CASEY JONES

John Luther Jones, who got his nickname from his hometown of Cayce, Kentucky, was a real person, a well-known train engineer. Substituting for a sick friend one night in 1900, he took the Illinois Central’s Cannonball out and, near Vaughan, Mississippi, crashed spectacularly into another train. Casey Jones was dead at age twenty-six. Railroading constantly threatened death and disaster, and songs were one way to glamorize workers so crucial to America’s expansion. One of forty-five related ballads, this 1909 version of Casey’s tragedy is by two railroad men, T. Lawrence Seibert and Eddie Newton.