State of Arkansas

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(Tune: somewhere between Joe Bowers and a recitation)

My name is Charlie Brennan, from Charlestown I come.
I've traveled this wide world over, some ups and downs I've had.
I've traveled this wide world over, some ups and downs I saw,
But I never knew what mis'ry was till I hit old Arkansas.

I landed in St. Louis with ten dollars and no more.
I read the daily papers till both my eyes were sore.
I read them evening papers, until at last I saw
Ten thousand men were wanted in the State of Arkansas.

I wiped my eyes with great surprise when I read this happy news.
And straight off I went to see the agent, Billy Hughes.
He said "Pitch me five dollars, and a ticket you shall draw
To ride upon the railroad to the State of Arkansas.

I started off next morning at a quarter after five.
I started from St. Louis, half dead and half alive,
I bought me a quart of whiskey, my misery to thaw
And I got drunk as a boiled owl when I left for Arkansas.

'Twas in the year of '82 in the merry month of June
I landed in Ft. Smith on a sultry afternoon.
The air so hot and dusty, my breath I could not draw
But I got off to see what was in the State of Arkansas.

I dodged behind the depot, to duck the oven wind.
There I met a walking skeleton, his name was James T. Glynn.
His hair hung down in rat-tails o'er his long and lantern jaw.
Invited me to his hotel "the best in Arkansas."

I followed my conductor into his dwelling place.
There mis'ry and starvation could be seen in ev'ry face.
His bread it was corn dodger, his meat I could not chaw
But he charged me a half a dollar in the State of Arkansas.

I started off next morning, in a hard and driving rain.
He says to me "If you will work, I have some land to drain
I'll pay you fifty cents a day, your board and wash and all
You'll find yourself a different man when you leave old Arkansas.

He fed me on corn dodgers, as hard as any rock,
Till my teeth began to loosen and my knees began to knock.
I grew so thin on sassafras tea, I could hide behind a straw
And, indeed I was a different man when I left old Arkansas.

So farewell to swamp-angels, to canebreaks and fever chills
Farewell to sage and sassafras and corn-dodger pills.
If I ever see this land again, I'll give to you my paw
But it'll be though a telescope, from Hell to Arkansas.

Recorded by Lee Hayes
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Laws H1

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