

Chase the Buffalo

As sung by
Preston Willis
08-22-1946 Linden, WI

A - rise my true love and pre - sent to me your hand and we'll take a plea - sant
6
ram - ble through some far and dis - tant land, where Jim Haw - kins shot Jim buzz - ard, and Jim
11
Buzz - ard shot Jim Crow, and we'll ral - ly 'round the wild woods and chase the buf - fa -
16 Chorus
lo. _____ And chase the buf - fa - lo, _____ chase the buf - fa - lo, we'll
21
ral - ly round the wild woods and chase the buf - fa - lo. _____

Lyrics

Arise my true love and present to me your hand
And we'll take a pleasant ramble through
some far and distant land,
Where Jim Hawkins shot Jim Buzzard
and Jim Buzzard shot Jim Crow,
And we'll rally 'round the wild woods
And chase the buffalo.

(Refrain?)

And chase the buffalo,
Chase the buffalo,
We'll rally round the wild woods
and we'll chase the buffalo.

Critical Commentary

Transcriptions by MB, HST.

HST notes:

In the Professional Papers series:

Sung by Preston Willis, age 64, Linden, 1946.

Mr. Willis recalled the popularity of the play party game, Chase the Buffalo, during his youth in Iowa City. As the game started, the boys and girls formed two lines facing each other. Then the two leaders would bow and choose partners.

Lomax gives a fuller version under the title, "Shoot the Buffalo," in which "The hawk shot the buzzard and the buzzard shot the crow. And we'll rally round the can brake and shoot the buffalo." In Mr. Willis version the animals take on human characteristics. "Jim Hawkins shot Jim Buzzard and Jim Buzzard shot Jim Crow." "Wild woods" are more suited to the Wisconsin landscape than "cane brakes."

Editor's notes:

Vance Randolph writes that "this piece is derived from an emigrant song 'The Hunting of the Buffalo,' according to Belden" (Randolph 306). It is a play party game, which he describes: "All couples form a ring and dance about the room, singing at the top of their voices. When they come to the third line in each verse they change partners, and then promenade back to their original places in the circle. At some parties the stanza which begins 'We'll shoot the buffalo' is used as a chorus, being repeated after each of the succeeding verses" (Randolph 307).

Alternate titles/related songs: "Shoot the Buffalo."

Sources:

Lomax, John A. and Alan Lomax, colls. and comps. *American Ballads and Folk Songs*. New York: Macmillan, 1934. "Shoot the Buffalo."

Randolph, Vance, coll. and ed. *Ozark Folksongs*. Vol. III. Columbia, Mo.: State Historical Society of Missouri, 1946-50. "Shoot the buffalo."

Sharp, Cecil J., coll. *English Folk Songs from the Southern Appalachians*. Vol. II. London: Oxford University Press, 1932.

K.G.