



YANKEE DOODLE

Historical Verses from the American Record

The Bangs Broadside (1775-76) and other documented variants

All verses verified from historical sources. Public domain.

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Yankee Doodle existed in many verse families across different periods of American history, growing from the 1750s through the Civil War era. The richest documented set is a 15-stanza broadside written by Edward Bangs in 1775-1776, titled "The Farmer and His Son's Return from a Visit to the Camp," describing a visit to General Washington's camp outside Boston. The famous "feather in his cap / macaroni" verse did not appear in print until 1842. The earliest known lyric dates to around 1755-1758 during the French and Indian War. Sources: Oscar Sonneck, Report on The Star-Spangled Banner... (Library of Congress, 1909); Bangs broadside via Wikisource; American Music Preservation archive.

The Chorus

Repeats after each verse throughout the song

**Yankee Doodle, keep it up,
Yankee Doodle dandy,
Mind the music and the step,
And with the girls be handy.**

The Bangs Broadside — All 15 Stanzas

Edward Bangs, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1775-1776 | "The Farmer and His Son's Return from a Visit to the Camp"

This is the richest documented set of Yankee Doodle verses in the historical record. Written from the perspective of a wide-eyed farmer's son visiting the Continental Army camp outside Boston, it includes a description of George Washington himself (verse 11).

Verse 1

Father and I went down to camp,
Along with Captain Gooding,
And there we saw the men and boys
As thick as hasty pudding.

(Chorus)

Verse 2

And there we saw a thousand men,
As rich as Squire David;
And what they wasted every day,
I wish it could be saved.

(Chorus)

Verse 3

The 'lasses they eat every day,
Would keep a house a winter;
They have so much, that I'll be bound,
They eat it when they're a mind to.

(Chorus)

Verse 4

And there we saw a swamping gun,
Large as a log of maple,
Upon a deuced little cart,
A load for father's cattle.

(Chorus)

Verse 5

And every time they shoot it off,
It takes a horn of powder,
And makes a noise like father's gun,
Only a nation louder.

(Chorus)

Verse 6

I went as nigh to one myself,
As 'Siah's underpinning;
And father went as nigh again,
I thought the deuce was in him.

(Chorus)

Verse 7

Cousin Simon grew so bold,
I thought he would have cocked it;
It scared me so I shrinked it off,
And hung by father's pocket.

(Chorus)

Verse 8

And Captain Davis had a gun,
He kind of clapt his hand on't,
And stuck a crooked stabbing iron
Upon the little end on't.

(Chorus)

Verse 9

And there I saw a pumpkin shell,
As big as mother's basin;
And every time they touched it off,
They scampered like the nation.

(Chorus)

Verse 10

I saw a little barrel too,
The heads were made of leather,
They knocked upon't with little clubs,

And called the folks together.

(Chorus)

Verse 11

And there was Captain Washington,
And gentlefolks about him,
They say he's grown so 'tarnal proud,
He will not ride without 'em.

(Chorus)

Verse 12

He got him on his meeting clothes,
Upon a slapping stallion,
He set the world along in rows,
In hundreds and in millions.

(Chorus)

Verse 13

The flaming ribbons in his hat,
They looked so taring fine, ah,
I wanted pockily to get,
To give to my Jemima.

(Chorus)

Verse 14

I see another snarl of men
A-digging graves, they told me,
So 'tarnal long, so 'tarnal deep,
They 'tended they should hold me.

(Chorus)

Verse 15

It scared me so, I hooked it off,
Nor stopped, as I remember,
Nor turned about till I got home,
Locked up in mother's chamber.

(Chorus)

Other Historically Documented Verses

Verified from Sonneck (1909), Halliwell (1842), and Revolutionary-era accounts

The Modern Standard Verse

First appeared in print: James Orchard Halliwell, The Nursery Rhymes of England, 1842. This is the verse most Americans know today.

Yankee Doodle went to town,
A-riding on a pony,
Stuck a feather in his cap
And called it macaroni.

The Origin Verse (French and Indian War, c.1755-1758)

The earliest documented lyric. Associated with British soldiers mocking colonial troops. Attributed by tradition to Dr. Richard Shuckburgh; no manuscript survives.

Brother Ephraim sold his cow
And bought him a commission,
And then he went to Canada
To fight for the nation.

The Ditson Verse (Boston, March 1775)

British soldiers reportedly sang this while tarring and feathering Thomas Ditson of Billerica, Massachusetts, who had tried to buy a musket.

Yankee Doodle came to town,
For to buy a firelock,
We will tar and feather him,
And so we will John Hancock.

A note on the historical record: Yankee Doodle accumulated verse variants continuously from the 1750s through the 19th century, and many variants circulate in oral tradition. The verses in this printable are drawn from documented primary sources. The definitive scholarly reference is Oscar George Theodore Sonneck's 1909 Library of Congress report, available free at archive.org. The full Bangs broadside text is at Wikisource: en.wikisource.org

Painting: The Spirit of '76 (detail) by Archibald M. Willard, c.1875. Public domain via Wikimedia Commons.