

The Green Fields of Canada sung by Jon Bartlett and Rika Ruebsaat: The First CFMS Cassette

"The Green Fields of Canada" was originally an album released by Canadian Folk Workshop in 1979. The album is no longer available, but CFMS has arranged to produce cassettes of this fine recording. In fact, it is the first entry in the CFMS Cassette Production Programme.

The original album was produced by Jon Bartlett, Gary Marcuse and Rika Ruebsaat at Studios West, North Vancouver, BC. Technical production was by Hal Beckett and Michael Dunn. Inquiries about the content of recording etc. should be addressed to Canadian Folk Workshop, 3169 Waterloo St., Vancouver, BC V6R 3J8. As a cassette, "The Green Fields of Canada" has been released by the Canadian Folk Music Society under the reference number CFMS 5-8501. It is available through the CFMS Mail Order Service for \$10.00 (\$8.00 for CFMS members) and is listed in the Mail Order Catalogue. To order copies please send cheque, money order or Visa account number and expiry date to CFMS, PO Box 4232, Station C, Calgary, Alberta, Canada T2T 5N1. Please add \$2.00 for shipping and handling (\$.50 per piece for additional copies).

Canada's Songs From Coast To Coast

A representative album of Canadian folk songs was not possible until 1979 when the last of the major collections of traditional folk song was published. Phil Thomas' *Songs of the Pacific Northwest* (Hancock House, North Vancouver), from which five songs in this album have been drawn, accurately represents the history and the economy of British Columbia, and allows us to assemble a composite picture of the regional varieties of Canadian song.

The songs on this album range in age from the title track, dating back to the eighteen-fifties, to the two songs of Wade Hemsworth made in the nineteen-fifties. Though the tunes of the songs vary from Irish modal through Protestant hymn to Tin Pan Alley (whichever mode was the most significant and familiar to the community out of which the song came), the songs are unified in voice: in each of them, we can imagine a

singer passing on a song in and to a community, whether an eastern or western logging camp, a prairie or Quebec town or a small Atlantic fishing village. This is the authentic voice of Canadians speaking to Canadians: we hope our arrangements and singing have done them justice.

Sung by **JON BARTLETT** and **RIKA RUEBSAAT**

accompanied by

KEITH MALCOLM — Fiddle & viola

PAUL NEWMAN — Bass

RIKA RUEBSAAT — English concertina, guitar and clogging

MURRAY SHOOLBRAID — Piano

BOB WEBB — Five-string banjo & voice

FRED WEIHS — Button accordion

Side 1

1. The Red River Valley (trad.) 2:30
2. The Grand Hotel/The Peekaboo Waltz/
Buck's Camp Down at Monroe (trad.) 4:06
3. It Was Way Out West In Alberta (Bill
"Bud" Baldwin) 1:55
4. The Hard Rock Miner (trad.) 1:56
5. Far From Home (tune, Phil Thomas) 4:00
6. Saskatchewan (words, William W. Smith) 2:31
7. The Doryman (tune, Phil Thomas) 3:10
8. The Homesick Trapper (words, Harold Smith; tune,
Stanley G. Triggs) 1:34

SIDE 1

The Red River Valley

The opening of the CPR main line in 1885 brought thousands of would-be settlers (and speculators) to Winnipeg and the west. But the combination of the weather, the CPR freight rates (which were twice as high as those in the east) and the Wheat Board's low price for grain soon encouraged many to go back east again. Rika collected this song in Winnipeg in 1975.

The Grand Hotel/The Peekaboo Waltz/ Buck's Camp Down at Monroe

Here are two songs collected by Phil Thomas, and published in his *Songs of the Pacific Northwest*, separated by a waltz that was popular in the logging camps. The Grand Hotel was a common destination for many of the loggers arriving in Vancouver on board the *Cassiar* from coastal logging camps. They would often hand their "roll" over to the proprietor, Tommy Roberts (1883-1917) for safekeeping, and Tommy would "run a slate" for them until the money was spent. "Buck's Camp" makes sport of the conditions in a camp in western Washington at the turn of the century.

It Was Way Out West In Alberta

This song, collected by Phil Thomas, was made by Bill "Bud" Baldwin in the early 'twenties to describe his experiences as a pre-emptor in the Rocky Mountain House district of Alberta.

The Hard Rock Miner

Phil Thomas found this song, sung to the tune of "When You Wore a Tulip" (c. 1914), more frequently than any other. The "mucker", the lowest-paid and dirtiest of all hard rock miners, was responsible for getting the ore away from the face after blasting and into the ore cars. A hard rock miner would often have a partner, with whom he would travel from job to job; the song mentions a variety of mines from Ontario to Idaho.

Far From Home

These verses were written by "W.H.D." at Emory's Bar on the Fraser River, between Hope and Yale. They were published in 1859 in a California magazine where they found later by Phil Thomas, who put the tune to them. The song describes the hard life of a gold miner who stayed and worked over the winter months of 1858, shortly after the first discovery of flake gold in the sand bars of the lower river. Others had returned to California in disgust, labelling the find the "Fraser River Humbug."

Saskatchewan

Many prairie songs have used Protestant hymns for tunes; here is one set to the tune of "Beulah Land." Other variants (though with many of the same complaints) are "Prairie Land", "Alberta Land", and, from the U.S., "Dakota Land". This set was composed by William W. Smith of Swift Current, Saskatchewan, in the 1930's, and refers to the plagues of grasshoppers, the drought and the low prices of that period, which saw

many Saskatchewan farmers give up and head west. The song may be found in Barbara Cass-Beggs' *Eight Songs of Saskatchewan*.

The Doryman

These verses were found in a locker on a halibut schooner and were set to music by Phil Thomas. The practice of small dories setting out from the schooner and laying down "long lines" which sat on the bottom, commonly used in the halibut fishery prior to the Second World War, was so dangerous that it was outlawed in 1939, the year these verses were found. The "queer thing" in the fourth stanza was a storm warning (often a bucket raised on a mast) from the schooner to the dories.

The Homesick Trapper

Stanley G. Triggs, who had a trapline in the Lardeau valley, got these verses from another trapper, Harold Smith, and set the tune. The Duncan River flows into the north end of Kootenay Lake, in south central B.C.



Side 2

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| 1. La Famille Latour (trad.) | 3:32 |
| 2. The Wreck of the <i>Mary Somers</i> (trad.) | 4:04 |
| 3. Hard, Hard Times (trad.) | 2:27 |
| 4. The Green Fields of Canada (trad.) | 3:59 |
| 5. Les Raftsmen (trad.) | 2:38 |
| 6. The Wild Goose (Wade Hemsworth) | 2:22 |
| 7. The Black Fly Song (Wade Hemsworth) | 3:45 |

SIDE 2

La Famille Latour

Quebec is rich in traditional cumulative songs, and this is one of our favourites. The expanding chorus mentions all the members of the Latour family, adding new names each time it comes around. The verses tell the story of a young man, Ti-Jean (from "petit Jean"), who marries a woman and then finds out that she isn't quite what he bargained for. When he comes home from work, cold, wet and hungry, she tells him that she's already had supper and that if he wants to eat, he can gnaw on the bones under the table. Ti-Jean complains bitterly, but she tells him, "Complain all you want — I'm going out to play."

The Wreck of the *Mary Somers*

There are many songs entitled "The Wreck of the . . .". This one about the *Mary Somers*, a ship that sailed out of St. Andrew's, New Brunswick, is one of the few with a happy ending. Jon learned this song from the singing of the late Capt. Charles Cates of North Vancouver, who learned it from his father, a sea captain originally from Ragged Reef, Nova Scotia. The song is in the P.J. Thomas Collection.

Hard, Hard Times

This Newfoundland song was popular in the 1930's but has been sung on the island since at least the turn of the century. It is a fisherman's complaint about "going in the hole". The fishermen struggle against the elements to catch and dry the fish. The schooner that sells supplies and buys the fish from them comes into port, and the fishermen are paid next to nothing for their fish. "West Indie" is the lowest grade of codfish and takes its name from the days when it was shipped to the West Indies as food for the slaves.

The Green Fields of Canada

Hardships and famine drove millions of people out of Ireland during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. They crossed the Atlantic with dreams of how good life would be in north America, but many died during the voyage. The survivors often encountered hardships equal to those they had left behind in Ireland. Their pain in leaving Ireland and their hopes for a new life are captured in the many emigration ballads they made, of which this is one of the most beautiful.

Les Raftsmen

In the days before logging railways and trucks, the rivers were the highways on which the logs travelled out

of the woods. On the Ottawa River, logs were tied together into big rafts and floated downstream, and the men who worked on these rafts were called *les raftsmen*. This song, dating from the middle of the nineteenth century, tells the story of the work of the raftsmen. They bought their winter's provisions — mostly pork and beans — in Ottawa (then called "Bytown") and paddled in canoes up the Ottawa River to the lumber camps (*les chanquiers*). They logged all winter, and when the spring thaw came, rolled the logs into the water, tied them together into rafts, and floated downstream to Quebec City.

The Wild Goose

People who have worked in the wilderness for a long time never quite feel comfortable in towns and cities. This song, set on the Pukaskwa River on the north shore of Lake Superior, is Wade Hemsworth's attempt to capture these feelings.

The Black Fly Song

In the late 1940's, Wade Hemsworth spent a summer with a survey crew on the Little Abitibi River (southwest of James Bay) and made this song about the experience. The only way to keep from being eaten alive by black flies was to smear all exposed skin with an evil mixture of bacon grease and balsam gum, a crude but effective salve.

Jon Bartlett and **Rika Ruebsaat** are singers of folk songs. Over the past ten years they have developed a very large and representative repertoire of songs from all over Canada. They have been involved in every aspect of folk music, from collecting and academic publishing in folklore to running folk song societies and folk music radio shows. They are both Directors of the Canadian Folk Music Society as well as being founders and editors of the national folk music magazine, *Canada Folk Bulletin*. They have also sung at festivals and on radio and television for both the English and French CBC networks. The main focus of their work, however, is in the field of education. They have given workshops to students and teachers of Social Studies, Music, English and French across the country.

In 1979/80, together with freelance producer, Gary Marcuse, Jon and Rika produced a series of sixteen half-hour radio shows entitled "Songs and Stories of Canada". The shows were commissioned for use on the Western Regional Network schools broadcast of the CBC. It is from the tapes of the music for these shows that the sixteen songs on this album are taken.

