

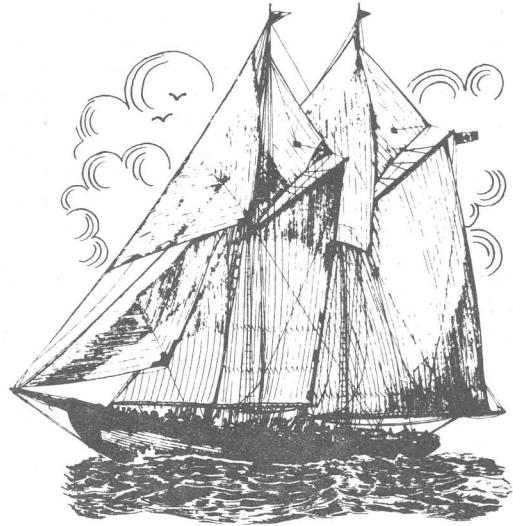
*Sea Songs and Ballads from 19th Century Nova Scotia* (Folkloric Press, New York, 1981) presents two collections of sea songs brought together by the distinguished Toronto folklorist Edith Fowke. The songs in the collection come directly from Nova Scotia seamen who sailed in square-rigged ships in the latter decades of the last century. The songs in the first collection were taken from the singing of William H. Smith, of Liverpool, N.S., by his son, T. Benton Smith, in 1940. Those in the second collection are from a book kept by Captain Fenwick Hatt in the early 1880's, with the songs apparently written by the singers themselves. This presentation by Folkloric Press is of interest to both folklorists and students of sailors' songs. The Fenwick Hatt manuscript is probably the earliest known song collection in Canada and coupled with the material from William Smith gives some idea of what songs and shanties were being sung by Nova Scotia seamen in the last quarter of the century.

Fowke's introduction describes what may be called a first class piece of folkloric detection. Her attention was drawn to several songs mentioned in a short story written by Thomas Raddell, *Blind MacNair*. The fact that she could find no published versions of these songs made her conclude that Raddell must have had some traditional informants. And so a correspondence developed between the author and herself that brought to light these two manuscripts.

The collections are presented pretty much as they appear in the original manuscripts with the songs in the same order in which they were written and spelled. Much of the Hatt collection is written phonetically and while there is a small difficulty at times in deciphering the meaning, for the most part it gives a fine sense of the accents used by the singers. In both collections each song is annotated, giving background and a great deal of cross-referencing with other collections. Indeed, it is this cross-referencing and lists of sound recordings which give the only clues as to what tunes might be used with these songs, there being no musical notation in the manuscripts. This lack of tunes is a drawback for anyone wishing to sing these songs, and especially so for those interested in studying the shanties. The shanties are mainly presented in fragmentary form, and their texts are little different from fuller versions and tunes found in other sources, notably Stan Hugill's. I have wondered at the reasons behind publishing these fragments since it seems to me that the major interest would lie only in what tunes Nova Scotiamen used and whether or not they differed from those used by sailors in other parts of the world. I can only suppose that from the folkloric point of view it was better to publish the whole manuscript regardless of the value of some of the material.

From the point of view of singers who might like to learn new material this book does not provide the easiest way of doing that. One would have to do a lot of researching through

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other collections to find matching tunes. However, there is a very extensive bibliography and this provides a valuable guide to any singer looking for education as well as songs. But these books or collections don't help the singer who is looking to learn style or the "way" to sing these songs. The list of recordings given is limited, it seems, to only those field recordings and singers looked upon by folklorists as "traditional sources." This is a pity, as there are many fine recordings of "revivalist" singers who are faithful to the tradition in their renditions and which could be helpful to any reader using this book. But perhaps this is a minor quibble. I'm not sure that one should expect Fowke to give a complete discography of the songs and shanties presented here when her main object appears to be that of drawing the attention of folklorists, and students of folklore, to the existence of these valuable manuscripts.

I would like to add some further information to the note Fowke gives to the song "Brigantine Sirocco" (p. 15). This chorus struck me as being very similar to one of the songs in Sam Lerner's repertoire "The Dogger Bank," (*The Singing Island* Seeger and MacColl, Mills Music Ltd. London, 1960). It is a parody on an American song called "The Knickerbocker Line." Other references can be found in Colcord's *Songs of American Sailormen* and the Lomax's *Folksong: U.S.A. and Our Singing Country*.

**Louis Killen**