



Songs & Ballads



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This is Sam Harmon's version of the ballad of "The Wild Boar", a unique Southern Appalachian version of the ancient ballad of "[Sir Lionel](#)".



"The Wild Boar"

Monday, February 25, 2008

*"Abram Bailey he'd three sons,
Blow your horn, Center,
And he is through the greenwood gone,
Just like a jovial hunter."*

Sam Harmon's ballad of "The Wild Boar" was recorded by Herbert Halpert for the Library of Congress at Maryville, Tennessee, in 1939. Since I grew up in Maryville, this song was of particular interest to me.

Sam Harmon and his family had come down to Tennessee from the Beech Mountain area of North Carolina before 1880 and settled in [Cades Cove](#), which is just over the

mountain from Maryville, in the Great Smokies.

When the Smokies were turned into a national park in the 1930's, Sam's family and all the other residents of Cades Cove were forced to leave and Sam apparently moved to Maryville.

Sam told Halpert that he had learned this song from his father, who was Goulder Harmon of the Beech Mountain area of North Carolina. Sam had grown up on the Beech Mountain and moved away to Tennessee sometime before 1880.

Sam was a first cousin of Robey Hicks of [Beech Mountain](#) and of Jane Hicks Gentry of Hot Springs, North Carolina, who was the source for many of Cecil Sharp's songs from that region. Betty Smith tells the story of Jane Gentry in her book [Jane Hicks Gentry, A Singer Among Singers](#).

You can read more about Sam Harmon and his family in Mellinger Henry's book [Folk Songs of the Southern Highlands](#). Henry collected a lot of songs from this family.

The refrain, "Blow your horn, Center" has been a puzzle for many years. I believe that "Center" was the name of a cousin of Sam's, and the son of Hiram and Jennie Hicks of Beech Mountain. You can find a good discussion of this ballad, along with many, many other versions [HERE](#) at Mudcat.

The ballad of "The Wild Boar" is a unique American version of the old ballad known as "[Sir Lionel](#)", and is number 18 in Child's collection of **English and Scottish Popular Ballads**. Peggy Seeger does a very nice job on Sam's version of this ballad on Record Four of the series she did with Ewan MacColl called [The Long Harvest: Some Traditional Ballads in Their English, Scots and North American Variants](#).

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