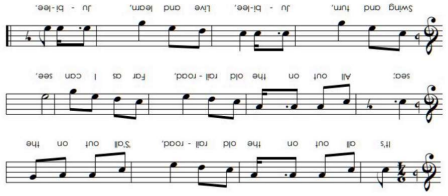
Zines about Kentucky Folk songs

Jubilee

Or, Swing and turn

Jubilee is a gamesong from the Ritchie family of Kentucky. Jean Ritchie is best known for her recording of it, but as with all folk music, there are many different variations.

The tune is simple, and is meant to be sung by the game players.



From MUDCAT:

"Children stand facing a partner in two lines holding hands. The ends of the lines also hold hands so they can circle to the left until back in their original position in two lines. Hands are dropped and the pair at the head of the line skips sideway to the bottom of the set as the others clap. Once they reach the foot the game continues as before. "

From Victoria Bowler

"one verse 1, head couple joins hands and all form a circle, moving left with a running step once around and back to place. On the chorus, "sing and turn" all form two lines again and head couple link right arms, turn once, then left arm swing once. On the following verses the head couple reels down the line, always giving left arm to the partner in the center. During reel sing any verse except first with the chorus following each verse. When the head couple reaches the foot of the set they remain, and the new head couple join hands to make a circle, and dance begins over. "

All out on the old railroad,
'S'all out on the sea,
'S'all out on the old railroad
Far as eye can see.

Swing 'n' turn, Jubilee!
Live 'n' learn, Jubilee!

Hardest work I ever done
Working on the farm,
Easiest work I ever done
Swinging my true love's arm.

Swing 'n' turn, Jubilee!
Live 'n' learn, Jubilee!

Coffee grows on the white-oak tree,
Sugar runs in brandy,
Boys as pure as a lump of gold,
Girls as sweet as candy.

Swing 'n' turn, Jubilee!
Live 'n' learn, Jubilee!

If I had me a needle and thread
Fine as I could sew,
Sew my true love to my side,
And down this creek I'd go.

Swing 'n' turn, Jubilee!
Live 'n' learn, Jubilee!

If I had no horse to ride,
I'd be found a-crawling,
Up and down this rocky road
Looking for my darling.

Swing 'n' turn, Jubilee!
Live 'n' learn, Jubilee!

All out on the old railroad,
'S'all out on the sea,
'S'all out on the old railroad
Far as eye can see.

Swing 'n' turn, Jubilee!
Live 'n' learn, Jubilee!

References:

https://mudcat.org/thread.cfm?threadid=31807

A 2001 thread including the real Jean Ritchie about the song

https://mainlynorfolk.info/folk/songs/jubilee.html

Lyrics and a small bit of information

https://blogs.loc.gov/folklife/2015/06/jean-ritchie-1922-2015/

A piece written about Jean Ritchie after her death, quoted in this zine.

https://static1.squarespace.com/static/55955001e4b0f2448bc55fa3/t/5d3b6e9187ba8b000106389e/1564176018273/Jubilee.pdf

Chords and an explanation of the game.

Song suggestions:

Shady Grove

Roll on Clouds in the Morning

Barbry Ellen (Barbara Allen)

"Perhaps the most important singer, interpreter, and proponent of Appalachian traditions since Bascom Lamar Lunsford (1882-1973), she (Jean Ritchie) had been part of the American folksong revival for about seventy years. Her life story is well known, partly through her autobiographical songbook Singing Family of the Cumberlands (1955) and her many other writings. She was born in 1922 in Viper, Kentucky, the youngest in a family of fourteen children. Her family's great storehouse of songs, stories, games, and other traditions, which they performed as part of their daily lives, was responsible for Jean's personal repertoire of mountain folklife. By her reckoning, the most prolific keeper of songs in the family was the man she knew as "Uncle Jason" (actually her father's first cousin), but her parents, aunts, uncles, and cousins all sang and played mountain music. "

Some fun alternate lyrics:

Saddle up the old gray horse,
Who will be the rider?
Ride him down to the old still house
And get a jug of cider.

I won't have no widder man,
Neither will my cousin,
You can get such stuff as that,
Fifteen cents a dozen.

Wished I had a big fine horse,
Corn to feed him on,
Pretty little girl to stay at home
And feed him when I'm gone.

Love it is a killing thing,
Beauty is a blossem,
If you want your finger bit,
Poke it at a possum.

The sun came up on Monday morn,
the world was all in flame.
It's all a mortal man can do,
to make it right again.