

Old Moke Pickin' on a Banjo

1. He-back, she-back, daddy shot a bear,
Shot him in the arse and he never touched a
hair.

**I'm just from the railroad, too-ra-loo
Oh, the old moke pickin' on the banjo.**

2. Roll her, boys, bowl her, boys, give her
flamin' gip,
Drag the anchor off the mud, and let the
bastard rip.

**I'm just from the railroad, too-ra-loo
Oh, the old moke pickin' on the banjo!**

**Hoo-oo-roo! What's the matter-O?
Just from the railroad, too-ra-loo.
I'm just from the railroad, too-ra-loo
Oh, the old moke pickin' on the banjo!**

3. Rock-a-block, chock-a-block, heave the
capstan round,
Fish the flamin' anchor up, for we are
outward bound.

**I'm just from the railroad, too-ra-loo
Oh, the old moke pickin' on the banjo!**

4. Out chocks, two blocks, heave away or
bust,
Bend your backs, me bully boys, kick up
some flamin' dust.

Notes:

A **capstan** shanty

Alternative names: He back she back, He bang she
bang, Old moke pickin' on a banjo

This version: CD: *Long time travelling*, Jeff Warner,
who writes:

A capstan shanty from the 1800s, probably of black
origin. It's related to the Irish-American song "Paddy
Works on the Railway" and the tune is a variant of the
Irish "**Shule Agra**."

The first verse and chorus of this version was collected
by Cecil Sharp in Somerset, UK, in 1916, from John
("Yankee Jack") Short (1839-1933), an English sailor
who sailed aboard American deep sea sailing ships in
the mid-19th century.

No musical instruments were used aboard ships when
shanties were sung to help hard physical labor. But I
couldn't resist adding the banjo from the title.

Notes on the words

Moke - a donkey (British, 1500's onwards)
- a black person, familiar or derogatory (US, 1856)
- a foolish or inconsequential person (1855)

**I'm just from the railroad, too-ra-loo
Oh, the old moke pickin' on the banjo.**

**Hooroo! What's the matter oh?
Just from the railroad, too-ra-loo.
I'm just from the railroad, too-ra-loo
Oh the old moke pickin' on the banjo!**

5. Whisky-O, Johnny-O, the mud-hook is in
sight,
A hell-of-a-way to the gals that wait at the
old Nantucket Light.

**I'm just from the railroad, too-ra-loo
Oh, the old moke pickin' on the banjo!**

6. Pat, get back, take in the slack. Heave
away, me boys.
Heave away, me bully boys, why don't you
make some noise?

**I'm just from the railroad, too-ra-loo
Oh, the old moke pickin' on the banjo!**

**Hoo-oo-roo! What's the matter oh?
Just from the railroad, too-ra-loo.
I'm just from the railroad, too-ra-loo
Oh the old moke pickin' on the banjo!**

Only a snippet of **Jeff Warner** singing this on
youtu.be/AMBUIMPJ450, but we'll hear all of it on
his CD: *Long time travelling*

Mudhook - anchor

Railroad - men working on the railroads would often
make their way on board ship.

Too-ra-loo - some of the railroad men were Irish!



Unknown artist: **The Banjo Player**,
US National Archives and Records Administration