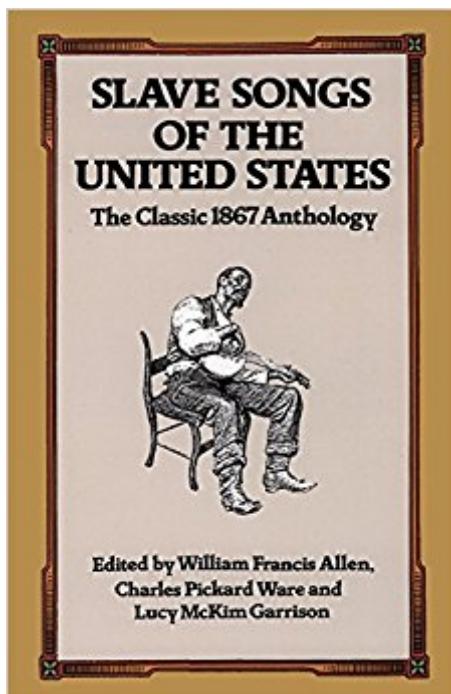


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# Slave Songs Of The United States: The Classic 1867 Anthology



## Synopsis

First published in 1867, this landmark book represented the first systematic effort to collect and preserve the songs sung by the plantation slaves of the Old South. To ensure authenticity, the editors notated most of the melodies and words directly from the singers themselves. The result was a rare musical treasury containing complete music and lyrics for over 130 songs, arranged by geographical region. Among them are: Roll, Jordan, Roll; Jehovah, Hallelujah; I hear from Heaven to-day; Michael, row the boat ashore; Turn sinner, turn O; Nobody knows the trouble I've had; No Man can hinder me; Heave away; Charleston Gals; I'm gwine to Alabamy; I want to die like-a Lazarus die; Belle Layotte; On to Glory Jacob's Ladder; My Father, how long?; Musieu Bainjo; Lean on the Lord's side; God got plenty o' room. The book presents the melody lone and all the known verses to each song. The editors also include directions for singing, along with a commentary on each song's history, its possible variations, what some of its key references mean and other pertinent details. A new preface to the Dover edition by Harold Courlander appraises the book's importance in American musical and cultural history.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Originally published in 1867, this book is a collection of songs of African-American slaves. A few of the songs were written after the emancipation, but all were inspired by slavery. The wild, sad strains tell, as the sufferers themselves could, of crushed hopes, keen sorrow, and a dull, daily misery, which covered them as hopelessly as the fog from the rice swamps. On the other hand, the words

breathe a trusting faith in the life after, to which their eyes seem constantly turned.

1830-18991840-19211842-1877 --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

My high school sophomore English students read Julius Lester's book "To Be a Slave" as a foundation for understanding the slave experience in the United States, particularly during the final decades leading up to the Civil War. To further their immersion into the slave culture, I have also purchased numerous slave narratives and other reference materials, including this book: "Slave Songs of the United States," first published in 1867. This collection begins with a 28-page introduction from editor William Francis Allen (1830-1889). In it, he writes: "More than thirty years ago those plantation songs made their appearance which were so extraordinarily popular for a while; and if "Coal-Black Rose," "Zip Coon" and "Ole Virginny nebber tire" have been succeeded by spurious imitations, manufactured to suit the somewhat sentimental taste of our community, the fact that these were called "negro melodies" was itself a tribute to the musical genius of the race." And this collection of 136 songs is, indeed, a tribute to the musical heritage of African-Americans. The collection is divided into four sections: I. Southeastern Slave States (82 songs), II. Northern Seaboard Slave States (20 songs), III. Inland Slave States (9 songs), and IV. Slave Songs of the United States (25 songs). Each song includes music and lyrics, as well as occasional notes of the songs history, origin, lyric meaning and/or use. It would be simply amazing to actually hear these songs as they were originally sung, but having the music and knowing these were songs that helped sustain an enslaved people gives me chills. These songs tell their own story, and it is a fascinating read. **VERY HIGHLY RECOMMENDED**

Originally published in 1867 and reprinted in a more modern edition, this book of Slave Songs provides insights into performance practice and African-American cultural of the middle of the 19th century. Following the dialect and the purpose of each song as presented in the introductory material is a bit challenging but also rewarding. Especially fascinating was the explanation on the "shout" and the use of the music in religious settings. Meaningful as a primary source and a direct understanding of the use of the language in music, this book of songs is an important and necessary resource for historians of African-American music. Aside from some of the musical flaws in the notation, the music is generally clear with a nice balance of text and actual music. Thankfully this book exists, for without it, much of this music would be lost due to its lack of usage in modern culture. A careful study reveals many great and meaningful songs virtually unknown in today's

world. Perhaps some of the songs could and should be included in the canon of fine American folk music.

There are 136 songs in this book, most of which are no longer sung. They are simply amazing, musically and theologically. An example: "Come and Go With Me", collected in Augusta, GA, presents a major scale with a flat 6th and 7th, and the tune ends on the 4th. Unfortunately, the collectors, as went on for generations as standard procedure, did not acknowledge the names of any of their sources. The original "Michael Row the Boat Ashore" is in here; it is a rowing song from the sea islands, addressed to the archangel Michael as a prayer for safe passage; these lyrics are more striking than the familiar ones. Here are the complete lyrics to "Come and Go With Me", which is singular both in its scale and its notion that heaven is in the present, to be accepted rather than earned:

Ole Satan is a busy ole man  
He roll stones in my way  
Master Jesus is my bosom friend  
He roll 'em out my way  
Oh, come and go with me  
Oh, come and go with me  
Oh, come and go with me  
A-walking in the heaven I roam  
I did not come here myself my Lord  
It was my Lord who brought me here  
And I really do believe I'm a child of God  
A-walking in the heaven I roam  
Oh, come and go with me  
Oh, come and go with me  
A-walking in the heaven I roam  
It was reported that the freed slaves did not want to remember their old songs. And we all have reasons for forgetting a painful past. But look at these songs; they are the heart and soul's truth of life. It is not too late to learn from these people. Put this music in your heart.

Water spring that never dry, Hallelu, Hallelu  
The more we dig, the more it spring, Hallelujah!

Great book.

Look for the Dover reprint — Slave Songs of the United States: The Classic 1867 Anthology — for a better quality printing at a lower price. This publication in 1867 is, if I recall correctly, the earliest publication of African American spirituals in book form. It did not have the lasting influence of the pivotal — The Jubilee Singers and Their Songs (Dover Song Collections) — published a few years later, but this book is absolutely indispensable to anyone interested in the subject. The book is available free online with some searching but this inexpensive reprint is an easy read and easy to consult.

I know this is an excellent resource but the digitized version is totally illegible. I expect to review the file and either send me a corrected version or refund my purchase.

Great history study!

My aunt became interested in Slavery Songs and this book was just what she needed. Great book for research. Would recommend this for anyone interested in African American history.

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