

Donkey

As sung by
Lester Coffee
08-20-1946 Harvard, IL

THE DONKEY *360 B* *circle*

I used to own a don-key - a bob-tailed stub-born mule; He was
born about the year of for-ty nine. His head was full of
starch From stop-ping rail-road cars; He was raw-boned, spa-vened, deaf and
blind. He'd kick a steam en-gine, He'd knock you for a goal. He'd
send you where Bob Ingersol be-longed. He might have gone to
Congress If he had only liv-ed. Emp-ty is the sta-ble, Dave is gone.
Emp-ty is the sta-ble, Dave is gone to rest. He's gone where all the *good*
good don-key's go. He died at half past four. He's gone to the beau-ti-ful
shore. Emp-ty is the sta-ble, Dave is gone.

Verse 1.

I used to own a donkey
 A bob-tailed stubborn mule;
 He was born about the year of forty-nine.
 His head was full of starch
 From stopping railroad cars;
 He was raw-boned, spavined, deaf and
 blind.
 He'd kick a steam engine,
 He'd knock you for a goal.
 He'd send you where Bob Ingersol
 belonged.
 He might have gone to Congress
 If he had only lived.
 Empty is the stable, Dave is gone.
 Empty is the stable, Dave is gone to rest.
 He's gone where all the good donkeys go.
 He died at half past four.
 He's gone to the beautiful shore.
 Empty is the stable, Dave is gone.

Verse 2.

His hoof was like a slingshot,
 He'd raise you through the roof.
 He'd come in the house and kick you out of
 bed.
 His feet were full of bunions,
 He could eat a barrel of onions,
 And go to sleep a' standing on his head.
 He'd go in a saloon,
 Shove his hoof through a spittoon,
 Kick the bar into the gutter for a joke.
 When he laid down and died,
 Every mule in Jersey cried.
 Empty is the stable, Dave is gone.
 Dave has left the stable for the promised
 land,
 His overshoes and saddle are in pawn.
 No more hay he'll ever chew,
 For they've turned him into glue.
 Empty is the stable, Dave is gone.

Transcription and lyrics from the Helene Stratman-Thomas Collection.

Critical Commentary

Transcription by Peters, p. 55.

HST notes:

In the Professional Papers series:

Lester A. Coffee. Learned as a boy. Sisters would run him out of house for singing it. First heard it at a circus, when small boy. Very old.

Sources:

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.

K.G.

