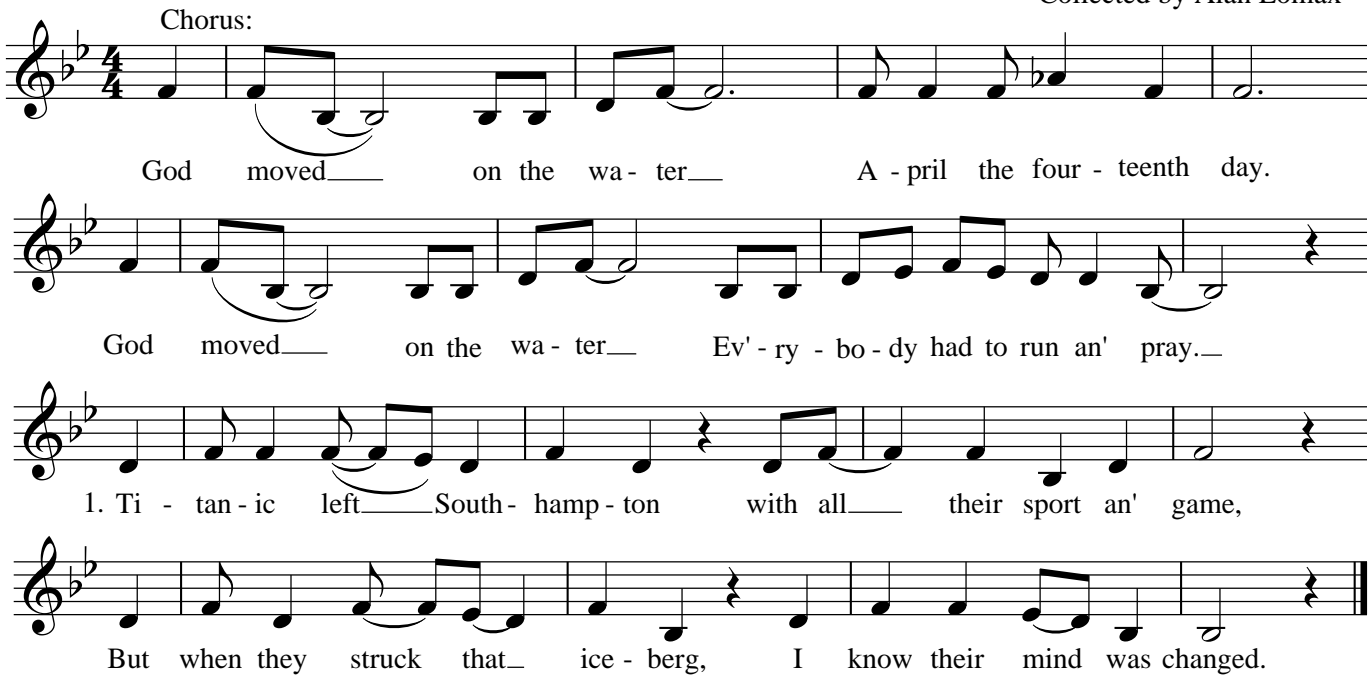


# The Titanic

Informant/Performer:  
Bessie Jones and group  
Georgia Sea Islands, 1960s

Source:  
*Georgia Sea Island Songs*  
New World Records 278  
Collected by Alan Lomax

Chorus:



God moved on the wa-ter A - pril the four - teenth day.  
God moved on the wa-ter Ev - ry - bo - dy had to run an' pray.  
1. Ti - tan - ic left South - hamp - ton with all their sport an' game,  
But when they struck that ice - berg, I know their mind was changed.

Transcribed by Eleanor G. Locke

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|---|---|
| 2. Their mothers told their daughters,<br>On a pleasure trip they may go,<br>But when they struck that iceberg,<br>They haven't been seen any more.<br>(Chorus) | 5. He kissed his wife a last time<br>When the boiler did explode,<br>He helped her in the lifeboat,<br>Sayin', "I won't see you any mo'!"<br>(Chorus)                 |
| 3. One man, John Jacob Astor,<br>Was a man with pluck and brains,<br>While this great ship was sinkin',<br>All the women he tried to save.<br>(Chorus)          | 6. The story of this shipwreck<br>Is almost too sad to tell,<br>One thousand and six hundred<br>Went down forever to dwell.<br>(Chorus)                               |
| 4. He was warned by a freight boat,<br>Captain Smith would not take heed,<br>But instead of givin' a warnin'<br>He ran with greater speed.<br>(Chorus)          | 7. Well, the fourteenth day of April,<br>It was in nineteen hundred and twelve,<br>The ship had a wreck by the iceberg,<br>It went down forever to dwell.<br>(Chorus) |

## Background Information

When the great luxury liner *Titanic* went down after a head-on collision with what some balladeers called an "ice bug," the religious people of the South took this as a sign that man had attempted too much and that God was showing His resentment of man's arrogance. The magnificent steamship had been held the greatest mechanical triumph of the twentieth century. Only the rich and powerful were supposed to be on board. Rumor had it that blacks, including the prize-fighter Jack Johnson, had been denied passage. For the poor of the rural South, then, especially for blacks, the tragic end of the great ship symbolized the essential vulnerability of the world that gave them so little. Ballads like this were composed and sung by bards up and down the South and linger in folk memory today.