

Seeger Pete, John Henry

John Henry was about three days old,
sittin' on his papa's knee.
He picked up a hammer and a little piece of steel;
said, "Hammer's gonna be the death of me, Lord, Lord.
Hammer's gonna be the death of me."
The captain said to John Henry
"Gonna bring that steam drill 'round.
Gonna bring that steam drill out on the job.
Gonna whop that steel on down. Down,
Down.
Whop that steel on down."
John Henry told his captain,
"A man ain't nothin' but a man,
But before I let your steam drill beat me
down,
I'd die with a hammer in my hand. Lord,
Lord.
I'd die with a hammer in my hand."
John Henry said to his shaker,
"Shaker, why don't you sing?
I'm throwin' thirty pounds from my hips on
down.
Just listen to that cold steel ring. Lord, Lord.
Listen to that cold steel ring."
The man that invented the steam drill
Thought he was mighty fine,
But John Henry made fifteen feet;
The steam drill only made nine. Lord, Lord.
The steam drill only made nine.
John Henry hammered in the mountain
His hammer was striking fire.
But he worked so hard, he broke his poor
heart.
He laid down his hammer and he died. Lord,
Lord.
He laid down his hammer and he died.
John Henry had a little woman.
Her name was Polly Ann.
John Henry took sick and went to his bed.
Polly Ann drove steel like a man. Lord,
Lord.
Polly Ann drove steel like a man.
John Henry had a little baby.
You could hold him in the palm of your
hand.
The last words I heard that poor boy say,
"My daddy was steel-driving man. Lord,
Lord.
My daddy was a steel-driving."
Well, every Monday morning
When the bluebirds begin to sing.
You can hear John Henry a mile or more.
You can hear John Henry's hammer ring.
Lord, Lord.
You can hear John Henry's hammer ring.