



# Songs & Ballads



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The "Wind and Rain" is [Dan Tate's](#) Virginia version of the ballad known as "[The Two Sisters](#)"



Dan Tate (picture by Mike Yates, from "Far In the Mountain", Vol. 1)

## "The Wind and Rain"

Thursday, February 28, 2008

*"Two loving sisters was a-walking side by side,  
Oh, the wind and rain,  
One pushed the other off in the waters deep,  
And she cried, "The dreadful wind and rain."*

This ballad is a unique, American version of the ancient ballad known as "[The Two Sisters](#)", which is #10 in Child's collection of the **English and Scottish Popular Ballads**.

This version comes from the singing of Dan Tate, who was from the Fancy Gap area of Southwestern Virginia. Here is a story of how one ballad collector found Dan Tate. (Click [HERE](#) for the background on Peter Hoover, the collector.)

"The story of how Peter found Dan Tate is an interesting tale. Peter had gotten Dan's name from the L of C field recording of Calvin Cole that had been recorded at Fancy Gap, Virginia, by Fletcher Collins in November, 1941. Peter had heard the story that Dan Tate was walking down the road near Calvin Cole's house during the recording session and he went up to the screen door and commenced to join in the singing of Old Sally Brown. Sometime after Peter's first recording trip Peter wrote a letter to Dan Tate addressed only to Dan Tate, Fancy Gap, Virginia. Within a week or two, Peter received a postcard back from Dan, stating that he would be at home and, essentially, that he would like to have the opportunity to be recorded (post card included in scanned images). However, Dan did not mention where he lived in Fancy Gap. On Peter's next trip to Virginia, he asked many folks in Fancy Gap for the whereabouts of Dan Tate. Peter was told that Dan lived somewhere off the Blue Ridge Parkway. So Peter drove up and down the Blue Ridge stopping in at houses, inquiring after the residence of Dan Tate. Finally, some time later, Peter picked up a hitchhiker on the highway and, of course, asked the fellow if he knew Dan Tate. The hitchhiker asked Peter, "Why do you want to find Dan Tate?" Peter told him and the rider said, "OK, yes, I can tell you where Dan Tate lives." Within a couple of miles of driving, the hitchhiker admitted, with a chuckle, that he was Dan Tate. They then drove on to Dan's cabin, a very simple building with a spring for his water and no electricity. While there, Dan, who was born in 1896, showed Peter a book he had been given by his mother, a handwritten book of family songs and ballads, passed down from generation to generation. Peter recorded Dan on a couple of occasions and he recalled that Dan locally had a reputation of being a witch. Peter said that, "Dan told me that he had the evil eye and he could tell fortunes by looking through a glass of water." Also, on this trip, Dan pulled out a banjo from a closet and told Peter that the banjo had belonged to Claude Allen, the very same Claude Allen from the folk song, who was executed in 1913 along with his father, for shootings which took place during the courthouse massacre in Hillsville, Virginia (see photo of Peter with Claude Allen's banjo)."

Dan learned this ballad from his sister. Dan was recorded at least three different times, in addition to the one described above. This particular ballad was recorded by Fletcher Collins for the Library of Congress, and once by W.K. [McNeill](#) (to be found [HERE](#)), and by Mike Yates. It was also known in a slightly different version by an autoharp player named Kilby Snow, who was from the same area as Dan Tate. You can find Snow's version in [Sing Out!](#) Vol. 18, #1, page 19.

Mike Seeger recorded [Kilby Snow](#) for Folkways. In the meantime, Jody Stecher put together a collated version of the lyrics for this song, to be found [HERE](#). Then Mike recorded a version using Snow's autoharp style and Stecher's words, to be found [HERE](#). On her latest CD, "[bring me home](#)", Peggy Seeger does a very fine job on this song.

Most other recorded versions seem to come from either Stecher's or Seeger's version. [HERE](#) is a particularly famous

one from YouTube. And [HERE](#) is another fairly recent version, by Gillian Welch and David Rawlings, which is the first one I ever heard. It is found on the [Songcatcher](#) album.

There is a lot of discussion from Mudcat on the ballad of "The Two Sisters" to be found [HERE](#). And there is specific discussion on "The Wind and Rain" [HERE](#).

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