

Down To The River To Pray

The following article about the song “Down To The River To Pray” was extracted from these websites. For more information, please read the articles:

<http://www.mustrad.org.uk/articles/appalach.htm>

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Old-time_music#Appalachia

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/O_Brother,_Where_Art_Thou%3F_\(soundtrack\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/O_Brother,_Where_Art_Thou%3F_(soundtrack))http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alison_Krauss

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/O_Brother,_Where_Art_Thou%3F

“Down To The River To Pray” is a traditional American folk song. The original composer and lyricist are unknown. Therefore, this article is about the genre of the piece - Appalachian music and more specifically, Appalachian Gospel Music. There is also a section on the recent movie that made it famous – “O Brother, Where Art Thou” and the artist who sang it, Allison Krauss.

Click on the audio and video links to hear various performances of “Down To The River To Pray.” There is also a link to the movie soundtrack album, and a site to buy sheet music/CD’s of similar music.

Finally, you can view the song lyrics below.

[Appalachian](#) folk music is a distinctive [genre](#) of [folk music](#).

Appalachian music is believed to have developed from traditional [Scottish](#), [English](#) and [Irish music](#) brought to the United States by [immigrants](#) from those countries, and in turn it influenced [country music](#) and old-time music^[6].

Most roots of early Appalachian folk music can be traced to ballads sung in the British Isles brought over and preserved by immigrants^[7] who moved into these western regions due to land opportunities made possible by land grants.^[8]

Appalachian old-time music is itself made up of regional traditions. Some of the most prominent traditions include those of [Mount Airy, North Carolina](#) (specifically the [Round Peak](#) style of [Tommy Jarrell](#)) and [Grayson County/Galax, Virginia](#) ([Wade Ward and Albert Hash](#)), [West Virginia](#) (the Hammons Family), East Kentucky (J. P. Fraley and Lee Sexton), and [East Tennessee](#) (Roan Mountain Hilltoppers).

Religious music, including white Country gospel, was probably the most prevalent music heard in Appalachia. During the Colonial period the press was controlled by a clergy which had no interest in the spread of secular music, therefore, not much of the latter survived in written form. There were three types of religious music: ballads, hymns, and revival spiritual songs. The latter directly arose out of the call and response of the African song tradition. These were popularized

among the white inhabitants after the revival circuit started in Kentucky in 1800. Their simpler, repetitious text of verse and refrain was easier to sing and learn and produced an emotional fervor in the congregation. Shape-note and revivalist gospel still flourished in the southern mountains after being eliminated in northern churches by the new 'scientific' music led by Lowell Mason and Thomas Hastings.

Appalachian folk became a major influence on styles like [country music](#) and [bluegrass](#). It is one of the few regional styles of old-time music that, since World War II, has been learned and widely practiced in all areas of the United States (as well as in Canada, Europe, Australia, and elsewhere). In some cases (as in the Midwest and Northeast), its popularity has eclipsed the indigenous old-time traditions of these regions. There is a particularly high concentration of performers playing Appalachian folk music on the East and West Coasts (especially in New York City, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and the Pacific Northwest). A number of American classical composers, in particular [Henry Cowell](#) and [Aaron Copland](#), have composed works that merge the idioms of Appalachian folk music with the Old World–based classical tradition.

O Brother, Where Art Thou? is a [comedy film](#) made by the [Coen Brothers](#). Released in [2000](#), the film is set in [Mississippi](#) during the [Great Depression](#) (specifically, [1937](#)).

The film is loosely based on the story of [Homer](#)'s [Odyssey](#)^[2] and the 1989 novella [A Dozen Tough Jobs](#) by [Howard Waldrop](#), which sets the labors of [Hercules](#) in July 1937 in Mississippi.^[3]

By its very title, the film displays a sly reference to another type of mythmaking: filmmaking, specifically the 1941 satire [Sullivan's Travels](#) by [Preston Sturges](#), in which the title character sets out to make a grim, socially conscious film to be called *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* After the privileged director experiences hardships of his own, he decides that comedic films are of more value than self-important dramas. Similarly, the Coen brothers' movie also has the tone and imagery of Depression-era realism interlarded with the comedic element.

The film stars [George Clooney](#), [John Turturro](#), [Tim Blake Nelson](#), [John Goodman](#), [Holly Hunter](#), and [Charles Durning](#). The [American roots soundtrack](#) won a [Grammy](#) for Album of the Year in 2001.^[4]

The Soggy Bottom Boys are the fictitious Depression-era 'old-timey music' quartet and accompaniment from the movie *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* The name Soggy Bottom Boys is possibly a reference to the famous [Foggy Mountain Boys](#) bluegrass band of the 1940s with [Lester Flatt](#) and [Earl Scruggs](#)^[22] but also a humorous name given the two backup singers who were wet from being [baptized](#) earlier in the film. It may also be a reference to Foggy Bottom Bluegrass, a West Virginia bluegrass group. The Soggy Bottom Boys' hit single is [Dick Burnett](#)'s "[Man of Constant Sorrow](#)", a song which had already enjoyed much success in real life.^[23]

After the film's release, the fictional band became so popular that the actual talents behind the music (who were [dubbed](#) into the movie) [Ralph Stanley](#), [John Hartford](#), [Alison Krauss](#),

<http://www.music44.com/X/product/8743829-H1>

If you enjoyed singing Down to the River to Pray as arranged by Sheldon Curry, you'll absolutely love this collection! Containing five new arrangements (plus the title song) with the same Appalachian gospel flavor, this collection is unbridled fun. Songs include: The Unclouded Day/Will the Circle Be Unbroken; O Come, Angel Band (My Latest Sun Is Sinking Fast); We Shall Rise; Dear Little Stranger; Precious Memories. Available for SATB, ChoirTrax CD, Preview CD, Instrumental Pak (score and parts for Rhythm (Number Charts included), Violin 1 & 2, Viola and Cello) and Preview Pak (one book and one Preview CD). Return Policy Exception: This product can not be returned if opened but it can be exchanged if defective, for the exact same title.

All ChoirTrax CDs have a full arrangement of backing instruments for sing-a-long accompaniment. There are 2 complete recordings on the CD. One recording has the choir and instruments. The other has only the backing instruments. (Exception: Some ChoirTrax CDs have only 1 recording. The vocals are recorded on one stereo channel. The backing instruments are on the other. In this case, you can use your stereo's balance control to add or remove the vocal track.)

"Down To The River To Pray"

As I went down in the river to pray
Studying about that good ol' way
And who shall wear the starry crown?
Good Lord show me the way!

O sisters let's go down
Let's go down, come on down
O sisters let's go down
Down in the river to pray

As I went down in the river to pray
Studying about that good ol' way
And who shall wear the robe & crown?
Good Lord show me the way

O brothers let's go down
Let's go down, come on down
Come on brothers, let's go down
Down in the river to pray

As I went down in the river to pray
Studying about that good ol' way
And who shall wear the starry crown?
Good Lord show me the way

O fathers let's go down
Let's go down, come on down
O fathers let's go down
Down in the river to pray

As I went down in the river to pray
Studying about that good ol' way
And who shall wear the robe and crown?
Good Lord show me the way

O mothers let's go down
Come on down, don't you wanna go down?
Come on mothers, let's go down
Down in the river to pray

As I went down in the river to pray
Studding about that good ol' way
And who shall wear the starry crown?
Good Lord show me the way

O sinners, let's go down
Let's go down, come on down
O sinners, let's go down
Down in the river to pray

As I went down in the river to pray
Studying about that good ol' way
And who shall wear the robe and crown?
Good Lord show me the way