The Death of Maggie Vail

Moderate \( d = 72 \)

Come all young friends and lend an ear, A dreadful story you shall hear; This murderous deed was done of late, in eighteen hundred and sixty-eight.

From the singing of Emma MacCready, Saint John, N.B.
Transcribed by Kenneth Peacock.

Come all young friends and lend an ear,
A dreadful story you shall hear;
This murderous deed was done of late
In eighteen hundred and sixty-eight.

There was a man named John Munro
Who did Miss Vail a-courting go;
This girl was handsome, young, and fair,
They’re few that could with her compare.

Munro was married, it is true,
He had a wife and children too (two?)
But still Miss Vail he went to see,
Not caring what the talk might be.

In course of time an offspring came,
Which brought to light their hidden shame,
But still together they did go,
Till he did prove her overthrow.

’Twas out on the Black River Plains
Some coloured folk found their remains,
Clothing and skull, and likewise hair,
Which showed someone had been murdered there.

The bones and clothing that were found
Were gathered up and brought to town,
An inquest held on the remains
Of those who were found on the Black River Plains.

The jury found it very plain
Miss Vail and baby had been slain;
The cruel wretch he did the deed,
And left them there for wild beasts to feed.

He killed the baby with a rush,
And covered them with moss and brush,
And hurried off with rapid flight,
Not thinking they would come to light.

The jury found it plain also
That they were killed by John Munro;
By his own hand the deed was done,
And he was sentenced to be hung.
And now young girls a warning take,
Be sure that you make no mistake:
If ever you do catch a beau,
Beware of one like John Munro!

The perpetrator of this 1868 murder in Saint John was a prominent architect, who designed, among other things, the gallows on which he was eventually hanged. The song was collected from Mrs. Emma McCready of Saint John, who learned it from her mother.

The story is also told in a different song, "Munroe's Confession," which is printed in Helen Creighton's Folk Songs of Southern New Brunswick.

Chris Lobban