

## Sonny Terry & Brownie McGhee

### "John Henry"

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When John Henry was a little baby, sitting on his  
daddy's knee,  
Pointed he figured out a little piece of steel,  
"Steel's gonna be the death of me, Lord, Lord, steel's  
gonna be the death of me,  
Well, now steel's gonna be the death of me, Lord, Lord,  
steel's gonna be the death of me"

John Henry told his captain one day,  
"A man ain't nothin' but a man, before I will let you  
steam drill beat me down  
Would die with this hammer in my hand, Lord, Lord,  
die with this hammer in my hand  
I would die with this hammer in my hand, Lord, Lord,  
die with this hammer in my hand"

John Henry had a little woman, her name was Polly Ann,  
John Henry got sick and had to go to bed  
You know Polly, she drove steel like a man, Lord, Lord,  
Polly, she drove steel like a man  
How she drive?

John Henry drivin' on the right hand side  
Steam drill drivin' on the left,  
"Before I will let your steam drill beat me down  
I will drive my poor self to death, Lord, Lord  
Drive my poor self to death"

John Henry drove steel on the Southern  
He drove steel on the C&O1;  
He drove steel for that Big Ben Tunnel2  
Steel drivin' kill John you know  
Steel drivin' kill John you know  
Well, now steel drivin' kill John you know, Lord, Lord  
Steel drivin' kill John you know

Some says John Henry was born in Texas  
Some people thinks he was born in Maine  
John Henry was born down in Tennessee  
He was a leader of a steel-driving-gang, Lord, Lord  
Leader of a steel-driving-gang,

Was a leader of a steel-driving-gang, Lord, Lord  
Leader of a steel-driving-gang

Well, the captain loved to see John Henry  
One of all loved to hear him sing,  
but most of all that the paymaster loved  
He just loved to get John Henry's hammer ring  
He just loved to get John Henry's hammer ring  
He just loved to get John Henry's hammer ring, Lord,  
Lord  
Loved to get John Henry's hammer ring

They carried John Henry on the mountain, upon a  
mountain so high  
Last words I heard that poor boy say:  
"Give me a cool drink of water 'fore I die  
Give me a cool drink of water 'fore I die  
Give me a cool drink of water 'fore I die"

Well, they carried John Henry's body to the White-  
house, and they laid it in the sand  
Every time a locomotive follows go rollin' by, they say:  
"Yonder lays a steel-drivin' man  
Well, now yonder lays a steel-drivin' man  
They say yonder lays a steel-drivin' man  
Yonder lays a steel-drivin' man"

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Note 1: C & O, ;

Note 2: Big Ben Tunnel, .

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