

Part of a set of four Folklore Stamps including Pecos Bill, Paul Bunyan and the Mighty Casey at the Bat.



The Ballad of John Henry

When John Henry was a little baby boy, sitting on his daddy's knee
Well he picked up a hammer and little piece of steel
Said Hammer's gonna be the death of me, lord, lord
Hammer's gonna be the death of mine.

John Henry told his captain

Lord a man ain't nothing but a man
But before I'd let your steam drill beat me down
I'd die with a hammer in my hand

John Henry said to his shaker

Shaker why don't you sing
Because I'm swinging thirty pounds from my
hips on down
Just listen to that cold steel ring

Now the captain said to John Henry
I believe that mountain's caving in
John Henry said right back to the captain
Ain't nothing but my hammer sucking wind
Now the man that invented the steam drill
He thought he was mighty fine
But John Henry drove fifteen feet
The steam drill only made nine
John Henry hammered in the mountains
His hammer was striking fire
But he worked so hard, it broke his poor heart
And he laid down his hammer and he died

John Henry had a little baby
You could hold him in the palm of your hand
And the last words I heard that poor boy say
My daddy was a steel driving man

So every Monday morning
When the blue birds sing
You can hear John Henry for a mile or more
You can hear John Henry's hammer ring