

Casey Jones

Wallace Saunders



1. Come all you rounders, I want you to hear,
I'll tell you the story of a brave engineer.
Casey Jones was the rounder's name,
On a six eight wheeler, boys, he won his fame.

Chorus

Casey Jones mounted to his cabin,
Casey Jones with his orders in his hand,
Casey Jones mounted to his cabin
And he took his farewell trip to that promised land.

2. The caller call Casey at half past four,
He kissed his wife at the station door,
He mounted to the cabin with the orders in his hand,
And he took his farewell trip to that promised land.

Chorus

3. When he pulled up that Reno hill,
He whistled for the crossing with an awful shrill;
The switchman knew by the engine's moan
That the man at the throttle was Casey Jones.

Chorus

4. He looked at his water and his water was low;
He looked at his watch and his watch was slow;
He turned to his fireman and this is what he said,
"Boy, we're going to reach Frisco, but we'll all be dead."

Chorus

5. "So turn on your water and shovel in your coal,
Stick your head out the window, watch those drivers roll;
I will drive her till she leaves the rail,
For I'm eight hours late by that Western Mail.

Chorus

6. When he was within six miles of the place,
There number four stared him straight in the face.
He turned to his fireman, said "Jim you'd better jump,
For there're two locomotives that are going to bump".

Chorus

7. Casey said just before he died,
"There're two more roads I would like to ride."
The fireman said, "Which ones can they be?"
"Oh the Northern Pacific and the Santa Fe."

Chorus

8. Mrs. Jones sat at her bed a-sighing
Just to hear the news that her Casey was dying.
"Hush up children, and quit your crying",
For you've got another poppa on the Salt Lake Line."

Chorus

"The Ballad of Casey Jones" is a traditional song about railroad engineer Casey Jones and his death at the controls of the train he was driving on April 30, 1906. Casey was driving the Illinois Central's Cannonball No. 638, making a run for a friend who was ill. It tells of how Jones and his fireman Sim Webb raced their locomotive to make up for lost time, but discovered another train ahead of them on the line, and how Jones remained on board to try to stop the train as Webb jumped to safety. Soon after Casey's death, the song was first sung by engine wiper and friend of Casey's named Wallace Saunders to the tune of a popular song of the time known as "Jimmie Jones". He was known to sing and whistle as he went about his work cleaning the steam engines. In the words of Casey's wife: "Wallace's admiration of Casey was little short of idolatry. He used to brag mightily about Mr. Jones even when Casey was only a freight engineer". But Saunders never had his original version published, and thus there is no way of knowing precisely what words he sang. It passed into use in vaudeville but no one seemed interested in claiming the copyright for it until 1909. It was recorded by Billy Murray as "The Ballad of Casey Jones" (1912), Furry Lewis as "Kassie Jones" (1928, *Anthology of American Folk Music*), Pete Seeger, Burl Ives, Johnny Cash, Milt Okun (1957), The New Christy Minstrels (1964), Elizabeth Cotten (1965), Grateful Dead (1970), Joe Hickerson, Spike Jones and his City Slickers and others. It appears in the **Anthology of American Folk Music**. It was printed in Alan Lomax's **The Folk Songs of North America**. It is #3247 in the **Roud Folk Song Index**.