

The Creighton-Senior Collaboration, 1932-51

The arrival of Doreen Senior in Halifax in the summer of 1932 was a fortuitous event for Canadian folksong collecting. Doreen, a friend and disciple of Maud Karpeles, was a folk and country dance instructor, trained by the English Folk Dance Society, who anticipated a career as a music teacher making good use of Cecil Sharp's published collections of *Folk Songs for Schools*. She was aware that Maud had recently undertaken two successful collecting trips to Newfoundland (in 1929 and 1930), and was curious to see if Nova Scotia might similarly afford interesting variants of old English folksongs and ballads, or even songs that had crossed the Atlantic and subsequently disappeared in their more urban and industrialized land of origin.



Doreen Senior [PANS HC Fonds Binder 16: 0344]

Helen Creighton had taken over from Roy Mackenzie as the leading folksong collector in Nova Scotia, and was awaiting the publication of her first collection, *Songs and Ballads from Nova Scotia*, which would finally appear in print early the next year. Not a highly trained musician, although she did play piano and melodeon and could sing well enough, Helen had struggled to capture the traditional tunes she had encountered when collecting the material for that first

book, and she was looking for a new collaborator who could note the melodies while she wrote down the words. In her autobiography, *A Life in Folklore*, she recalled her first meeting with Doreen in the following terms:

For years the Nova Scotia Summer School had been bringing interesting people here, and one day I was invited to meet a new teacher, Miss Doreen Senior of the English Folk Song and Dance Society. She liked people and they liked her to such an extent that whenever I met one of her old summer school students in later years, they would always ask about her. She was a musician with the gift of perfect pitch and she had an interest in folk music. Her schedule was heavy, but she had abundant energy. We talked about English folk songs, what I had found here and my problems with music. I asked if she would like to go collecting with me, but made it clear that as far as money was concerned it was a gamble, since I had none to offer. She was too interested to let this deter her, and, after a few more meetings, when our friendship had ripened, we decided to spend the two weeks at the end of her term, before she returned to England, on a collecting trip. Books on collecting usually said that folk songs were found in remote areas where people had no outside interests and were forced to entertain themselves. With this in mind we chose Cape Breton, and named the family car in honour of the great English collector Cecil Sharp, whose work we tried to emulate.¹

Cape Breton (1932)

The two women set out together for the first time on August 15th, 1932, “full of high spirits and a sense of adventure”.² The road to Cape Breton led via Antigonish to Port Hawkesbury and then Baddeck, but none of the two women's initial inquiries about singers of old songs bore fruit. They were counseled to continue north to Breton Cove, where they would find tourist accommodation and the most renowned local singer, D. B. (Donald) MacLeod. His songs were in Gaelic, as were those of another local informant, Malcolm Angus MacLeod, of nearby Birch Plain. Malcolm contributed a Scottish lament, “Tuireadh Nan Hiortach” (“Lament for the St. Kildans”), while D. B. sang nine songs that several decades later Helen would publish in the collection that she co-edited with Calum MacLeod, *Gaelic Songs in Nova Scotia*. Some of these, such as “Sid

Mar Chaidh An Cal A Dholaidh” (“How the Kale Was Ruined”), had a touch of humour, and others were love songs, of which one of the most beautiful was “Nighean Donn A Chuil Reidh” (“The Brown-Haired Maiden of the Smooth Tresses”). Most of these songs were composed locally and some of them quite recently, but part of D. B.’s repertoire was derived from his Scottish ancestors. “Maili Bheag Og” (“Little Young Molly”), the tragic tale of an elopement that ended in the accidental death of the heroine and the judicial murder of her lover, was an 18th C. ballad, while Jacobite sentiments permeated several of his other songs. Often quite elaborate poems set to music by someone other than the writer, many of the songs reflected past events and provided a way for members of the community to come to terms with difficulties in their lives or circumstances beyond their control. “Do’n Urramach Iain Friseal”, for example, regretted the loss of a much-loved pastor, the Reverend John Fraser, who had left to serve in another parish, while “Oran Na Bochdainn” recalled the hardships of the Depression years and “Reisimeid Ghaidhealach Eilein Cheap Breatainn (185th)” commemorated the war service of the Cape Breton Highlanders. Not surprisingly, since these Gaelic-speaking Cape Bretoners were descendants of clansmen from the Scottish Highlands, there were songs that expressed a sense of exile or loss. “Oran Na Bliadhna Uire” (“New Year Song”), for example, evoked the sadness of separation from a mother left behind in Scotland, although the lost community remembered in “Oran Mo Sheann Dachaidh” (“Song of My Old Home (Black Island)”) was located in Cape Breton. One of the most interesting songs was “An Te A Chaill A’ Ghaidhlig” (“The Woman Who Lost Her Gaelic”), which treated not just the attrition of the Gaelic language but the depopulation of the island and the changing values of those who abandoned a simple rural life for the lures of the city.

Although on the whole it produced little in the way of English-language folksongs, it seems likely that it was on this trip that Doreen noted a variant of “Geordie” (Child # 209), since it does not appear on any of her later transcription lists and she attributed it to John Bray of Glencoe when she published it with a piano arrangement in 1940. However, even if the songs that they found had in the main not been those they hoped for, both Helen and Doreen had enjoyed the expedition. While Helen had considerable difficulty jotting down song lyrics in a language of which she spoke not a word, Doreen had risen successfully to the challenge of noting the melodies, finding the Edison phonograph that Helen had brought along a useful but hardly essential piece of equipment. Helen reported to Marius Barbeau that

the phonograph “was not, I regret to say, altogether successful. It recorded all right, but after the second or third playing of a record the sound was worn off”.³ On the other hand, she had found a collaborator whose company she enjoyed and who possessed the skills and knowledge necessary to complement her own. Doreen, in fact, taught her much about Sharp and English folksong, and, as they drove around the island, sang many songs that Helen had never previously heard, as well as English variants of items printed in *Songs and Ballads from Nova Scotia*. Helen, who had regarded herself as something of an expert on folk music, now felt that she still had much to learn about the subject.⁴ The expedition had been a success, but it seemed obvious that Cape Breton was not the best place to find the Nova Scotian versions of Child ballads and old folk lyrics that both women were really looking for. So they decided to try again the next year, but to focus their efforts on the coastal communities east of Halifax.

Atlantic Shore (1933)

Helen prepared the way for her second collaboration with Doreen by making a number of exploratory trips in May and June, looking for new source singers. She then spent the month of July in England, participating in a package tour with a galaxy of other Canadian authors, but by August 1933 both she and Helen were back in Nova Scotia and ready to make their second attempt at collecting together. Helen later recalled that

We thought we might drive to Ecum Secum on the eastern shore and work back, but on second thought decided to begin near home and work towards Ecum Secum which, of course, we never reached. I wanted Doreen to meet Mr. Thomas Young, the postman at West Petpeswick, whom I’d visited on an earlier trip with mother. His house was on a low hillside overlooking Petpeswick Harbour, a sheltered inlet about seven miles long. There were green islands between this and the eastern shore, and I was to find this whole district a collector’s paradise. Mr. Young was tall with a yellow beard and he usually wore a broad-brimmed hat and carried a long stick like a shepherd’s staff. I had words taken down on my earlier visit and in no time he was singing and Doreen was transcribing his tunes. At lunch we left him to have our picnic and also to give him a rest, but even at eighty-three he felt no need of rest and soon came to look for us. We invited him to join us but he seemed to feel this would be an intrusion so we packed up and went back to the house where he sang until his voice grew husky and his tunes confused. It was still early in the afternoon, so we secured a lodging for the night

at Musquodoboit Harbour and then drove down Petpeswick's eastern shore to Martinique Beach. After a good rest and another picnic we returned [to Mr. Young's house]...and again he sang until his voice grew husky. Fortunately we had asked James Young, a neighbor, to join us, and he took over until the older man's bedtime, which was early, as he got up every morning at four-thirty to carry the mail.⁵

We know from Doreen's masterlist of the tunes on this trip that Thomas Young sang nine songs that day: "Black Eyed Susan", "It Was on the Fourteenth Day of June", "The Ship's Carpenter", "Price of Me Pie", "The Rich Merchant's Daughter", "The Maid I Left Behind", "Jolly Young Sailor Boy", "Sweet Ado" and "Ann O'Brien". James Young sang almost as many that evening: "The Rocks of Scilly", "Trips We Had Over the Mountains", "The Shooting Star", "The Golden Vanity", "The Sailor and his Beautiful Queen", "Harry Dowsey" and "Mary's Dream". Of these seventeen items, some would be included in *Traditional Songs of Nova Scotia*, but more than half of them remain unpublished to this day.

The next day the two women returned to West Petpeswick, spending the morning with James Young and the afternoon with Thomas Young. James gave them five more songs: "The Dog and the Gun", "Benson and the *Gilchrist*", "Fair Azina", "Down By the Fair River" and "Margaret and John", while Thomas remembered "When Barney Flew Over the Hills to his Darling", "Dinah Kitty and Maria", "Peggy Bourne", "The Girl Beguiled" and "Highland Mary".

That evening was spent in Mrs. Dennis Greenough's kitchen, and it was then that Helen and Doreen first heard the song that would become the most famous of all those they collected together, "Farewell to Nova Scotia" (aka "The Nova Scotia Song"). Helen later commented that

Doreen and I had been so steeped in the English tradition that we didn't realize [at the time] anything locally composed could have that much value, and anyhow Doreen didn't consider it a folk song. [It] combines the pull of the sea with the nostalgia sailors feel towards home... Since then I've found one singer in King's and another in Colchester County whose tunes were practically the same, and a friend knew the song when a child in Cape Breton. It was known best however in the area we were now working because it had been taught in their schools at the turn of the century... Whether original or adapted [from an older Scottish song] it fits our mood and countryside.⁶

The version of the song that Helen printed in *Traditional Songs of Nova Scotia* was actually a composite of her own creation, with additional verses added from those other informants, although it was based on the variant collected from Mrs. Greenough.

From various members of the Greenough family Doreen also noted "The Bold *Princess Royal*", "The Dark Eyed Sailor", "My Willie Is Over the Deep Blue Sea", "The Lady Shepherd", "Billy Boy", "Barbara Ellen" and "Lost Jimmy Whalen", bringing the total number of songs collected in just two days to over thirty. Later that week Mrs. Greenough would also contribute two love songs, "My Colin's Two Cheeks are as Ruddy as Morning" and "Love You'll Forget Me Not". All this was far better than the two women had dared to hope for, and they found that Thomas Young was not done yet. The next day he produced six more songs, although he sometimes needed a little help with the words from James or Freeman Young. Doreen noted "The Stormy Seas of Winter", "When First Into This Country", "Paul Jones", "Banks of Brandy Wine", "The Stately Southerner" and "The Brown Girl". A few days later he also recalled "The Farmer's Boy".

On August 6th, the two collectors implemented their plan of moving north-eastwards along the Atlantic coast, but they only got as far as East Petpeswick, where they called on other members of the Young clan.⁷ They were almost as lucky with their informants as before, finding Tom, Garvie and Roy Young, as well as Tom's wife, whose own first name does not seem to have been recorded. Mrs. Young offered "The Braes of Belquether" and Roy "Early in the Summer in that Lovely Month" but most of the singing was shared between Tom and Garvie, sometimes together and sometimes singly. They helped each other out with "Johnny Riley", "The Banks of Sweet Dundee" and "The Tailor's Lament", while Garvie produced four solo efforts: "The Man in the Moon", "Little Schooner *Myrtle*", "Eastern Lights", and a sea song common in the Atlantic coastal communities, "Stormy Weather Boys". Tom Young, not to be outdone, responded with six of his own: "When First to This Country", "The Dreadful Ghost", "The Heights of Alma", "Terence's Farewell to Katie", "The Roving Blade" and "Dan O'Sullivan".

The next day was also spent mainly in East Petpeswick, although a quick visit back to the western side of the inlet allowed Doreen to note a song about Newfoundland from James Young ("Cape Spear"), plus four more from the elderly postman, Thomas Young: "The Silvery Tide", "Celie", "I'm a

Stranger in this Counteree” and “The Bailiff’s Daughter”. In Young’s version of Child #105 the bailiff’s daughter was from Waterford rather than Islington, which probably reflected the Irish ancestry of his variant. That Petpeswick had inherited part of its musical heritage from Ireland was also suggested by the two songs contributed by another informant, G. W. Burrell, who sang “The Waterford Boys” and “Paddy Enlisted”. Back at Mr. & Mrs. Tom Young’s house, Robert Young, a visiting relative from Halifax, offered “The Chezzetcook Song”, Freeman Young produced “The Jolly Miner”, Gertrude Young sang “The Fox”, Tom Young contributed “The Green Linnet”, “The Press Gang” and “Spanish Ladies”, and family and visitors alike joined in for the cumulative song “The Tree in the Valley”. Mrs. Young had been reticent about singing while the men were ready to hold forth, but next morning Doreen persuaded her to sing “Johnny Doyle” and “The Dreadnought” as well as the children’s song “Heigh Ho Says Rowley”, while Gertrude Young contributed “Catching a Wife” and “In the Shade of Green Trees”. Then it was on to Ostria Lake, the furthest north-east that the two collectors reached on this expedition. Here they located the Williams family, who were of partly Scottish descent. Captain Martin Williams was happy to sing “The Banks of the Nile”, “I Wandered by the Brookside” and “Dixie’s Isle”, but Stanley Williams proved to have the larger repertoire. From him Doreen noted the melodies of seven songs, including a variant of Child # 81 which he called “Little Matha Grove”. The others were “The Soldier Boy”, “Kitty Gray”, “Three Bold Huntsmen”, “My Little Wee Soldier”, “The Bonny Hills of Scotland” and the shanty “Blow the Man down”.

Doreen had now run out of time and had to catch her boat back to England, but she had noted eighty-eight tunes, the fruits of an intensive and most productive week of collecting. Helen gave her a copy of *Songs and Ballads from Nova Scotia*, and promised to take her to meet the Henneberry family on Devil’s Island next time she was back in Nova Scotia. When Doreen got back to London she eagerly shared her experiences with Maud Karpeles, with the Kennedy family who ran the newly amalgamated English Folk Dance and Song Society, and with Frank Howes, the *Times* music critic who edited the Society’s *Journal*. She didn’t have copies of the words of the songs for which she had noted tunes, but she promoted Helen’s book and sang illustrations from it. This is how she reported back to Helen on the good reception that Nova Scotian folksongs were receiving in EFDSS circles:

Then I went [to listen to a Bach concert and] who should I bump into on the way out but Maud Karpeles (I often meet her at London concerts). We chatted on the way out, and she asked me to have tea with her. So the indefatigable P[ink] L[ady] [Doreen’s nickname for her car] ambled off to Hampstead, where I had a very thrilling time comparing collecting notes with her – she showed me all Cecil Sharp’s manuscripts, and asked about our songs. We had a rare time. She exclaimed, on hearing that you were in town this summer, “but why on earth didn’t she look me up”. I explained, & she hopes you’ll see her next time you come. It happened that there was a members’ folk song evening at Cecil Sharp House on the day following. So she persuaded me to go along & tell some collecting incidents & sing some of our songs. I could only sing one of this year’s batch (The tree in the wood) because I couldn’t remember any more words, but I then explained your own achievements & sang several from your book, which aroused much interest. It was an interesting evening & I did wish you had been there. Maud Karpeles sang one of her Newfoundland songs set to music by Vaughan Williams which was beautiful. Another thing she did was to promise to look through our tunes, which she has done, & I send a copy of her letter... And I’m also sending Miss Gilchrist’s criticism of your Gaelic tunes, & Frank Howes’ fragmentary notes on the same... I think the report is rather encouraging.⁸

Doreen was back teaching in Halifax the next summer, but although she and Helen resumed their friendship and went over their collection together, evaluating the different items in the light of the feedback from the EFDSS ‘experts’, they did little or no collecting, mainly because Helen was preoccupied with caring for her sick mother. It was not until 1937 that the two women scheduled a much more extensive follow-up to their brief but productive field trip of 1933. By this time Helen had located a considerable number of new informants and had collected the words of some of their songs, but, as she recalled in *A Life in Folklore*, she had now decided to leave all the music to Doreen, “realizing that only an expert should transcribe it”.⁹

“Gigantic Effort” (1937)

Doreen arrived in Halifax at the beginning of July, and Helen immediately rushed her off to the community of Chezzetcook to meet Dennis Smith. A singer who decorated his melodies with multiple grace notes, he was not the easiest of informants to collect from, especially as he tended to mix his tunes if one followed another too quickly. Doreen’s

solution was to limit each session to a handful of songs; first time around she noted “Rochester City”, two Child ballads (# 4 “The Outlandish Knight” and # 46 “Captain Wedderburn’s Courtship”), and two of Helen’s favourite songs, “Peggy Gordon” and “Seven Long Years”, the latter one of the cluster of broadside ballads using the ‘broken ring’ motif. They also found John and Enos Roast at home, the latter contributing “Egg Rock Song” and the former “The Jovial Young Sailor” and “Banks of Newfoundland”. Walter Roast, the family member whom Helen regarded as one of her best and most reliable singers – she would employ him regularly in her CBC radio programs in 1938 and 1939 – happened to be out, but next day he came up with his own version of “The Bailiff’s Daughter” and five other songs, “The Carrion Crow”, “The Constant Farmer’s Son”, “Indian Song”, “Lovely Nancy” and “The Silvery Tide”.



Walter Roast [PANS HC Fonds Album 14: 14-28]

Another local resident, Tom Conrod of Woodside, came up with four songs: “The Jacket of Blue”, “Daniel Sullivan”, “Gypsy Song” and “Three Jovial Huntsmen”. Doreen’s second session with Dennis Smith produced new versions of “The Banks of Newfoundland” and “The Carrion Crow”, another sea song (“The Brig *Harmony*”), “Sweet Sunny South”, a striking *revenant* ballad (“Margaret and John”), and a

variant of Child # 20 “The Cruel Mother”. Before the two collectors left Chezzetcook he also remembered “Bonny Labouring Boy”. The only blank was drawn at the Hartlans, where Enos was found to have a bad cold and Richard was not at home. Despite this failure, Doreen had noted over two dozen melodies during her first two days back on the job. Moreover, in Dartmouth Mrs. R. W. Duncan, although shy at first, provided six songs: “Pretty Polly”, “The Saucy Sailor”, “The Harbour of Dundee”, “Caroline of Edinburgh Town”, “I’m a Stranger in This Counteree” and the ballad “He’s Young But He’s Daily Growing”.

The promised trip to Devil’s Island turned out to be less enjoyable for Doreen than had been anticipated. She found the place oppressive, and collecting there made her ill. Helen recalled the incident this way:

We went straight to Mr. Henneberry. I had words of nine songs for which I wanted his tunes, and we worked for two and a half hours. I could understand my friend having trouble with his voice because with his facial deformity he didn’t always hit the notes head on. Then I saw her face turn a sickly green and I said, “Are you all right?”. “No,” she replied, so I said cheerfully, “We’ll stop then and come some other day,” but she said, “If I don’t finish now I’ll never come back”...As soon as the last tune was on paper the two of us went to the lightkeeper’s dwelling [and Doreen] went on alone to the great rocks that protect the island’s shore. Here, after I’d had a welcome cup of tea, I found her facing the sea with the broad Atlantic before her and no sound but the breaking surf. The whole world seems shut out here and one feels completely remote. She was sobbing [and] one look showed that her raging headache was real. Half the island joined the procession to see us off and Ken slackened his speed for the return trip. Then the most remarkable thing happened. Once in Ken’s boat and away from the island she was herself again. We had gone out the short way from South East passage, and when we sat on the mainland hillside facing the island and opened our basket, she was jolly and carefree again and soon was even singing.¹⁰

Doreen explained that the island felt to her as if it harboured evil spirits and had been tainted by incest. She liked the Henneberrys and Faulkners and was a little ashamed of how she had reacted, to the extent of asking Helen not to reveal her name when describing the incident in her autobiography. But Helen, who had a keen interest (and belief) in the paranormal, subsequently discovered that Doreen’s experience was by no means unique among visitors to Devil’s Island. In the circumstances, it was amazing that she

managed to note nine tunes from Ben Henneberry, including “As I Roved Out”, “Jockey to the Fair”, “The Ram o’ Derby” and Child # 12, “Lord Randall”. The others were “The Gallant Huzzar”, “The Jolly Ploughboy”, “Jolly Roving Tar”, “One of the Nicest Young Men” and “The Tailor’s Hardship”. But she never returned to capture more of his extensive repertoire.

It was some compensation that Walter Roast was in when Helen and Doreen went back to Chezzetcook, and he sang them eight songs, including “Banks of the Nile” and “Ritcey’s Mill”. Doreen also noted three more songs from Dennis Smith: “George Riley”, “The Saucy Sailor” and “The Plains of Waterloo”. Another good singer that Helen was anxious Doreen should hear was Dennis Williams, who kept a store at Musquodoboit Harbour, a little further along the Eastern shore. His repertoire was varied, ranging from “The Honest Working Man” (a labour song that Helen would not see fit to include in *Traditional Songs from Nova Scotia*) to Child # 75 “Lord Lovel”. It included 18th C. lyrics (“Black Eyed Susan”) and Irish ditties (“Paddy”) as well as “The Alphabet Song” and the unusual “Frank Fidd”. Other members of the Williams clan had songs to offer too: Stanley Williams sang “Three Bold Huntsmen”, while George Williams contributed “Ann O’Brien” and “The *Flying Cloud*”.

On the way back to Dartmouth, the two collectors stopped off at Petpeswick and found Tom Young in fine form, anxious to regale them with “Peggy Bourne”, “Captain Wedderburn’s Courtship”, “Stormy Winds of Winter”, “Banks of Sweet Dundee”, “John Munro” and the haunting “Young Edmund of the Lowlands Low”. They also picked up one more song (“The Brown Girl”) from Dennis Smith, and during a later visit to Chezzetcook he also produced “Nancy”, “Sally” and “The Banks of Claudie”. Trying the Hartlans again later that week, Helen and Doreen found Enos recovered from his cold but enjoying a visit from his sister, Mrs. R. W. Duncan. Together they sang a version of Child # 53 “Lord Bateman” and then settled down to a song swapping session. On this occasion Mrs. Duncan contributed “The Cuckoo”, “The Bellyon’s Daughter” and “Johnny Gallagher” but the item that most excited her audience was a Child ballad (# 106), “The Famous Flower of Serving Men”. Helen reckoned it “a rare and definite discovery”.¹¹ Enos’ songs included “I’m going To Be Married On Monday Morning”, “The Bold Boatwain”, “Branded Lambs” and his *piece de resistance*, “When I Was in My Prime”. Helen was relieved to find that her

earlier transcription of this beautiful melody had been sufficiently accurate.

Doreen now had to concentrate her energies on teaching her Summer School on folk dancing. Back in Halifax, she was taken by Helen to meet Mrs. Annie Wallace, who came up with a local song, “We’re a Band of Nova Scotians”, and a number of items that greatly pleased her visitors: a version of “The Cherry Tree Carol”, a Robin Hood ballad, and two Child ballads, # 286 “The *Golden Vanity*” and the rarer # 73, “Lord Thomas and Fair Elleanor”.

Doreen’s transcription record next lists around twenty songs by a variety of informants, including Nicodemus Coolen, Dan Cleveland, Lionel Boutelier, Japhet Dauphinée, Rita Dorey and Dorothy Hyson, but it is not clear in which communities these informants were located or precisely when they were visited. They may have been residents of Dartmouth and Halifax. At any rate, the women among them seemed to know the most interesting songs. Rita Dorey, for example, sang a ballad about “The Wreck of the Titanic”, while Dorothy Hyson knew (among other songs) “Barbrew Allen” (*sic*), “Soldier, Soldier” and a local ballad about the Halifax Explosion of 1917. At weekends Doreen was free to go on short expeditions away from the metropolis. One informant visited around this time (early August) was Mr. A. E. Ettinger, who lived near the fishing village of Duncan’s Cove, and offered “William and Nancy” and “Janey of the Moor”.

The great discovery of 1937 was Catherine Scott, the wife of Edward Gallagher, the lighthouse keeper at Chebucto Head, whom the two women first visited on the 7th and 8th of August. Helen came to regard her as “the most delightful folk singer I have ever heard [with a voice that] is lovely and absolutely true.”¹² This is how she remembered the first collecting session with the Gallaghers:

Dear Mrs. Gallagher! How we grew to love her! That Saturday afternoon her floor had to be scrubbed so her house would be in order for possible Sunday visitors. She wanted to sing, and then did the thing most natural to her which was to sing while she scrubbed. This was her songs’ function in her life anyway, for they accompanied her housework. (Walter Roast sang as he ploughed and Ben Henneberry as he fished.) This is how we got “The Broken Ring”, a song which became the basis of a folk opera. Her voice was true, and like Dennis Smith, she could stop anywhere and pick her tune up again in the same key. With other singers, Doreen made frequent erasures. This wasn’t necessary here... Our real work began [after the children were in bed] as

Mrs. Gallagher recalled one gem after another. This was a happy home and a musical one. Mr. Gallagher played the accordion and mouth organ and in time the boys played musical instruments ...The weekend had given us eighteen new songs and variants of several already published in *Songs and Ballads from Nova Scotia*. Four were Child ballads, and Doreen considered at least ten of the eighteen publishable.¹³



Helen Creighton with Catherine Gallagher and family
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Mrs. Gallagher would prove to be one of Helen's more prolific informants as well as one of her finest singers, and she would be employed extensively in the CBC broadcasts of 1938 and 1939. The sister of another informant, Andrew Scott of Enfield, Catherine was of Scottish descent and had learned many of her songs from her mother, and she had taught school before getting married. Her repertoire was varied, and Doreen noted seventeen tunes from her that year. For Helen the highlights were a version of Child # 68 "Young Hunting", the pirate ballad "Henry Martin" (Child # 250), a Robin Hood ballad titled "The Bold Pedlar and Robin Hood" (Child # 132), and a comic ballad that sanctioned wife-beating, "The Wife Wrapped in Wether's Skin" (Child # 277). Broadside ballads included the "Broken Ring Song", the humorous "Quaker's Courtship", the naval ballad "*Chesapeake and Shannon*", "Brennan on the Moor", and "Well Sold the Cow", the tune of which particularly appealed to Doreen. "When Will Ye Gang Awa'" reflected Catherine's Scottish heritage, but Irish songs were actually more numerous, including "The Wild Irishman", "Paddy Backwards" and "The Courtship of Willie Riley". Since Catherine had young children it was hardly surprising that she also sang cumulative songs that could keep them amused or teach them things, such as "The Alphabet Song" and "The Tree in the Wood".

The next weekend the two collectors decided to explore the communities of Kinsac (north of Halifax), to look up singer William Nelson, and nearby Enfield (further up the road towards Truro), where Andrew Scott lived. Helen had already made the acquaintance of the Nelson family, as she related in *A Life in Folklore*:

[My] father was my companion [when] we drove to Kinsac to see Mr. William Nelson. We found a nice old couple but there had been a drowning accident in the village and they were grieving. I showed him my book of songs and decided to leave it with him for a little while hoping it would remind him of some he knew, and that by the time our picnic was over he might be inclined to sing. On our return we found he hadn't shaved for fear of missing us, and he'd been so engrossed in the book he had forgotten to smoke his pipe. He had been ill lately and the beginning wasn't encouraging, but he soon got used to us and slipped into real old time form with a variant of "Lady Isabel and the Elf Knight." The tune for this and also "The Three Ravens" sounded good, so we arranged a return trip on Saturday with Doreen. It proved a bad day because she had just put on her display of folk dancing at the summer school that Friday and was too tired to be enthusiastic over anything. As so often happened, an hour's rest beneath a sheltering tree revived her.¹⁴

Tired or not, Doreen did what Helen wanted, and William Nelson obligingly sang four Child ballads: "The Three Crows" (# 26), "Lady Isabel and the Elf Knight" (# 4), "Sir James the Ross" (# 213) and "Barbery Ellen" (# 84). He also offered "The Railroad Song", "The Hanover Mills" and "Down By Yon Rocky Shore". The next day the two collectors found Andrew Scott at the Renfrew Gold Mine near Enfield, and he sang "Johnny Riley" for them, as well as two Child ballads about battles at sea, "The Golden Vanity" (# 286) and "Henry Martin" (# 250). Another informant located at Enfield was John C. Horne, who offered three songs: "Death on the Humber", "William and Nancy" and "Lovely Nancy", although Doreen preferred Walter Roast's tune for the latter item.

By the end of the next week Doreen was free of teaching responsibilities and she had five days available for further collecting before sailing back to England. She and Helen headed back to South East Passage, where they found Mrs. Osbourne and Mrs. Duncan. Doreen was impressed by the former's rendition of "The Company Dressed in Green", a variant of Child # 221 ("Katharine Jaffray"), and was able to note the latter's version of "The Cruel Mother" (Child # 20). Mrs. Duncan also contributed

“As I Rode Out”, and a local song that she said had been made up about sixty years ago, “The Dave Hartlan Song”. The composer, now eighty years old, lived in the next village, Eastern Passage, and was prevailed on to sing for the women; he offered “O Early Early in the Spring”. On this occasion the elusive Richard Hartlan was at home, and Doreen noted three items from him: “As I Rambled Out”, “The Tender Mothers”, and “The Merry Green Fields”, a variant of Child # 49 (“The Twa Brothers”).

The next two days were spent at Chezzetcook, where the Smiths and the Roasts lived. Dennis Smith remembered “Pretty Polly” and “The Trial of Willie Riley” on this occasion, and before Doreen left Nova Scotia he would also contribute four more items: “O So Well I Do Remember”, “Willie”, “Paul Jones”, and a version of Child # 53 “Lord Bateman”. He couldn’t recall all the words of this long ballad, but Doreen liked his tune. Walter Roast sang “Pretty Polly” (a variant of “Polly Oliver”) to a melody that Doreen ranked highly, and she was also taken with the pretty Irish love song “Sweet Erin Go Bragh”. But it was John Roast who was most in the mood to sing, offering “The City of Boston”, “The Crocodile Song”, “Kate”, “The Wreck of the *John Harvey*”, and Child # 20 “The Cruel Mother”.

Leaving the coastal communities that had proven their best song-hunting grounds, Helen and Doreen next drove north-eastwards along the Atlantic coastline, getting as far as Owl’s Head Harbour before deciding to turn back in order to spend the night at Musquodoboit Harbour. Owl’s Head was the furthest east they would reach on this collecting trip, and they found only one informant there, sailor George May, who contributed three new songs, “The Quays of Belfast”, “Danna’s Banks” and “The Seizure of the *E. J. Horton*”, which Doreen characterized as a “local rollicking sea song”. Back at the Musquodoboit store Dennis Williams sang “No Sir, No Sir”. Next day it was time to begin heading back towards Halifax, but a stop off in Petpeswick found two of the Young family happy as always to offer a few more songs. Tom Young sang “The Wreck of the *Atlantic*” and “The Storm” (Doreen dismissed the latter as “not folk”), and Garvie Young came up with “Jack Tar” and “Kate O’Brien”. On August 25th Doreen made her last tune transcriptions, among them four songs from a new informant, Phillip Warner, who sang “Freemason’s Song”, “The Girl I Left Behind Me”, “The Wreck of the *Dorcas*” and “Young Sailor Bold”. It was the end of the longest period of close collaboration between Doreen and Helen, and they had reason to be satisfied with their

efforts. Concluding, with reason, that they had enough new songs for a book-length sequel to Helen’s *Songs and Ballads from Nova Scotia*, Helen drew up an alphabetical master-list of all the items that they had collected together, as well as songs for which she had obtained words but for which tunes were still lacking. The plan was obvious: Doreen should return as soon as possible in order to note the missing tunes, after which they would jointly decide which items to include and which to leave out. In the meantime, Doreen would begin the search for an English publisher.

On the voyage back to England Doreen found that Douglas Kennedy, Director of the English Folk Dance & Song Society, was a fellow passenger, and she showed him some of the best tunes that she had collected. He was enthusiastic, and suggested publication in the *Journal of the EFDSS*. Doreen, however, was more interested in a commercial publisher who would pay royalties. But she was hampered by the fact that Helen had neglected to give her the lyrics of all the songs that they had earmarked. A few weeks later she reported on her progress, sent Helen fair copies of the tunes, and pointed out that she was still waiting for the words:

Douglas [Kennedy] loves the songs I croaked to him on board: he says they are truly beautiful & well worthy of publication. I rang Maud Karpeles the other night, found her head over heels in work, but she’s promised to give me the first free evening she has...I hear, though, that O.U.P. has spent a lot on the Newfoundland collection & may not be disposed to do any more at present. Still, there is always Curwen, where I have a pull...But I did find time to make a list of such words as I hadn’t got, & mark the most important ones. I must still go to Maud with several of your best songs incomplete, but you will see from the list which are the most urgent. PLEASE let me have them soon...Will write when there’s more to report; meanwhile think of me struggling with a job & doing my best to get our songs out to the world in my few spare moments....¹⁵

Although Doreen and Helen were the best of friends and the tone of their correspondence was warm, reading between the lines one can nonetheless sense a few differences in perspective that would later cause trouble between them. The songs, for example, were sometimes referred to by Doreen as “ours” and sometimes as “yours”, which suggested a degree of ambiguity concerning Doreen’s status as a full partner in the enterprise and also a certain possessiveness on Helen’s part about items that she had initially found on her own. Doreen, moreover, was evidently more inclined to defer to Maud

Young Hunting

Anon
Catherine Gallagher

The la - dy stood in her bo - wer door, In her
bow - er door stood she. She thought she heard a
bri - dle ring, Which filled her heart with glee, glee, Which
filled he heart with glee.

The lady stood in her bower door,
In her bower door stood she,
She thought she heard a bridle ring,
Which filled her heart with glee, glee,
Which filled her heart with glee.

“Will you alight, fair lord?” she said,
“And stay with me this night?
I’ll give you bed, I’ll give you board,
Charcoal and candle light, light,
Charcoal and candle light.”

“I’ll not alight, fair lady,” he said,
“And stay with you alone,
For I have a far better bride than you
To enjoy when I go home, home,
To enjoy when I go home.”

Learning over his saddle girth
To kiss her ruby lips,
She had a penknife in her hand,
She wounded him full deep, deep,
She wounded him full deep.

“Why wounds’t me, fair lady?” he said,
Why wounds’t me full sore?
There’s not a lord in fair Scotland
Loves thee, false lady, more, more,
Loves thee, false lady, more.”

“Oh, can you ride, fair lord,” she said,
Can you ride under the moon?
For there’s a doctor in yonder town
Can cure your mortal wound, wound,
Can cure your mortal wound.”

“I cannot ride, false lady,” he said,
“I cannot ride under the moon,
And there’s not a doctor in all of the world
Can cure, but God alone, alone,
Can cure but God alone.”

She called up her waiting maids,
Three hours before t’was day,
Saying, “There’s a dead man in my room,
I wish he was away, away,
I wish he was away.”

Some took him by the golden hair,
Some took him by the feet,
They threw him in a deep, deep well,
Full thirty fathoms deep, deep,
Full thirty fathoms deep.

Then up and flew a little bird
And sat upon a tree,
Saying, “Go home, go home, you false lady,
And pay your maids their fee, fee,
And pay your maids their fee.”

“Come down, come down, you pretty bird,
 And sit upon my knee,
 For I have a golden cage at home,
 I will bestow on thee, thee,
 I will bestow on thee.

“If I had a bow all in my hand,
 And an arrow to a string,
 I’d shoot you through the very heart
 Amongst the leaves so green, green,
 Amongst the leaves so green.”

“I will not come down,” said the little bird,
 “Or sit upon your knee,
 For you’ll take my sweet life away,
 Like the lord that loved thee, thee,
 Like the lord that loved thee.”

“And if you had a bow all in your hand,
 And arrow to a string,
 I would take to flight, away I’d fly,
 And never more be seen, seen,
 And never more be seen.”

Geordie

Anon
 John Bray

As I went ov - er Lon - don Bridge, T'was
 in the morn - ing ear - ly, And there I met a
 fair la - dy, La - ment - ing for her Geor - die.

As I went over London Bridge, t'was in the morning early,
 And there I met a fair lady, lamenting for her Geordie.

I stepped up to this fair young one, saying “Where are you going so early?”
 “I’m going to my good lord judge,” she cried, “to plead for the life of Geordie.”

The judge looked over his right shoulder and said to this fair lady,
 “Fair lady, fair lady, you come too late, your Geordie is condemned for ever.”

“Has my Geordie been robbing all along, or has he wounded any?”
 “Oh no, but he stole three of the king’s gold rings, and sold them in Virginy.”

“Then my Geordie shall be hung with a golden chain, these chains they are not many,
 For he was born of royal blood, and courted by a loyal lady.”

“Then my Geordie shall be buried in a marble tomb, such tombs there are not many,
 For he was born of noble blood, and courted by a loyal lady.”

Karpeles' opinions on the quality of individual items than was Helen, and she apparently believed that the planned book should include piano arrangements that she was eager to compose herself. In short, she was thinking of a songbook along the lines of Karpeles' 1934 publication *Folk Music from Newfoundland*,¹⁶ which utilized arrangements by Vaughan Williams and others, rather than Helen's *Songs and Ballads from Nova Scotia*, which provided only melody lines but a far greater number of songs.

Coda (1939)

Buoyed by her success in persuading the CBC to air a radio series featuring Nova Scotia folksongs, Helen had eagerly anticipated working with Doreen again in 1938 to round up the tunes still listed as missing on her master-list. She was disappointed to learn that Doreen, who was busy with her job as a music teacher, would not be coming over that summer, but she nonetheless enlisted her as composer of string quartet arrangements to be used in the "Folk Songs from Nova Scotia" broadcasts. Doreen was again employed as an arranger in the second (1939) radio series, but by March of 1939 Helen was getting impatient about her lack of progress in finding a publisher for the collection. It is evident from Doreen's reply that Helen was anxiously counting on royalty payments from the projected publication, whereas Doreen was having difficulty fitting the project into a busy schedule:

Don't make it sound worse than it need be – it won't be two years till next September, & who knows, they may be out by then! I'm just as disappointed as you, but I have about 8 hours a week at my disposal for work on the tunes (& not always that!), so what seems a lengthy eternity to you is not so to me, in actual terms of working time at our affairs. I know it must be difficult for you to imagine the life of a person who is absolutely absorbed by work from 8 a.m. until 6 p.m., with lots left to do in the evening. But that's me, nevertheless! Thank goodness the work for these broadcasts, being mostly on songs, will help my growing pile to be submitted to the publishers, instead of hindering it, as the quartets did. But if you lose upon the roundabouts of time you may pick up on the swings of cash, because if I hadn't been able to tackle the settings you'd have had to pay very heavily to get them done - & you know what its like when royalties are just "credited to your account!"...It disturbs me just a little when you obviously rely on the sale of our volume to secure your financial position! Do bear in mind that Folk songs have a very limited appeal, & I've never heard of anyone making a fortune over them, not even the Sharps! And if

you remember, the Newfoundland collection hung fire for quite a time. I laugh at your "floor scrubbing" fear; I guess I'm nearer that than you – I, who have no money or business in the family at all, & a "luxury" job which is the first to be curtailed when times are bad!...How peaceful the songs are!..I have realized that as I have to do "When I was in my prime" for our book I may as well do it for the broadcast – but you have Miss Spooner's version to fall back on in case mine miscarries.¹⁷

Although it came close to the wire, Doreen's arrangements did arrive in time for use in "Folk Songs from Nova Scotia", and she also returned to Halifax that July to run the folk dancing summer school for what turned out to be the last time.

There was no opportunity for any collecting before the school began, and Doreen only managed to get out to Chezzetcook on one weekend during the time that she was teaching. On that occasion she noted "I Will Give My Love an Apple" from Dennis Smith and "All Around My Hat" from Mr. & Mrs. Tom Young. However, it was not until August 13th that Helen's and Doreen's fourth – and last – joint collecting expedition began in earnest with a visit to Mrs. Duncan. She was in good voice, and offered her own version of "All Around My Hat", followed by "Seventeen Come Sunday" and "When a Man's in Love". She also sang "William and Mary", "The Crockery Ware" and a shorter song on the theme of "Lord Bateman" titled "The Turkish Rover". The next day the two women were off to the lighthouse at Chebucto Head to see another of their favourite female informants, Catherine Gallagher. This was the last time that Doreen noted tunes from Catherine and they had a long and productive session. The nine items included melodies for Child # 20 "The Cruel Mother" and for one of the most poetic of all political broadsides, "The Bonny Bunch of Roses O". Catherine also sang another broadside ballad dating from the Napoleonic Wars, "The Plains of Waterloo", and her other songs included "Reilly the Fisherman", "The Miller of Derbyshire", and "I'm going to be Married", as well as her favourite cumulative song "The Tree in the Bog".

The question now facing the two collectors was how to best use Doreen's remaining time in Nova Scotia. Should they go back to the communities along the Atlantic coast, or should they try another area entirely? Doreen was eager to see parts of Nova Scotia that she had never visited, so they headed north to try their luck along the southern shore of the Minas Basin, at the eastern end of the Bay of Fundy. Initially the gamble did not seem to have paid off but their luck changed on the 17th August. First they

picked up a version of Child # 213 “Sir James the Ross” from Oswald Gorman, and then found a singing family, the Sanfords, in the fishing community of East Walton. Lawson Sanford knew a good variant of Child # 53 “Lord Bateman”, with a tune that Doreen enthusiastically declared to be the “best yet”, but it was Lloyd Sanford who really made their day. He was an excellent singer who was adept at remembering tunes even when almost all the words escaped him, as was the case with “The Miracle Flower”, a melody that Doreen loved. He also knew three Child ballads, two of which (# 84 “Barbery Allen” and # 4 “Lady Isabel and the Elf Knight”) were common in Nova Scotia but the third, # 17 “Hind Horn”, Helen regarded as more of a rarity. Lloyd’s repertoire also included “The Gay Spanish Maid” and such Irish songs as “The Mantle of Green”.

Unfortunately no other informant located by Helen and Doreen on this trip proved to have such a store of the kind of material they were looking for. They drove to Truro and then along on the north shore of Minas Basin. From Captain Edward Patterson of Five Islands they collected “Lady Le Roy” but that was the only melody Doreen noted that day. On August 20th the two women continued westwards along the coast towards Parrsboro, and at Moose River they found Mrs. Laura Dow. She gave them four songs: “Lady Isabel”, “The Lass of Mohee”, “Rogers the Miller” and “Canady”. It hadn’t been planned that way, but these were the last tunes that Doreen ever noted in Nova Scotia. Word reached her that evening that war was imminent in Europe and that English nationals had been advised to take the first available boat home before marine traffic on the Atlantic became subject to attacks from German U-boats. Doreen immediately cut short her stay in Canada, and it would be two decades before she and Helen would meet again.

Wartime (1940)

Back in England, Doreen now had two goals: to demonstrate to the English Folk Dance & Song Society that the quality of the tunes she had collected in Nova Scotia rivaled those that Maud Karpeles had found in Newfoundland, and to find a publisher for a selection of those tunes, in piano arrangements that she had composed. Her friendship with the Kennedy family made the first of these aims relatively easy to accomplish, but it was February 1940 before the opportunity presented itself. An evening gathering was arranged at Cecil Sharp House at which Doreen would first talk about her experiences collecting in

Canada and would then perform some of the songs. Very happy about the way the evening turned out, Doreen reported enthusiastically to Helen how she had handled her presentation.

The audience was small, but very select and discriminating. Douglas and Helen Kennedy were there, & Maud Karpeles, Major & Mrs Ney, Engel Lund & her accompanist Rauter, Jean Stirling Mackinlay, Frank Howes (of the ‘Times’ & editor of the E.F.D.S. News) & lots of lesser lights of the E.F.D.S., but all people who know good from bad, & are not likely to bestow praise lightly... Douglas introduced me, referring lightly to our return trip together on the ‘Empress’ in 1937 - & we were off. I spoke first of Mr. Kennedy’s responsibility for my being “in” on these songs, and then proceeded to tell the story of your early collecting, & the struggles you had & the difficulties you overcame & your enthusiasm & refusal to be beaten by anything, till finally your book came out in 1932, just as I got there. Then I told of how, amongst much that was ‘late folk’ there were several gems in your book – 3 of which they were to hear later. I told them how complete your knowledge of the origin of the words was, & of how you worked in Toronto. Then I made them laugh by telling how skeptical you were when I proposed trying to take down tunes – but how you accepted me as a traveling companion; I then admitted that I had no idea myself whether I could do it!

Then I went on to tell of our work together – taking incidents from the first 3 years which I thought would interest them. Then I spoke of our gigantic effort in 1937, & of Mrs Gallagher, Walter Roast & Dennis. They laughed when I described our adventures with the foghorn, & I made Eve stand up & sing them just a fragment of “Chesapeake & Shannon”. Then I told of Walter Roast & his “Bailiff’s Daughter”, of which Eve sang some verses (unaccompanied), & then I tried to give them a picture of Dennis Smith’s home, & told of his love for “Peggy Gordon” & made Eve sing some of it. My dear, I just don’t seem able to write a good accompaniment for that!! I hate the one I wrote chez-toi, but I’ll go on trying. Then I summed up our achievements to that date, & referred back to my enthusiasm aboard the “Empress”. There wasn’t much to say about 1939, except the senseless frustration of having to abandon everything to come home. But I left them with the picture of that lovely evening at Enos Hartlan’s which will always be a perfect memory to me.¹⁸

The recital during the second half of the evening, shared by Doreen and her friend Eve Maxwell-Lyte (who in England had pioneered performing material from Helen’s *Songs and Ballads from Nova Scotia*),

also went very well. They sang twelve songs, of which Doreen judged “I’m Going to be Married”, “Well Sold the Cow”, “When I Was In My Prime”, “The Kangaroo”, “Margaret & John” and “Tree in the Bog” were those best liked by the audience.

Professional singer Engel Lund, one of the audience at the recital, promised to use her influence to help Doreen in the search for a publisher, as did Douglas Kennedy. Doreen had high hopes that either Oxford University Press or Curwen would take her manuscript but in the event she had to settle for music publishing firm Novello, which specialized in selling folksong arrangements for use in British elementary schools. This dictated the nature and format of the songbook: a small number of songs printed in large type for the ease of pianists, and no room for scholarly notes about the texts. *Twelve Folk Songs from Nova Scotia* was published just before Christmas 1940, and when Helen received her copy early the next year she must have had mixed feelings about the book. Her name was prominently displayed on the cover as co-collector of the songs, and she had been permitted to contribute a one-page introduction, but the number of songs was meagre and she had reservations about the need for packaging them in this manner. She consoled herself with the notion that this would be only the first in a series of songbooks of Nova Scotia songs that Novello would be bringing out, but in this hope she was to be disappointed. Helen’s brief introduction to the volume is nonetheless of some interest, as it captures in a paragraph her overall perspective at the time on Nova Scotia and its folksongs:

That Nova Scotia has a great wealth of material is a fact I have proved beyond a doubt during ten years devoted to the collecting of folk songs in this province. Along her coastline and scattered through her thickly wooded valleys there still live people who are more or less isolated for the greater part of the year. Radio has, of course, penetrated nearly everywhere, making entertainment for those who were once accustomed to make their own, and the coming generation will learn other songs than the traditional ones their fathers knew. To-day, however, there still remain many of the old-time singers, and from them are yet to be gathered song treasures of inestimable value. These singers are faithful to tradition in both words and music, and regard their songs as something very precious. They are glad to share them with us, because they sense very quickly that we who collect love them as much as they do; indeed it is often pathetic to see how eager they are for their favourite songs to be considered valuable, not because their preservation means any material benefit to the singers, but because it gives them a

feeling of pride to realize that they can contribute something to the world of literature and music. Men like our singers have no use for modern songs, which Mr. Enos Hartlan scornfully calls “a jumble of words with no sense to ‘em.” He wants a story when he sings, and he wants it sung to a folk tune. There are excellent French and Gaelic songs in Nova Scotia, but in this volume we are concerned only with the English tongue. You will find the subject matter varied.¹⁹

The twelve songs did display some of the range of material that Helen had discovered, and they drew upon the repertoires of many of her favourite informants. The book opened with Catherine Gallagher’s “The Broken Ring”, followed by three Canadian variants of Child ballads: “The Cruel Mother” (# 20), “The Farmer’s Curst Wife” (# 278) and “Geordie” (# 209). The first two of these were composites, derived primarily from the singing of Ben Henneberry, while “Geordie” had been collected from John Bray of Glencoe, Cape Breton. Henneberry was also the source for “Henery”, a variant of Child # 12 (“Lord Randall”), while both he and Catherine Gallagher had contributed versions of the broadside ballad “Well Sold the Cow”, which Helen regarded as a “peasants’ song”.

The singing community of East Chezzetcook was represented by Walter Roast’s “The Kangaroo” (aka “The Carrion Crow”), which Helen characterized as a children’s song, and by Dennis Smith’s “Margaret and John”. The latter, a *revenant* ballad which Helen saw as a variant of “The Grey Cock” (Child # 248), also incorporated elements from Child # 255 (“Willie’s Fatal Visit”), and had a marked resemblance to a ballad collected by Maud Karpeles in Newfoundland, “The Lover’s Ghost”. The Hartlan family of South East Passage was also well represented, with Richard Hartlan’s “Green Bushes” and Enos Hartlan’s “I’m Going to Get Married” and “When I Was In My Prime”. Perhaps the most surprising omission from this attempt to pick the very best of the songs collected jointly by Helen and Doreen was Dennis Smith’s “Peggy Gordon”, which was rejected in favour of the cumulative song, “The Tree in the Bog”, a decision probably made with Novello’s marketing strategy of aiming the songbook at elementary school teachers in mind.

Later Publications (1950-51)

World War II, during which Doreen served as a paramedic in the Ambulance Service, kept the two women apart, and communications were difficult.

Margaret and John

Anon
Dennis Smith

The image shows a musical score for the song 'Margaret and John'. It consists of three staves of music in a treble clef, with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a time signature of 4/4. The lyrics are written below the notes. The first staff begins with a rest, followed by the lyrics 'As I rode out one evening, the moon it shined clearly, And I'. The second staff continues with 'heard a fair damsel complain, She was crying for her mammy and la-'. The third staff concludes with 'menting for her daddy, And complaining for her true lover John.'

As I rode out one evening the moon it shined clearly,
And I heard a fair damsel complain;
She was crying for her mammy and lamenting for her daddy,
And complaining for her true lover John.

Oh Johnny he came when he was not expected,
And he knocked at the bedroom so loud,
And it's up this fair one rose and it's to the door she goes,
It's all to let her true lover in.

"Oh Johnny, dear Johnny, you told me that you'd meet me,
You have stayed full an hour too long,
For what has delayed you, for there's something has detained you,
For I'm weary of wandering alone."

He took her in his arms and he gave her many kisses,
And these words unto her he did say,
"Oh, if I had my wishes, my dearest, dearest dear,
This long night would never become day."

"Where is your down bed, dear Marg'ret?" he cries,
"And where is your white holland sheet?
And where are those waiting maids that used to wait upon you,
Every night when you lie down to sleep?"

"The grave is my down bed, dear Johnny," she cries,
And the linen is my white holland sheet,
And the night larks and worms they are my waiting servants,
For to feed on me whilst I'm asleep."

"Oh pretty little cockerel, you very handsome cockerel,
Don't you crow before day,
For your comb shall be gilded with the very best of gold,
And your wings of the silver so gay."

The cock he proved false, so very, very false, oh,
 And he crowed full an hour too soon,
 And she sent her love away, before that it was day,
 And it proved to be the light of the moon.

Peggy Gordon

Dennis Smith

Oh, Peg - gy Gor - don, you are my dar - ling, Come sit you
 down..... all on my knee. And tell to me..... the ve - ry
 rea - son, Why I am slight - ed so by thee.

Oh Peggy Gordon, you are my darling,
 Come sit you down all on my knee,
 And tell to me the very reason
 Why I am slighted so by thee.

The sea is deep, I cannot wade it,
 Neither have I got wings to fly,
 But I wish I had some jolly boatman
 To ferry over my love and I.

I'm deep in love but I dare not show it,
 My heart lies smothered all in my breast,
 It's not for you to let the whole world know it,
 A troubled mind that has no rest.

I will go down to some lonesome valley
 Where no womankind is ever to be found,
 Where the pretty little birds do change their voices
 And every moment a different sound.

I laid my head on a cask of brandy
 Which was my fancy I do declare,
 For while I'm drinking, I'm always thinking
 How I'm to gain that lady fair.

I wish I was as far as Ingo
 Way out across the briny sea,
 A-sailing over the deep blue water
 Where love nor care never trouble me.

I leaned my back against an oak tree,
 Thinking it was a trusty tree,
 Then first it bent and then it broke,
 And that's the way my love served me.

I wish I was in Spencervania
 Where the marble stones are black as ink,
 Where the pretty little girls they do adore me,
 I'll sing no more till I get a drink.

I wish my love was one red rosy
 A-planted down on yonder wall,
 And I myself could be a dewdrop
 That in her bosom I might fall.

I wish I was in Cupid's castle
 And my true love along with me,
 Oh Peggy Gordon, you are my darling,
 Oh Peggy Gordon, I'd die for thee.

Doreen had promised to return to Nova Scotia after the war, but she did not do so. She resumed her pre-war career as a music teacher, and later became Music Advisor for the County of Devon, living for a time in the city of Exeter. She maintained her membership of the English Folk Dance & Song Society, and in the late '40s decided to make a contribution to the Society's *Journal*.

Titled "Folk Songs Collected in the province of Nova Scotia, Canada, by Doreen H. Senior and Helen Creighton", Doreen's article was probably written before the publication of *Traditional Songs from Nova Scotia*, although it actually appeared in print the year afterwards. The piece consisted mainly of song transcriptions. There were two variants of "Captain Wedderburn's Courtship" (Child # 46), as sung in 1937 by Tom Young in Petpeswick and by Dennis Smith in Chezzetcook. They were followed by Mrs. Duncan's version of "He's Young, but He's Daily A-Growing", and two variants of "The Bailiff's Daughter of Waterford Town" (Child # 105) collected from Thomas Young in 1933 and from Walter Roast (Chezzetcook) in 1937. The article concluded with John Roast's account of "The Jovial Young Sailor" (Chezzetcook, 1937) and the tune for "The Miracle Flower" remembered by Lloyd Sanford in East Walton in 1939. Doreen provided brief commentaries on the songs, and they were also annotated by various members of the *Journal's* editorial board, including Annie Gilchrist, Pat Shuldham-Shaw and Ralph Vaughan Williams.

Helen, meanwhile, had made contact with the elite of American folklorists at the Indiana University Institute of Folklore summer school in 1942, visited the folklore archives at the Library of Congress, and made a variety of disc recordings for Alan Lomax that included a considerable number of traditional songs. After the war she turned herself into a quasi-academic folklorist, and for a while concentrated on collecting customs and folk tales. In 1947 she obtained a contract as a freelance fieldworker for the National Museum, which published her *Folklore of Lunenburg County* three years later. Nonetheless, she had not abandoned work on the large corpus of songs that she and Doreen had collected between 1932 and 1939. From her point of view *Twelve Folk Songs from Nova Scotia* was legitimate in its own way, but it was not what she had hoped for, and if it was to be a one shot deal with Novello, then something else had to be done. Doreen was apparently no longer pursuing English publishers with any degree of energy and commitment, so perhaps the solution was a Canadian one. In any case, Helen had a different kind of book in mind, one that roughly followed the

format of *Songs and Ballads from Nova Scotia* and would not include piano arrangements of the songs. She took advantage of Doreen's preoccupation with her job in Devon to plan and execute a book-length publication along the lines that she preferred. The result was *Traditional Songs from Nova Scotia*, published by Ryerson in 1950.

Doreen had known Helen was working on the project but in the summer of 1950 she had no idea that it was so near completion. In October of that year she received a copy in the mail from the publisher, followed by a letter from Helen. Although her name appeared on the cover as the co-collector of the contents, Doreen was understandably surprised and very disappointed not to have been involved as music editor. Moreover, she detected certain mistakes in the tune transcriptions and was annoyed that Helen had even failed to permit her to proof the melodies that she had noted. Although she appreciated the book's virtues, her letter to Helen indicates that she felt it contained significant musical inaccuracies and for that reason was seriously flawed:

Your letter has just come. I took time to examine the book before replying and it is as well I did! I realized before I had got very far that you can never have had a very important letter I sent in 1940, while I was busy with the Novello book. In it I asked you to substitute the time signature 3/2 in certain songs for 6/4, if the latter appeared on your copy...I thought I remembered you to have written to say you received that letter but I was evidently wrong, for there they are with their 6/4 time signatures in the new book! But if only you had consulted me at all about the tunes you were using, or, better still, sent me the proofs to correct, all would still have been well. WHY didn't you? – I was expecting the proofs and when 3 printed copies emerged from your parcel I was flabbergasted. I hope sincerely that you will understand when I say that I feel I have reasonable grounds for grumbling at not being allowed to correct proofs of a book that bears my name, and also that I feel most emphatically that I cannot accept full responsibility for errors I was given no chance to eradicate. Who did correct the music proofs? If someone from Ryerson, he ought to have spotted the errors at once if he knew his job. If you did it I would hardly expect you to see it, but neither do I think you should have undertaken the task unaided. If anybody else undertook it they weren't of much use to you!...I blame myself very much for not having asked you to let me co-operate when I knew a book was projected, but it simply never occurred to me that you wouldn't ask me! I know I put out the Novello book on my own responsibility, but in 1940 it was impossible to send proofs across the Atlantic. There is no such difficulty now!²⁰

Doreen followed this legitimate complaint with a bitter-sweet evaluation of the book as a whole:

I want you to believe me when I say how deeply distressed I am at not being able to send unqualified praise, realizing as I do the immense amount of work you have put into the production, and your generosity in sharing the honours with me. But I must say what is in my heart and what I feel to be true. I think the binding, the layout, the type and the printing of the musical notation are all excellent, and your notes most complete. The book would have had twice the value in a library if there had been as full notes on the music as on the text, and these I could have supplied had you asked for them. Oh dear – I wish I had pushed myself forward a bit more, but I honestly thought you would ask for my help in matters musical. I am trying to convey my feelings to you and I hope you will not take offence. I am not handing out blame – if I did I must hand some to myself. But do let us put things right if we can, and everyone will respect us for it. It is most important that the complete Errata should reach all Folk Song experts to whom the book may have been sent. I will myself correct the copy which will go into the Cecil Sharp House Library.²¹

In the context of the entire work, the errors that Doreen had detected were relatively minor, but her pride had been wounded, and she had good grounds for thinking that Helen had treated her rather shabbily. She was also correct in thinking that the book would have been improved had it included notes on the tunes as well as on the texts.

The way that Helen organized *Traditional Songs* was interesting, and, as Doreen recognized, she had obviously put considerable thought into it, although she did not spell out the rationale behind her categories or discuss them in the book's rather brief introduction. Conveniently, she began with Child ballads, including them in the same order as they appeared in *English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, and, with one exception (Child # 289 "The Mermaid") listing their Child numbers. This made it possible to see at a glance which of the privileged 305 had been found in Nova Scotia: in fact there were thirty-seven.

Helen then printed her versions of seven ballads rejected (or not known) by Child. These she considered sufficiently traditional to stand out from the much larger number of broadside ballads that her informants had sung. Some were loosely related to Child ballads although in Helen's opinion insufficiently close to be counted as variants. The seven were "He's Young but He's Daily Growing",

"Gallows", "The Bold Fisherman", "The Ship's Carpenter", "The Three Jovial Huntsmen", "Turkish Rover" and "The Wealthy London Prentice".

Following these elite items, Helen placed in alphabetical order fifty-five broadside ballads and other lyrics, beginning with "All Around My Hat" and ending with "Young Edmund of the Lowlands". This category included many of the favourite items offered by her singing friends at South East Passage, Devil's Island, Chebucto Head, Petpeswick, Chezzetcook and Musquodoboit Harbour, and it included, to name just a few, such songs as "As I Rode Out" (a version of "Banks of the Sweet Primroses"), "Broken Ring Song" (aka "Seven Long Years"), "The Brown Girl" (aka "When First To This Country"), "The Cuckoo", "Dark Eyed Sailor", "I'll Give My Love an Apple", "Lost Jimmie Whalen" and "Peggy Gordon".

Helen's next category was sea songs, and they included "The *Flying Cloud*", "The Banks of Newfoundland", "Stormy Weather Boys" and "Spanish Ladies". Curiously, though, Helen separated from these such other marine ballads as "*Chesapeake* and *Shannon*" and "The Stately *Southerner*", presumably because she counted the latter as local creations whereas the former were foreign in origin. Three miscellaneous broadsides ("The Miller of Derbyshire", "Brennan on the Moor" and "Well Sold the Cow") comprised a small category of their own, followed by a rather large number of comic songs and children's songs, everything from "Paddy Backwards" and "The Derby Ram" to "The Wild Man of Borneo" and "Here Comes a Duke A-Riding". The last group of songs was religious in nature, consisting of four carols and spirituals, but before it came six items that Helen obviously considered local creations. Apart from the two sea songs mentioned earlier these included two lumbering songs ("The Jam at Gerry's Rock" and "Shantyman's Life") as well as the "Nova Scotia Song" (aka "Farewell to Nova Scotia").

Despite its faults and idiosyncracies, *Traditional Songs* was an impressive publication, and it vindicated Helen's newly won status as a folklore scholar. Rather than creating composite Nova Scotia versions of traditional ballads, she printed many of the individual variants that she and Doreen collected, ascribing each to the appropriate source singer, although, regrettably, failing to include the date of collection along with the place. Moreover, she did a conscientious job of referencing other variants of the song texts in over two dozen British, Canadian and American collections, going back in time beyond

Child to Joseph Ritson's *Ancient Songs and Ballads*. As might be expected, she was familiar with the most relevant Canadian collections by Mackenzie, Karpeles, and Greenleaf and Mansfield, but she also had a comprehensive knowledge of the numerous American collections that had appeared since Sharp's *English Folk Songs from the Southern Appalachians*. These included works by Barry, Belden, Cox, Davis, Eckstorm and Smyth, Fuson, Gardner and Chickering, Gray, Hudson, Linscott, Neely, Pound, Scarborough, and Reed Smith. Her knowledge of British sources was less systematic (Baring-Gould, Broadwood, Kidson and Sharp were all conspicuous by their absence from her bibliography), but she included John Ord as well as multiple volumes of the *Journal of the Folk-Song Society*. The book was thus a pioneering work of Canadian folksong scholarship, and it is evident that Kenneth Peacock, among others, learned much from it.

If Doreen still had in the back of her mind the idea of returning to Nova Scotia and again collaborating with Helen, their quarrel over *Traditional Songs* put an end to the possibility. In any case, the truth was that Helen no longer needed Doreen: she had a tape-recorder instead, and subsequently received a Canada Council grant to employ Kenneth Peacock to transcribe many of the songs that she had recorded with it. Nonetheless, she still regarded Doreen with gratitude and affection, and the two women kept in touch, albeit episodically. They did meet once more, when Helen visited Doreen in Devon in August 1959, and they resumed their friendship, although they would never again be as close as they had been during the 1930s. Despite Doreen's reservations about the time signatures of some tunes, *Traditional Songs from Nova Scotia* remains an enduring monument to their work together. Because of the high quality and variety of its contents combined with the accuracy and clarity of Doreen's tune transcriptions, it is arguably still the single best collection of Nova Scotian folksongs.

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Notes

¹ Helen Creighton, *A Life in Folklore*, 65-66.

Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1975.

² *A Life in Folklore*, 66.

³ Helen Creighton to Marius Barbeau, 28th September, 1932. *Helen Creighton Fonds*, Public Archives of Nova Scotia (PANS).

⁴ *A Life in Folklore*, 71.

⁵ *A Life in Folklore*, 85-86.

⁶ *A Life in Folklore*, 86-87.

⁷ Doreen Senior's notes suggest that this field-trip took place in September, but Clary Croft has concluded that it was actually in August (*Helen Creighton: Canada's First Lady of Folklore*, 50), which makes sense because Doreen taught summer school in July and it is most likely that she went collecting with Helen immediately afterwards, i.e., during the first week of August. I am therefore assuming that when she recorded a song as noted on 6/9/33 she actually meant 6/8/33.

⁸ Doreen Senior to Helen Creighton, 1st November 1933. *Helen Creighton Fonds*, PANS.

⁹ *A Life in Folklore*, 95.

¹⁰ *A Life in Folklore*, 99-100.

¹¹ *A Life in Folklore*, 102.

¹² Helen Creighton & Doreen Senior, eds., *Traditional Songs from Nova Scotia*, ix. Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1950.

¹³ *A Life in Folklore*, 104-105.

¹⁴ *A Life in Folklore*, 106.

¹⁵ Doreen Senior to Helen Creighton, 21 September 1937. *Helen Creighton Fonds*, PANS.

¹⁶ Maud Karpeles, ed., *Folk Music from Newfoundland with pianoforte accompaniments*. Oxford: Oxford U.P., 1934.

¹⁷ Doreen Senior to Helen Creighton, 13th March 1939. *Helen Creighton Fonds*, PANS.

¹⁸ Doreen Senior to Helen Creighton, 25th February [1940]. *Helen Creighton Fonds*, PANS.

¹⁹ Helen Creighton, "Introduction" (unpaginated), in Helen Creighton & Doreen Senior, eds., *Twelve Folk Songs from Nova Scotia*. London: Novello, 1940.

²⁰ Doreen Senior to Helen Creighton, 11th November [1950]. *Helen Creighton Fonds*, PANS.

²¹ Doreen Senior to Helen Creighton, 11th November [1950]. *Helen Creighton Fonds*, PANS.