



Songs of the Mississippi River

Mississippi National River and Recreation Area

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Go to our website for more information: <https://www.nps.gov/miss>

Songs of the Mississippi River

About our National River

The Mississippi River contains 10,000 years of human history and countless millennia of natural evolution and change. Along its 2,350 mile journey from Minnesota to the Gulf of Mexico can be found wooded islands, canyon-like walls and floodplain forest.

Cutting through our country's midsection, the Mississippi River and its peoples are part of the American story.

So significant to the nation is the 72 miles of river between the cities of Dayton/Ramsey to Hastings, Minnesota, that Congress declared it a unit of the National Park System—the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area. Visitors can find here a rich natural, historical and cultural heritage, a wide range of scenic and recreational resources, and a vital river economy.

About this Songbook

The Mississippi River may be the most musical river in the entire world. Drum songs, folk songs, blues, and jazz were all invented and reinvented along its banks. People paddled on the river, crossed over it, traveled and lived alongside it, and have felt the need to say something about the experience. Working people told stories and sang songs about what they saw on the river. Artists sketched, painted and photographed it.

Musicians have been truly prolific not only in the sheer volume of works about the river, but by a need to create entirely new musical styles just so they could describe their feelings about themselves and the water.

There are many unique and interesting stories about the Mississippi River, some of which have inspired these songs. The guitar chords, the string and harmonica rhythms, and the lyrics floating along on top seem to imitate how the river runs. These songs reflect the eight educational themes presented by the Mississippi National River and

Recreation Area and are proving to be a fine way to talk about the "Great Mississippi." The themes are listed on the contents page in bold followed by the titles of the songs that relate to them.

As you play these songs, ask yourself what the Mississippi River means to you. Even more importantly, come down to the river, rediscover its majesty, and consider taking an active role in caring for its future.

Contents

1. The Mississippi is one of the world's great rivers.
"GREAT MISSISSIPPI"
"ROLL RIVER JOURNEY"
2. The stories of human life along the Mississippi River have unfolded over 12,000 years.
"FIRST NATIONS"
"PIERRE BOTTINEAU"
"REVEREND HICKMAN'S HANDS"
"LIGHT THE RIVER"
3. We must care for the Mississippi River.
"TAKE A LOOK"
4. Glacial and human forces shaped the river.
"OLD RIVER"
5. As a working river, the Mississippi River's influence extends far from its shoreline.
"PILOT DADDY"
"FALLING WATERS"
6. The Mississippi National River and Recreation Area (MNRRA) corridor includes a variety of organisms and ecosystems; improved biological diversity is a goal.
"FISHING RIVER"
7. All living things (including humans) in the MNRRA corridor are interdependent.
"PASS THE BOWL"
"RISING TIDE"
8. The resources of the MNRRA corridor are nationally significant. The area is a unit of the National Park System.
"RIVERTOWN"
"NATIONAL RIVER"

These songs were written by Charlie Maguire during his years of employment with the National Park Service.

Great Mississippi

GREAT MISSISSIPPI

Words and Music by
CHARLIE MAGUIRE

Musical score for the song "Great Mississippi" in 2/4 time. The score consists of six staves of music with lyrics underneath. Chords are indicated above the notes. The lyrics are: Born every day at I-tas-ca o-ver Saint An-thon-y Falls. She rolls through the heart of this coun-try. She rolls through the hearts of us all. REFRAIN She's the Great Mis-sis-sip-pi. She's a wind-ing road. Eve-ry turn, eve-ry bend will bring you back a-gain For a sto-ry told.

Additional Verses

She is a wide-shouldered river
Taking the Rockies' high mountain snow
And the soft spring rains of Virginia
Along with her as she goes.

Rolling over Saint Peter Sandstone
Twisting down Glenwood Shale
Bearing down on Platteville Limestone
For 12,000 years she's been there.

She's the "Rio Escondido,"
The "Sassagoula," the "Mee-zee-see-bee."
She has a river of names from her people,
Twenty-four hundred miles to the sea.

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Roll River Journey

ROLL RIVER JOURNEY

Words and Music by
CHARLIE MAGUIRE

CHORUS

G (bass line) (F# E) D G C G

Roll, ri - ver jour - ney! _____ Roll, ri - ver jour - ney, roll! _____

Bmaj Em (bass line) (E D) C D

Roll, ri - ver jour - ney! _____ Take me where you're bound to

VERSES

G C G

go! Call - ing _____ you on a jour - ney! _____
Come on _____ down to the ri - ver! _____
She'll make _____ you a be - liev - er! _____

C G Bmaj

Ramb - ling ri - ver Mis - sis - sip - pi! _____ Her sad, sweet, sing - ing sound - ing
Hur - ry bro - thers and _____ sis - ters! _____ Her long, lost lov - ing ling - ers
We be - long _____ to the ri - ver! _____ Her wan - der - ing wa - ter wait - ing

Em (bass line) (E D) C D G

through the air! _____ Roll, ri - ver jour - ney, _____ roll!
ev - 'ry - where! _____
just down there! _____

TAG

Bmaj Em

Her wan - der - ing wa - ter wait - ing just down there! _____ Her

Bmaj Em Bmaj

long lost lov - ing ling - ers ev - 'ry - where! _____ Her sad, sweet sing - ing sound - ing

Em (bass line) (E D) C D G

through the air! _____ Roll, ri - ver jour - ney _____ roll!

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First Nations

FIRST NATIONS

Words and Music by
CHARLIE MAGUIRE

REFRAIN

Am G E

First Na - tions _____ on the Riv - er

Am G E

First Na - tions _____ on the Riv - er Da -

VERSE

Am G Am

ko - ta, _____ I - o - wa, _____ A - nish - i - na - be, _____ Mes -

BRIDGE

G E G E Am G

qua - kie. Fall - ing Wa - ter, O - wah - me - nah. Riv - er of

E Am G E Am

the falls, Ha - ha - wak - pa. The Sev - ered Rock, Ka - ka - bi - kah.

G E Am G E Am 2

First Na - tions _____ on the Riv - er.

Additional Verses

2. And they called it
Mee-zee-see-bee, Chauqua,
Tapata, Sassagoula.
3. And they lived at
Hole in the Day, Kaposia,
Remnicha, Wabasha.
4. Dakota, Mesquakie, Illinois, Miami,
Anishinabe, Tionontati.

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PIERRE BOTTINEAU

Words and Music by
CHARLIE MAGUIRE

VERSE

A man of the old roads, the Riv-er and the Trail, He was hard as stone.
Clear Sky Wo-man's _ Child. The Na-tions claimed him as their own, _
La-ko-ta French, O-jib - we, he was at home, or else he was liv-ing _ wild.

REFRAIN

Sing it _ high, sing it _ low, Sing it where the Riv-er _ goes for Pi-erre _ Bot - ti - neu._
_ Chan - tez Oh _ Pi - erre _ Bot - ti - neu.

BRIDGE

Tra - vel - ing like wood - smoke _ Up and down the coun - try. _
Fol-low-ing the drum song in his _ heart _ and the church bells of St. An - tho - ny. _

Additional Verses

2. A man of the old ways
Of the buffalo coat
And the Calumet
Outside of cabin walls
And in the fire-dancing night.
He whispered to her the stories of his days
In the language of the river falls.

3. A man of the old times
Who could read the future
And the buffalo sign
With equal fluency,
In this sainted land
Named by Galtier and the native bands
He held clearly to both memories.

Reverend Hickman's Hands

REVEREND HICKMAN'S HANDS

Words and Music by
CHARLIE MAGUIRE

VERSE 1

Rev - er - end Hick - man's hands were those _ of a work - ing _ man,
Swing - ing a ham - mer and split - ting _ rail _ _ by the light of day, _ Rev - er - end Hick - man's hands
were those _ of a preach - ing man. _ At night they built a boat to take the pil - grims a - way.

CHORUS

Oh Pil - grim, Run to the riv - er! Run to the riv - er!
Run to the riv - er! The riv - er in prayer, Oh Pil - grim, Run to the
riv - er! Run to the riv - er! For Free - dom! _ Free - dom! _

VERSE 2

Free - dom _ wait - ing there! Rev - er - end Hick - man's hands were those _ of a fear - less man, _
_ _ When the cry went out they _ were long, long gone. Rev - er - end
Hick - man's hands were those _ of a preach - ing man. _ No man, no wo - man, no

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A D G D A D D7
child will ev - er get caught. Oh stor - ies say — they built a boat, —

G G D D D7 G
Glo - ry on the Riv - er! Raft of logs, an - y - thing that — floats, Glo - ry on the

G D G D7 G G D
Riv - er! Jef - fer - son Cit - y, — they did go, Glo - ry on the Riv - er!

D D7 G G D D
Un - der - ground, — un - der - ground — rail - road. Glo - ry on the Riv - er! War Ea - gle they

D7 G G D D D7
hooked a ride, — Glo - ry on the Riv - er! Towed or rode on the riv - er - side,

G G D D D7 G
Glo - ry on the Riv - er! Up the Mis - sis - sip - pi to St. Paul, Glo - ry on the

G D D D7 G G D
Riv - er! Found - ing Con - gre - ga - tion on and — all, Glo - ry on the Riv - er!

G G D G G G# A *To Chorus*
Glo - ry on the Riv - er! Glo - ry on the Riv - er!

VERSE 3 D D7 G D F#m
Rev - er - end Hick - man's hands were those — of a riv - er — man, Down the wide Mis -

Bm E7 A D D7
sou - ri — up the Mis - sis - sip - pi — too. Rev - er - end Hick - man's hands were those — of a

F# Bm F A D G D *To Chorus*
preach - ing man. — And — he gui - ded on the Bi - ble and the riv - er — to see him — through!

Light the River

LIGHT THE RIVER

Words and Music by
CHARLIE MAGUIRE

G A D A G A D
1. Row-ing on the wa - ter, Pull-ing on the oar. _
2. (See additional verse)

G A D A Bm G
Jane Ro-bin-son "post light keep - er" A-long the Mis-sis-sip-pi Ri-ver shore. _

G D F#7 Bm G A
Row-ing on the wa - ter, To shine a _ light On "Big Mud-dy" for all _
_ who stu - dy His tar-nished sil-ver high-way through the night. _

REFRAIN
D A Bm G A D A
Light _ the riv - er, _ show your light un - til the break of _ day, Now
D A Bm G A D A
Jane, light _ the ri - ver, Then we'll be on our way.

D A G A D A G A
3. Row-ing on the wa - ter. Pull-ing on the oar. _

D G A D A Bm G
_ "Old Man Ri-ver" is sneak - ing off To join the sha-dows
A G A D F#7 Bm
on the shore. _ Row-ing on the wa - ter. Light the ri - ver, Jane _ Be-fore the

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G A D A Bm G A D A Bm
 fire-flies shine in the e-ven-ing time Be-fore the sun goes down and leaves us blind, Be-fore the

G A D A Bm G A
 stars come out in - to the sky, This is what the pi-lots say. Be-fore a

G A D A Bm G A D A Bm
 snag-log catch-es our poor boats, Be-fore a sand-bar lifts us too high to float, Be-fore the

G A D A Bm G A
 ri-ver grabs us by the throat, Light the ri-ver, Jane.

REFRAIN

F Dm Bb C F C
 Light the ri-ver Show you light un-til the break of day, Now

F Dm 1. Gm C F
 Jane, light the Ri-ver Then we'll be on our way

2. Gm C F Gm C F
 We'll be on our way We'll be on our way

Gm C F Dm Gm C F
 We'll be on our way.

Additional Verse

2. Rowing on the water
- Spring-flood to fall
- Four lights showing whether clear or blowing
- From Dayton Bluff to South Saint Paul
- Rowing on the water
- River woman, Jane
- Bend your back in service to the brightest, purest
- Government specified clear, white, flame
- To Refrain*

Take a Look

TAKE A LOOK

Words and Music by
CHARLIE MAGUIRE

VERSE
C



Heard a - bout her in a song, read a - bout her in a book, Go down

REFRAIN



to the riv - er bank your - self and take a look. Go down

F C



take a look at that riv - er, go down, I'll

G



in - tro - duce you to her, Big Riv - er Mis - sis - sip - pi, she

F G C BRIDGE F



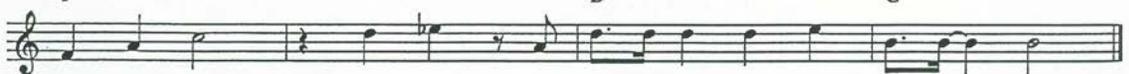
sure - ly is a friend of mine... Oh, Big Riv - er Mis - sis - sip - pi, I

C



found my home Grace - ful as a danc - er when I wake up in the morn - ing she's my

F D G



long - time pal, it's true, we met the same way, I'm tell - ing you.

Additional Verses

2. Big River Mississippi is wide and fair,
But behind a city, she gets lost down there.
3. If you can't see her, even driving slow
Pull over and park, go down and say hello.
4. In 1988 the Congress did say
"She's a national river, she ought to stay that way."

Old River

OLD RIVER

Words and Music by
CHARLIE MAGUIRE

The musical score is written in 2/4 time with a key signature of one flat (Bb). It consists of several staves of music with lyrics underneath. Chords are indicated above the notes. The lyrics are: "You went wherever you wanted to go in a time of your own. In a time of your own. Wind and water, Earth and sky were all that you lived by. Old River, before you had a name, You ran your own way, a rambling. Old River, before you had a name, You were the name for traveling. CODA (after last refrain) You were the name for leaving."

Additional Verses

2. You were whatever you wanted to be
In a time of your own.
In a time of your own.
Winter, Summer, Spring, and Fall
Never really changed you at all.

Old River, before you had a name,
You rambled through the seasons.
Old River, before you had a name,
You were the name for leaving.

3. You went wherever you wanted to go
In a time of your own.
In a time of your own.
Shallow and wide, narrow and deep
On your own way to the sea.

Old River, before you had a name,
You rambled through the seasons.
Old River, before you had a name,
You were the name for leaving.

Pilot Daddy

PILOT DADDY

Words and Music by
CHARLIE MAGUIRE

VERSE

There's a tow com - ing up - bound keep - ing to the red, Tak - ing all — nine feet.
Your Pi - lot Dad - dy gon - na get you out of bed, Sit - ting in the high seat.
Read - y with your steel toes, Lace them in the dark, One hand for the boat now.
Your Pi - lot Dad - dy, he was born to bark, This ain't no Ro - me-o,

REFRAIN

And you're all go - ing out to show Just how much a line deck - ie don't know, Swap
Now! Trade up the rig - ging, Your Pi - lot Dad - dy's on the ra - di - o. Swap
Now! You can hear him sing - ing, "One, Two, Three, Four, Puz - zle out that tow." —

Additional Verses

2. A barge ain't nothing but a hole in the water
For moving the Midwest.
Your Pilot Daddy has no papers on one,
So he's talking to the office.
When he bumps,
You move as quick as you can.
One hand for the boat now,
Your Pilot Daddy he is going to keep you safe,
He's got the know-how.

3. Two boxes on the stern,
Three rakes on the head,
Notch on the portside.
Your Pilot Daddy is making his bread,
Watching how it all rides.
There's a tow coming upbound,
Keeping to the red,
Taking all nine feet.
Your Pilot Daddy is going to get you out of bed,
Sitting in the high seat.

Falling Waters

FALLING WATERS

Words and Music by
CHARLIE MAGUIRE

Very Slow and Free Flowing
VERSE

Mis-sis-sip-pi — she's a chang-ing riv-er. — Don't let her
ca - sy go-ing fool_ you. — Cit-ies have ris-en_ where she's gone,
and she don't stay in one place_ for_ ver-y long.

REFRAIN

At her fall - ing wa-ters. — You know, she's a might - y
riv-er. — At her fall - ing wa - ters.

BRIDGE

Call her O-wah-me-nah, Call her St. An-tho-ny. Mis-sis-sip-pi —
she's_ a liv-ing riv-er. — Fall - ing wa-ters, O - wah - me - nah. —
Once you've heard her fif - teen_ miles_ a - way.
Sev-en-ty-five feet high, miles and miles from where she is_ to - day.

Additional Verses

2. Mississippi, she's a working river.
Don't let her graceful beauty fool you.
She's milled timber for a million houses, roof and walls,
Milled a million wheatfields, for bread on the table
for them all.
3. Mississippi, there are legends in the river.
Don't let her peaceful manner fool you.
She's been in every kind of story that's ever been told
Light and dark, new and old.

Fishing River

FISHING RIVER

Words and Music by
CHARLIE MAGUIRE

REFRAIN

M - I - dou - ble S - I dou - ble S - I - P - P - I

That's ___ a good fish - in' riv - er to try.

M - I - dou - ble S - I dou - ble S - I - P - P - I

That's ___ a good fish - in' riv - er to try.

VERSE

Pad - dle fish, Rock Bass, Bow - fin, ___ Chan - nel Cat, Short - Nose _ Gar,

Small - mouth Bass, Shov - el Nose Stur - geon, They aren't ver - y ___ far.

Additional Verses

I'm going to take my time
With my hook and line,
Trying to put on a show.
And if we get nothing,
We're sure to catch something,
Watching the River flow.

Quillback, Shorthead Redhorse,
Bigmouth Buffalo,
Mooneye, Walleye, Freshwater Drum,
Don't you want to go?

Pass the Bowl

PASS THE BOWL

Words and Music by
CHARLIE MAGUIRE

A CAPELLA REFRAIN



VERSE



Additional Verses

Out in the fields
The wheat has risen,
Planted by machines in rhythm
To the weather and the season,
Pass the bowl.
This grain is like treasure.
Take it down upon the river,
Around the world to the cook and the baker.
Pass the bowl.

Rising Tide

RISING TIDE

Words and Music by
CHARLIE MAGUIRE

VERSE 1

F C G Am F C G Am
Hard win - ter, — fro - zen ground. — No place for Spring to go. down. —

F C G Am F C G C
No - where to go, no - where to hide. When the riv - er wants to ram - ble on the ris - ing tide.

CHORUS

F C G Am F C G Am
Ris - ing tide, on the high wa - ter, Ris - ing tide, on the riv - er - side. —

F C G Am F C G
Ris - ing tide, on the high wa - ter. Get your - self down to the riv - er — wide. —

1. End of 1st Chorus

Am F C G
There's high wa - ter com - ing on the Ris - ing

2. End of 2nd Chorus

C C F C C C F C F C
Tide. — high wa - ter com - ing on the

G Am F C G C C F C
Ris - ing Tide, There's high wa - ter com - ing on the Ris - ing Tide. —

To Bridge 3. End of 3rd Chorus

C C F C F C G Am F C
high wa - ter com - ing on the Ris - ing Tide, There's high wa - ter com - ing on the

G Am F C G Am
ris - ing tide, There's high wa - ter com - ing on the ris - ing tide, There's

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F C G C C F C C C F C

high wa - ter com - ing on the Ris - ing Tide.

VERSE 2

F C G Am F C G Am

Miles - an hour, - roll - ing in flood Mak - ing miles - a day o - ver mus - cle and blood,

F C G Am F C G C

To Chorus, take 2nd ending

Tears - and Sweat can on - ly pro - vide High - er wa - ter for the ris - ing tide.

BRIDGE

Am G

You can't - stop her, no, - - - no! - - - Ris - ing up, on her own, - - -

F Am

Run - ning hard, bound to go - - - On the Ris - ing Tide. - - -

Am G

And you don't know her - - - an - y - more, - - - Some - thing you've nev - er seen - - - be - fore. - - -

F E

Deep and - - - wide, - - - on the Ris - ing Tide - - - On the

Am G F

Ris - ing Tide! - - - On the ris - ing - - - tide - - -

VERSE 3

Am F

Riv - er,

C G Am F C G Am

riv - er, chang - ing plans, - - - Ris - ing to re - claim your lands. - - -

To Chorus, take 3rd ending

F D G Am F C G C

Tak - ing his - to - ry for a ride On the high wa - ter and the Ris - ing Tide.

Rivertown

RIVERTOWN

Words and Music by
CHARLIE MAGUIRE

C
Come on — down, — down to the riv - er with the wa - ter shined up for to - day. —

F
Flow - ing all night, got me feel - ing all right, Like a beat - ing heart roll - ing the hours a - way. Now we're

E7 F
rea - dy to go — to cel - e - brate this show to fin' - ly see what's al - ways been a - round. —

C G F
— Re - mind - ing me and you what has al - ways been true, That we're liv - ing in a Riv - er -

REFRAIN

C E7 F C E7
town. Oh, oh, liv - ing in a Riv - er - town. Oh,

F C G C
oh, liv - ing in a Riv - er - town. — No more to turn my back, — going to

E7 F D7
fol - low that track, To the Riv - er, I'm a - go - ing — down, To

C G
spread the word that is bound to be heard, that we're liv - ing in a Riv - er - town.

Additional Verses

Going to jump down, turn around
Listen to the river sound
Where it all began,
A highway, byway, up above a flyway
Long before anything was built by hand.
Now we're ready to go, to celebrate this show
To finally see what's always been around,
Reminding me and you what has always been true,
Living in a Rivertown.

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National River

NATIONAL RIVER

Words and Music by
CHARLIE MAGUIE

VERSE

C F G C

"Great Mis - sis - sip - pi" In the "U. S. A." "Old Man

F G C F

Riv - er" Roll - in' a - way. If ev - 'ry-bo - dy here _

C (bass line B) Am F G

Will lend a _ hand, We'll bring this "Na - tion - al _ Riv - er" _ back a -

C REFRAIN G

gain. Takes a lot of hands to care for the

C G

Riv - er. _ Takes _ a lot of voic - es to pro - tect her

C Am F

name. Takes _ a lot of heart To love _ a riv - er, _

C G C

To bring this "Na - tion - al _ Riv - er" _ back a - gain. _

Additional Verses

Mississippi River
"Red, White, and Blue"
Eagles are flying
Over the water too
If everybody here
Will take a stand
We'll bring this "National River" back again...

Mississippi River
Front end to end
"National River"
"All American"
If everybody here
Will make it their friend
We'll bring this "National River" back again...