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American Folk Songs [2 volumes]: A Regional Encyclopedia

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This state-by-state collection of folksongs describes the history, society, culture, and events characteristic of all fifty states. Unlike all other state folksong collections, this one does not focus on songs collected in the particular states, but rather on songs concerning the life and times of the people of that state. The topics range from the major historical events, such as the Boston Tea Party, the attack on Fort Sumter, and the California Gold Rush, to regionally important events such as disasters and murders, labor problems, occupational songs, ethnic conflicts. Some of the songs will be widely recognized, such as Casey Jones, Marching Through Georgia, or Sweet Betsy from Pike. Others, less familiar, have not been reprinted since their original publication, but deserve to be studied because of what they tell about the people of these United States, their loves, labors, and losses, and their responses to events. The collection is organized by regions, starting with New England and ending with the states bordering the Pacific Ocean, and by states within each region. For each state there are from four to fifteen songs presented, with an average of 10 songs per state. For each song, a full text is reprented, followed by discussion of the song in its historical context. References to available recordings and other versions are given. Folksongs, such as those discussed here, are an important tool for historians and cultural historians because they sample experiences of the past at a different level from that of contemporary newspaper accounts and academic histories. These songs, in a sense, are history writ small.

Includes: Away Down East, The Old Granite State, Connecticut, The Virginian Maid's Lament, Carry Me Back to Old Virginny, I'm Going Back to North Carolina, Shut up in Cold Creek Mine, Ain't God Good to Iowa?, Dakota Land, Dear Prairie Home, Cheyenne Boys, I'm off for California, and others.

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