

Canadian Murder Ballads:

A Preliminary Study of Ballads and Songs Showing Our Responses to Crimes of Violence

Edited by Tim Rogers

Editor's Introduction: Canada did not have a wild west in the tradition of our neighbours to the south. Rather, our western history is full of law and order, Mounties and a lack of violence. Pierre Burton, in his book "Why We Act Like Canadians," suggests that this lack of violence is a fundamental part of the Canadian character.

Perhaps, however, it is not so much that we Canadians are not prone to violence as it is our reluctance to celebrate it that creates this apparent difference between us and the US. The following series of articles speaks to this in its presentation of a series of songs related to murder that have entered tradition in our country. None of these has become exceedingly popular, but rather they are local songs that have evolved in response to the tragedy of violence. They demonstrate that the folkways in our country are active in their documentation of homicides. That these songs have not achieved great popularity beyond the region in which the event took place is testimony to our reluctance to discuss or celebrate this kind of crime.

