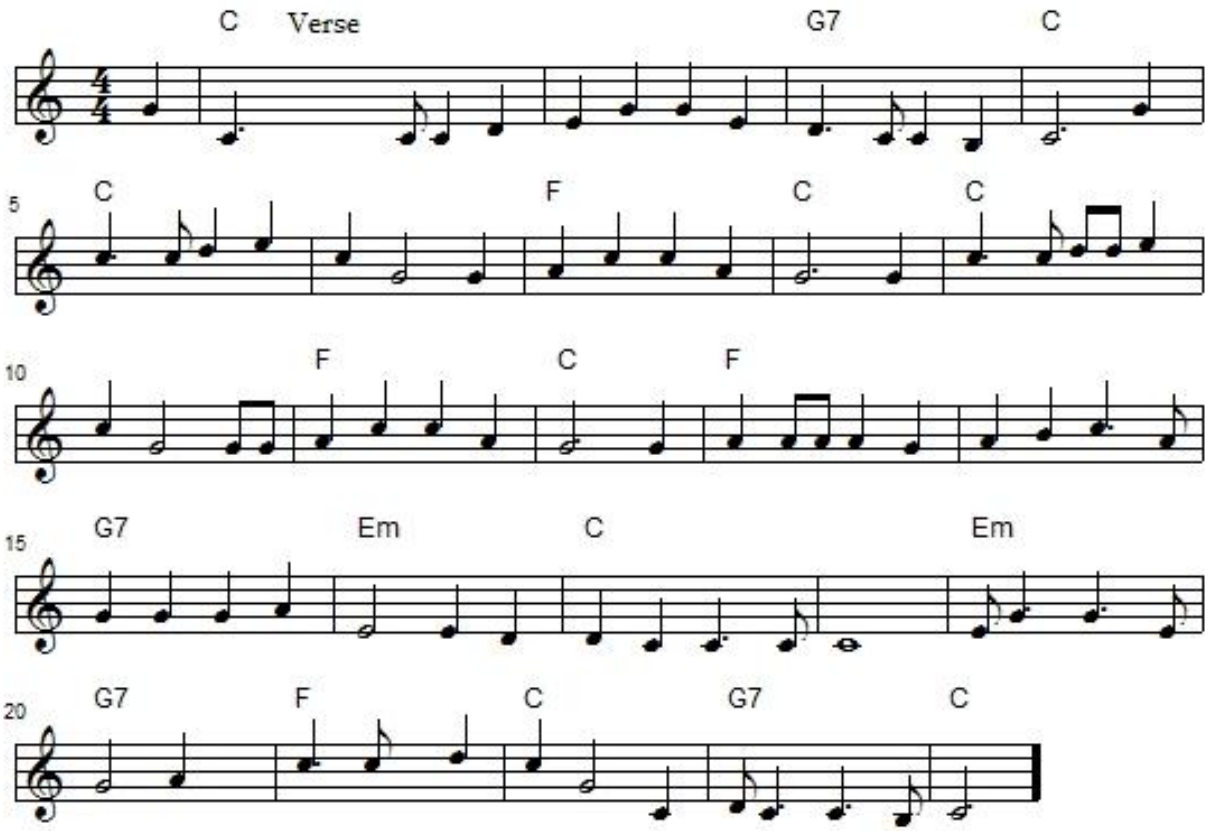
Brennan on the Moor



1. 'Tis of a brave young highwayman this story I will tell
   His name was Willie Brennan and in Ireland he did dwell
   It was on the Kilwood Mountain he commenced his wild career
   And many a wealthy nobleman before him shook with fear
   Chorus:
   It was Brennan on the moor, Brennan on the moor
   Bold, brave and undaunted was young Brennan on the moor

2. One day upon the highway as young Willie he went down
   He met the mayor of Cashiell a mile outside of town
   The mayor he knew his features and he said, Young man, said he
   Your name is Willie Brennan, you must come along with me

3. Now Brennan's wife had gone to town provisions for to buy
   And when she saw her Willie she commenced to weep and cry
   Said, Hand to me that tenpenny, as soon as Willie spoke
   She handed him a blunderbuss from underneath her cloak

4. Now with this loaded blunderbuss - the truth I will unfold -
   He made the mayor to tremble and he robbed him of his gold
   One hundred pounds was offered for his apprehension there
   So he, with horse and saddle to the mountains did repair

5. Now Brennan being an outlaw upon the mountains high
   With cavalry and infantry to take him they did try
   He laughed at them with scorn until at last 'twas said
   By a false-hearted woman he was cruelly betrayed

6. They hanged Brennan at the crossroads, in chains he hung and dried
   But still they say that, in the night, some do see him ride
   They see him with his blunderbuss, all in the midnight chill
   Along, along the King's highway rides Willie Brennan still!

William "Willy" Brennan was an Irish highwayman. He was a Waterford man but carried out most of his exploits in County Tipperary. He was betrayed by a comrade for the price on his head and was hanged in Clonmel Gaol in County Cork in 1809. Not much is known about him except a lot of legends that built him into a Robin Hood figure. The earliest version of the ballad dates to the middle 19th century, and various versions of the song were extant in Ireland, Great Britain, Canada and the United States.
The song's writer is unknown. It was introduced to Folk Revival audiences by Burl Ives who recorded it in 1949 for his LP **Wayfaring Stranger** (**The Burl Ives Songbook**, 1953), Ed McCurdy in 1955, The Clancy Brothers and Tommy Makem and The Kingston Trio.
I learned it from the Clancy's recording.