



Follow The Drinking Gourd:

A Story and Song in the Night Sky

This version of the song focuses on Peg Leg Joe, a carpenter who is said to have traveled throughout the Deep South spreading word about the Underground Railroad.

SONG LYRICS	MEANING
<p>When the sun comes back And the first quail calls</p>	<p><i>These are signs that winter is ending – when the days start getting longer, yet it is still cold.</i></p>
<p>Follow the Drinking Gourd. For the old man is waiting for to carry you to freedom, If you follow the Drinking Gourd</p>	<p><i>Some people think the old man was Peg Leg Joe, a carpenter who reportedly traveled throughout the deep south.</i></p>
<p>The river bank makes a mighty good road, The dead trees show you the way. Left foot, peg foot, traveling on Follow the Drinking Gourd</p>	<p><i>The river bank here is the river bank of the Tombigbee River in Mississippi. "Left foot, peg foot" talks about marks that were placed on dead trees along the river bank. If Peg Leg Joe did create this song, perhaps he left his mark on the trees.</i></p>
<p>The river ends between 2 hills Follow the Drinking Gourd. There's another river on the other side Follow the Drinking Gourd.</p>	<p><i>When the Tombigbee ended, slaves should go north over the hills until they came to another river, the Tennessee River.</i></p>
<p>When the great big river meets the little river, Follow the Drinking Gourd. For the old man is a-waiting to carry you to freedom If you follow the Drinking Gourd.</p>	<p><i>The Tennessee River joins the Ohio River. Once slaves crossed the Ohio, they were in free territory. There, people from the Underground Railroad could help them as they escaped to freedom.</i></p>