

I Ride An Old Paint

Words & Music:
Traditional American

This song has been covered by many artists and used by several classical composers (Virgil Thomson, Aaron, William Grant Still) as the basis for works. Not bad for an old "cowboy song". Thanks again to Songhound Stephen Kermode for reintroducing me to it.

G
I ride an old paint, I lead an old dam.
D7 G
I'm going to Montana to throw a houlihan.
D7 G
They feed in the coulees, they water in the draw,
D7 G
Their tails are all matted, their backs are all raw

CHORUS:

D7 G
Ride around, little doggies, ride around them real slow.
D7 G
The fiery and the snuffy are raring to go.

Old Bill Brown had a daughter and a son.
One went to Denver and the other went wrong.
His wife, she died in a poolroom fight.
And still he keeps singing from morning 'til night.

CHORUS:

Well, when I die, take my saddle from the wall
Put it on my pony and lead him from his stall.
Tie my bones to his back, turn our faces to the west
And we'll ride the prairie that we like the best.

CHORUS: [2x]

Vocabulary:

"old paint" = a breed of horse and "old dam" = a female horse

"throw a houlihan" = a particular kind of lasso shot; specifically, "a right hand man throwing a left hand loop" [per Horsecity.com]

"feed in the coulees" - "coulees" is the correct spelling, like "Grand Coulee Dam". It is a deep gulch or ravine, which is usually a floodplain (so, it is dry, but grassy in summer with the nutrients left there by floods). This whole line means that the animals in the song graze on the grass in the coulee and drink water from the "draw" (a shallow, natural depression where the water drains to).

"doggies" - NOT "doggies". "Dogies" are the motherless calves in the herd you are driving over the range.

"the fiery & the snuffy" - describing temperment. In this case, hot-tempered, sullen or disagreeable cattle.