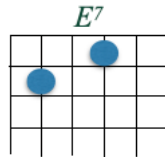
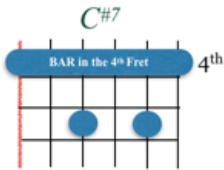


Freight Train

Words and Music Elizabeth Cotten, 1906 or 07 when she was 11 or 12 years old © all rights reserved
Sing along with Ms Cotten @ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IUK8emiWabU>



CHORUS

A *E* *E7*
Freight train, freight train, runin' so fast.

A
Freight train, freight train, runin' so fast.

C#7 *D*
Please don't tell what train I'm on,

A *E* *E7* *A*
They won't know what route I'm gone.

A *E* *E7*
When I am dead and in my grave,

A
No more good time ere' I crave.

C#7 *D*
Place a stone at my head and feet,

A *E* *E7* *A*
Tell them all that I've gone to sleep.

A *E* *E7*
When I die Lord, bury me deep,

A
Way down on old Chestnut Street;

C#7 *D*
Then I can hear old Number Nine,

A *E* *E7* *A*
As she comes rollin' by.

A *E* *E7*
Freight train, freight train, runin' so fast.

A
Freight train, freight train, runin' so fast.

C#7 *D*
Please don't tell what train I'm on,

A *E* *E7* *A*
They won't know what route I'm gone.

History

Elizabeth Nevills (January 5, 1895 - June 29, 1987) was born in Chapel Hill, NC, the youngest of five children.

She began writing music while toying around with her older brother's banjo. She was left-handed so she played the banjo in reverse position. Later, when she transferred her songs to the guitar, she formed a unique style, since on the banjo the uppermost string is not a bass string, but a short high pitched string called a drone string. This required her to adopt a unique style of finger picking for the guitar. Her alternating bass style is now known as *Cotten picking* which has influenced many other musicians.



By her early teens she was writing her own songs, one of which, "Freight Train", became one of her most recognized tunes written in remembrance of the nearby train that she could hear from her childhood home.

Cotten had retired from the guitar for 25 years, except for occasional church performances. She didn't begin performing publicly and recording until she was in her 60s. She was discovered by the folk-singing Seeger family while she was working for them as a housekeeper.

In the later half of the 1950s, Mike Seeger began making bedroom reel to reel recordings of Cotten's songs in her house. These recordings later became the album *Folksongs and Instrumentals with Guitar*, which was released on Folkways Records. Since that album, her songs, especially her signature track, *Freight Train* have been covered by many artists. Shortly after that first album, she began playing concerts with Mike Seeger, the first of which was in 1960 at Swarthmore College followed by many other concerts with some of the big names in the burgeoning folk revival.

The new-found interest in her work inspired her to write more material to play, and in 1967 she released a record created with her grandchildren, which took its name from one of her songs, *Shake Sugaree*.

She continued touring and releasing records well into her 80s. In 1984, she won the Grammy Award for "Best Ethnic or Traditional Recording" for the album on Arhoolie Records, *Elizabeth Cotten Live*. When accepting the award in Los Angeles, her comment was, "Thank you. I only wish I had my guitar so I could play a song for you all." In 1989, Cotten was one of 75 influential American women included in the photo documentary, *I Dream a World*.

elizabethcotten.com, collected and written by Itsuko Nishimura and Wikipedia