

The Minnesota Heritage Songbook



compiled and edited by Robert B. Waltz

in cooperation with the Fort Snelling State Park Association.
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Introduction

MINNESOTA BECAME A STATE IN 1858. THIS BOOK CAME into being in 2008. Those dates are not coincidence — the purpose of this book is to celebrate Minnesota's sesquicentennial, and to help us remember the lives and times of the people who made the state what it is.

To do this, we're using folk music — here defined as songs which people preserved by *singing* them, not just by listening. These are songs that people passed on to other people, and which still exist because people sang them to their children, their friends — eventually, to total strangers.

Most states have had folk song collectors travel them looking for these songs. Relatively little of this has been done in Minnesota, and what has been done was mostly done after the best singers were gone. To a large extent, this book relies on printed sources and occasional manuscript collections, though we've tried to find singers who still remember their family songs. The most important of the printed sources is certainly Michael Cassius Dean's *The Flying Cloud*. Dean was a sailor on the Great Lakes, and in 1922, he gathered together the songs he had learned on the Lakes and had them published. The great folk song scholar D. K. Wilgus said of Dean, "The book certainly seems to be a slice of the repertoire of the Northern folksingers... the editors of random-text collections have consciously and unconsciously followed the organization and texts of *The Flying Cloud*" (D. K. Wilgus, *Anglo-American Folksong Scholarship since 1898*, Rutgers University Press, 1959, p. 210). Dean's book is long out of print, and it contains words only, with no tunes and no source information (not even composer information); this book tries to follow its best traits of selection while adding organization, background information, additional songs from other sources — and, of course, *tunes*.

This is a key element of the songs in this book: They are meant to be *sung*. A song only becomes a folk song by singing. So any song in this book is one that has a solid tune, worthy of people's voices. Sometimes this means leaving out a song with much historical value if it doesn't sing well. And we have included a few very singable songs whose Minnesota connections are questionable, as long as they illustrate Minnesota's heritage.

One noteworthy omission in this book is the music of the Dakota, Ojibwe, and other native peoples. This is not because I'm unaware of its significance — rather, it is because it is so great a subject that it needs specialist treatment. The first great work in this area was done by Minnesota native Frances Densmore, and other publications have appeared since; I urge you to consult those volumes. For the same reason, the native-language songs of the immigrants to Minnesota are under-represented, though I've included a few well-known examples to give a feel for these songs.

Folk songs have more influence than most of us realize. The legend of Robin Hood began in songs and ballads; though none are known in Minnesota, there was a version of "Robin Hood and Little John" collected in Ohio; other Robin Hood songs have been found in Virginia, the Appalachians, New England, and eastern Canada. There would have been no "Beggar's Opera" (and hence no "Threepenny Opera") had John Gay not used folk tunes. In more recent times, Wallace Stegner wrote a novel inspired by the hobo song "The Big Rock Candy Mountain," and the Finnish epic *The Kalevala* inspired J. R. R. Tolkien — indeed, I think one of his Entish songs was influenced by "Eikä ne haaven lehdet lakkaa," which Marjorie Edgar heard sung on the Iron Range.

One of the interesting things about folk song is how the songs often stay relevant long after they were composed. No one will ever vote for Thomas Jefferson or Abraham Lincoln, of course, but a song like "When This Cruel War Is Over" is just as meaningful in 2008 as when it was written during the Civil War. We hope you will find these songs as beautiful, and as meaningful, as we do.

This project isn't finished! We had only a limited time to put this book together, meaning that I had to rely primarily on my personal library. There was little time to look over the Edgar papers at the Minnesota Historical Society, and none to look over the Morris Collection at the Minneapolis Public Library. And we managed only two "collecting sessions."

We couldn't even include all we found, because this book had to be limited to 80 pages due to budget constraints. But we intend to do more. Work is already underway on a CD-ROM which will include more songs, MIDI files of every song in this book, MP3 recordings of many of them, a database of all folk songs found in Minnesota (whether they're in this book or not), an annotated copy of Dean in PDF format, and whatever else we can think of.

We hope to make this CD available as a supplement to this book. Watch the Minnesota Heritage Songbook web site (www.MNHeritageSongbook.net) for details. This site also includes the MIDI files and other resources for use with the songbook.

And don't forget that you can be part of this! If your family has a tradition of folk songs (songs handed down from generation to generation), we want them — both for the Heritage Songbook project and for the Traditional Ballad Index, the author's bibliographic project of traditional song. If you have something, please contact me!

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How to Use This Book

If you have just picked up this book, and want to go out and start singing — great. That's how you keep songs alive. But we've tried to put the songs in context. Each of the several chapters in this book consists of three parts: A short introductory essay describing some aspect of Minnesota's life or history, historical background on the songs, and the songs themselves. The essays are keyed to the songs by sidebars in the text showing which songs illustrate which general themes. The notes on the individual songs describe how the song came to be — e.g., if it is a work song, it describes what *sort of* work it was used for, and the source or sources used to compile this version.

The chapters, although loosely based on Minnesota history, are not intended to be chronological, and are not intended as a history of the state — rather, they are a “sidebar” to the history. The first few chapters are in historical order (and include most of the songs we can't prove were sung in Minnesota), because they are intended to illustrate how Minnesota became a state. After all, this is a celebration of Minnesota statehood! But the later sections are organized more by theme — immigration, or work, or home life. The songs themselves are often preceded by a quotation intended to give some sort of feel for what they are about.

If you want to find songs about a particular topic (say, the Civil War), or of a particular type (e.g. Swedish songs, or

logging songs), the Topical Index, found inside the back cover, is for you. You can look up a particular subject, such as “Civil War,” and then find the songs in the collection which are related to that subject.

A person reading the song notes with care will observe that I have “fiddled” with a lot of the songs. This is something folk song scholars quite properly disapprove of. But this is a songbook, not a dissertation. If a Minnesota text of a song has no tune, one must be supplied — from another version of that song if possible; from some other source if not. If a text is damaged beyond use, the missing material must be replaced. The source notes document all such changes, so the reader can find the original versions if needed.

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None of them, of course, bear any responsibility for any errors remaining in the book.

Robert B. Waltz, September 2008

The Beginnings

MUCH OF MINNESOTA'S EARLY HISTORY IS LOST.

This is not because anyone set out to hide it. But the early residents, the Dakota, were a semi-nomadic people. They have songs and legends, but songs and legends can only tell so much. And when the first Europeans came to the area, they often kept what they learned deliberately secret — many could not read or write, and in any case they were out for profit of one sort or another. Mostly, they wanted furs — which meant trading posts and trade routes. Initially the French did most of the exploring, working their way up the Great Lakes from Quebec. René Robert Cavalier de la Salle was the first to really explore the upper Lakes. He built a ship, the *Griffin*, in 1675, and sailed up the largely uncharted waters of Lakes Erie, Huron, and Ontario. The boat was eventually lost, but de la Salle and his men — including Father Louis Hennepin — had by then gone on to explore the Mississippi River. Even before that, a French explorer, Etienne Brûlé, described a body of water west of Lake Huron which some think was Lake Superior.

As the years passed, a new kind of French fur trader came to the area. These were the *voyageurs*, who regularly came to the area to collect furs from the natives. They were mostly poor, uneducated men, but they learned about the rivers and woods of Minnesota and Canada. Consider how many places in Minnesota still bear French names: The St. Croix River. Grand Marais. Mille Lacs (lake). Lac Qui Parle. In Wisconsin, there were places such as Prairie du Chien and the Big and Little Eau Pleine (which we shall meet later).

And as the *voyageurs* worked and explored, they sang. Singing helped pass the time, and it also helped with the rhythm of paddling. Theirs were the first European songs ever sung in Minnesota. Mostly they sang simple tunes about women and home (not too surprisingly for men a thousand miles from the nearest woman who spoke their language and perhaps four thousand miles from home).

As the British established more of a foothold in North America, they set out to explore in more detail. *Voyageurs* were often part of these explorations. Alexander Mackenzie was accompanied by *voyageurs* when he became the first European to see the Arctic Ocean north of Canada. When it came time to map the Arctic coast, *voyageurs* accompanied expeditions by John Franklin, Simpson and Dease, and George Back to map the region from the Coppermine River to Bathurst Inlet, plus the region of Chantry Inlet.

Those explorers were searching the Arctic for something they had wanted to find in Minnesota: the Northwest Passage — that is, a sea route from the Atlantic to the Pacific north of Canada. At one time, it was hoped that the Great Lakes or the Minnesota River would lead there. Obviously, they didn't.

Explorers eventually realized that the Passage was far north of Minnesota, too far north to use; the ice blocked the passage. John Franklin in fact died in the 1840s when the ships of his expedition were trapped in the ice, as is told in "Lord Franklin":

*With a hundred seamen he sailed away
To the frozen ocean in the month of May.
To seek the passage around the pole,
Where we poor sailors must oftentimes go.
Through cruel hardships they mainly strove;
On mountains of ice their ships were drove.
Only the Huskima (Eskimo) in his skin canoe
Was the only one who ever came through.*

Disasters like that didn't do much for British control of North America. If you had been gambling, around 1700, on which nation would end up controlling the area that is now Minnesota, you probably would have bet on France. The British had colonies on the Atlantic seaboard of North America, of course, and fishermen based in Newfoundland, and the Hudson's Bay Company had been founded in 1670 to exploit trade in the far north. But the French, through the *voyageurs* and the Saint Lawrence river and their settlement in Quebec, controlled the best route to the Atlantic from what is now the Midwest, and were the ones with "boots on the ground" in Minnesota. Had things been allowed to take their course in the New World, the French would probably have eventually settled Minnesota.

Events in Europe changed that. France and England were in almost constant conflict in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The most important of those wars, at least for North America, was the Seven Years' War, known on this side of the Atlantic as the French and Indian War. In the course of that war, the British captured Quebec and Montreal (Borneman, pp. 204-279), and the portion of Minnesota east of the Mississippi river became British territory.

It is unlikely that anyone in either nation really cared about that part of the continent; even the American Revolution went almost unnoticed in what would later be Minnesota. No battles were fought in Minnesota; there were, as far as we know, no Colonials in the entire area in the 1770s. But the peace following the Revolutionary War was significant: The British, rather than trying to maintain their hold on land they could hardly reach, freely granted the United States all their lands south of the Great Lakes and east of the Mississippi. Although the region was poorly mapped, the territory the British gave up contained a significant portion of Minnesota, including most of what is now the city of Saint Paul, part of Minneapolis, Duluth, and the areas in between.

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Song Notes

A la claire fontaine

A typical *voyageur* song, originally from France and first published in 1704. Fowke/Mills/Blume declares it to have been popular in Quebec “since the days of Champlain.”

Note that the French version of this song and the next repeat the last line of the previous verse to start the next verse. This makes the song much longer, but it’s easier to remember.

Source: I learned this mostly from the singing of Lillian Labbé. The French text (identical as far as I can tell at a casual glance) can be found either in Fowke/Mills/Blume (who had it from Gagnon) or Nute (who had it from Gibbon).

Note that this is *voyageur* French, which is not the same as the language of modern France; I’ve followed Fowke’s and Nute’s texts even where it looks funny to a French speaker.

C’est l’aviron

This song originated in France, although the chorus is from the *voyageurs*. It’s the kind of song they liked, given that they lived far away from women: The guy got the girl, she was pretty, and he didn’t really have to do much to deserve her. La Rochelle is a city on the Bay of Biscay in southern France.

Source: The words are from Edith Fulton Fowke and Richard Johnston, *Folk Songs of Quebec*, pp. 72-73. The French version was collected by E. Z. Massicote. The music is as I learned from the singing of Lillian Labbé, compared against Fowke/Johnston.

Brave Wolfe

James Wolfe led the attack on Quebec in 1759, while still in his early thirties and unmarried. There is a story, probably apocryphal, that courtiers said before his appointment that he was mad. King George II, irritated at the ineffectiveness of most of his other senior officers, supposedly declared, “Mad, is he? Then I wish he would bite my other generals.”

Part of this song is true: Shortly before the Quebec campaign began, Wolfe hurried back to England to propose to Katherine Lowther. Then he returned to Canada. Not all historians are impressed with his performance there; it was quite some time before he dreamed up the campaign that led his troops up to the Plains of Abraham. Never very healthy, he seemed on the brink of death before the final campaign. It was a high-stakes gamble which paid off: He put eight or nine thousand troops on the Plains of Abraham without the French stopping him. The defenders had many more troops in the area, but the French commander, Montcalm, hurried to confront Wolfe with the troops he had immediately at hand. These were relatively few, and not very well-trained; Wolfe’s regulars beat them easily, though Wolfe was killed in the battle and Montcalm mortally wounded. Contrary to the song, they did not meet before the battle.

Source: The text is a composite based on versions I’ve heard; I started from the text in Fowke/Mills/Blume, *Canada’s Story in Song*, pp. 48-49. Music: There are several tunes for

this song. This is probably the best-known, originally sung as “The Blacksmith.” The song has not been found in Minnesota, but versions were known from Michigan and Ontario, so there is a high likelihood that it was heard here.

Old Granny Wales

This is one of the curiosities of Minnesota folk song: It’s a song of Irish origin about the American Revolutionary War which somehow made its way to Minnesota.

Granny Wales, or Granny O’Whale, is a distortion of the Irish name “Granuaile.” Granuaile was a real person, Grace O’Malley, who lived in the time of Elizabeth I, but her Irish name came to be used as a symbol for Ireland. Around her grew up a whole genre of poetry called the “aisling”; they are poems about visions — usually a vision in which Granuaile meets the poet by the river and talks about Ireland’s wrongs.

Obviously this version has undergone a lot of changes; it refers to American grievances against Britain in the 1770s. The song mentions several high officials of the period. Lord North was Prime Minister under George III from 1770-1782, and passed the Tea Act which resulted in the Boston Tea Party (though, contrary to what most Americans think, the Tea Act in fact reduced most taxes on the Americans!). Granville is clearly George Grenville, the Prime Minister 1763-1765. It was he who imposed the much-hated Stamp Act. “Infamous Bute” was the Third Earl of Bute, a former tutor of George III, who was Prime Minister 1762-1763 and continued to have power behind the scenes after that. Collectively, the three of them were largely responsible for implementing the policies of George III which caused so much trouble with the colonies.

Source: This is a rare song, although a few printed copies are known. It appears that only one tune was ever found. Bessie Mae Stanchfield collected the song from Elma Snyder McDowell of Saint Cloud, who learned it from her father in the nineteenth century. Stanchfield published the text in the October 1945 edition of *California Folklore Quarterly*, along with some rather misleading annotations (none of the people she asked about the song had ever heard of Granuaile, so she conjectured that the song was about Benjamin Franklin!). The text is as she published it, except as noted. But she did not print the tune with the text. As best I can tell, it has never been published; Stanchfield left several manuscript copies of it in her papers in the Minnesota Historical Society archives.

Unfortunately, it seems very likely that the transcription is wrong. Oh, it’s probably what McDowell sang, literally transcribed. But I’m sure it’s not what she learned. It’s two measures too long for the text! I’m guessing that Stanchfield was fooled by the tendency of some folksingers to play fast and loose with the timing — especially since Stanchfield didn’t realize the Irish roots of the song. Once it is regularized, the Irishness is especially clear. I have cut two verses from the (very long) text, and used the melody I think McDowell meant; if you want to see the original tune and the full McDowell text, it is in the online appendix.

A la claire fontaine

"Oh! were she but as true as fair, 'twould put an end to my despair, Instead of that she is unkind, and wavers like the winter wind."
Jockey was a piper's son, he fell in love when he was young, But all the springs that he could play was, o'er the hills, and far away.
"O'er the Hills and Far Away," first found in Pills to Purge Melancholy, 1706

A la clai - re fon - tai - ne M'en al - lant pro - me - ner,
 By the clear flow - ing foun - tain, I chanced one sum - mer day,
 J'ai trou - vé l'eau si bel - le Que je m'y suis bai - gné.
 The wat - er looked so love - ly, I bathed with - out de - lay.
 Lui ya long - temps que je t'ai - me, Ja - mais je ne t'ou - blei - rai.
 For so long now I have loved you, Al - ways in my heart you'll stay.

French:

*A la claire fontaine, M'en allant promener,
 J'ai trouvé l'eau si belle, Que je m'y suis baigné.*

Refrain:

Lui ya longtemps que je t'aime, Jamais je ne t'oublierai.

*J'ai trouvé l'eau si belle, Que je m'y suis baigné.
 Sous les feuilles d'un chêne, Je me suis fait sécher.*

*Sous les feuilles d'un chêne, Je me suis fait sécher.
 Sur la plus haute branche, Le rossignol chantait.*

*Sur la plus haute branche, Le rossignol chantait.
 Chante, rossignol, chante, Toi qui as le coeur gai.*

*Chante, rossignol, chante, Toi qui as le coeur gai.
 Tu as le coeur à rire, Moi je l'ai-t-à-pleurer.*

*Tu as le coeur à rire, Moi je l'ai-t-à-pleurer.
 J'ai perdu ma maîtresse Sans l'avoir mérité.*

*J'ai perdu ma maîtresse Sans l'avoir mérité.
 Pour un bouquet de roses Que je lui refusai.*

*Pour un bouquet de roses Que je lui refusai.
 Je voudrais que la rose Fût encore au rosier.*

*Je voudrais que la rose Fût encore au rosier.
 Et moi et ma maîtresse Dans les mêms amitiés.*

English:

*By the clear flowing fountain, I chanced one summer day,
 The water looked so lovely, I bathed without delay.*

Refrain:

For so long now I have loved you, Always in my heart you'll stay.

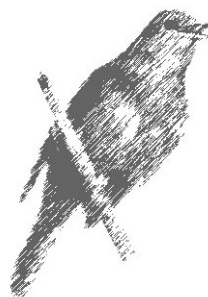
*Up in an oak tree shady, Birds flitted on the wing;
 As I dried off by its branches I heard a nightingale sing.*

*Its song was clear and lovely; Its music sweet and gay;
 I said, "O bird, keep singing, Though I must weep all day."*

*"Your heart is full of music, My heart is full of pain;
 I lost my own true lover In such a foolish way."*

*"She wanted the red roses I'd picked one summer day,
 I gave her not the roses; Now I must pine away."*

*"I wish those lovely flowers Bloomed on the bush today,
 While I and my beloved Walked hand in hand always."*



The nightingale is a European bird not found in Minnesota or any part of North America.

C'est l'aviron (It's the Oars)

Blow, northerne wind, send thou me my sweting [sweetheart].

Blow, northerne wind, Blow, blow, blow!

British Library MS. Harley 2253, folio 72b. Thought to be from circa 1320.

1 C C C F C

Rid - ing a - long the road to Ro - chelle ci - ty,
M'en re - ven - ant de la jo - lie Ro - chel - le,

5 C C C F C

Rid - ing a - long the road to Ro - chelle ci - ty,
M'en re - ven - ant de la jo - lie Ro - chel - le,

9 C F F C G

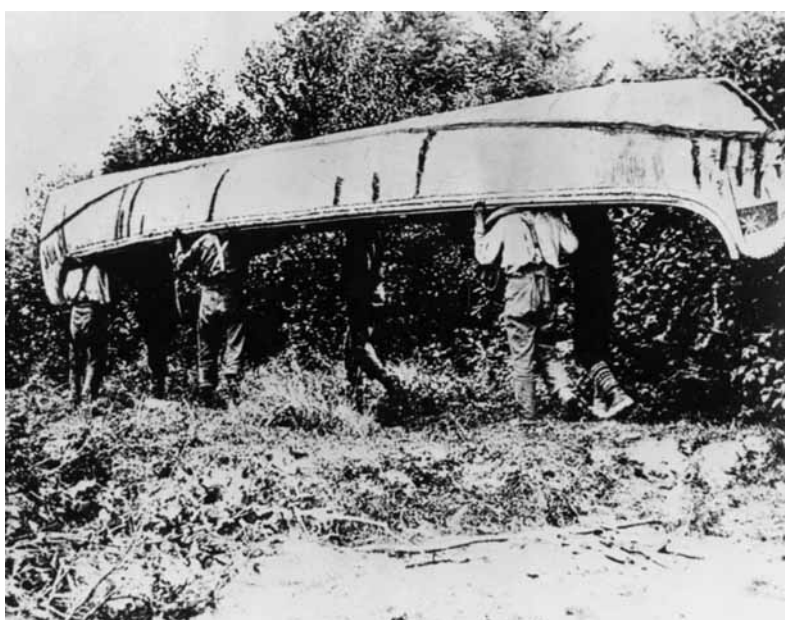
I met three girls, and all of them were pret - ty.
J'ai ren - con - tré trois jo - lies de - moi - sel - les.

13 C G G C

Pull on the oars as we glide a - long to - ge - ther,
C'est l'a - vi - ron qui nous mè - ne qui nous mè - ne,

17 C G C

Pull on the oars as we glide a - long.
C'est l'a - vi - ron qui nous mè - ne en - haut.



Portaging a canoe, c. 1880. *Minnesota Historical Society.*

French Lyrics

*M'en revenant de la jolie Rochelle,
M'en revenant de la jolie Rochelle,
J'ai rencontré trois jolies demoiselles.
C'est l'aviron qui nous mène, qui nous mène,
C'est l'aviron qui nous mène en haut.*

*J'ai rencontré trois jolies demoiselles
J'ai rencontré trois jolies demoiselles
J'ai point choisi, mais j'ai pris la plus belle.*

*J'ai point choisi, mais j'ai pris la plus belle
J'ai point choisi, mais j'ai pris la plus belle
J'l'y fis monter derrière' moi, sur ma selle.*

*J'l'y fis monter derrière' moi, sur ma selle
J'l'y fis monter derrière' moi, sur ma selle
J'y fis cent lieues sans parler avec elle.*

*J'y fis cent lieues sans parler avec elle
J'y fis cent lieues sans parler avec elle
Au bout d'cent lieues, ell' me d'mandit à boire.*

*Au bout d'cent lieues, ell' me d'mandit à boire
Au bout d'cent lieues, ell' me d'mandit à boire
Je l'ai menée auprès d'une fontaine.*

*Je l'ai menée auprès d'une fontaine
Je l'ai menée auprès d'une fontaine
Quand ell' fut là, ell' ne voulut point boire.*

*Quand ell' fut là, ell' ne voulut point boire
Quand ell' fut là, ell' ne voulut point boire
Je l'ai menée au logis de son père.*

*Je l'ai menée au logis de son père
Je l'ai menée au logis de son père
Quand ell' fut là, ell' buvait à pleins verres.*

*Quand ell' fut là, ell' buvait à pleins verres
Quand ell' fut là, ell' buvait à pleins verres
A la santé de son père et sa mère.*

*A la santé de son père et sa mère
A la santé de son père et sa mère
A la santé de ses soeurs et ses frères.*

*A la santé de ses soeurs et ses frères
A la santé de ses soeurs et ses frères
A la santé d'celui que son coeur aime.*

English Lyrics

*Riding along the road to Rochelle City,
Riding along the road to Rochelle City,
I met three girls, and all of them were pretty
Pull on the oars as we glide along together,
Pull on the oars as we glide along.*

*By chance I chose the one who was the beauty,
By chance I chose the one who was the beauty,
Lifted her up so she could ride beside me.*

*With never a word we rode along together,
With never a word we rode along together,
After a while, she said, "I'd like a drink, sir."*

*Quickly I found a spring from out the mountain,
Quickly I found a spring from out the mountain,
But she'd not drink the water from the fountain.*

*On then we went to find her home and father,
On then we went to find her home and father,
When we got there, she drank... but not of water.*

*Many a toast she drank to her dear mother,
Many a toast she drank to her dear mother,
Toasted again her sister and her brother.*

*When she had drunk to sister and to brother,
When she had drunk to sister and to brother,
Turning to me, she toasted her own lover.*



Engraving of a Voyageur by C. S.Reinhart.
From *Harper's Magazine*. Minnesota Historical Society.

Brave Wolfe

*And ye that love fighting shall soon have enough,
Wolfe commands us, my boys, we shall give them Hot Stuff.*

"Hot Stuff," reportedly by Ned Botwood, printed in Rivington's New York Gazetteer, 1774

Now God be praised, I will die in peace.

Last words of James Wolfe, according to a contemporary (but perhaps fictional) account

1 Love — here's a dia - mond ring, Long time I've kept it,
5 'Tis for your sake a - lone, If you'll ac - cept it.
9 When — you the to - ken view, Think on the giv - er.
13 Ma - dam, re - mem - ber — me, I'm yours for - ev - er.

*Love, here's a diamond ring, long time I've kept it.
'Tis for your sake alone, if you'll accept it.
When you the token view, think on the giver.
Madam, remember me; I'm yours forever.*

*Brave Wolfe raised up his head as the guns did rattle,
And to his aide he said, "How goes the battle?"
"Quebec is all our own; none can prevent it."
Then answered that brave youth, "I die contented."*

*Then forth went this brave youth across the ocean.
To free Amerikay was his intention.
He landed in Quebec with all his party,
The city to attack, being brave and hearty.*

*Brave Wolfe drew up his men in a line so pretty,
On the Plains of Abraham before the city.
The French came marching down, resolved to meet them.
In double numbers round, resolved to beat them.*

*Montcalm and that brave youth together walkéd.
Between two armies they like brothers talkéd.
Then each one took his post, and did retire.
'Twas then these numerous hosts commenced their fire.*

*The drums did loudly play, and the balls were flying,
The purple gore did flow, and men lay dying,
Then shot from off his horse was our brave hero.
We'll long lament his loss, that day in sorrow.*



James Wolfe

Old Granny Wales

The tears of grief fell from her eyes full as large as hail. None could express the deep distress of poor old Granuaile. On her harp she leaned and thus exclaimed, "My royal Brien is gone Who in his day he drove away the tyrants every one."

"A New Song Called Granuaile." "Brien" is Brian Boru, who beat the Norse at Clontarf in 1014 but died in the battle.

1 Dm Dm C Dm C

Old Grann - ny she rose in the morn-ing so soon, She slipped on her

7 C C Dm F F F

pet - ti - coat, a - pron and gown, Saying, "Ve - ry bad news last night came to

13 G G F C Dm

me, They're wrong - ing my child - ren that's o'er the sea.

*Old Granny she rose in the morning so soon
She slipped on her petticoat, apron, and gown
Saying, "Very bad news last night came to me,
They're wronging my children that's o'er the sea."*

*Old Granny then mounted her gelding in haste,
And to fair London city — it was her first place,
As she was prancing up fair London street
'Twas there with Lord Cornwall she chanced for to meet.*

*"Noble Granny," says Cornwall, "Come tell me in haste
Have you any good news from the east or the west?"
"Oh, bad news," says Granny, "that [makes?] me complain
They're wronging my children that's o'er the main."*

*"That news is too true," Lord Cornwall says,
"They're enslaving your children too soon I'm afraid.
There's Lord North, Granville, and Infamous Bute
That brought on this Tea Act that's now in dispute."*

*Old Granny remounted her gelding in rage
And to fair Dublin city it was her next stage
As she was prancing on fair Dublin street
'Twas there with Lord North, Granville, and Bute she did meet.*

*"You're the three villains that I understand
That's wronging my children in yon foreign land;
And it's reported and told for a fact,
That you're the three villains that made this Tea Act."*

*"You're wrongly informed," says these gentlemen,
"To enslave your children we ne'er did intend,
But the land is our king's we solemnly say
We make our laws and your sons must obey."*

*They say, "Noble Granny don't make such an event
We will cool your sons' courage and make them repent.*

*With our ships of war and our men in the field
We'll cool your son's courage and make them to yield."*

*"Oh I'd not have you think to frighten my sons
For at Lexington Battle they made your men run.
They are men of experience in every respect
And never will yield to your bloody Tea Act."*

*"Besides them," says Granny, "give me leave to tell
Of a Battle once fought and it was on Bunker Hill
Where twelve hundred Britains lay dead on the ground
And five hundred more have since died with their wounds."*

*"You need not tell us about Bunker Hill
Our troops were few and you gained the field
But then you had Warren, but now he is slain
You have no more Warren that's over the main."*

*"Well, well," says Granny, "though Warren is dead
There's a Washington living and our enemy he'll head
He'll handle your troops polite as you please
And he'll pay them the trouble for crossing the sea."*

*"I have millions of sons in America born
To submit to your laws, they hold it in scorn
They are men of experience in every degree
And they will see your great ships of the helm [=line?] a lee."*

*"Too late you'll repent of your desperate crime,
To mourn and lament to the end of your time.
That ever you sent your troops over the flood
To spill my dear innocent children's blood."*

*"Then sing, hubor oh, buhor," says Granny O'Whale,
"There's a fox in the trap and he's caught by the tail
My sons are true blue that never will fail
Success to the sons of Granny O'Whale."*

The Louisiana Purchase and the War of 1812

DESPITE ALL THE FIGHTING IN THE EAST, IT HAD BEEN PRETTY much “All Quiet on the Minnesota Front” for forty years after the French and Indian War. Even though the land east of the Mississippi was officially American, the British continued to send fur traders into the area. They might still be doing it had it not been for a man who wasn’t even an American.

Napoleon Bonaparte, widely known in English as “Boney,” would shake up nations from Russia to the American Midwest.

Boney
ON PAGE 12

Napoleon came to rule France in the aftermath of the French Revolution, just about the time the United States experienced something that was almost a second revolution of its own: The Federalist party, which had ruled the country from Washington’s time until 1800, was voted out of office and replaced by a party called the Republicans (though they weren’t the same party as today’s Republicans). The first Republican President was Thomas Jefferson, and when he replaced John Adams, it was the first real transfer of power in American history.

Jefferson and Liberty
ON PAGE 13

Soon after Jefferson took office, Napoleon made him an offer he couldn’t refuse. Napoleon had a history of Big Plans. One of those Big Plans brought France ownership of the Louisiana country — all the land west of the Mississippi which drained into the Mississippi river. But then came a slave revolt in the Caribbean. After that, Louisiana didn’t look so useful to France. And Napoleon always needed money. He sold Jefferson the Louisiana country.

Instantly, the United States doubled in size. Included in the Purchase was the larger part of Minnesota. Americans set out to survey the area. One survey was conducted by Lewis and Clark. Another exploration party, which moved up the Mississippi toward Minnesota, was headed by Lieutenant Zebulon Pike (1779-1813). At Prairie du Chien he put his men in two bateaux (low, shallow-bottomed boats) and sailed north. He camped at Pike Island where the Mississippi and Minnesota rivers meet, raised the American flag (possibly the first time it was raised in Minnesota), and “bought” the land that would later house Fort Snelling. He then headed up the Mississippi seeking its headwaters. He failed to find them (it was Henry Schoolcraft who put Lake Itasca on the map a quarter of a century later), but Pike did at least take his men far enough north to make an (unsuccessful) show of force against British posts in the Brainerd area (Blegen, pp. 87-89).

The Louisiana Purchase wasn’t the only time Napoleon influenced American history. For more than a decade, the British and French fought. Napoleon wanted desperately to conquer Britain, which was bankrolling his other enemies. As long as the British Navy could control the seas, Britain was safe from invasion. But to control the seas required ships and sailors. The British recruited sailors by a system known as “impressment” — like a modern draft, but rougher: They

sent out groups of men known as press gangs and grabbed sailors off the streets or off merchant ships. Including, sometimes, American ships, if they thought there were British deserters aboard. They also demanded that American ships trade through them, rather than to the continent. It made the Americans very angry. Finally they declared war on Britain.

For the British, the War of 1812 was a sideshow. The big fight was with Napoleon. They sent only a few soldiers, mostly to defend Canada, and a few ships to blockade the American ports. They still held the Americans to a draw for two years. Much of this was due to American impetuosity: The Americans kept trying to invade Canada, and kept digging themselves holes. (Zebulon Pike was killed on one of those expeditions.) One of the great battles of the war, for instance, was fought at Lundy’s Lane. Like the war as a whole, it was a bloody draw. The commander at Lundy’s Lane was Jacob Brown. It was Brown who, in 1819, issued the orders which sent Lt. Colonel Henry Leavenworth to found what became Fort Snelling (Folwell, p. 135).

Billie Johnson of Lundy’s Lane
ON PAGE 14

Napoleon kept the British busy for all of the two terms of President Jefferson, and through the first term of his successor James Madison. But eventually the French wars ended and Napoleon went into exile:

*Oh, Boney’s away from his wars and his fightings,
He is gone to a land where naught can delight him.
And there he may sit down and tell the scenes he’s seen-o,
While alone he does mourn on the isle of Saint Helena.*

The British then were able to turn their full might on the U. S. In 1814, they burned Washington. But Fort McHenry, outside Baltimore, held them up (incidentally inspiring “The Star Spangled Banner”), and peace commissioners started meeting. The British could surely have won the war had they been willing to pay for it — but their economy had been strained to the breaking point by the French wars. Both sides agreed to go back to the way things were in 1812.

The War of 1812 did have one important effect: It caused the British to finally leave the northern United States. That was due in part to the fact that the Americans had beaten them in the one major battle on the Great Lakes, the Battle of Lake Erie.

James Bird
ON PAGE 15

Gradually, the Americans moved into the vacated territory. In Minnesota, the single most important act was probably the building of a fort near the present site of the Twin Cities. The first soldiers were sent out in 1819, under Lt. Col. Henry Leavenworth. He was replaced soon after by Col. Josiah Snelling, who decided to build the fort at a different site, at the junction of the Mississippi and Minnesota rivers. The fort, completed in 1824, would eventually be renamed Fort Snelling (Blegen, pp. 99-102).

Song Notes

Boney

This song is interesting both for its form and for its content. In form, it is a sea chanty (or shanty; however you spell it, it's pronounced "shanty"). These were songs sailors used for a particular task — for example, to help them time their hauls on a rope or their shoves on a capstan. Stan Hugill, the last real expert on chantys, thought this both a halyard song and a short haul chanty. This version is a short haul chanty; the sailors would pull on *Yup!* and *Swar!* To get the feeling across, you could have kids clap on the haul syllables.

The song is a good short summary of the later career of Napoleon: His chief enemies on land were Russia, Prussia, and Austria (all of whom also allied with him at one time or another as well). In 1812, he invaded Russia, and reached Moscow, but saw his army destroyed. Two years later, having failed to defend France, he went into exile on Elba, only to return for the "Hundred Days" in 1815, ending in the Battle of Waterloo. He fled into British custody, was taken into exile on the *Bellerophon*, and died on Saint Helena.

Source: I have heard many recordings of this; I think the one I know best is by John Roberts and Tony Barrant. I have used their tune. The fullest set of lyrics is in Hugill's authoritative *Shanties from the Seven Seas*, but this text is a combination of what I remember with the version in Joanna C. Colcord's *Songs of American Sailormen*.

Jefferson and Liberty

These days, politicians have television ads and public debates. In the early days of the Republic, they had campaign songs; the candidates sat at home and wrote letters, while local people staged rallies on their behalf. John Adams had a song called "Adams and Liberty," notable for being absolutely terrible and for using the tune of the drinking song "To Anacreon in Heaven"; the "Adams and Liberty" version was the basis for "The Star-Spangled Banner." Versions of Jefferson's song also had lousy lyrics, but it was easier to sing.

The "reign of terror" reference is almost certainly to the Sedition Act of 1798, probably the strongest attack on the rights of American citizens in history — it was an overt attempt to suppress freedom of speech and the press. Jefferson was firmly against it, and it was not renewed.

Source: Known from broadsides (single-sheet printings of the words). I've selected a subset from the text on page 165 of Vera Brodsky Lawrence's *Music for Patriots, Politicians, and Presidents: Harmonies and Discords of the First Hundred Years*. The tune is said to be the Irish melody "The Gobby-O." I learned the song in my youth, from a forgotten recording. Appropriately, the form is a Virginia Reel.

Billie Johnson of Lundy's Lane

The Battle of Lundy's Lane took place on July 25, 1814, during one of several American invasions of Canada in the

War of 1812. General Jacob Brown took his forces across the Niagara River on July 3. After some minor fighting, Winfield Scott's brigade ran into a British force, and both sides brought up reinforcements. The battle was bloody, and both Brown and Scott were wounded (as were the top British generals). Both sides claimed victory, but the officer left in command of the American forces decided to retreat. It was the last time the United States seriously threatened to capture part of Canada.

Brown would be important for Minnesota history; he sent the troops that founded Fort Snelling. Scott would go on to even bigger things: He was the American commander in chief during the Mexican war, and was responsible for the campaign that captured Mexico City and won the war; he was still in charge of American forces at the start of the Civil War 47 years after Lundy's Lane. (He would retire within a year, but his strategy would largely be responsible for winning the war.) Clearly the veteran was going to visit General Scott to ask to fight for the Union again — though no sane general would have wanted him; even had he been fit, his insistence on using his old musket (which could hardly hit the wall of a barn, let alone an enemy rifleman) would have made him completely useless in Civil War-era combat.

This song, said to be by Bayard Taylor, was written in the Civil War seemingly to encourage patriotism.

Source: The words are from Dean, one of only three collections in tradition. The melody is based on the tune collected by Frank Warner from "Yankee" John Galusha, 1941 and printed in Warner, p. 69. Galusha was very old at the time he was recorded, and his timing seems to have been influenced by his need to breathe. His pitch is known to have been affected by his age. I have fiddled slightly with the tune somewhat as a result, both as to timing and pitch.

James Bird [Laws A5]

Chances are, if you've heard anything about the War of 1812, you've heard of the Battle of Lake Erie, at which Oliver Hazard Perry declared, "We have met the enemy and they are ours." This is a song about a sailor in the battle — one who fought bravely, but then deserted out of, it seems, boredom.


Source: Though it was composed as a poem, "James Bird" became a very popular song. Several tunes exist. This one, which is peculiar in its lack of modality, was sung by George M. Haskins of Gordon, Wisconsin; he told Rickaby that he learned it in Minnesota around 1874. The tune is as given by Rickaby, though I suspect that measures 7 and 8 should be combined into one. I have supplied chords, but I think this tune works best when sung *a capella*. Rickaby did not give Haskins's full lyrics, so I have used a text furnished to me by Doris Chriswell of Palmyra, New York, who found a copy written by her great-grandfather John James Johnson in 1881. He reportedly was farming near the Ohio/Indiana border at the time, making it the oldest known traditional version from the midwest. The text is written rather poorly; I have corrected errors and supplied missing lines in brackets.

Boney

To delight in war is a merit in the soldier, a dangerous quality in the captain, and a positive crime in the statesman.

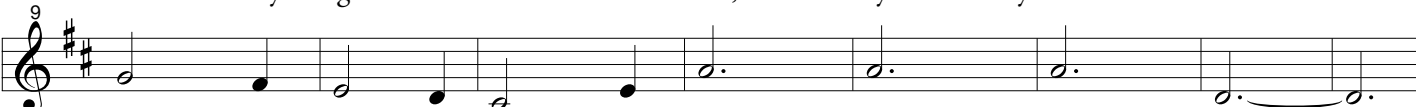
George Santayana

1



Bo - ney was a war - ri - or, Way - ay YUP!_____ A
Bo - ney fought the Roosh - i - ans, Way - ay YUP!_____ The

9



war - rior and a tar - ri - er John Fran - SWAR!_____
Roosh - ians and the Proosh - i - ans, John Fran - SWAR!_____

*Boney was a warrior, Way-ay YUP!
A warrior and a tarrier, John Fran-SWAR!*

*Boney fought the Rooshians,
The Rooshians and the Prooshians.*

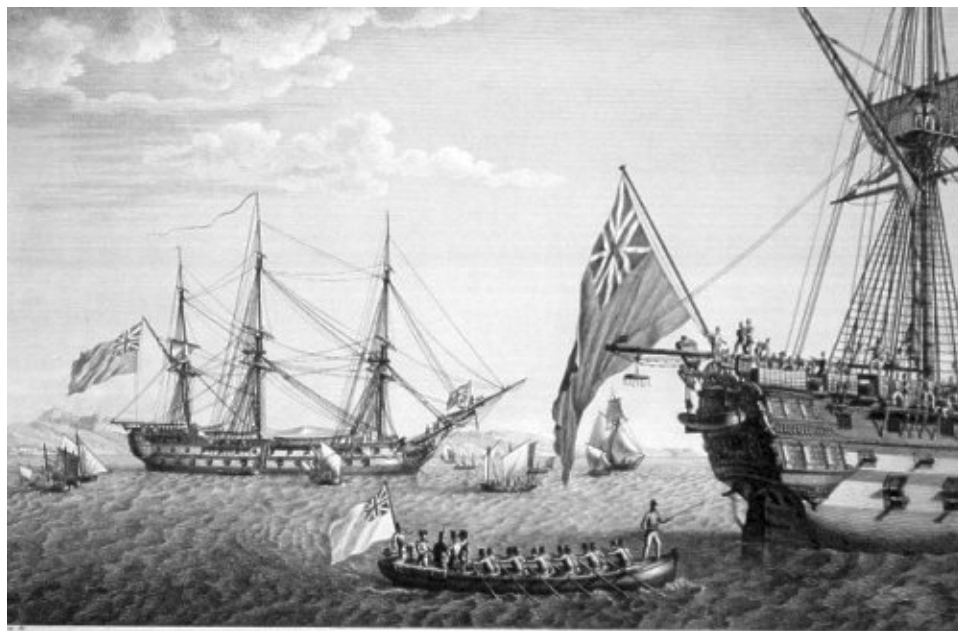
*Boney went to Moscow,
And lost his army in the snow.*

*Boney went to Elbow (=Elba)
And Boney he came back again.*

*Boney went to Waterloo
And there he got his overthrow.*

*Then they took him off again
Aboard the Billy Ruffian (=Bellerophon).*

*Away in Saint Elen-i-a (=Helena)
Boney broke his heart and died.*



The *Bellerophon* carrying Napoleon into exile on Saint Helena in 1815.

Jefferson and Liberty

A state without the means of some change is without the means of its conservation.

Edmund Burke, Reflections on the Revolution in France, 1790

The gloom - y night be - fore us flies, The reign of ter - ror now is o'er, Its
gags, in - quis - i - tors, and spies, Its herds of harp - ies are no more. Re -
joice, Co - lum - bia's sons, re - joice, To ty - rants nev - er bend the knee, But
join with heart and soul — and voice For Jef - fer - son and lib - er - ty.

*The gloomy night before us flies,
The reign of Terror now is o'er;
Its Gags, Inquisitors, and Spies,
Its herds of Harpies are no more*

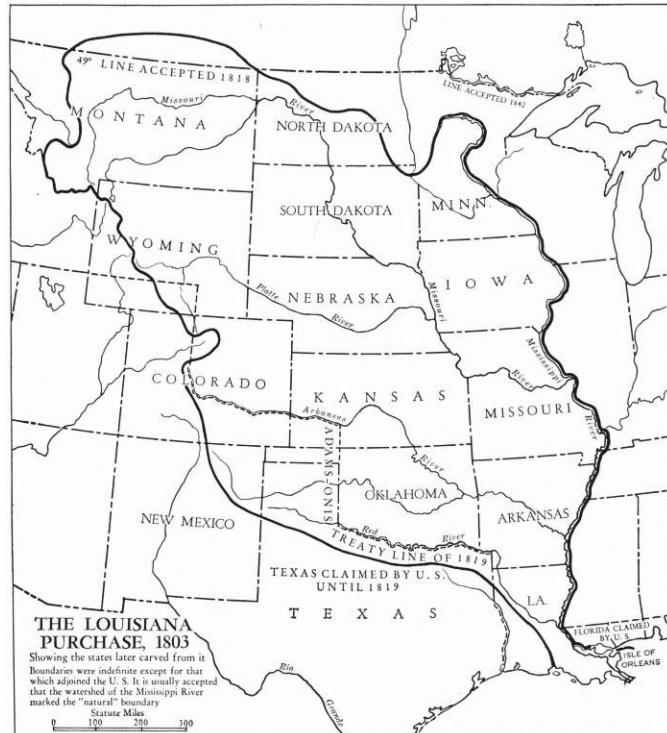
*Chorus: Rejoice! Columbia's Sons, rejoice!
To tyrants never bend the knee
But join with heart and soul and voice
For Jefferson and Liberty.*

*No Lordling here with gorging jaws.
Shall wring from Industry the food;
Nor fiery Bigot's holy Laws,
Lay waste our fields and streets in blood.*

*Here strangers from a thousand shores
Compell'd by Tyranny to roam;
Shall find, amidst abundant stores,
A nobler and a happier home.*

*Here art shall lift her laurel'd head
Wealth, Industry, and Peace divine;
And where dark pathless Forest spread.
Rich Fields and lofty Cities shine.*

*From Georgia up to Lake Champlain
From Seas to Mississippi's Shore;
Ye Sons of Freedom loud proclaim,
The Reign of Terror is no more.*



A 1912 map of the Louisiana Purchase.

Billie Johnson of Lundy's Lane

*We formed our lines for battle, the conflict soon began;
The cannons loud did rattle, while many a valiant man
Lay bleeding in his purple gore, heart-rending were their cries,
While the clouds of sulphur, tinged with blood, ascended to the skies.*

"The Battle of Bridgewater" (another name for Lundy's Lane). From J. H. Cox, Folk-Song of the South, p. 259.

An old and crippled vet - er - an to the War De - part - ment
came He sought the chief who led him through man - y a field of
fame, The chief who shout - ed "For - ward" when - e'er his ban - ner
rose, And bore the flag in tri - umph be - hind his fly - ing foes.

*An old and crippled veteran to the War Department came,
He sought the chief who led him o'er many a field of fame,
The chief who shouted "Forward!" whene'er his banner rose,
And bore the flag in triumph behind his flying foes.*

*"Have you forgotten, General," the battered soldier cried,
"The days of Eighteen Hundred and Twelve when I fought by your side?
Have you forgotten Johnson who fought at Lundy's Lane?
It's true I'm old and feeble, but I'd like to fight again."*

*"Have I forgotten?" says the chief, "My brave old soldier, No!
And here's the hand I gave you then and let it tell you so;
But you have done your share, my friend, you are crippled, old and gray,
And we have need of stronger arms and fresher blood today."*

*"I'm not so weak, but I can shoot, and I've a good old gun,
To get the range of traitors' hearts and pierce them one by one;
And if a bullet should find me out and lay me on my face,
My soul will go to Washington, and not to Arnold's place.*

*"I am ready, General, so you let a post to me be given,
Where Washington can look down on me as he looks down from Heaven,
And say to Putnam at his side, or maybe General Wayne,
'There stands old Billie Johnson, he fought at Lundy's Lane.'"*



Winfield Scott, "Old Fuss and Feathers" (1786-1866), as he appeared in dress uniform around the time of the War of 1812. Based on a portrait in the Smithsonian by an unknown artist.

James Bird

The battle for the mastery of the lake began September 10, 1813. Perry's ship was flying the motto, "Don't give up the ship." The "Lawrence" for two hours bore the brunt of the battle till it was almost a total wreck.... Perry now crossed over to the "Niagara...." [H]e at once... dashed through the British line. Within ten minutes the flagship and three other British ships had surrendered.

J. Franklin Jameson's Dictionary of United States History, 1894

1 G C Dm Dm G Am Dm Dm
Sons of free-dom, list-en to me, And ye daugh-ters too give ear,

5 Am Am C C Dm Am G C Dm
You a sad and mourn-ful sto-ry As was ev-er told shall hear.

*Sons of freedom, listen to me,
And ye daughters too give ear,
You a sad and mournful story
As was ever told shall hear.*

*Hull you know his troops surrendered
And defenseless left the west
And Captain Thomas our commander
The invader to resist.*

*Among the troops that marched to Erie
Were the Kingston Volunteers,
And Captain Thomas was our commander
To protect our west frontiers.*

*But there was one amongst that number
Tall and graceful in his mien
Firm his step, his look undaunted
Never a nobler youth was seen.*

*One sweet kiss he stole from Mary,
Begged his mother's prayers once more,
Pressed his father's hand and started
For Lake Erie's distant shores.*

*"Where is Bird? The battle rages
Is he in the strife or no?
Hear the cannons roar tremendous.
Dare he meet the dreadful foe?"*

*"Yes — by Perry see him standing
In the self same ship he fights
[Though] his messmates fall around him
Nothing can his [soul] affright.*

*But behold a ball has hit him,
See the crimson current flow
"Leave the deck," exclaimed brave Perry,
"No," cried Bird, "I will not go."*

*"Here on deck I have took my station/
Bird will near his colors fly.*

*I'll stand by you galliant Perry
Till we conquer or we die."*

*Thus he fought both faint and bleeding
Till out Stripes and Stars arose.
Victory having crowned our efforts
All triumphant o'er our foes.*

*Then did Bird receive a pension?
Was he to his friends restored?
No, nor never to his bosom
Clasped the maid his heart adored.*

*But there came most dismal tidings
From Lake Erie's distant shore:
"I must suffer for deserting
From the brig Niagarie.*

*["Dearest parents," said the letter,
"This will bring sad news to you.]
Read this letter, brother, sisters
It is the last you'll have from me."*

*Though he fought so brave at Erie,
Freely bled and boldly dared.
Let his courage plead for mercy,
Let his noble life be spared.*

*It was a dark and doleful morning,
Bird was ordered out to die.
Where is the heart not dead to pity
But for him would heave a sigh?*

*See him kneeling on his coffin;
Sure, his death can do no good.
Spare him. Hark — my God they have shot him!
See his bosom stream with blood!*

*Farewell, Bird. Farewell forever.
Friends and home you will see no more.
Now his mangled corpse lies buried
On Lake Erie's distant shore.*

The First Minnesota Settlers

FORT SNELLING WAS THE FIRST PERMANENT AMERICAN settlement in Minnesota, but it didn't stay alone for long. The fur traders followed: Jean Baptiste Faribault set himself up at Mendota in 1826, and Henry Sibley, the future governor, arrived in 1834 (Blegen, pp. 132-136).

Sparkling and
Bright
ON PAGE 18

The frontier of American settlement, which had hardly reached Wisconsin at the time of Fort Snelling was founded, had reached through that state and into Minnesota by the 1840s. There aren't many songs about the fur trade itself, but we have a few from the fur trade period. One of the noteworthy things about the trade was how it had to keep moving westward, into the interior of the United States, as the lands further east were hunted out. We can't be sure, but it is thought that "The Maid of Prairie du Chien" is about a fur trader (or other resident of southern Wisconsin) who abandoned his home and headed west or northwest to the new territories; he may well have ended up in southeastern Minnesota.

The Maid of
Prairie du Chien
ON PAGE 19

The earliest songs sung in Minnesota were mostly old songs from other lands. Many originated in Britain, including the only one of the Great Ballads collected by Francis James Child to be collected in the state, "The House Carpenter." (Three other Child Ballads, "Barbara Allen," "Four Nights Drunk," and "The *Golden Vanity*," were almost certainly known here, based on collections outside Minnesota, but there are no Minnesota texts.) One of the few Minnesota songs about colonial days also originated in England under a title such as "The Three Rogues," though the most common American title is "In Good Old Colony Times"; Minnesota John Healy's version begins "In Good Old Colony Days."

The House
Carpenter
ON PAGE 20

In Good Old
Colony Days
ON PAGE 21

Most settlers to Minnesota arrived from the east and south, but some arrived from the north — though they weren't Americans by birth. The regions of Canada west of Ontario at this time were organized not as colonies, nor as provinces, but as the holdings of joint stock companies: The Hudson's Bay Company ruled the eastern regions, and the North West Company controlled the west. So independent were these companies that they actually went to war with each other on occasion. Needing people to do its work, the Hudson's Bay Company in 1812 granted land to a Scottish magnate, Lord Selkirk, who for a dozen years had been trying to found a Scottish enclave in North America. Selkirk did manage to found a settlement in the vicinity of modern

Winnipeg — but the population wasn't exactly what he expected. The area was surrounded by Hudson's Bay Company men, many of them Catholics from Quebec, and their native wives. Their children — who back then were called half-breeds — were the Métis, or mixed people, and they would end up being one of the most persecuted groups in both Canada and the United States. The North West Company used the Métis to attack the settlers, then, in 1820-1821, merged with the Hudson's Bay Company. Selkirk died about that same time (Blegen, pp. 92-93). Many of these Métis would end up in northwestern Minnesota, though their songs, such as "Falcon's Song," were in French and are rarely remembered.

*Si vous aviez vu tous ces Anglais
Et tous ces Bois-Brûlés après
De butte en butte les Anglais culbutaient,
Les Bois-Brûlés jetaient de cris de joie!*

*You should have seen those Englishmen,
And our Bois-Brûlés after them,
Till one by one we did them all destroy
While our brave comrades shouted for joy.
(Fowke/Mills/Blume, pp. 122-123).*

The later fate of the Métis was sad. Persecuted by a racist Canadian government, they tried rebellion under Louis Riel. The rebellion failed. They moved to Saskatchewan, only to find the settlers coming west on the railroad and again taking their lands. They called Riel back from exile to lead another rebellion, but it was crushed at the Battle of Batoche in 1885. Riel would later be executed.

Shortly before the failure of the Selkirk colony, the boundary between the United States and Canada west of the Mississippi was settled. In 1783, when the British and Americans had decided what lands would belong to the new country, they had not realized that the Mississippi headwaters were south of the Great Lakes. Since the boundary was supposed to be the Mississippi on the west, and the Great Lakes and Lake of the Woods on the north, this left the boundary indefinite. It was indefinite in the regions further west, too. In 1818, they decided on a boundary of the forty-ninth parallel — except for the oddity of the Northwest Angle of Minnesota, the jut into Lake of the Woods that made Minnesota the northernmost state in the Union until Alaska became a state; the Northwest Angle is a relic of the bad surveying and uncertain boundaries of the pre-1818 period. Still, the decisions of the boundary commission finally placed all of what is now Minnesota in the Union.

But the boundary remained unguarded. In the aftermath of Selkirk's death, many of the persecuted people of his colony migrated down the Red River to take up lands in what is now western Minnesota and the Dakotas.

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