

Two green graves by the riverside, where grows the hemlock tree,  
And the shantyboys carved in the tree, where these two lovers lie low,  
“Here lies fair Anna Dennison and her true lover, young Monroe.”

And here are John Leeder's notes on “The Jam on Jerry's Rock”:

Statistically, logging is the most dangerous occupation in North America, with more deaths and injuries per person-hour than other occupations. It was even more so in the early days, before trucking revolutionized the industry. In the “horse-drawn days”, loggers spent the winter in rough camps (“shantys”, hence the term “shantyboy”) in wilderness areas, cutting timber and hauling it by horse-drawn sleighs to piles on the banks of rivers and streams. During the spring run-off, when water levels were highest, the logs were rolled into the current and floated or “driven” downstream to civilization as represented by sawmills. Often the logs would get caught in a “jam” on rapids and would have to be pried loose. Workers who were caught on top of a jam, or downstream of it, when the logs came loose ran the risk of being injured or killed, and this often happened -- witness the plethora of songs about men being killed on log drives.

I've been singing the song for many years; originally I was inspired by Tom Brandon's version, which I learned from the LP *Lumbering Songs from the Ontario Shanties*, consisting of logging songs collected by Edith Fowke (Folkways Ethnic Library FM 4052, now available on CD from Folkways Smithsonian, [www.folkways.si.edu](http://www.folkways.si.edu)). I have heard many versions since, and have been unconsciously influenced by them, so this version can be thought of as an unintentional composite.

And many versions of the song exist. In her book *Lumbering Songs from the Northern Woods* (Austin and

London: University of Texas Press, 1970), Edith describes it as “[the] most widespread of all shanty songs” and “In Ontario, ... by far the best-known lumbering ballad,” and prints two other Canadian texts. The song has been shown to have originated in Maine, composed by a New Brunswicker (Fannie Hardy Eckstrom and Mary Winslow Smith. *Minstrelsy of Maine*. Boston & New York: Houghton, Mifflin Co., 1927). It spread throughout the logging areas of North America, and had a tendency to become attached to locations, so that singers often swear that it took place in their region.

In the earliest versions, only young Monroe's head is found, not his body, and the heroine's name is not standardized. There is also a suggestion that the purpose of the song was to show the generosity of New Brunswickers in taking up a collection for the widow, back in those days before Workers' Compensation. These elements have been lost in the later versions -- it's become a straightforward story of a guy being killed in heroic fashion and his girlfriend pining to death. “Signal town” may be a corruption of “Saginaw town” -- many Ontario loggers went across to work in Michigan, and the reference to “our Canadian boys” suggests an out-of-Canada version. I also find it a tad whimsical to think of burying someone beneath a hemlock tree, which typically grows in very rocky areas with little soil.

## Treasures from Our Archives

### *Fifteen Years Ago*

*Bulletin* 24.2 (Summer 1990). This issue introduced new songs editor Howard Kaplan and included one of his songs, “Bright Sweaters in Fall”. Lots of constitutional housekeeping, with proposed revisions, notices of motion, an article by Phil Thomas on the proposed name change of the era, and an editorial by new president Gregg Brunskill. Gregg also wrote on Papalak (Theresa) Kukkiak, a button accordionist from Chesterfield Inlet. The Northern theme was continued by “A Week with Soviet Eskimo Singers and Dancers” by Nicole Beaudry. Judith Cohen wrote a report on Klezkamp, and contributed the song “Alle Brider”. Reviews of Grit Laskin's cassette *Lilia's Jig* and Margaret Bennett's book *The Last Stronghold: Scottish-Gaelic Traditions in Newfoundland* also appeared.

### *Ten Years Ago*

*Bulletin* 29.2 (June 1995). Grassroots events provided a sort of theme this time, with articles “How to Hold a House Concert” (Vic Michener), “House Concerts—The Beginning of Raga-Mala” (Jagannath Wani),

“Bossinware Party Tips” (Bob Bossin et al.), “‘What's the Life of a Man?': Recording with Barry Luft” (Richard Scholtz) (with accompanying song of that name), “Confessions of a Hell's Elf” (John Leeder), “Living the Music” (Michael Pollock), “...gets the blood circulating and keeps the legs in condition...” (George W. Lyon) and “Powell River BC: The Enjoyment Band Plays On” (Martin Rossander). Yet another article was “Copyrights and Traditional Music: A Canadian Perspective” by Paul Cranford. Another song included was “The Rum Runners Song”, lyrics by Jack Fleetwood, music by George Halkyard 62 years later. In addition to regular features (which by now included the Folk Festival Directory), there were reviews of Canada's Cowboy Festival, Edith Fowke and Jay Rahn's book on LaRena Clark, *A Family Heritage*, and recordings: *The Prairie Hugglers over Twenty Years*, *In the Müd* (Scatter the Mud), *Canada: A Folksong Portrait*, *Keep On Walking* (Lester Quitzau), *The Hills of Home* (Minnie White), *Traditional Music from Cape Breton* (Scumalash), *Modabo*, and *Spirit of the North* (The Gumboots).

### **Five Years Ago**

*Bulletin* 34.1-2 (March/June 2000). This was a double issue, and a fat one at that. Among the articles were two tributes to the late Bill Sarjeant (one of our former presidents): “Bill Sarjeant: Singing from Sheffield to Saskatoon” by Dave Spalding, and “Bill Sarjeant: A Four Decade Contribution to Folk Music” by Lois A. Wooding. Sherry Johnson contributed “Gender Consciousness Among Women Fiddlers in Ontario Fiddle Contests”, Jean Mills reported on “The Woods Music and Dance Camp”, and Jim Hiscott told us about “Inuit Accordion Music -- A Better Kept Secret”. An obituary of Ed McCurdy (by Lorne Brown) was included, as were a couple of Ontario fiddle tunes, “Elmer Campbell's Barn Dance”

and “My Aunt Sally Ann”, and a number of topical parodies from The Raging Grannies. Minutes and abstracts from the 1999 AGM, the festival directory, various columns and numerous reviews rounded out the issue.

These issues (and all back issues, either in original form or as photocopies) are available from CSTM Back Issues, 224 20th Ave. NW, Calgary, Alta. T2M 1C2. See the Mail Order Service catalogue or the website ([www.yorku.ca/cstm](http://www.yorku.ca/cstm) and follow the links), or contact [john.leeder@nucleus.com](mailto:john.leeder@nucleus.com), for pricing. [JL]

## **Reviews – Recordings**

**Finest Kind, with John D. Huston. *Feasts & Spirits: A Christmas Entertainment*. FAM 07. Fallen Angle Music, 285 Spencer St., Ottawa, Ont. K1Y 2R1; <[ian@ianrobb.com](mailto:ian@ianrobb.com)>; <[www.finestkind.ca](http://www.finestkind.ca)>**

Finest Kind is a highly-acclaimed Ottawa-based trio consisting of Ann Downey (voice, bass, banjo), Shelley Posen (voice, guitar) and Ian Robb (voice, concertina). Joining them on their fourth album, *Feasts & Spirits*, are James Stephens on fiddle and Skip Gorman on mandolin. In addition, John D. Huston is featured reading Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* as a solo narrative on all of the even-numbered tracks (with the exception of track 18, the musical finale to the disc). Thus *Feasts & Spirits* consists of eight tracks of narrative and ten tracks of music, only one of which is newly-composed.

Finest Kind's concept for this album was to provide fans with a studio-quality recording that closely parallels the group's Christmas concerts, which are, of course, limited to a very short period each year. As they have provided the music for Huston's performances of *Charles Dickens Reads A Christmas Carol* over the past several years, it seemed only fitting that Finest Kind and Huston should collaborate on *Feasts & Spirits*. Indeed, the collaboration was a wonderful idea in large part because Huston performs *A Christmas Carol* with such conviction and sensitivity that he commands the listener's attention from beginning to end. While spoken word performances are not exactly the mandate of this magazine, this one is particularly noteworthy.

Fortunately for all involved, Huston's talents are amply balanced by the singing and playing of Finest Kind. As expected, the vocal harmonies are impeccable throughout and feature prominently in

every arrangement. In addition, the instrumental performances are stirring, yet never overpower the lyrics. Noteworthy are gorgeous performances of “The Holly and the Ivy”, “O Little Town of Bethlehem” and “While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks by Night”. Each is presented in a musical version that is infrequently heard in Canada, and in the case of “While Shepherds”, each member of Finest Kind has contributed a favourite version to a three-part medley.

*Feasts & Spirits* is a welcome addition to the crowded palate of Christmas recordings. The recording lives up to its stated goal of “bring[ing] to mind other places, other times”. The only caveat is that, as with a live performance, *Feasts & Spirits* demands (and deserves) your attention from beginning to end. This is not background music.

*Paul Guise, St. John's, Newfoundland*

**Ann Gray. *Shouting at Magpies*. AGSM002. 2019 Ramsay St. SE, Calgary, Alta. T2G 4H9; <[www.internode.net/users/anngray](http://www.internode.net/users/anngray)>**

Then to his bags he flew wi' speed; about the drone he twisted: Meg up and wallop'd ower the green; for brawly could she frisk it! “Weel done!” quo he. “Play up!” quo she. “Weel bobb'd!” quo Rob the Ranter; “It's worth my while to play, indeed, when I hae sic a dancer!”

—F. Sempill, *Maggie Lauder*

Until relatively recently, the world at large regarded the Scottish pipes in two limited ways. Most people would recognize the military/competition style as what they heard in marching parade bands and at Highland games. Those with more familiarity with Scottish music were also aware of *piobaireachd*, the “big music”, sometimes described as the classical or art music of the pipes. Ensemble playing for the pipes has typically meant largish collections of pipes