

SONG HISTORIES

“**Boil Them Cabbages Down**” is a song that is sometimes called “Bile Them Cabbages Down”. “Bile” is an older way of saying “boil”. The tune comes from an English country dance called “Smiling Polly”, which was first printed in 1765. Some of the verses are sung in other traditional songs as well.

“**Old Joe Clark**” is a fiddle tune about a preacher’s son named Old Joe Clark who was good at gambling and telling tall tales. Some people claim that Joe Clark might’ve been a moonshiner in the Virginia hills, a veteran of the War of 1812, or a banjo player from Clay County, Kentucky—ultimately, there’s an Old Joe Clark wherever you might be!

“**Cluck Old Hen**” is a modal (minor-sounding) song with lyrics about a hen who sometimes does, and sometimes doesn’t, lay eggs. The song is often played with a “cluck” sound produced by plucking the strings of the fiddle with the left hand. The first recording of the song was made by Fiddlin’ John Carson of Cobb County, Georgia in 1923, though there are earlier transcriptions of the tune that date back to the late 1800s.

The song “**New River Train**” is associated with one of the railroad lines that used to pass through the New River area of southwestern Virginia. The lyrics are about the problems that come with having many different lovers. It is also sometimes called “Green River Train”, as recorded by the South Georgia Highballers in 1927.

“**Lazy John**” is a tune from the Cumberland Plateau area of Kentucky and eastern Tennessee. Fiddler Clyde Davenport, who learned “Lazy John” from a radio recording by a western swing band that included Texas musician Johnny Lee Wills, is responsible for the tune’s popularity in Appalachia.

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