmed my poor old heart is broken
As I write to you this letter edged in black."

"Those angry words I wish I'd never spoken
You know I did not mean them don't you Jack?
May the angels bear me witness I am asking
Your forgiveness in this letter edged in black."

I bowed my head in sorrow and in sadness
The sunshine of my life it all had fled
Since the postman brought that letter yesterday
mornin'
Sayin' "Come home my boy your mother dear is dead."

I could hear the postman whistlin' yesterday mornin'
Coming up the pathway with his pack
But he little knew the sorrow that he brought me
As he handed me that letter edged in black.

SIDE II, Band 8: COWBOY'S LIFE IS A VERY DREARY LIFE

The most popular of the cowboy's complaint songs,
learned from Library of Congress disc, AAFS L 28,
as sung by Sloan Matthews of Alpine, Texas.

You can talk about your farms and your Chinamen's
charms
Talk about your silver and your gold
But a cowboy's life is a very dreary life
Ridin' through the heat and the cold.

Early in the mornin' you can hear the boss say,
"Get up boys the breakin' of the day."
It's now for to rise with our little sleepy eyes,
The bright dreary night's passed away.

When springtime comes then the hardships began
The rain is so fresh and so cold
We almost freeze with the water on our clothes
And the cattle we can scarcely hold.

You can talk about your farms and your Chinamen's
charms
But cowboys take my advice
Settin' out for to roam but you'd better stay at
home
With your kind and your lovin' little wife.

SIDE II, Band 9: BIG CITY JAIL

A typical type of "goodnight" song, learned by the
singer from the old Conqueror disc, sung by Billy
Vest.

They got me on the corner of Fifth Street and Main
Take me to the big jail they bound me in chains
Down come the jailer, 'round 10 o'clock
With that big bunch of keys and he opened that lock.

Now the judge found me guilty, said I had to pay
Now for ten long years behind bars I stay
They put me on board of that train Cannonball
And when it pulled out I waved to them all.

I've traveled this country 100 times or more
And now for 10 long years I'll travel no more
If I'd a listened to mother I wouldn't be here today
But when you do a crime you sure have to pay.