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Nebraska Folklore: Pamphlet 3, Children's Singing Games

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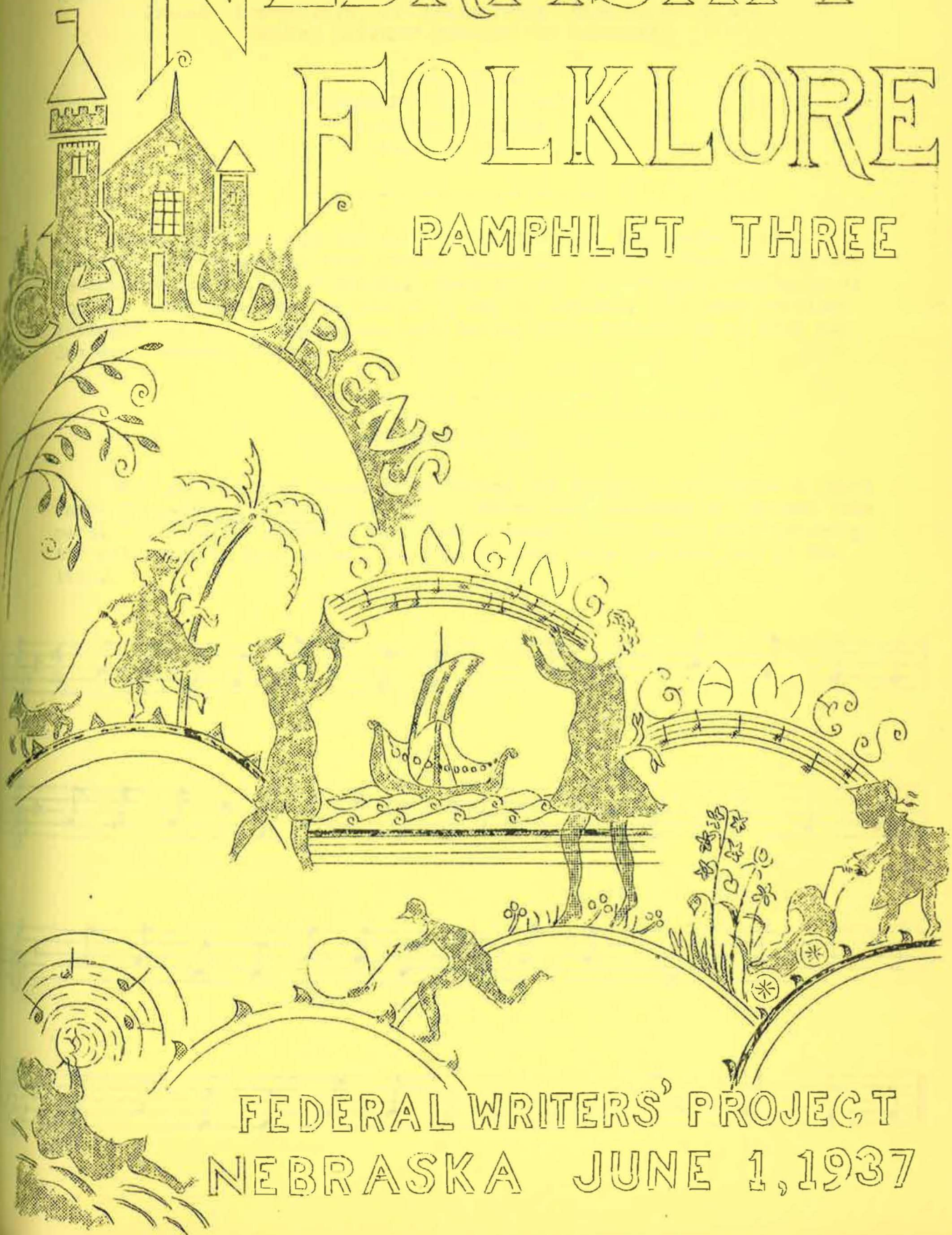
NEBRASKA FOLKLORE

PAMPHLET THREE

CHILDREN'S

SINGING

GAME



FEDERAL WRITERS' PROJECT
NEBRASKA JUNE 1, 1937

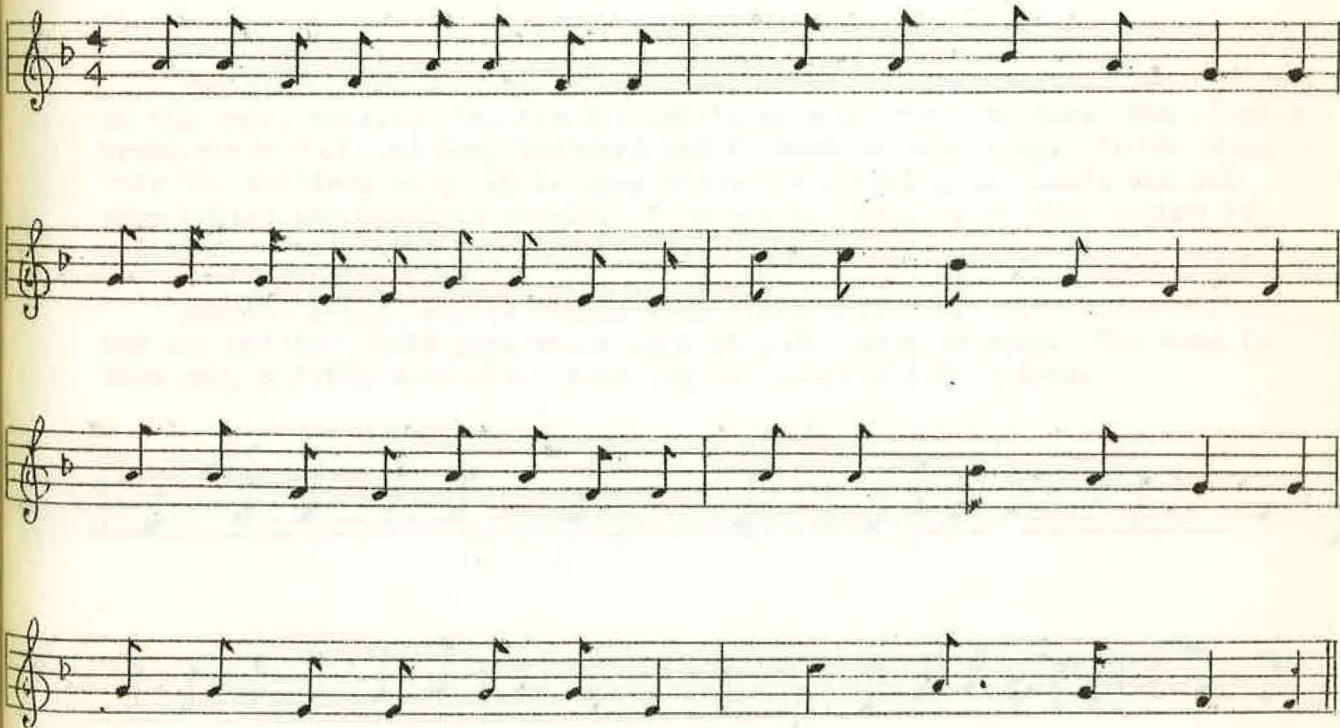
NEBRASKA FOLKLORE PAMPHLETS
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 Issued Irregularly, at Least Twice Each Month by the
 FEDERAL WRITERS' PROJECT IN NEBRASKA

Number Three
 CHILDREN'S SINGING GAMES
 Lincoln, Nebraska
 June 1, 1937

These games are all suitable for children in the grades. Some of them are also played by high school pupils and adults. Many of them can be adapted for dances or drills. They are all traditional, coming to us for the most part from England or by way of England. The many versions indicate the local adaptations made during their travels to us from the Eastern Seaboard States.

THE NEEDLE'S EYE

This game is also known as Threading the Needle. In France a dance named Threading the Needle is done in which many hundreds of persons take part. At regular intervals the leading couple raise their arms allowing the followers to pass under. The leaders then take the rear end of the line.



Directions:

Two children face each other and form an arch by raising their arms and clasping hands. As they all sing the other children form a line and pass under the arch. As the last "Because I wanted you" is sung the leaders drop their arms around the child passing under the arch. The player is then asked, "Do you choose needles or pins?" The children do not know which leader is needles or pins. After making a choice the player takes his place behind the designated leader; after all have been caught a tug of war follows.

Sometimes the game is played by older children as a kissing game. The line is formed by boys and girls in alternate positions. A boy and a girl are caught at the same time. The pair kiss and take places behind opposite leaders. This game also ends in a tug of war.

Song:

The needle's eye that doth supply
The thread that runs so truly,
There's many a lass that I've let pass
Because I wanted you.

Because I wanted you; because I wanted you
There's many a lass that I've let pass
Because I wanted you.

DRAW A BUCKET OF WATER

Directions:

Two girls face each other and clasp hands at arms length. Two others do the same, crossing the first couple's arms at right angles. The couples brace their feet and sway backward and forward as they sing. As the song ends the children raise their arms without unclasping the hands and put them behind the opposite couple. They end the game by dancing around in position as they sing the song again.

Sometimes the game is played with eight children. Four stand waiting and one waiting child pops under each time the song is sung. The song is then sung a fifth time with great jogging until all fall down.



Song:

Draw a bucket of water
 For my lady's daughter
 My father's a king
 My mother's a queen
 My two little sisters
 Are dressed in green.

Stamping grass and parsley
 Marigold leaves and daisies
 One in a rush
 Two in a rush
 Please little girl
 Hob under the bush

THE FARMER IN THE DELL

Directions:

One child stands in the center of a ring. The children forming the ring clasp hands and walk around as they sing. As the second verse is sung, the child in the center chooses one from the ring and the person chosen goes and stands beside him. As each verse is sung, the one last chosen beckons to one in the ring. When the last verse is sung those in the center form a ring and both circles move as rapidly as possible in opposite directions until the rings break and the Chorus becomes the Farmer of a new game. Sometimes the game ends in clapping hands instead of circling.



Song:

The farmer in the dell,
 The farmer in the dell,
 Heigh ho! the cherry-o
 The farmer in the dell.

The farmer takes the wife,
 The farmer takes the wife,
 Heigh ho! the cherry-o
 The farmer takes the wife.

The wife takes the child,
 The wife takes the child,
 Heigh ho! the cherry-o
 The wife takes the child.

The child takes the nurse,
 The child takes the nurse,
 Heigh ho! the cherry-o
 The child takes the nurse.

The nurse takes the dog,
 The nurse takes the dog,
 Heigh ho! the cherry-o
 The nurse takes the dog.

The dog takes the cat,
 The dog takes the cat,
 Heigh ho! the cherry-o
 The dog takes the cat.

The cat takes the rat,
 The cat takes the rat,
 Heigh ho! the cherry-o
 The cat takes the rat.

The rat takes the cheese,
 The rat takes the cheese,
 Heigh ho! the cherry-o
 The rat takes the cheese.

The cheese stands alone,
 The cheese stands alone,
 Heigh ho! the cherry-o
 The cheese stands alone.

GREEN GRAVEL

Variants of this game are played in Sweden, England, France and perhaps in other European countries. It is played as a game by itself and sometimes in combination with other games.

Directions:

The children form a circle and march around singing. As the smallest child is named he turns his back to the center of the ring. The first verse is repeated until every name has been called and all have their backs to the center—beginning with the smallest the names are called again and the second verse is repeated until all have their faces again turned to the center.

In a variation of the game, after all children face outward, two players hold up their hands and the others still holding hands pass through thus turning their faces to the center again.



Song:

Green gravel, green gravel,
 The grass is so green,
 The fairest of maidens
 That ever was seen;
 O (name), O (name)
 Your true love is dead,
 The King sends you a letter
 To turn round your head.

Green gravel, green gravel,
 The grass is so green,
 And all the fair maidens
 Prayed to be seen;
 O (name), O (name)
 Your true love's not slain,
 The King sends you a letter
 To turn back again.

ITISKIT ITASKIT

(Pronounced: Eye-tiss-kit, Eye-tass-kit)

This game is known also as Hunt the Squirrel, Drop-Glove, and Drop The Handkerchief. The many versions illustrate the local adaptations of the English shires and of the eastern States. It may be played in a number of ways.

Directions:

(1) The children stand in a circle about a foot apart. One child skips around outside of the circle as the group sings. He drops a handkerchief behind someone standing in the circle. The one behind whom the handkerchief is dropped picks it up and tries to touch the one who dropped it before he can reach the vacant space left by the one who picked it up. If the "receiver" succeeds in touching the "dropper" before the latter

reaches the vacant space, the "dropper" must go to the center, which is called the "mushpot." The "receiver" now becomes the "dropper" and the song is sung again. The one in the mushpot may steal the handkerchief from the "receiver," in which case the latter must enter the mushpot and the one who stole the handkerchief becomes the "receiver" and chases the "dropper." The game may proceed indefinitely.

(2) A child outside the circle touches another child on the shoulder. The child touched must pick up the handkerchief and run in the opposite direction. The two meet and curtsy three times. Then they run on, each trying to reach the vacant space first. The loser takes the handkerchief and the game continues.

(3) A child called the "squirrel" touches a child who must pursue him in and out of the ring until he is caught, the pursuer being obliged to enter and leave the ring at the same place as the "squirrel" does. The singing ceases when the chase begins.

(4) A kissing game entitles the pursuer to a kiss if he catches the fugitive before she reaches the vacant place.



Song:

Itiskit Itaskit
 A green and yellow basket,
 I wrote a letter to my love,
 And by the way
 I dropt it, dropt it, dropt it.
 A little boy came and put it
 In his pocket, pocket, pocket.

OATS, PEAS, BEANS AND BARLEY GROWS

This game apparently does not come originally from England. It is widely known in France, Sweden, Italy, Sicily, Spain and Germany. It is about six centuries old. Much played in Nebraska.

Directions:

The players join hands and circle about a child in the center, while they sing the first verse. Then they pause, drop hands, and go through the motions indicated by the second verse. During the third verse the players join hands and circle again. The "Farmer" selects a partner and they skip around the circle in opposite direction to the other players. During the fourth verse the couple kneel and curtsy. The one chosen becomes the "Farmer" and the game continues.

Melody 1st, 2d and 4th verses



Melody of 3d verse



Song: Oats, peas, beans and barley grows,
 Oats, peas, beans and barley grows,
 You, nor I, nor nobody knows,
 How oats, peas, beans and barley grows.

Thus the farmer sows his seed,
 Stands upright and takes his ease,
 Stamps his foot, and claps his hands,
 And turns about to view his lands.

Waiting for a partner,
 Waiting for a partner,
 Open the ring and take one in,
 And kiss her when you get her in.

Now you're married, you must obey,
 You must be true in all you say,
 You must be kind, you must be good,
 And make your husband chop the wood. (if girl is chosen)
 or
 And keep your wife in kindling wood. (if boy is chosen)

KING ARTHUR WAS KING WILLIAM'S SON

Although the words of this song seem to be of English origin it is thought by some that they may have been developed from a ballad concerning a romantic kidnaping in Sweden in 1287. In the process of adaptation the original significance of the ballad has been almost lost.



Directions:

(1) From a row of hats on the floor belonging to both sexes the leader chooses a hat, places it on his own head, and marches around alone in a large circle singing the verse. After completing the circle he places the hat on any one he chooses. The one chosen marches behind him and they again complete a circle, singing the first verse as they march. This procedure continues, with the first and second verses sung alternately until all are in the marching circle. The leader then goes to the center with the one first chosen and the players march around singing the third and fourth verses as the couple kneel and salute. The leader then returns to the circle and the second one chosen goes to the center. The game continues and the third verse is repeated until every one has been in the center.

(2) One hat is used by older children or adults to play the game. A young man places the hat on a girl and they march around singing. After completing the circle the girl places the hat on some boy standing in the waiting group and he follows the first couple. When the circle is completed he places the hat on some girl and the game continues until

all are marching. All players stand in a group waiting to be chosen. Verse five may be substituted for verse three and verse four omitted.

Song:

King Arthur was King William's son
And when the battle he had won
Upon his breast he wore a star,
And it was called the sign of war.

King William was King James's son,
And all the royal race he run;
Upon his breast he wore a star,
And it was called the sign of war.

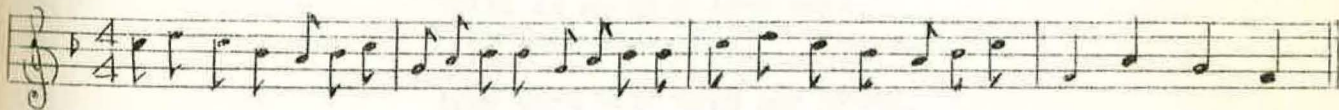
Star of the East, Star of the West,
Star of the one you love the best.
If she's not here don't take her part,
But choose another with all your heart.

Down on the carpet you must kneel,
As the grass grows on the field,
And rise again upon your feet,
And give your bride a kiss so sweet.

Say, young lady, will you 'list and go?
Say, young lady, will you 'list and go?
The broad-brimmed hat you must put on,
And follow on to the fife and drum.

LONDON BRIDGE

The origin of this game and of the ballad upon which it is based is uncertain. It was mentioned by a French writer in 1533, and there are German versions. It is very popular in Nebraska.



Directions:

Two children with arms raised and hands clasped form an arch which represents a bridge under which the line of children pass, with hands joined, singing as they go.

The children in the line sing the first verse, those in the arch the second, and so forth. The game may be varied by all the children singing all the verses. When the words "Here's a prison I have got" are sung, the bridge falls, or, if the game is to end in a tug-of-war, the arms drop to catch the largest player. When "Off to prison he must go" is sung, the players representing the arch take the captive to one side and ask him

to choose between gold and silver, lemons and oranges, etc. The captors have previously agreed upon each of these articles as representing his line. After making a choice the captive takes his place behind his leader. After all have been captured the game ends in a tug-of-war. If there are a great number playing, more than one arch can be formed. The tug-of-war may be omitted and the two next to the leaders or the two at the ends of the line then make the arch and the game begins again.

Song:

London Bridge is falling down,
Falling down, falling down.
London Bridge is falling down,
My fair lady.

Build it up with bricks and mortar,
Bricks and mortar, bricks and mortar.
Build it up with bricks and mortar,
My fair lady.

Bricks and mortar will not stay,
Will not stay, will not stay.
Bricks and mortar will not stay,
My fair lady.

Build it up with gold and silver,
Gold and silver, gold and silver.
Build it up with gold and silver,
My fair lady.

Gold and silver will be stolen,
Will be stolen, will be stolen.
Gold and silver will be stolen,
My fair lady.

Build it up with iron bars,
Iron bars, iron bars.
Build it up with iron bars,
My fair lady.

Iron bars will bend and break,
Bend and break, bend and break.
Iron bars will bend and break,
My fair lady.

Get a cock to crow all night,
To crow all night, to crow all night.
Get a cock to crow all night,
My fair lady.

Here's a prisoner I have got,
I have got, I have got.
Here's a prisoner I have got,
My fair lady.

What has this poor prisoner done,
 Prisoner done, prisoner done?
 What has this poor prisoner done,
 My fair lady?

Stole my watch and lost my key,
 Lost my key, lost my key.
 Stole my watch and lost my key,
 My fair lady.

A hundred pounds will set him free,
 Set him free, set him free.
 A hundred pounds will set him free,
 My fair lady.

Stole my hat and lost my keys,
 Lost my keys, lost my keys.
 Stole my hat and lost my keys,
 My fair lady.

Off to prison he must go,
 He must go, he must go.
 Off to prison he must go,
 My fair lady.

ROUND AND ROUND THE VILLEY

This is a very old traditional game based upon village marriage festivals at which it was customary for the young men and women to go through the houses in a long procession. The game is also known as Go In and Out of the Window.



Directions:

The children join hands and form a circle with one player on the outside singing the first verse as he dances around the circle. As the second verse is sung, the players raise their arms to form windows and the child outside the circle goes in and out of alternate windows until the circle

has been completed. While the third verse is sung he stands facing some child in the ring, and during the fourth verse he takes the hand of this person and stands in the ring. Then the child who was chosen goes outside the ring and the game begins again.

Song:

Go round and round the valley,
Go round and round the valley,
Go round and round the valley,
As we have done before.

Go in and out of the windows,
Go in and out of the windows,
Go in and out of the windows,
As we have done before.

Now stand before your partner,
Now stand before your partner,
Now stand before your partner,
As we have done before.

Now follow him to London,
Now follow him to London,
Now follow him to London,
As we have done before.

EDITORIAL COMMENT

Mr. Ross Santee, State Director of the Writers' Project in Arizona, reports that The Cowboys Dream, as presented on page 10 of NEBRASKA FOLK-LORE PAMPHLET Number One, was written by Arizona's Will C. Barnes. According to Mr. Santee, the song, written to the tune of The Sweet Bye and Bye, first appeared in Mr. Barnes' article "Stampede On the Turkey Track Range," in the Cosmopolitan, August, 1895, page 438. We are glad to have this information. A Nebraska origin is not claimed for this song. It was included in our collection on the ground that it has been very popular with Nebraskans.

NEBRASKA FOLKLORE PAMPHLET Number Four will be issued about June 15, 1937, and will contain Historical Legends.