

# Old Joe Clark

Informant/Performer:  
Rebecca Tarwater, with banjo  
Washington, D.C., 1936

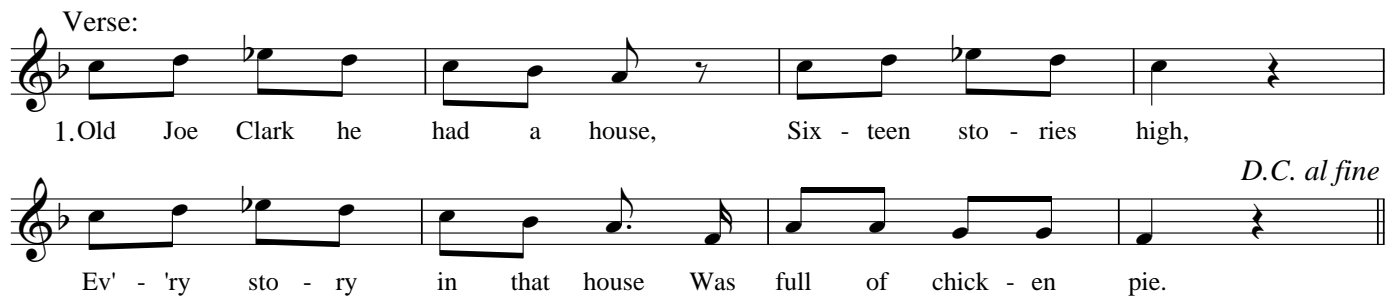
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Collected by Charles Seeger

Chorus:



Round and round, old Joe Clark, Round and round, I say, *Fine*  
Round and round, old Joe Clark, I ain't got long to stay.

Verse:



1. Old Joe Clark he had a house, Six - teen sto - ries high, *D.C. al fine*  
Ev - 'ry sto - ry in that house Was full of chick - en pie.

2. I went down to old Joe's house,  
Never been there before,  
He slept on the feather bed  
And I slept on the floor.
3. Old Joe Clark is mad at me,  
And I'll tell you the reason why.  
I went down to Old Joe's house  
And ate his chicken pie.
4. Old Joe Clark he had a mule.  
His name was Morgan Brown.  
Every tooth in that mule's head  
Was twenty inches round.

5. Joe Clark had a brindle cow  
And he was muley born,  
It took a jaybird twenty years  
To fly from horn to horn.

6. Fare thee well, old Joe Clark  
Goodbye, Betty Brown.  
Fare thee well, old Joe Clark,  
I'm gonna leave this town.

Verses 3-6 from Francis Edward Abernethy,  
*Singin' Texas*

## Game Directions

Partners join hands and form a big ring. At large parties, especially those that are held in the yard or on the road in front of the house, these rings are forty or fifty feet in diameter. When the singing starts, the players hold hands and march to their right. At the chorus, the boys turn back and begin weaving through the line of girls, swinging the first by the left hand, the second by the right, and so on until they reach their partners. Then they promenade through a verse and chorus and form the ring again. For variety's sake the boys change partners by dropping back to the girl behind them and then swing their ladies twice the second time around. With as many verses as most leaders know and can make up, "Old Joe Clark" can last a long time.

Background Information

Joe Clark was a Virginian (and a preacher's son, so the song says), who fought in the War of 1812. In recognition of his services, the state gave him a claim in the Blue Ridge Mountains. Clark settled there in 1815 and established the family name by siring twenty-four children. His influence over his family and the surrounding country soon made him the man to be reckoned with. From an imposing figure of a man, dominating a large hunting ground, he grew to be a legendary character with a song to continue his fame. Old Joe Clark, for all his wealth and influence and dubious fame, evidently gained his notoriety as a result of a mean disposition rather than any enduring contributions to his society.