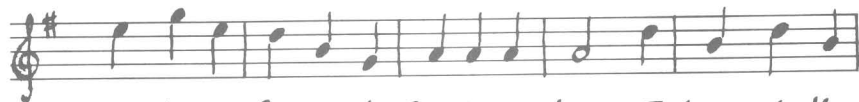


My Dad's Dinner Pail



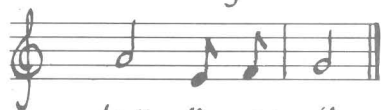
Pre-serve that old ket-tle, so black and so worn It was



worn by my fa-ther be-fore I was born It hangs in the



cor-ner be-yond the red nail It's the emb-lem of la-bour my



dad's din-ner pail.

—from the singing of Doll Nixon and Dan Miller

Preserve that old kettle, so black and so worn:
It was worn by my father before I was born.
It hangs in the corner beyond the red nail:
It's the emblem of labour, my dad's dinner pail.

Chorus

For it shines like silver and it sparkled so bright.
I was fond of that kettle, though it held a wee bite.
In summer or winter, rain, snow or hail,
I've carried that kettle, my dad's dinner pail.

There's a place for the coffee, another for bread,
Cold beef and potatoes; it's oft-times been said,
Go fill it with porter, wine, beer or ale,
We'll eat and be merry from the old dinner pail.

When the bell rang for mealtime, my dad he'd come down:
He'd sit with the workers around on the ground.
He'd share with the workers: you'd swear he'd go bail
For you never seen the bottom of the old dinner pail.

When the weather was rainy my dad, he'd stop in—
He'd polish that kettle till it shone like new tin.
He'd joke with my mother, and me he would flail
If I dare touch a finger on the old dinner pail.

“Dinner Pail” is not heard much these days—nowadays, it's called a “lunch bucket” or “lunch box.” I first heard the song on a tape of Doll Nixon, an

old-time logger, kindly given me a few years back by his son, Ronald Nixon of Saint John, New Brunswick.

Doll Nixon, who died in 1972, worked for many years after the turn of the century as a logger in the Restigouche system (Restigouche and Madawaska Counties, northern New Brunswick). Ronald said that “along with his father and his brothers they lumbered in that area from before the turn of the century . . . and had about thirty camps each winter. They transported their supplies to Green River (now Rivière Verte) . . . via rail and from there thirty-some-odd miles back into the Restigouche country via high wagons and sleds. And I’m sure in country like that with only horses to travel with the dinner pail was about the most popular thing around. . . .”

The song has a bit of an odd history—it was written by Edward Harrigan and Dave Braham, two very popular composers of the time, for the show “Cordelia’s Aspirations”, which opened in New York in November, 1883. It passed somehow into the oral tradition, and was reprinted in Michael Cassius Dean’s *Flying Cloud*, a collection of 163 well-known popular songs of the turn of the century, published in Virginia, Minnesota, in 1922. Since Dean himself was very interested in loggers’ songs (and the title of his book is the name of one of the most popular songs found in logging camps everywhere), it may well have been an east coast logger who had brought the song from the eastern woods into the Great Lakes country.

Jon Bartlett

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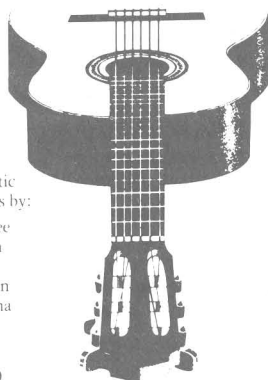
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