

Joyful Noise

A Study of Children's Music at the Baldwin Library for Historical Children's Literature

By Jane Marino



Jane Marino was a recent recipient of the Louise Seaman Bechtel Fellowship. The opportunity to explore the history of children's music and how it appeared in children's books, as well as its use within the culture of children, was her impetus to apply for the Bechtel Fellowship from ALSC. The following article is based on her studies at the Baldwin Library at the University of Florida.

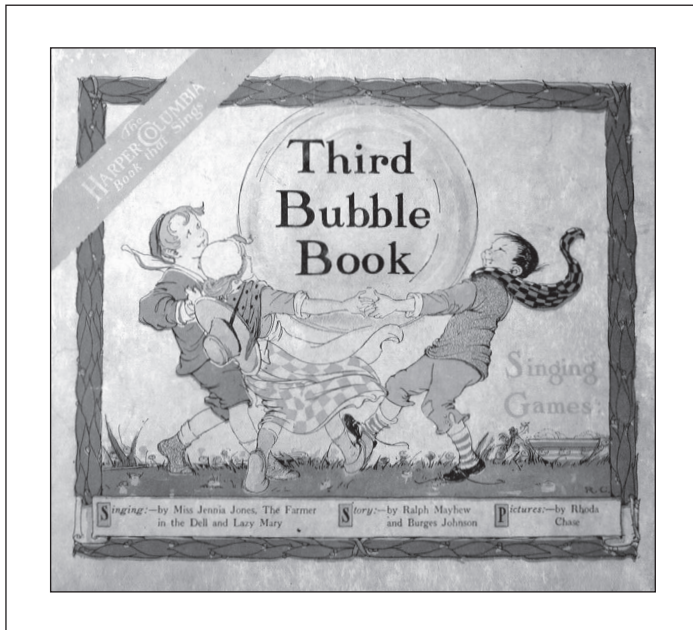
Rich in a long and varied history, the language, ritual, and melodies of children's music have been the exclusive realm and the secret delight of the babies, toddlers, school children, and teens who share it. The experience of tracing that music can be as wonderful and mysterious as the music itself, uncovering treasures one would never expect and digging through layers of meaning and nonsense that are at times so deep the bottom is impossible to see.

One route to that treasure, the Baldwin Library for Historical Children's Literature at the University of Florida, is an amazing trip through time. The collection enables a researcher to hold and examine hand-colored collections of songs published in the nineteenth century: tiny chapbooks with their thin delicate pages, so small one can fit in the palm of your hand; or books illustrated by Walter Crane or Randolph Caldecott. It brings into clear and sharp focus the world in which those books existed. It forges a connection between our world and theirs much stronger than the faded, jeweled leather covers of the books or the worn linen sheets or fragile paper on which they are printed. It forges a connection that leads to understanding: the new

understanding one has of a particular song when it's viewed on the landscape of its own history.

The life span of many children's songs is surprisingly long. In their catalog *Three Centuries of Nursery Rhymes and Poetry for Children*, Iona and Peter Opie have traced the history of some of the earliest printed collections of rhymes and songs for children. One of the categories of which they take particular note is Classic Collections, which they define as the ones "which will always be valued for their antiquity . . . the collections containing rhymes not hitherto printed" (3). They cite *Tommy Thumb's Songbook*, published in Worcester, Massachusetts, in 1794, as "an edition of the first nursery rhyme book, published in 1744," printed by Isaiah Thomas, written, according to the title page, by a "Nurse Lovechild," with a subtitle that declares it to be "for all little Masters and Misses. To be Sung to them by their Nurses, until they can sing themselves" (3). It is filled with many familiar rhymes as well as several pages that contain pictures of animals and their sounds written underneath, intended for the instruction of babies in the sound the animals make.

Another collection from that time, *Mother Goose's Melody, or Sonnets for the Cradle*, is a tiny, ninety-four-page book, measuring 3¼ x 2½". This "second Worcester edition" was printed in 1794, also by Isaiah Thomas. It was later printed as a facsimile with introductory notes in 1889, the cover of which cites the original issue by "John Newbery of London, about A.D. 1760." It contains some old and familiar friends like "See Saw Margery

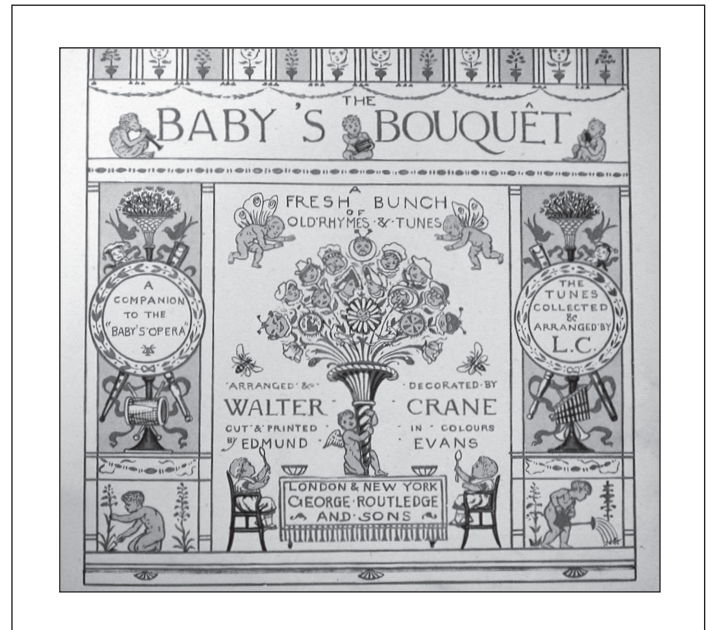


Third Bubble Book, 1918

Daw” and “Ride a Cock Horse.” Many of them had a maxim following them, to be sure that the child listening to them came away with a nugget of wisdom or virtue. After “This Pig Went to Market,” for example, was the maxim “If we do not govern our passions, our passions will govern us” (54). The collection *Songs for the Nursery*, published fifty years later in London, decries that tendency, however, stating that the rhymes themselves have such a “wholesome freshness, an unfettered buoyancy of feeling” (iv) that they need no further instruction or comment.

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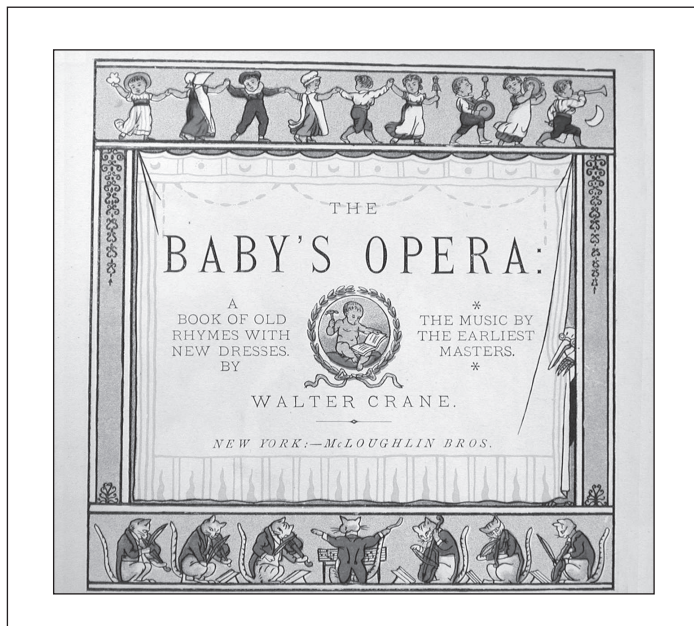
Several collections of the time, however, continue the philosophy of instruction as part and parcel to the sharing of rhymes and songs. *A Book for Boys and Girls, or Country Rhymes for Children*, originally published in London in 1686 and reprinted in many different editions over the next 200 years, is filled with morals and lessons of every kind, including prayers, the sacraments, and meditations on nature, animals, and plants. Two other collections, published 150 years later, continue the moral lessons. *The Boys and Girls Book of Songs and Ballads*, published in New York in 1860, contains six poems that are not really songs in the modern sense, despite the title. In four of them, a child dies, usually through his own sloth, sometimes because of his bravery, or through some unforeseen misfortune, like a storm. *The Illustrated Book of Songs for Children*, published around the same time, is actually a songbook with three sections of songs included. The first section has “Songs from the Nursery,” such as



The Baby's Bouquet, 1879

“Four and Twenty Blackbirds” and “Frog He Would A-Wooing Go” (vii). The next two sections contain songs that the editor determined that “intelligent children of 10 or 12 might enjoy,” including “The Days of the Month” and some not-so-subtle songs entitled “The Obstinate Chicken” and “The Broom and the Rod Come from the Same Tree” (viii).

Fortunately this tendency to moralize seems to have been limited to “older” children, with the nursery set left alone—with nurse, of course—to enjoy their songs. Walter Crane published two books of nursery songs during this time. *The Baby's Opera*, originally published by F. Warne & Co. in 1877, is described on the title page as “A Book of Old Rhymes with New Dresses” and includes such favorites as “Lavender’s Blue,” “Ye Frog’s a Wooing,” “Jack and Jill,” and “Dickory Dock.” Its sequel, *The Baby's Bouquet*, was published in 1879. It is described on the title page as “A Fresh Bunch of Old Rhymes & Tunes,” and includes “Hot Cross Buns,” “London Bridge,” “Aiken Drum,” and “Margery Daw.” The lyrics of many of these songs differ vastly from what our twentieth-century ears are accustomed to hearing. The refrain for “London Bridge” is not “My fair lady,” but “Dance over my Ladye Lea” (42). The song “See Saw Margery Daw,” which is remembered fondly by many of us as a gentle nursery rhyme, has a bit of a harsher edge here, with the words, “See Saw Margery Daw / Sold her bed to lie upon straw; / Wasn’t she a nasty slut / To sell her bed and lie upon dirt” (55)? These words, however, are true to the rhyme’s origins, according to William S. Baring Gould, who states that the name Margery was used almost exclusively by poor country people and that “Daw” can mean a “lazy person” or an “untidy woman, slut, slattern” (247). The Opies agree and also point out that the more familiar (to recent ears) version of the rhyme, “See-saw, Margery Daw, / Jacky shall have a new master / Jacky must have but a penny a day, / Because he can’t work any faster,” was originally sung by sawyers to help keep the rhythm of the saw (297). It’s interesting



The Baby's Opera, 1877

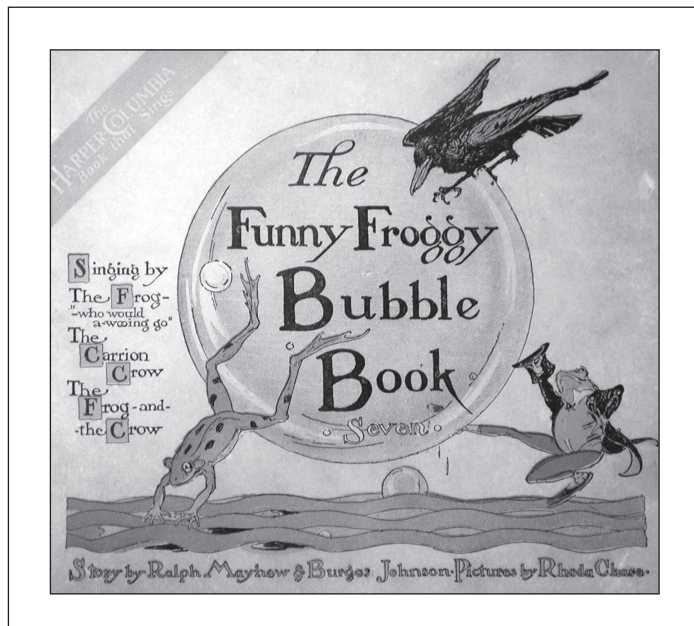
that such a rhyme would be considered appropriate in a book for babies at all, with either set of lyrics.

The remarkable thing about nursery rhymes and songs is their ability not only to thrive through the centuries but to remain alive and adapt to varying circumstances and locations. Jack and Jill went up and then tumbled down the hill in 1794 and continue to do so today. And although the origins of “Ring-a-ring-a-roses” or “Ring around the Rosie” may have been debated by such experts as Peter and Iona Opie and Baring Gould, and by others today, there is no doubt that children everywhere, from the time they can walk, love to ring around and all fall down.

The testimony that nursery rhymes and songs have been affected by and then adapted to the circumstances that surround them is strongest in the book *Step it Down: Games, Plays, Songs & Stories from the Afro-American Heritage* by Bessie Jones and Bess Lomax Hawes. In that book, which is a collection of children's nursery songs and circle games from Sea Island, Georgia, the heritage of slavery is evident in many of the songs they sing. The lullaby that was sung “throughout the South by white and black mothers alike” uses lyrics like “Go to sleepy, little baby / Before the booger man catch you” and “Mama went away and she told me to stay,” which carry the “poignant subcurrent of the great tragedy of slavery—the separation of mother and child” (7). In her book *On the Trail of Negro Folksongs*, Scarborough refers to that lullaby as well, quoting lines like, “Mammy and daddy have both gone away / And left nobody for to mind you,” or “Daddy run away, / An'lef'nobody with the baby!”

The rhyme “This Little Piggy,” also recorded in *Step it Down*, has a version that Jones called “the slavery-time way of doing it”:

This little piggy wants some corn.
 This little piggy says, “Where are you going to get it from?”
 This little piggy says, “Out of Massa's barn.”
 This little piggy says, “Run go tell!”



The Funny Froggy Bubble Book, 1919.

This little pig says, “Twee, twee, twee, I'll
 Tell old Massa, tell old Massa!” (9)

Although the rhyme “Patty Cake” has “been giving babies and their parents ‘consolation’ for more than two centuries at least,” the Sea Islands version might be a bit different than the one originated in the eighteenth century:

Patty cake, patty cake, baker's man
 Put it in the oven and spike it with tea,
 Save it for supper for baby and me.
 Roll 'em . . . roll 'em . . . roll 'em . . . roll 'em . . .
 Da-a-a-sh 'em in the oven! (13)

Just as they have changed with location, many of the sharp edges in many songs that existed two hundred or three hundred years ago have softened over time. No longer is Margery Daw a “nasty slut.” Gone from the lyrics of “Charley Over the Water” are any references to Charley's love of “good ale and wine” (Crane 43). So firmly integrated into the oral tradition are these rhymes, they become attuned to the times in which they live in order to survive. So, despite their British origins, they have become and are now a part of our American folklore.

When examining the folklore that has become part of all childhood, John and Alan Lomax state in their work *Folk Songs, U.S.A.*:

The life of a folk song depends not upon print but upon its appeal to children. The songs especially created with children in mind, therefore, possess incomparable vitality and, critical and candid of audiences, they have unmatched charm, subtlety, strength, and, above all, fancy. In their long march across this great continent, the people have tossed off thousands of such rhymes for their children . . . that includes riddles, knee-bouncers, finger plays, rocking songs and every other sort of fancy for the imagination of kids to feed upon. These are the

songs from which you learned to understand and enjoy rhyme and rhythm and melody. (8)

The folklore of children's music and songs takes many forms, the most prevalent of which are circle games. Despite the changes in meaning of the ritual or play-acting that accompany many of these songs, one of the factors that remains constant to many of them is the circle itself. It is with good reason that an illustration of children holding hands to create a circle is on the cover of Ruth Seeger's collection, *American Folk Songs for Children*. It symbolizes the action of so many of the songs within the book. Bess Lomax Hawes, in her book *Step it Down*, says, "The notion of a ring has always had a quality of magic; during play it is, literally, a 'charmed circle.' The ring is without gap or weakness—perhaps strength is its underlying symbolic quality. When you are part of a ring you are just that—part of a ring" (87). It's as if the strength of the whole supersedes any weakness, or inadequacy, or awkwardness one individual may feel. And as the game or the song goes on, the individual, feeling more and more a part of the whole, will derive more strength from it.

A classic example of a circle song is the song that we know as "Here we Go Round the Mulberry Bush." It has had words that vary from "Here we go round the bramble bush" (Baring Gould 253), to "The Mulberry Tree" or "The Gooseberry Bush" (Newell 57), to even "The Old Soap Gourd" (Ritchie 46). The origins and story of this song are just as varied. *The Play Party in Indiana* calls this a "play-party game," which has at its core an "imitation of work" (Wolford 127), while the version cited by Dorothy Scarborough is called a "kissing game" in which a girl pretends to be asleep while children circle around her singing, "Here we go round the strawberry bush, / This cold and frosty morning." As the game progresses, a "young gentleman" is called into the ring to wake her up, apparently with a kiss. The girl wakes up and then someone else plays the sleeper. "The Old Soap Gourd" song, which is cited in *The Swapping Song Book*, seems to be a courting song as well, as the boy (the Old Soap Gourd) or the girl (the lily bush) in the song is said to like sugar in their tea and "sometimes takes a little brandy," and "Ev'ry time he (she) turns around, / Chooses the girl (boy) comes handy" (Ritchie 47). In *Games and Songs of American Children*, William Wells Newell categorizes this as a work song, but describes it as more of an "action game" as children join hands and circle round, singing the refrain, and then, stopping, imitate various activities, like "wash our hands," "lace our stays," or "walk to school" (57–58).

Many circle games and songs of the nineteenth century had a great deal of ritual attendant to them, sometimes even the ritual of death. With childhood death being a much more common occurrence than it is in the twentieth or twenty-first century, children acted it out and, seemingly, tried to make sense of it through their play. One of the most prevalent games has several different names. Called "Miss Jennia Jones" by Newell, he states that this game "has been familiar in the Middle States since the memory of the oldest inhabitant" (63). The story, originally a love tale, according to Newell, had the girl Jennia, her parents, and a young suitor as the principal players, although "in America, [the suitor] is represented by feminine friends" (64).

Bechtel Might Be for You!

Kathy East, Wood County District Public Library, Bowling Green, Ohio, 1997 Bechtel Fellowship winner

Interested in the Bechtel Fellowship but all you can think is, "What could I possibly do or study for a month?" Having spent some time among the books, an extensive and special collection of books published mostly before 1950, in the Baldwin Collection at the Smathers Libraries at the University of Florida at Gainesville, I can offer some suggestions:

- Consider looking at the physical structure of these early books: size; kinds of paper; quality of print and illustrations; and the various methods of bookbinding.
- What early books were published in paperback? What do they look like? Curious about size, quality, length, price, or the intended audience?
- If you are a wordsmith, you may be intrigued with a study of the vocabulary—what topics were used to teach English? Was there early slang? And what about terms or words that have taken on a new or different meaning with the passage of time?
- Consider studying a body of work on a non-fiction topic. Read books about explorers, health, birds, famous people. Notice what information is presented and consider how it compares to today's books for children.
- What's funny? Look at humor for children and how it is presented in words and pictures.
- Curious about what the writers say about themselves? Would you find interesting a study of how people of color or any ethnic groups may have been depicted? That would probably lead to a study of the question: "how 'politically correct' by today's standards were many of these stories?" What would be your interpretation of how that impacts the value of the story or book?
- Your personal sensitivity to the arts might draw you to research the varied collection of songs and music, or poetry, or art and drawing books. You might like finding which works or pieces by Shakespeare were incorporated into early children's books.
- What about children with disabilities? What role did they have in early books? Were stereotypes established? Were these children included to show them as survivors or does the reader feel sorry for these characters?

- Consider a study of the roles of father, mother, grandparent, and siblings in books published at least one hundred years ago. And what about the descriptions of those roles when various classes of people are the main characters?
- Look at the portrayal of entertainment. What did people do or have for leisure activities? Are today's activities the same? Why have there been changes? Has the idea of "play" taken on a new definition recently?
- If you find folk literature appealing, read the folktales of Europe. Study the fascination with the number three in literature. What point of view is presented when Native Americans are part of the literature? This could be extended to today's efforts to provide a more holistic approach to the study of Native Americans and many other minority populations.
- I always read a book's dedication. Could there be anything in looking at the dedications of various historic books? Would that be entertaining? Revealing? Might the dedication be so obscure, we would not know the meaning?
- Many recitation pieces were included in early readers. I was surprised by the age of the learners! What was the purpose of these assignments? Have they disappeared or been adjusted in today's textbooks?
- And there is always the works of early authors and illustrators. What does a study of their work and style say about the time(s) and what influence might they have had on children's literature?
- When perusing the titles within the Baldwin collection, I saw numerous religious works including children's Bibles and early catechisms, hymns, hymns, and prayer books for children.

A large part of the lure of the Bechtel Fellowship is the chance to touch and handle, and think about all that went into the crafting of each of the books in this unique collection. Because of individual experiences, knowledge, and sensitivities, the reaction to each book is a personal one. That is what the fellowship is all about—little discoveries of your very own. There is no wrong or right. You need only pursue and enjoy while you are interacting with the Baldwin Collection.

Allow this list of possible topics and questions to spark your curiosity. I encourage you to develop a creative proposal to submit to the Louise Bechtel Fellowship selection committee. Any ALSC member who has had the pleasure of receiving this fellowship is willing to offer advice and encouragement! Happy planning.

They call on Miss Jennia Jones to come out and play, and are told in various verses that she is washing or ironing or baking. Finally they are told she is dead, and they go through several verses trying to decide what color to bury her in, rejecting various colors until they come to white, which is deemed suitable since it is "for dead people" (65). In some versions she is carried out by the friends, as if to be buried. In others, she rises up as a ghost and chases the girls in the ring, and the one who is caught plays Jennia next.

Essentially the same version is cited by Robert Ford in his book *Children's Rhymes, Games, Songs and Stories*, although with the young suitor being the principal participant rather than the girls and without the verses about colors (91). The version described by Newell survived until 1917 when it appears in the third of Harper Brothers "Bubble Books," which were coproduced by Harper Brothers and Columbia Graphophone and were touted on the cover as "The Harper Columbia Book that Sings." Within *The Third Bubble Book* by Ralph Mayhew were three songs, complete with 78 rpm, one-sided records and a small story that connected the songs. One of a set of eleven books, these bubble books were early music book kits. The song appears again in the children's songbook *This Way and That: A Book of Singing Games* by Edna Potter, published in 1931, in essentially the same form.

The song "Jennie Jenkins" appears in two of the collections by John and Alan Lomax, *Our Singing Country* (1941) and *Folk Song U.S.A.* (1947). By the time of these appearances, it has become a courting song, in which the young girl rejects color after color, none of them suiting her for one reason or another, so maybe she'll have to go bare. There are no allusions to death or dying. In 1950, in Beatrice Landeck's *Songs to Grow On*, "Jennie Jenkins" makes its appearance as a children's song. Called a "nonsense song," here again, the color she would wear is the only concern, just out of her own vanity (22). In John and Nancy Langstaff's collection, *Jim Along Josie*, the song is entitled "Will you Wear Red?" and the protagonist is called "Jilly Jenkin," but she is still the same vain girl for whom appearance is everything (62). The version that appears again in *Go In and Out the Window* is once again called "Jenny Jenkins" and also only concentrates on what color Jenny will wear and why. These more recent versions can also be called courting songs, with the phrase "oh my dear" or "oh my love" being used to address the girl. The remarkable transformation that this song undergoes is only one example, although a dramatic one, of the changes a song can experience as it reflects the changes in culture and outlook of the children who sing it.

The song "Old Roger" also ritualizes death and is listed in many collections as a children's circle game. In the game, children circle around three players. One is Old Roger (who is lying down, dead), the second is the apple tree that grows over his grave, and the third is the old woman who comes to collect the apples that fall from the tree. When the old woman comes along to try to collect the apples, Old Roger's ghost rises up to "thump" the old woman, who runs away. In Scarborough's book, the song is called "Old Ponto," but the plot is essentially the same. Unlike Jennia Jones's transformation to "Jenny Jenkins," "Old Roger" seems to remain essentially the same in the various collections

in which it appears, although the song's appearance seems to drop off or stop altogether after the 1970s. Its origins or meaning are unclear, but it seems to have sustained itself through several generations.

A song that was so particular to the culture in which it began was "The Blue Tail Fly," found in several collections, *Singing Holidays* among them, as a "plantation song." In it, the singer's "master" is chased and whose horse is finally bitten by a blue tail fly which causes the horse to jump and pitch the master into a ditch where he dies. This is a cause of great delight to the singer, who sings the refrain, "Jimmy crack corn, but I don't care, My master's gone away" (10–11). A century later, this funny little plantation song was collected by Ruth Crawford Seeger and became an animal song for children. In her version, the first three verses use

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animals and only the last verse has the same lyrics as the original minstrel song, "When I was a boy I used to wait / On Master's table and pass the plate" (125). The addition of that verse in Seeger's version, as a last verse rather than the first, lessens its impact. The whole story is not told as it was in earlier versions, and as a last verse, it is probably not even sung a lot of the time.

In his book *Brown Girl in the Ring*, Alan Lomax spotlights many of the songs and games that have come down through our British heritage and examines how they evolved as they traveled to the islands of Trinidad and Tobago, Dominica, St. Lucia, Anguilla, and Nevis. Here again, the circle is paramount. Lomax states that the "song game epitomizes the classic and central form of Caribbean ring play, in which a single dancer occupies the center of the circle, 'shows her [or his] motion,' and then selects a partner who shares the dance briefly and ultimately takes over the central role" (8).

"Blue Bird" has a long history and began, according to both William Wells Newell and Robert Ford, as a circle game in which one girl, selected according to the color of her dress, enters the ring. In the "Blue Bird" version that Lomax cites, the song, from San Juan, Trinidad, is played very much the same way, with the child who is wearing the appropriate color going in and out of the ring and then tapping the next child to take her place (28). "Some Like it Hot, Some Like it Cold," on the other hand, is a

variation of "Pease Porridge Hot," which is very different from the clapping song most American children know. In this version, gathered from Trinidad and Nevis, children stand in a circle, "hands free for clapping" while the center player holds her right hand high with one finger pointing up to represent "One finger, one finger, keep moving" in the song. As the appropriate numbers progress to two fingers, then three, and so on, the number of dancers, each holding one finger up, move to the center. Lomax further states: "Adult Trinidadians seem to know nothing of the song's European origin and simply claim that it came down to them from the 'older heads,' their ancestors, as indeed it probably did" (38–39).

There are just as many variations on the circle game that have acquired other names. Sometimes they are dances; other times they are play-party songs. "The Noble Duke of York," for example, is used in many collections as a lap song for babies. But it was once, according to Richard Chase in his book *Hullabaloo and other Singing Folk Games*, an elaborately patterned dance in which five to nine couples would participate, and each couple would move up and down the line of the other couples in a series of turns and steps (10–11). Beatrice Landeck, in her second book of folk songs for children, *More Songs to Grow On*, also cites this as a couples dance with essentially the same directions (107). In Potter's book, the song "The King of France" seems closely related, although not a couples dance here. This song is the first of what can be many examples of "play-party" songs that became the exclusive property of children.

Lomax defines play-party songs as a device invented by the young people of the frontier who were faced with "violent religious prejudices" against dancing and fiddle playing by their elders. The "dancers sang and clapped their own music. [It] soon acquired a life and vitality of its own [and] was an ideal amusement for the teenage group and the younger married people" (Lomax 1947, 3). Leah Wolford, in her book *The Play Party in Indiana*, is careful to define the play-party song as belonging, not to children, but to the young courting couples who used these dances as social instruments at the parties they attended, although she admitted that many play-party songs were also now considered children's songs as well. The most classic and universal of the play-party songs is "Skip to My Lou," in which so many of the lyrics suggest it as a courting game and choosing game. Others include "Old Dan Tucker" and "Old Joe Clarke."

There are numerous examples of songs whose own story changed as the culture surrounding it changed. Two classic examples are "London Bridge," which because of its name is so strongly linked with its British origins, and "Frog Went A-Courtin'," which John and Alan Lomax say has "established a more enduring place in the Anglo-American repertoire than, perhaps, any other song" (Lomax 1947, 3).

"London Bridge" has a long history and a long list of variations and meanings. Opie tells us that there are references to a dance

called "London Bridge" which date back to 1719, but by 1725 the verses were thought of as belonging to children (272). It appears in *Tommy Thumb's Pretty Song Book*, 1744, and in Crane's *Baby's Bouquet*, 1879.

Throughout its history, the basic idea of two children forming an arch under which the line of children playing the game passes remains the same. The most variations occur when a child is captured by the two children who are playing the bridge. Newell says that the child is asked if he would prefer a diamond necklace or a gold pin. Depending on his answer, he is placed behind one side or the other. Each player on the line is captured and questioned in turn, so that at the end two lines have formed and a tug-of-war ensues (204). There are many verses attributed to this song, depending on the source that is cited, all of which are concerned with how to build the bridge back up. The version that Edna Potter includes in her book has no reference to choosing materials to build the bridge back up, however. In this version, "London Bridge is falling down" and then when the player is captured, it's "off to prison you must go" (4). In *Step it Down*, Hawes states, "This traditional European game is a reflection of the ancient custom of offering a living sacrifice to the angry spirit of the river when a bridge is to be built." In the version recorded here, the children sing, "London Bridge is all broke down"; and as the children continue under the bridge, they sing, "Catch the one that come by last." And when the child is caught, they sing, "Give him a kick and send him home, Pity poor me." But Jones assures the reader, "We don't hurt him, just bump him" (279). Peter Spier's picture book of this song, published in 1967, takes a very literal interpretation of this song, depicting the various attempts to rebuild the bridge with the different materials mentioned in the song's verses, from clay to gold. Newell also assigns the traditional meaning that Hawes refers to, identifying the evil spirit as the devil who has a hatred of bridges since he values his solitude,

and the child who is arrested was originally seen as the price paid for the bridge being built. He states that from his research and citations, the song represents "the antagonism of celestial and infernal powers, and the final decision by which each soul is assigned a place on one side or the other" (210). This is obviously a well-researched and interesting theory. But the most important element of this song, which has helped it become so universal and survive for three hundred years, at least for children, is the story of the bridge. Both the idea of its falling down and that they can participate in building it back up again and, of course, the suspense of being captured in the game are all the keys to its long life and universality.

The oldest song that children still sing today seems to be "Frog Went A-Courtin'." Robert Ford reports, "In 1580, the Stationers Company licensed 'a ballad of a most strange wedding of the froggie and the mouse' and that same ballad Dr. Robert Chambers printed from a small quarto manuscript of poems formerly in the possession of Sir Walter Scott, dated 1630." That very old version bears very little resemblance to the modern one.

Itt was ye frog in ye wall
Humble doune, humble
doune;
And ye mirie mouse in
ye mill,
Tweidle, tweidle; twino.
(125)

In his book *The Burl Ives Song Book*, Burl Ives gives it an even earlier beginning, stating, "It first occurs in a Scottish broadside, 1549, "The Frog came to Myl Dur (mill door)" (22).

Interested in the Bechtel Fellowship?

The Louise Seaman Bechtel Fellowship allows qualified children's librarians to spend a month or more reading and studying at the Baldwin Library of the George A. Smathers Libraries, University of Florida, Gainesville. The Baldwin Library contains 85,000 volumes of children's literature, most published before 1950.

The fellowship, endowed in memory of Bechtel and Ruth M. Baldwin, provides a stipend of \$4,000. Candidates must be personal ALSC members and must be currently working in direct service to children, with at least twelve years professional experience in direct service to children. The candidate must also have a graduate degree from an ALA-accredited program. For more information on the fellowship, visit the ALSC Web site.



Past Bechtel Fellowship winners with the curator of the Baldwin Collection. Front row (left to right): Leslie Barban, Mary Ann Paulin, Jane Marino, Rita Smith (curator), Kathy Simonetta. Back row (left to right): Sue McCleaf Nespeca, Kathy Toon, Kathy East, Floyd Dickman.

The version of the song that Ford cites, one that appears in a few other sources, tells the story of the Frog who sets off in his coat and hat to Miss Mousie's hall for an evening of drinking, singing, dancing, and merry-making. Sadly, the cat comes tumbling in to break up the festivities. In some of the nineteenth-century versions, the cat and her kittens eat up Miss Mouse and Mr. Rat, while Mr. Frog, never the gentleman, makes his escape. In others, Mr. Frog tries to escape but is punished for his lack of gallantry by being eaten by the duck at the river.

The version that appears in Crane's *Baby's Opera* is closer to the more recent versions. In "Ye Frog's Wooing," the frog does propose marriage to Miss Mouse and the celebration ensues. The story does end tragically, however, as the cat comes in and catches the mouse while the drake catches the frog. Only the rat escapes, climbing up the wall. The illustrations quite clearly depict it all, with the cat pouncing on the mouse and the frog's legs dangling from the drake's mouth (25). Even though *The Funny Froggy Book*, the seventh bubble book in the Harper Brothers & Columbia series, uses the earlier version in which Frog's wooing means drinking and making merry (6–7), many of the later collections in the twentieth century tell the story of Frog who goes to ask Miss Mousie's hand in marriage, seeks per-

"Many circle games and songs of the nineteenth century had a great deal of ritual attendant to them, sometimes even the ritual of death. With childhood death being a much more common occurrence than it is in the twentieth or twenty-first century, children acted it out and, seemingly, tried to make sense of it through their play."

mission from Uncle Rat, participates in the discussion of what will be at the wedding feast, and lives happily ever after. The unfortunate demise of the mouse, rat, and frog so common in earlier versions has disappeared. But this song, which was, as Iona Opie states, "Old when the first Queen Elizabeth was a child" (Opie 1973, 5) continues to endure. It has been made into several picture-book versions, the most famous of which is the 1956 Caldecott winner by John Langstaff and Feodor Rojankovsky.

It is a classic example of folklore, whether spoken or sung: it's a tale that is changed with each new teller, molded by the circumstances and times that surround it but always continuing to reinvent itself in order to remain fresh and new. Two of the most recent picture-book versions illustrate that trend quite clearly. In Dominic Catalano's version, published in 1998, "Frog went a Courtin'" is a play put on by the Highland Minstrels. In Marjorie Priceman's picture book, published in 2000, the characters find themselves in New York City. It will doubtless continue to be sung and retold in many different variations, as the saga of the frog and the mouse continues to intrigue and entertain us.

Throughout the history of children's music, a few names appear again and again. They are the collectors, the anthropologists, the preservers of children's music as it wends its way through time. Walter Crane and Randolph Caldecott were two of the best-

known British illustrators and artists of the nineteenth century. Their understanding of picture-book illustration helped to give a new voice to many of the rhymes that had previously gone no further than the nursery door. Crane (1845–1915) had much to say about book illustration and seemed to understand the importance of integrating picture with text, an understanding that is demonstrated quite remarkably in the two collections of babies' songs mentioned in this essay. Caldecott, who lived for only forty years (1846–1886), nevertheless produced several picture-book versions of Mother Goose Rhymes, using his droll pen-and-ink illustrations to extend the story beyond the words in the rhymes. Despite an ill-fated trip to Florida during which he took sick and died, Caldecott's name will be forever linked with the popularization of many rhymes and songs well beyond the nursery as well as with excellence in children's book illustration.

As more and more people populated the United States, the songs so entrenched in the British and European traditions went with them. Isaiah Thomas (1749–1831) was one of the leading publishers of his time and one of the country's leading citizens. His four hundred titles were printed in thousands of copies. Among them were *Tommy Thumb's Songbook* and *Mother Goose's Melody*, cited by the Opies in their catalogue as two of the classic early collections of nursery rhymes and songs (3–4). John Lomax and later his son Alan were the two most influential collectors and cataloguers of American folk music, including music for children. They produced ten books, five of them together. Their books were immense and extensive collections of traditional American music, transcribed from recordings they made as they traveled throughout the country. Later, those recordings went to the Folklore Center at the Library of Congress.

Due to his efforts, John Lomax was named Honorary Consultant and Curator of the Archive of American Folk Song at the Library of Congress. His son Alan, who went on the road with his father when he was just seventeen, has spent the rest of his professional life working with folk music. He was one of the Almanac Singers, a folk group that had in its ranks Woody Guthrie, Bess Lomax Hawes, and Peter Seeger. Receiving his degree, as did his father, from Harvard University, he worked as an anthropologist of the performing arts for Columbia University and Hunter College. Recording songs with his father, singing them, and later collecting them on his own led to his being called "The Father of the American Folksong Revival."

John Langstaff, who has produced twenty-five books, including several picture-book versions of traditional American songs like "Frog Went A-Courtin'" and "Over in the Meadow" and two collections of African American spirituals, is well known for his work in music, especially educating children about music. He founded the Revels in 1971, a group whose purpose is to promote the understanding and appreciation of traditional folk music, dance, and rituals from around the world. He is now Director Emeritus of Revels.

Ruth Crawford Seeger, (1901–1953), who collaborated with the Lomaxes on their collections as the musical arranger, is considered by many to be the most significant American female composer in this century. Besides her work with the Lomaxes, she composed many works of music and produced two volumes of American folk music for children. During her life, she campaigned vigorously for the use of American folk songs in children's music education.

As she stated in her introduction to *American Folk Songs for Children*, "This music has been a natural part of work, play, sleep, fun, ridicule, love, death. It has grown out of and passed through many ways of living and doing. It knows and tells what people have thought about the ways of living and the things that happened" (21). Music is so much a reflection of our culture, the culture of childhood, and the way we perceive that culture that, to study its history, we also learn about the present. The knowledge we acquire, both from past and present, will help us to appreciate and understand the songs we sing and the children who sing them as well. ↵

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