

# Gambler's Blues

As sung by  
Bessie Gordon  
08-13-1941 Schofield, WI

Those Gamblers' Blues

I was down in Old Joe's bar-room, At the corner of the square, And the

drinks were served as u - sual, And a good - ly crowd was there. Yo - del -

(Last verse only)

lay-hee - oh, del - lay-hee - oh, del - lay - hee..... Yo - del - iny - ha - oh, del -

lay-hee - oh, del - lay-del - lay-hee, Yo-del - lay-hee - oh, del - lay-hee, Yo - del -

lay-hee - oh, del - lay-hee - oh, del - lay - hee.

## Verse 1.

I was down in Old Joe's barroom,  
At the corner of the square,  
And the drinks were served as usual,  
And a goodly crowd was there.

## Chorus

Yo-del-lay-hee-oh,  
Del-lay-hee-oh,  
Del-lay-hee.

## Verse 2.

At my right stood Joe McCaddy,  
His eyes bloodshot and red,  
And he looked at the crowd all around him,  
And these were the words he said:

## Verse 3.

"As I passed by the old 'firm'ry,  
I saw my baby there,  
All stretched out on a table,  
So cold and still and fair.

## Verse 4.

"Sixteen coal-black horses,  
All hitched to a rubber-tired hack,  
Took seven pretty girls to the graveyard,  
Only six of 'em comin' back.

## Verse 5.

"Now, when I die, just bury me  
In a box back coat and hat.  
Put a twenty dollar gold piece on my watch  
chain,  
To let the Lord know I'm standin' pat.

Verse 6.  
"Six crap shooters as pallbearers;  
Let a chorus girl sing me a song.  
Put a jazz band on the hearse,  
To raise heck as we go along."

Verse 7.  
"Now that you've heard my story,  
I'll take another shot of booze,  
And if anybody happens to ask you,  
Well, I've got those gam-bl-er blues."

Final Chorus.  
Yo-del-lay-hee-oh,  
Del-lay, del-lay-hee,  
Yo-del-lay-hee-oh,  
Del-lay-hee,  
Yo-del-ley-hee-oh,  
Del-lay-hee-oh,  
Del-lay-hee.

*Transcription and lyrics from the Helene Stratman-Thomas Collection.*

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## Critical Commentary

Transcriptions by Peters, p. 257, and HST.

### HST notes:

In the Professional Papers series:

*Sung by Mrs. Bessie Gordon, Schofield, 1941.*

*When Mrs. Gordon consented to sing some of the songs she sang for the entertainment of the customers at the Gordon tavern, she said, "Usually I play the organ when I sing." She replied to our questioning look as to the whereabouts of the organ by taking us behind the counter and showing us the little reed organ that had been cut down to fit under the counter. She had learned her songs from her mother.*

### Editor's notes

The lyrics of Mrs. Gordon's song and the one collected by Carl Sandburg are nearly identical, though the tune is rather different. Mrs. Gordon's is in 4/4 meter and is major, while Sandburg's is in 6/8 and minor.

Alternate titles/related songs: "Those Gambler's Blues."

### Sources:

Asch, Moses, editor. *124 Folk Songs, As Recorded on Folkways Records by Famous Folk Song Singers*. New York: Robbins Music Corporation, 1965. Text similar, tune different.  
Gamse, Albert. *World's Favorite Hootenanny*. New York: Ashley Publications, 1964.  
Peters, Harry B., ed. *Folk Songs out of Wisconsin: An Illustrated Compendium of Words and Music*. Madison, WI: The State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1977.  
Sandburg, Carl. *American Songbag*. New York, Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1927.

K.G.