

## Peter Crowley

As sung by Charlene Ash and Elaine Oates, Carbonear, Nfld., 18th November 1994.

Another politically significant song from an earlier era, from Maureen Chafe's MA thesis, entitled *The Collection and Documentation of Folk Songs of Conception Bay North, Newfoundland* (University of Calgary, 1996); the informative notes are hers.



As I roved out one eve-ning, in the love-ly month of June, I strayed in-to an  
old church yard to view a new laid tomb. It was there I heard an old man say, as the  
tear slid from his eye, "It's in a cold. cold grave to-day. door Pe - ter Crow-lev lies."

The grave where Peter Crowley lies, o'er it the grass grows green,  
And underneath poor Peter sleeps, because he loved the Green.  
It grieves my heart to see you there, a hero once in bloom,  
But unkindly, death has taken you to fill a silent tomb.

"O Crowley! O Crowley! Come tell to me the truth.  
Who went along with you that night, down Cluney's lonely room?  
Who stood beside the brave old oak and fired the single gun?  
Who fought and died for Ireland's pride, was Crowley's only son.'

So fare thee well young Crowley and fare thee well again.  
It's many a mile I shouldered you to save a man from jail.  
It's many a mile I shouldered you ... *Grá-mo-chroi*\*  
Because you were a Fenian bold, and died for liberty.

\**Grá-mo-chroi*—pronounced *gra-mo-cree*, Irish Gaelic for "free once more." (Colm O'Lochlainn. *Irish Street Ballads*. Dublin: The Three Candles Limited, 1939, p. 126.)

This Irish folk song was sung in unison by Charlene Ash and Elaine Oates as Elaine accompanied them on guitar. It was learned from Justin McCarthy of Riverhead, Harbour Grace. Mr. McCarthy, Elaine's uncle and Charlene's great-uncle, commonly wrote down the words for songs. He would distribute the texts to his nieces and nephews, who added these songs to their repertory.

The story of this ballad is unclear now. It is clear that it was written from the Irish Nationalist point-of-view and that Peter Crowley was part of the Fenian movement, having died during the group's fight for Irish liberty. The Fenians were known as the Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB). It was a secret organ-

ized by Irish workers in 1858. Its mandate was to "achieve Irish independence by force". (T.W. Moody, *Davitt and Irish Revolution 1846-82*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981, p. 24) The Fenian movement spread quickly to the rest of Great Britain and into North America, anywhere the Irish emigrated when fleeing the famine.

Who Peter Crowley was and which struggle he died in are no longer remembered. The song was probably written during the middle of the 19th Century. Due to its years in the oral tradition, many of the details have been forgotten.

As is common in Irish folk melodies, Peter Crowley is in the dorian mode. The melodic turn l-r is characteristic of Irish melodies of some age.