

Songs of Slavery Days

*Down Below, Johnnie; A Fragment; Another Fragment;
Raccoon Song*

My father, who was born in 1837, went to sea when he was eighteen years of age and followed the sea for some years. He made several voyages to the south before the war and used to tell us many stories of his experiences there. He told us how the darkies used to sing in front of their cabins in the evenings when their work was done, and how they sang while loading the vessel and kept time to the music. The following are the scraps I remember of some of the negro songs father sang.

Down Below, Johnnie

Oh I took my gun and I went a - gun-ning Down be - low and a hi yi yi. I —
took my gun and I went a gun-ning Down be - low John-nie, Down be-low John.

Chorus
Row, men, row. Down be - low and a ti yi yi.
Row, men, row. Down be - low John - nie, Down be-low John.

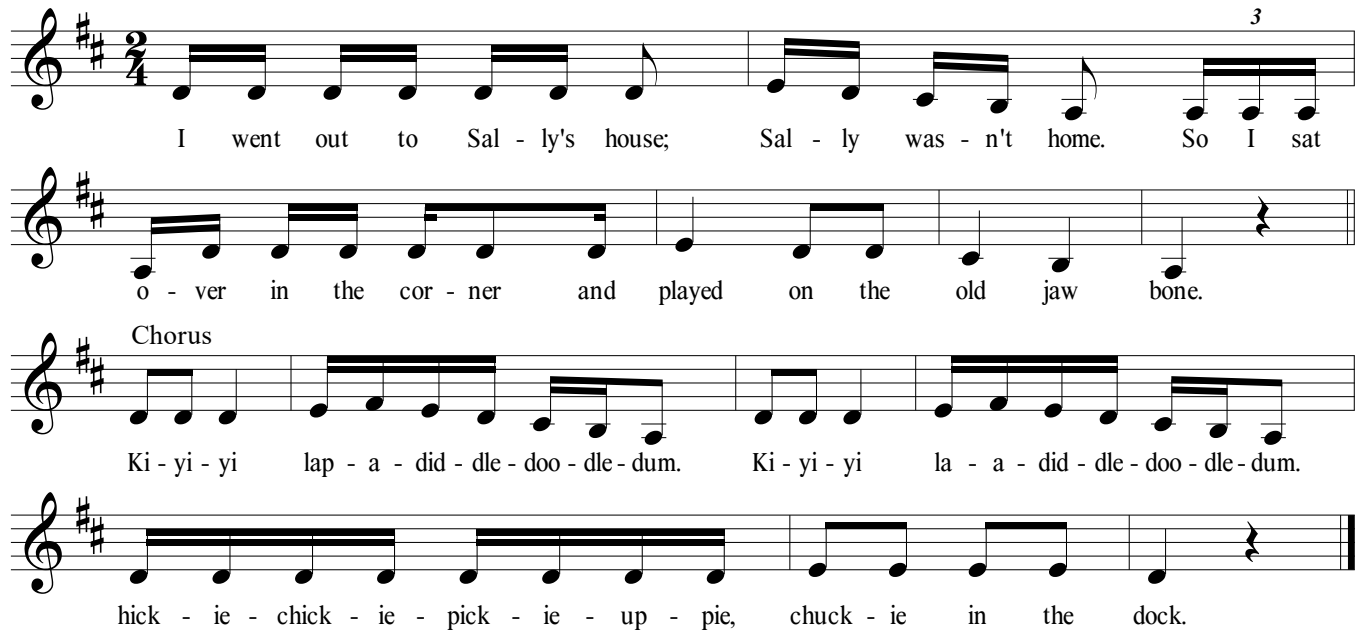
Oh, I shot a coon as he was a-running
Down below in a hi yi yi.
I shot a coon as he was a-running
Down below Johnnie, down below, John.

(Chorus)

Oh, I saw his very heart's blood a-running
Down below in a hi yi yi,
I saw his very heart's blood a-running
Down below Johnnie, down below, John.

(Chorus)

A Fragment



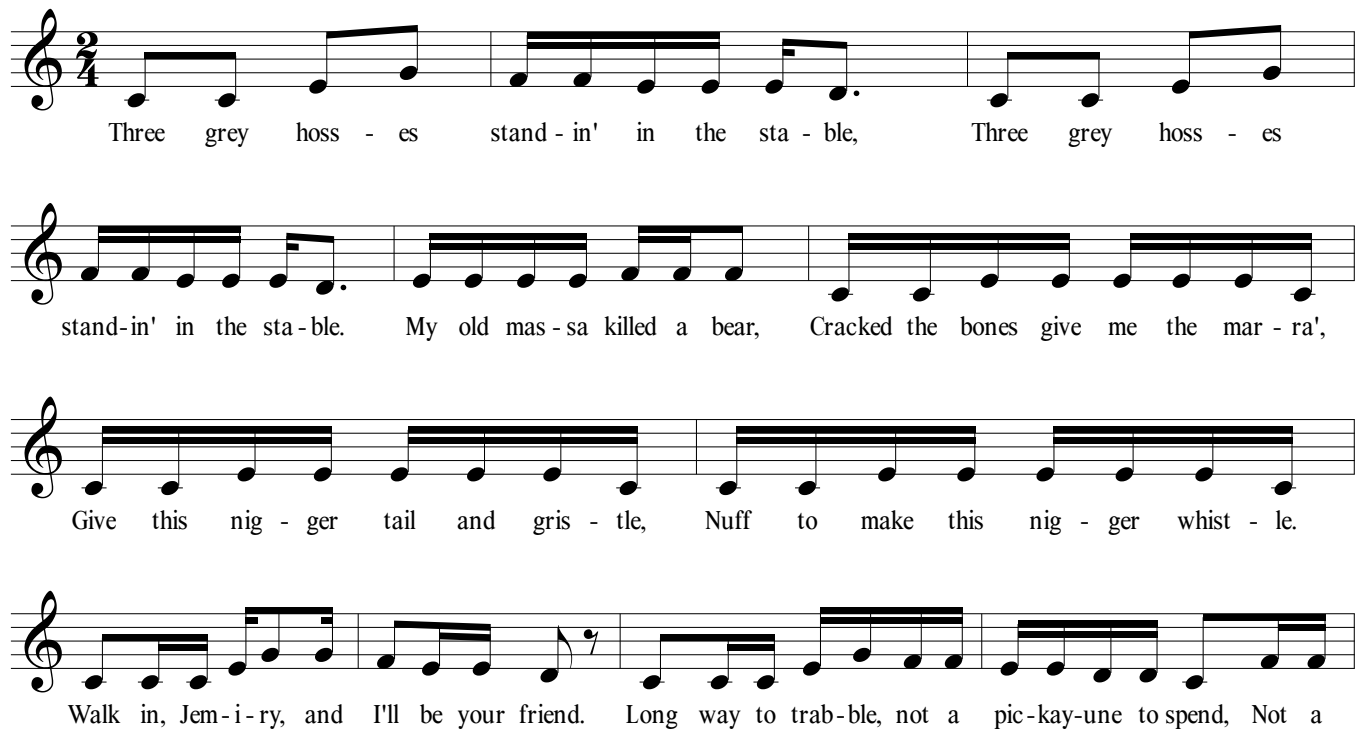
I went out to Sal - ly's house; Sal - ly was - n't home. So I sat
o - ver in the cor - ner and played on the old jaw bone.

Chorus
Ki - yi - yi lap - a - did - dle - doo - dle - dum. Ki - yi - yi la - a - did - dle - doo - dle - dum.
hick - ie - chick - ie - pick - ie - up - pie, chuck - ie in the dock.

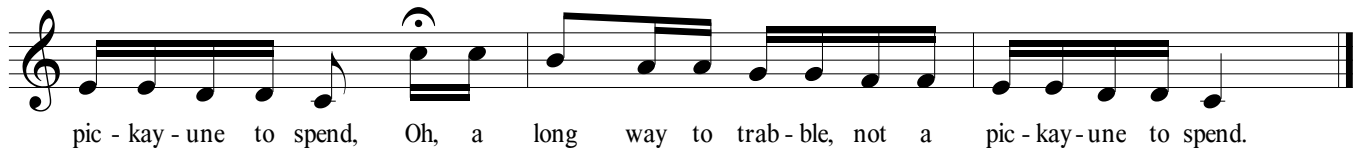
Coon in the gum tree, possum in de holler
Show me the colored man couldn't make a dollar.

(Chorus)

Another Fragment



Three grey hoss - es stand - in' in the sta - ble, Three grey hoss - es
stand - in' in the sta - ble. My old mas - sa killed a bear, Cracked the bones give me the mar - ra',
Give this nig - ger tail and gris - tle, Nuff to make this nig - ger whist - le.
Walk in, Jem - i - ry, and I'll be your friend. Long way to trab - ble, not a pic - kay - une to spend, Not a



Sheep meat am good for the colored population,
 Hog meat, daddy, eat a plenty.
 Oh, the ram, de lamb, de sheep, de mutton,
 All look out for Davey Dutton.
 Eat a whole leg of mutton, never stop to pay the footin',
 Walk in, Jemiry, and I'll be your fren',
 Long way to trabble, not a picayune to spen',
 Not a picayune to spen',
 Oh, a long way to trabble, not a picayune to spen'.

Raccoon Song



chile to fight and play de ban - jo, too, And

play de ban - jo, too And play de ban - jo, too.

My old massa lub his gin
 De way he drink it am a sin
 Which caused him to tumble in
 A hole 'bout six foot deep,
 A hole 'bout six foot deep,
 Oh, a hole 'bout six foot deep.

My ole massa dead and gone
 A dose of pizen help him on
 De debbel sing his funeral song
 Lor' bress him, let him go.
 Lor, bress him, let him go,
 Lor, bress him, let him go.

Note: My father said that after a hard day's work the darkies would gather in front of their cabins and play the banjo and sing and dance. A favorite dance was called "Patting the Juba."

When I was a child I went with my parents to a little concert, or show, given by an old ex-slave and his family. The old man danced "Pat the Juba" to the music of the banjos and my father said it was just as he had seen the slaves dance it in "Ole Virginny" long ago. He kept perfect time to the music by slapping himself "fore and aft," as father would say. He would jump into the air and whirl around, keeping perfect time with his slapping.