

VERMONT'S FABULOUS FOLKSONGS

Folksongs are passed along by word of mouth for generation after generation. Children learn them from their parents, maybe as they sing together on a hike or around a picnic campfire in the summer woods. Their parents learned them from their parents. Some songs go back hundreds of years.



Vermont has many of its own folksongs. Some came with the settlers from England and Europe when they immigrated to the United States. Over the years people changed the words to the songs so they fit the stories they wanted to tell about Vermont. People sang while they worked—songs about farming, logging, mining—and while they played—counting songs, game songs like “Green Gravel,” “Buster, Buster, Turn Around,” and dancing songs like:

Jerry's Account of a Junket

Did y'ever go to a “Junket,”
A thing very common of late,
Tho' the name for a while it was sunk—it
Now is fast coming to date.

Then the boys and the girls meet together,
Full of gaiety, gladness and glee,
And they skip round as light as a feather,
And never go home till 'tis three.

The first thing the fiddle goes squeaking,
And the beaux pull the girls on the floor
In such a hurry, that some fall a-shrieking,
And some in loud laughter roar.

This song tells you about what people did for fun in the early days of Vermont. Can you find any words they used that we probably don't use today?

On page 6 is another Vermont folk song. The Green Mountain Rams, a Junior Historians Club from the fourth grade at Twinfield Elementary School, liked it and sent it to *The Green Mountaineer*.

Helen Hartness Flanders, who lived in Springfield, Vermont, wanted to preserve Vermont's folk songs. In the 1930s she started to travel around the state, asking people to sing their old songs for her. Tape recorders had not been invented, so she had to write all the words down on paper or use a dictaphone. She wanted only songs that people had sung from memory, not songs from books or heard on the radio.

Beside each song, she carefully explained what the singer knew about the history of the song and where he or she had learned it. She was so excited about finding so many wonderful old songs that she kept collecting them for thirty years.



This unusual collection of songs is now in the library at Middlebury College. It is called the Helen Hartness Flanders Collection after the remarkable woman who made it.

THE TUNE THE OLD COW DIED ON

Collected in the spring of 1931, by H. H. F. in Springfield, Vermont, as sung by Mr. Elwin Burditt, from lumber camp days. Transcribed by E. F.

Lively

Old Farmer John came walking home one summer after-noon And he sat him down neth a

The first system of musical notation for the song. It consists of a vocal line in treble clef and a piano accompaniment in grand staff (treble and bass clefs). The key signature has one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 2/4. The lyrics are: "Old Farmer John came walking home one summer after-noon And he sat him down neth a".

maple tree and he sang him self a tune..... The farmer sang til the cows came up and

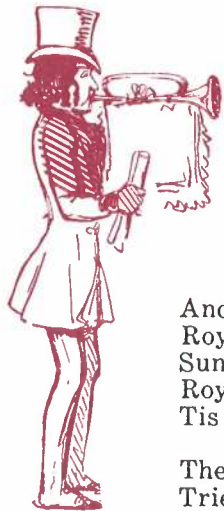
The second system of musical notation. The lyrics are: "maple tree and he sang him self a tune..... The farmer sang til the cows came up and".

round him formed a ring, For they ne-ver heard old Farmer John at-tempt be-fore to

The third system of musical notation. The lyrics are: "round him formed a ring, For they ne-ver heard old Farmer John at-tempt be-fore to".

The image shows a musical score for a song. It consists of two systems of music. Each system has a vocal line on a single treble clef staff and a piano accompaniment on two staves (treble and bass clefs). The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 4/4. The lyrics are: "sing. And this was the tune. Roy fal dol da dol Sung neath the ma - ple grove. Roy fa dol dol, roy fal dol day, tis the tune the old cow died on." The piano accompaniment features a steady bass line and chords in the right hand.

THE TUNE THE OLD COW DIED ON



Old Farmer John came walking home
 One summer afternoon
 And sat him down neath a maple tree
 And sang himself a tune
 The farmer sang til the cows came up
 And round him formed a ring
 For they never heard old Farmer John
 Attempt before to sing

And this was the tune
 Roy fal dol da dol
 Sung neath the maple grove
 Roy fal dol dol, roy fal dol day
 Tis the tune the old cow died on.

The oldest cow in the farmer's herd
 Tried hard to join the song

But the melody she could not get
 Though her voice was loud and strong.
 The farmer laughed till the tears ran down
 His cheeks like apples red
 Then the cow got mad and tried to sing
 Until she dropped down dead

And this was the tune, etc.

Old Farmer John had an inquest held
 To see what killed his cow.
 The jury sat and a verdict brought
 Which I mean to tell you now.
 They said that the cow would be living yet
 To chew her cud with glee
 If Farmer John hadn't sung that song
 Beneath the maple tree.