

Song Collecting in Newfoundland: Maud Karpeles, 1929

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Maud Karpeles (1885-1976) is best known for her song collecting with Cecil Sharp in the Southern Appalachians, her biography of Sharp,¹ her commitment to preserving and teaching English folk dancing, and her work for the International Folk Music Council. During 1929 and 1930 she made two collecting trips to Newfoundland, and they may be seen as the last important activities of the Late Victorian and Edwardian folk music revival and a coda to the work of Cecil Sharp.² Newfoundland, incidentally, was not part of Canada when she visited it, since it would join the Canadian federation only after the Second World War.

Why did Karpeles decide to go to Newfoundland? The reason is simple: Cecil Sharp had recommended it as a most promising place for further fieldwork.³ Maud knew that he had been disappointed that first lack of money and later his state of health had prevented the field-trip to the island that they had twice planned.⁴ And she had promised Sharp that she would carry on his work. Going to Newfoundland was thus a way of keeping faith with her mentor.

Although Karpeles' collection of Newfoundland songs is by far and away her most important work as a solo collector, she did also note some songs and dance tunes in the U.K., Canada and New England. In the years following Sharp's death she collected folk dances in Worcestershire, Devon, Yorkshire, Northumberland, and New England, plus a few folk-songs in Glamorgan. What still worried her in the mid-1920s, though, was her ability to note tunes by ear, a skill that with characteristic doggedness she practiced for several years before deciding she was sufficiently expert.⁵ By 1929 she felt confident enough to give the Newfoundland project a shot, although still with considerable trepidation. And events conspired to give her the opportunity. Invited to direct a folk music summer school at Amherst, Mass., and then to participate in an EFDS dance team tour of the USA and Canada in November of the same year, Maud found herself with nearly two months to spare in North America.⁶ Canada and Newfoundland beckoned. The Amherst summer school was scheduled for late August (1929), so she decided to take a vacation in Canada first and do some "prospecting" (her term) there, then teach the summer school, and finally move on to Newfoundland in September. I have discussed Karpeles' collecting in Ontario and Saskat-

chewan in a previous article,⁷ so on this occasion I will focus on Newfoundland.⁸

Karpeles had her agenda, of course: it was to find in Ontario and Newfoundland oral tradition as many examples of English ballads and folk lyrics as she could. For her to note it down a song had to be old, traditional, and an authentic folksong according to Sharpean criteria.⁹ She rejected sentimental songs and drawing room ballads, anything touched by what Peter Van der Merwe has characterized as "the parlour modes,"¹⁰ anything that smacked of the music hall or of commercial pop music, anything composed recently, and anything published (except, of course, by Child, Sharp and the *Journal of the Folk-Song Society*). She was not interested in collecting shanties, and she spurned most songs about fishing, sealing, tragedies at sea, and historical events, even when such songs met her rigorous criteria for genuine folk music. We will never know exactly what she rejected as "too modern," although the non-British songs included by Elisabeth Greenleaf & Grace Mansfield in their 1933 collection, *Ballads and Sea Songs of Newfoundland*, give us some clues.¹¹

It is easy to wish that Maud had been more eclectic in her collecting. But her time in North America was limited, and she knew she had to be focused and efficient. Rather than complaining about what she did *not* do, it seems more profitable to focus on what she *did* achieve and to accept her collection for what it is: a fairly extensive record of the provenance of British folk ballads and lyrics in oral tradition in eastern Newfoundland at the end of the 1920s, no more, no less. Surprisingly, not all of this collection has yet seen the light of day. Most of the songs were printed, very belatedly, in her 1971 publication, *Folk Songs from Newfoundland*, but that volume is not exhaustive. The remaining items are to be found in the Folk Lore Archives at Memorial University, St. John's, Newfoundland.

First Impressions: St. John's

Maud arrived at St. John's on Sept 9th. Her first impressions were mixed. There was a splendid view of the coastline as the boat approached the harbour, and the city at first looked picturesque. But viewed from closer up, she thought it looked "squalid," and she was not impressed with the expensive Newfoundland Hotel in which the hot water ran "bright red" and the

food was “quite fifth rate.”¹² She knew no one in Newfoundland but she did have two letters of introduction, to Dr. Paton, head of Memorial College, and to a musical lawyer living in St. John's, Fred Emerson. Both proved friendly and supportive. Emerson, in particular, loved Newfoundland folk music and was eager to do everything that he could to help Karpales succeed in her undertaking. Maud also met Gerald Doyle, who had two years previously edited and published a small collection entitled *Old-Time Songs and Poetry of Newfoundland*.¹³ Doyle was a fund of information about Newfoundland's maritime economy, its myriads of tiny outports, and local singing traditions. A Newfoundland nationalist, he was more interested in home-grown songs than British imports, but Maud found his information valuable and regarded her time with him well-spent. That same afternoon, she collected her first tune in Newfoundland. This was from the St. John's harbour-master, P. K. Devine, who had heard about her arrival and come to visit her at the hotel. She reported in her diary what had happened:

After lunch Mr. Devine called to see me. An interesting old man and a great talker. I took down the tune of “Cushion Dance” from him, much to the amusement of bellboys as he tramped round while singing it, finally kneeling down in front of me and presenting me with the cushion (i.e., my newspaper).¹⁴

Maud was now getting to feel more at home in St. John's. She was pleased to find that some of the local people seemed “very nice and very English” and spoke with “ordinary” (rather than American) accents. Others had strong Irish accents, and she was informed that the population around St. John's was about half Irish descent.¹⁵ Fred Emerson and his wife Isobel invited her to stay with them, and over dinner that night they debated how best she should tackle her task. The basic problem was the awkward geography of Newfoundland and the lack of through-roads or rail service to most of the outports, which could be reached only by sea.¹⁶ Maud now recognized that Newfoundland was bigger and more diverse than she had previously realized, and that because of the difficulties of travel it would be impossible to cover the entire island in one two-month trip. There was no telling which area would prove the best for finding songs, but she now had some sense of the pros and cons of each option, and she decided that it was time to head out of St. John's and make a start. The west shore of Trinity Bay seemed a good choice, since it was one of the coastal areas first settled from Britain and it was accessible by train.¹⁷

The Bonavista Peninsula

So Maud set out on September 12th. From St. John's she took the narrow-gauge railway to Clarenville, enjoying the “perfectly gorgeous” scenery until nightfall. She had to change trains in the middle of the night, but she eventually arrived at Trinity at 4.30 am. After finding somewhere to lodge, she took the ferry to East Trinity. Here she listened to the local school-children playing “the usual singing games,” and then started looking for songs. Walking up a hill, she found a man chopping wood and made friends with him and his wife. This was where she found her first folksong in Newfoundland, a variant of Child ballad #85, “Lady Alice,” which the singer, Mrs. Mary Tibbs, called “Young Collins.”¹⁸ But she soon decided that the Trinity area was not very promising, and decided to try the outports on Bonavista Bay, further north and further west. Had she but known, her luck was about to change. She made her way over bumpy mud-and-gravel roads to King's Cove on the northern shore of the Bonavista peninsula, which she would make her base for visiting the nearby outports of Stock Cove, Tickle Cove, Broad Cove and Openhall. In King's Cove she took lodgings with Mrs. John Brown, the wife of a schooner captain. Her candid comments on the family and her living arrangements reveal something of material and religious life in the outports at the time:

A nice large bedroom with comfortable clean bed, but alas windows do not open. Flies in living rooms very trying. Staple diet seems to be tinned rabbit. Practically no fresh food, and no idea of what's nourishing. But water good and tea, also home-made jam. Sanitary arrangements literally nil, and scarcity of water – hot and cold...[At evening prayers the captain] addresses the Lord as tho' he were a long way off. They are nice, simple people.¹⁹

On the 18th September, she took a taxi to Stock Cove, three miles away. This was a poverty-stricken Irish hamlet, but it proved a most fruitful source of songs. This extract from Maud's field-diary gives the flavour of the community and her reception in it:

Called on Joanie Ryan, a half-daft woman of 80 or more...Got her to sing and with utmost difficulty took down tune and words. The room gradually filled with men, women and children, and before I had finished there must have been about a dozen people there – all highly interested and entertained. Then went on to see old Mrs. Mahoney, and from there got passed on from one person to another. Everyone most friendly and delighted to see me. My calling on Joanie Ryan evidently tickled their fancies...They are all Irish

people and I might be in an Irish village. Evidently a lot of songs about, but they have got covered up by the new songs and most people have to dig into their memories to recall them...I sang and taught them a figure of Running set, much to their delight. Got back about 1am.²⁰

This was more like what Maud had been hoping for. The song that old Mrs. Joanie Ryan sang was “The Maid on the Shore.” The next afternoon she was back at Stock Cove, and found another warm welcome.²¹

She discovered that there were several other singers there, although she had some difficulty with the Irish accents and with sorting out who was who. It turned out that members of three different families—the Mahoneys, the Alwards, and the Brennans—each knew a version of the Child ballad “Sweet William’s Ghost” (Child #77). Matthew Aylward also performed full versions of “The Outlandish Knight” and “The Grey Cock.”

The Lover's Ghost (The Grey Cock)

Anon

Voice

The image shows a musical score for the song 'The Lover's Ghost (The Grey Cock)'. It features three staves of music. The first staff is labeled 'Voice' and contains the lyrics: 'She said to her mamma, she said to her dada, "There's some-thing the matt-er with me. There's something the matt-er and I don't know what it is, And I'm wear-y from ly-ing a-lone."'. The second staff contains a piano accompaniment with two triplets marked with a '3'. The third staff is a single note on a treble clef staff, corresponding to the word 'alone.' in the lyrics.

She said to her mama, she said to her dada,
 “There’s something the matter with me,
 There’s something the matter and I don’t know what it is,
 And I’m weary from lying alone.”

John he came there at the very hour appointed,
 He tapped at the window so gay;
 This fair maid arose and she hurried on her clothes,
 And let her true love John in.

She took him by the hand and on the bed she laid him,
 Felt he was colder than clay.
 “If I had my wish and my wish it would be so,
 This long night would never be morn.”

“Crow up, crow up, my little bird,
 And don’t crow before it is day,

Two other discoveries at Stock Cove were James Heaney, from whom Maud noted “Johnny Doyle,” and a girl named Mary Gallahue who sang “(Young) Reilly the Fisherman.” Maud was pleased with what she had found and with the friendly way she had

And your cage shall be made of the glittering gold,” she said,
 “And your doors of the silver so gay.”

“Where is your soft bed of down, my love,
 And where is your white Holland sheet,
 And where is the fair maid that watches on you
 While you are taking your long silent sleep?”

“The sand is my soft bed of down, my love,
 The sea is my white Holland sheet,
 And long hungry worms will feed off of me
 While I’m taking my long silent sleep.”

“And when will I see you, my love,” she cries,
 “And when will I see you again?”
 “When the little fishes fly and the seas they do run dry
 And the hard rocks they melt with the sun.”

been welcomed into the families' homes. That evening, writing in her diary, she commented:

If only I had more aptitude for taking down [the tunes]. It is slow work and so I get very few down – the singers, too, are difficult, be-

cause they vary so much from verse to verse. Impossible, even for good musicians, to get down all that they sing...I am amazed at [the] social distinction between Stock Cove and King's Cove. 'We (as Stock cove people say) are just the common people'. They evidently like my visits. One woman said, 'she is the best person that has come amongst us. Wherever she goes there is singing and dancing.' and another, 'Isn't she lovely; she's just like one of us'. They are all expecting me to find a young man and settle down there, and one young man got to the length of asking me if I had a boy in King's Cove. I felt that it was time to give some indication of my age.²²

Maud was actually 43 at the time. The next day she had a car available for the whole day and decided to try a couple of other local settlements. At Tickle

Cove she found Pat Kelly, from whom she noted "The Bold Lieutenant." Her other discovery that day was Samuel Moss of Openhall, from whom she collected a version of "Nancy of London" with a distinctive tune. This was part of her summary description of the day's activities in her diary:

Made many enquiries, but all the good old singers have died in the last few years...People very reserved at first, but they soon warm up. I entertained a little crowd of men in the road by singing them 'Edward'...Saw Sam Moss at Open Hall and got a beautiful tune from him which took me a long time to get, but he (as all of them) was wonderfully patient...Bitterly cold & I arrived back frozen.²³

Here is Sam Moss' version of "Nancy of London":

Nancy of London

Anon

Voice

O Nancy from Lon-don from a clear pur-ling stream Was court-ed by

Wil-lie on board of the Fame, Was court ed by Wil-lie a long while a - go, And he's

on the sea sail-ing where the storm-y winds blow.

O Nancy from London from a clear purling stream
Was court-ed by Willie on board of the *Fame*,
Was court-ed by Willie a long while ago,
And he's on the sea sailing where the stormy winds blow.

The stormy winds blow, love, makes my heart to ache,
Causes my parlour window to shiver and shake.
God knows where my love lies, he's far from the shore,
And I'll pray for his safety; what can I do more?

A ship on the ocean, it's a wonderful sight,
Like an army of soldiers just going to fight,

On her farewell visit to Stock Cove Maud obtained three more songs. Sarah Aylward sang her "The Croppy Boy," for which Maud noted the tune but not

But a soldier can lay down his fire-arms and run,
While a seaman must yield to a watery tomb.

When seamen go drinking, drink the health to their wives;
Young men love their sweethearts as they love their lives,
And the health bowl goes round with a full glass in hand,
Here's a health to loving Nancy we left on dry land.

Green grow the rushes o'er the tops of them small,
My love it's a peril that will grow o'er them all;
The green leaf will wither and the root will decay,
And the red rose will flourish when my love comes from sea.

the political words. Lizzie Mahoney's final offering was "The Rose of Britain's Isle" which Maud liked a lot, and Lucy Heaney and her brother Mike Mahoney

jointly contributed “The Awful Wedding.” Maud felt quite sad to say goodbye to her new friends. She would always remember Stock Cove as a place where she was called “that girl,” treated as if she were twenty years old, and expected to marry and settle down among a musical community that had welcomed her with open arms.²⁴

By this time she was finding that the ice was also breaking in the stiffer, Protestant, community of

King's Cove. She now met with a friendly reception everywhere she went, and sensed that the people on whose doors she knocked had heard all about her and were hoping she would call. One valuable informant was Jemima Hincock, who sang her a version of a broadside ballad about murder, the supernatural, and violent revenge, “The Cruel Ship’s Carpenter”:

The Cruel Ship's Carpenter

Anon

Voice

One morning, one morning, just before it was day, Young Willie instantly strolled out on his way, Saying: "Rise, pretty Polly, and come along with me, And before we get married our friends we'll go see."

One morning, one morning, just before it was day,
Young Willie instantly strolled out on his way,
Saying: “Rise, pretty Polly, and come along with me,
And before we get married our friends we’ll go see.”

He led her over hills and through valleys so steep,
Which caused pretty Polly to sigh and to weep,
Saying: “O dearest Willie, you’ll lead me astray,
And perhaps my poor innocent life to betray.”

“It’s true, love, it’s true, it’s true what you say,
For this livelong night I will be digging your grave.”
So they walked along together till the grave she did spy,
Which caused pretty Polly to sigh and to cry.

“O pardon, O pardon, O pardon my life,
For I will not covet for to be your wife;
I’ll run this world over for to set you free,
If you will but pardon my baby and me.”

No pardon, no pardon, no time for to stand,
He instantly taken a knife in his hand.
He pierced her tender bosom while her heart’s blood
did flow,
And into the cold grave her body did throw.

He covered her over so safe and so sound,
Not thinking this murder would ever be found.

Set sail on his own ship and ploughed the world around,
Not thinking this murder would ever be found.

And young Charlie Steward with courage so bold,
One night when he’s watching throughout the ship’s hold,
A beautiful damsel unto him did appear
And held in her arms a baby so dear.

Our captain he summons our jolly ship’s crew,
Saying: “Now, my gay fellows, I fear one of you
Have murdered some fair one before we came away,
And now she is haunting us here on the way.”

Up speaks young Willie: “I’m sure it’s not me,”
Up speaks another: “I’m sure it’s not me,”
Up speaks another: “I’m sure it’s not me,”
And those was the discussion through the ship’s company.

“Whoever he may be if the truth he’ll deny,
I’ll hang him out on the yardarm so high;
And if he’ll confess it his life I’ll not take,
I’ll land him safe out on the first island I make.”

O Willie was coming from the captain with speed,
He met with this fair one, which cause his heart to bleed.
She ripped him, she stripped him, she tore him in three
Because he had murdered her baby and she.

She turned to the captain, those words she did say:
"Since I have taken your murderer away,

With the heavens' protection you and all agree
And send you safe homeward to your own country."

Kenneth Monks was another King's Cove informant
He sang "Go From My Window," and on the after-
noon of the 24th September gave Maud a "wonderful

ballad" called "The Bonny Banks of Virgie-O," a
variant of "Babylon" (Child # 14):

The image shows a musical score for the song "The Bonny Banks of Virgie-O". The title is written in green at the top. Below the title, the word "Anon" is written in green. The score is for a voice part, indicated by the word "Voice" in red. It consists of two staves of music in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. The lyrics are written below the notes. The first line of music starts with a rest for two measures, then continues with the lyrics: "[Oh]— Three young lad-ies went out for a walk, all a lee and the". The second line of music continues with the lyrics: "lone-ly O, They met a rob-ber on their way, On the bon ny, bon ny banks of Vir-gie - O."

Three young ladies went out for a walk,
All a lee and the lonely O;
They met a robber on their way,
On the bonny, bonny banks of Virgie-O.

He took the first one by the hand,
And whipped her around till he made her stand.

"O will you be a robber's wife,
Or will you die by my penknife?"

"I will not be a robber's wife,
I would rather die by your penknife."

He took the penknife in his hand,
And it's there he took her own sweet life.

He took the second one by the hand,
And whipped her around till he made her stand.

"O will you be a robber's wife,
Or will you die by my penknife?"

"I will not be a robber's wife,
I would rather die by your penknife."

He took the penknife in his hand,
And it's there he took her own sweet life.

He took the third one by the hand,
And whipped her around till he made her stand.

"O will you be a robber's wife,
Or will you die by my penknife?"

"I will not be a robber's wife,
Nor will I die by your penknife."

"If my brothers were here tonight,
You would not have killed my sisters bright."

"Where are your brothers, pray now tell?"
"One of them is a minister."

"And where is the other, I pray now tell?"
"He's out a-robbing like yourself."

"The Lord have mercy on my poor soul,
I've killed my sisters all but one."

Then he took his penknife in his hand,
And he took away his own sweet life.

It was approaching the end of September, and
Maud had reluctantly decided it was time that she
moved on, further north and west. She spent one
more day in King's Cove, and obtained several more
songs before leaving. Then on September 27th she

returned to Trinity with the intention of catching a
midnight train back to Clarendville on the main line
from St. John's, and then a connection that would
take her further west.

Clarenville and Fortune Bay

The train was hours behind schedule. By now Maud had discovered that the only thing predictable about overland travel in Newfoundland was that it would take much longer than expected. While waiting at Clarenville she wrote a long letter home, summing up how she perceived her expedition thus far:

Now for the bright side of things and on the whole it certainly predominates. First of all with regard to the songs themselves. I have noted about 30...all good and interesting tunes, although I don't think I have anything that is really supreme. I have four new ballads (3 of them certainly "Child" ballads, one of them being my favourite "Proud Lady Margaret"), but on the whole texts not particularly good. So far nearly all my singers have been of Irish descent and...I am finding it terribly hard to take them down and I should say that most of the singers are as difficult as they can be. They are terribly temperamental in their singing and vary with each verse. In many cases it seems to take a few verses before the tune becomes anything like stabilised. I have so far succeeded in getting down all the songs that I wanted to, but, of course, miss a great many of the variants which is a pity. Phonograph would be the only way in many cases. It is very hard so far to know how rich a field there is. In some places I have struck almost a complete blank, and even in my good localities the songs are just on the verge of disappearing. I am really too late and even ten years earlier would have made a difference. The old generation that sang the songs is almost gone and although the younger people do sing them, it is the modern songs that are in the forefront of their minds and

it is sometimes quite hard work to dig up the traditional stuff...The people are inclined to be very reserved and suspicious at first and at the same time very inquisitive, and I have had one or two bad moments wondering whether I should be able to get on with them, but so far I have always managed to make them thaw very quickly... I've not mentioned the scenery, but it is beautiful – great big sweeping bays that have the appearance of lakes.²⁵

Eventually a west-bound train arrived and she took it as far as Notre Dame Junction, changed onto a branch line for Lewisport, and then got a boat to Fortune Harbour, arriving about 3pm on the 30th September. It was a beautiful place, she recorded in her diary, with "steep rocky cliffs covered with trees going down sheer to waterside," but the weather was very cold. Worse, Maud quickly concluded that her luck had run out. The American collectors Greenleaf and Mansfield had recently stayed at Fortune Harbour for five days and "pumped all the singers." Moreover, it appeared that because her visit coincided with that of some Roman Catholic priests her prospective informants were spending most of their time in church. But she did find one singing couple, James and Margaret (Maggie) Day. Maggie was "inclined to be surly" at first, but she gradually warmed to Maud and eventually sang her "William Taylor," "Little Fishes," "Lowlands" and "Cold Blows the Wind" (aka Child # 78, "The Unquiet Grave"). James provided another version of "Sweet William's Ghost," "The Lover's Ghost" (aka "The Grey Cock"), "The Sea Captain" and "Spanish Ladies."

Spanish Ladies

Anon

Voice

Good - bye and a - dieu... to you, Span-ish la - dies, Good - bye and a -
dieu to you, la - dies of Spain; For we've re-ceived or - ders to run to old Eng-land, Hoping
in... short time... to see you a - gain.

The image shows a musical score for the song "Spanish Ladies" in G major (one sharp) and 3/4 time. It consists of three staves of music. The first staff is labeled "Voice" and contains the lyrics: "Good - bye and a - dieu... to you, Span-ish la - dies, Good - bye and a -". The second staff continues the lyrics: "dieu to you, la - dies of Spain; For we've re-ceived or - ders to run to old Eng-land, Hoping". The third staff concludes the lyrics: "in... short time... to see you a - gain." The music is written in a simple, folk-like style with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp.

Goodbye and adieu to you, Spanish ladies,
Goodbye and adieu to you, ladies of Spain,
For we've received orders to run to old England,
Hoping in short time to see you again.

We'll rant and we'll roar like true British sailors,
We'll rant and we'll roar across the salt seas,
Until we strike soundage in the Channel of old England,
From England to Sweden is ninety-five leagues.

We'll round our ship to and the wind at sou'west, boys,
We'll round our ship to for to strike soundage clear,
Our lead it strikes bottom in ninety-five fathoms,
Then we ran our main-yards, up channel did steer.

Despite Maud's "many fruitless visits" to other potential informants, she had hardly come away empty handed. However, she was disappointed and depressed by her experience in Fortune Bay.²⁶ A mail steamer took her to Exploits, where she found a lodging with electric light and good cooking. She explored the island extensively by foot but concluded that it was a bad place for songs because the inhabitants were mainly Methodists. Nonetheless, she found one singer, Alex Wells, from whom she noted four songs: "The Sea Captain," "Claudy Banks," "Babes in the Wood" and "The Simple Ploughboy."

Clarke's Beach and North River

By now Maud had used up more than half the time she had available, and she had to make a difficult decision: whether to explore the islands of Twillingate and Fogo to the north-east, go further west to the Baie Verte peninsula, or return to eastern Newfoundland. She opted for the latter, taking a boat and train back to the relative civilization of Harbour Grace, where she did some more collecting before moving to Clarke's Beach on the south-western shore of Conception Bay.

The dozen or so outports Karpeles visited during the remainder of October included Clarke's Beach, North River, Halls Town, Kit Hughes, Colliers, Conception Harbour, Harbour Main and Avondale. The community that she found the most productive was North River, where lived a mix of families descended from both Irish and West of England settlers: the McCabes, Flinns, Boones, Snows, Halls, Fillers, and Sinclairs.

The first land we sighted was the Philadelphée,
The next we sighted was the Island of Wight;
We sailed then by Beaches, to the Isle of Wight at Dungeon,
And then bore away for South Portal light.

The signal was given by the grand fleet to anchor,
All in the Downs that night for to lie.
Stand by your ring stopper, see clear your shank painter,
Ease up your clew garnets, stand by tacks and sheets.

Now let each tar drink a full flowing bumper,
And let each tar drink a full flowing bowl;
We'll drink and be merry and drown melancholy,
Here's adieu to all fair mates and Sarah so bold.

Maud first went to North River on October 15th, and that day's diary entry read as follows:

Started off after breakfast for North River – a lovely walk beside the 'River' (really an inlet of the sea), a beautiful valley with wooded mountains on either side. Called first on old Mrs Bourne [*sic*] (grandmother of Zeala)...After leaving her got into conversation with several people on the road, all very friendly, they all tell me of names of singers, and even say they sing themselves. One girl – a Snow (they are mostly Snows here) took me round and introduced me to several people. Finally visited the McCabes. They are two brothers (uncles of Zeala) and live each in a shack on either side of ride. I got my one song from one of the men, but their wives, May and Violet, know any amount and are very ready to sing. It really looks as though I had struck a gold mine...After tea went up to Mr. Flinn's but he was out. A beautiful moonlight walk.²⁷

Maud found three singers at the McCabe residence the next day: May, Violet, and Mary Ellen Snow. Violet offered "The Twelve Apostles" and "The Spanish Main," while Mrs. Snow contributed "The Bonny Banks of Batt'ry O" and a fragment of "Morning Dew." Mrs. Hall's evening session produced "Barber" (a variant of "Willie of Winsbury"), "In Arbour Town," "Young Floro," and a version of one of Maud's favourite ballads, "Banks of Virgie-o." And May McCabe sang "The Bold Lieutenant" and one of the ballads that Maud considered among the very best that she found in Newfoundland, "The Bloody Gardener":

The Bloody Gardener

Anon

Voice



'Twas of a la-dy fair, a — shep-herd's daugh-ter dear, She was
court-ed by her own sweet heart's de-light, But ³ false let-ters moth-er — wrote: "Meet me,
dear, my heart's de-light, For it's a-bout some bus-ness I have to re-late.

'Twas of a lady fair, a shepherd's daughter dear,
She was courted by her own sweetheart's delight;
But false letters mother wrote: "Meet me, dear, my heart's delight,
For it's about some business I have to relate."

O this young maid arose and to the garden goes
In hopes to meet her own true heart's delight.
She searched the ground and no true love she found,
Till at length a bloody gardener appeared in view.

He says, "My lady gay, what brought you here this way,
Or have you come to rob me of my garden gay?"
She cries, "No thief I am, I'm in search of a young man
Who promised that he'd meet me here this way."

"Prepare, prepare," he cried, "Prepare to lose your life,
I'll lay your virtuous body to bleed in the ground,
And with flowers fine and gay your grave I'll overlay
In the way your virtuous body never will be found."

He took out his knife, cut the single thread of life,
And he laid her virtuous body to bleed in the ground,
And with flowers fine and gay her grave he overlaid
In the way her virtuous body never should be found.

This young man arose and into the garden goes
In hopes to meet his own true heart's delight.
He searched the garden round, but no true love he found
Till the groves and the valleys seemed with him to mourn.

O he sat down to rest on a mossy bank so sweet
Till a milk-white dove came perching round his face,
And with battering wings so sweet all around this young man's feet,
But when he arose this dove she flew away.

The dove she flew away and perched on a myrtle tree
 And the young man called after her with speed;
 This young man called after her with his heart filled with woe,
 Until he came to where the dove she lay.

He said, "My pretty dove, what makes you look so sad,
 Or have you lost your love as I have mine?"
 When down from a tree so tall, down on her grave did fall,
 She drooped her wings and shook her head, and bled fresh from the breast.

O this young man arose and unto his home did go,
 Saying, "Mother, dear, you have me undone;
 You have robbed me of my dear, my joy and my delight,
 So it's alone with my darling I'll soon take flight."

Recognising that North River was, if anything, an even better source of folksongs of British origin than Stock Cove, Maud walked back to the community the next day. On the way she met a thirteen year old girl called Ella Sinclair, who sang her "The Nightingale." The McCabe sisters-in-law were at home, and Violet offered her a fuller version of "Morning Dew," which Maud identified as a variant of "The Baffled Knight." May McCabe was in fine form, and sang a Child ballad (#1), "Riddles Wisely Expounded," a full-length version of "Lady Margaret and Sweet William" (aka Child #47, "Proud Lady Margaret"), and "The Blind Beggar's Daughter." At the Snow family residence she found Mary Ellen's daughter, sixteen year old Florrie, "a nice girl who sang very prettily." Florrie knew "The Nightingale," "The Bonny Banks of Virgie-o" and a beautiful ballad that Maud had not previously come across in

Newfoundland, "The False Bride." Maud was back again in North River on the 18th October, and found a new singer, Mrs. Bridget Hall, who also knew "The False Bride" and supplied her with three other songs: "The Poor Irish Girl," "Still Growing" (aka "The Trees They Do Grow High") and "Farewell Nancy," plus a tune for "Blow Away the Morning Dew."

Maud then walked further up-river to Halls Town in order to find another reputed singer named Mrs. Hurley, but she proved a disappointment; although she knew some ballads, including "Lamkin" (Child #93), Maud found her tunes "too vague" and her voice too loud, "an unpleasant, raucous noise." The next day Maud told Violet McCabe about her disappointment in not getting a good tune for "Lamkin" from Mrs. Hurley. Violet promptly offered her own version of "Lamkin."

Lamkin

Anon

Voice

Said the lord to his la - dy, As he was going a - way: 'Be - ware of proud

Lam - kin, For he comes up this way.

Said the lord to his lady
 As he was going away:
 "Beware of proud Lamkin,
 For he comes up this way."

"What do I care for proud Lamkin,
 Or any of his men,
 When my doors are well bolted
 And my windows shut in?"

He was scarce gone one hour
When proud Lamkin came by;
He knocked at the hall door
And the nurse let him in.

“O where is your master?
Is he not without?”
“He’s gone to old England,”
Cried the false nurse.

“O where is your mistress?
Is she not within?”
“She’s up in her bed-chamber
With the windows barred in.”

“How am I to get at her?”
Proud Lamkin did cry.
“O here is young Sir Johnson,
Pierce him and he’ll cry.”

He took out his bodkin
And pierced young Sir Johnson,
And made the blood trickle
Right down his toes.

“O mistress, dearest mistress,
How can you sleep so fast?
Can’t you hear your young Sir Johnson
A-crying his last?”

“I can’t pacify him
On the nurse-milk or pap;
I pray you come down,
Quieten him on your lap.”

“How can I come downstairs
On such a cold winter’s night,
No spark of fire burning,
No candle alight?”

“You’ve got two white Holland sheets
As white as snow;
I pray you come down
By the light on them so.”

As she was coming downstairs,
Not thinking much harm,
Proud Lamkin awaited,
Took her by the arm.

“I have got you, I have got you,”
Proud Lamkin did cry,
“For years I have waited,
But I have got you at last.”

“O spare me my life,” she cries,
“For one, two o’clock,
And I’ll give you all the money
That you will carry on your back.”

“If you’ll give me the money
Like the sand on the shore,
I’ll not keep my bright sword
From your white skin so free.”

“O spare me my life,” she cries,
“For one half an hour,
I’ll give to you my nurse,
Although she’s my flower.”

“O where is your nurse?
Go send her to me;
She can hold the silver basin
While your heart’s blood runs free.”

“False nurse was my friend,” she cries,
“But now she’s my foe;
She can hold the silver basin
While my heart’s blood do flow.”

There was blood in the nursery,
And blood in the hall,
And blood on the stairs,
And her heart’s blood was all.

Proud Lamkin was taken
To the gallows to die,
And the false nurse was burned
In a fire near by.

Violet McCabe also sang “Down By a Riverside”:

As I roved out one evening down by a riverside,
I overheard a damsel sing, which filled my heart with pride.
“May the heavens smile on you, fair one, send me another sun,
For I do wish you were my bride.” “Kind sir, I am too young.”

“The younger you are, my pretty fair maid, the better you are for me,
For I readily swear and do declare my lovely bride you will be.”
He took her by the lily-white hand, he kissed her cheeks and chin,
And he took her to his own bedroom to spend the night with him.

O the first part of the night they frolicked and they played,
And the next part of the night close in his arms she lay.
The night being spend and the day coming on and the morning sun appeared,
This young man arose, put on his clothes, saying: “Fare you well, my dear.”

Down By a Riverside

Anon

Voice

The image shows a musical score for the song 'Down By a Riverside'. It consists of four staves of music in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. The lyrics are written below the notes. The first staff begins with a red 'Voice' label. The lyrics are: 'As I roved out one eve - ning down by a ri - ver - side, I o - ver heard a dam - sel sing, which filled my heart with pride. "May the heave - ens smile on you, fair one, send me an - oth - er sun, For I do wish you were my bride." "Kind sir, I am too young"

“O that’s not the promise you made to me down by a riverside,
You promised that you’d marry me, make me your loving bride.”
“If I promised that I’d marry you, it’s more than I can do,
For I never intend to marry a girl so easily led as you.

“You go down your father’s garden and there you’ll cry your fill,
And when you think on what you’ve done you can blame your own free will.
There is a rose in your father’s garden, some people call it rue,
When fish will fly and seas run dry, young men they will prove true.”

“There’s lots of girls go to the fair, which I’ve been often before,
But me, poor thing, must stay at home, rocking the cradle o’er,
Rocking the cradle o’er and o’er, singing sweet lullaby;
Was there ever a girl in this wide world so easily led as I?”

Another member of the Snow family, Rose, offered variants of “Young Floro” and “The Cruel Mother,” and then Maud called on the Halls, finding both Bridget and Jane at home. Bridget sang her “The Nightingale” and “Jimmy and Nancy,” while Jane offered “The Sheffield Apprentice.” It was another good day’s collecting, and Maud enjoyed walking back to Clarke’s Beach on a “glorious moonlight night.” But she sensed that she had “pretty well exhausted” North River’s well of songs, and in any case she was fast running out of time.²⁸

This was not quite the end of Karpeles’ collecting in the Conception Bay area, however; for exam-

ple, Theresa Corbett of Conception Harbour provided another version of “Lamkin,” as well as such ballads as “The Green Wedding,” “The Cruel Mother,” “The Blind Beggar of Bethnal Green” and “The Dark-eyed Sailor.” At Colliers she found Thomas Ghaney and he sang her “The Silk Merchant’s Daughter” and a variant of Child #7, “Earl Brand.” He also knew a version of a broadside ballad that Sabine Baring-Gould had first noted from oral tradition in the English West Country, although Ghaney’s version likely had Irish antecedents—the song known variously as “Polly Vaughan,” “Molly Bond,” “The Setting of the Sun” or “The Shooting of his Dear”:

Shooting of his Dear

Anon

Voice

Come all you young gal-lants take de-light in a gun, Be-ware of_ your
shoot-ing at the set-ting of the sun.

Come all you young gallants who take delight in a gun,
Beware of your shooting at the setting of the sun.

As it happened one evening in a large shower of hail,
In under a bower my love was concealed.

Her apron flew around her, I took her as a swan,
And I shot my own darling at the setting of the sun.

As I walked up to her I found it was she,
My limbs they grew weary and my eyes could not see.

The rings on her fingers, most bitterly I cried,
"O Molly, if you were living, you'd be my fond bride!"

Home to my dada like I lightning did run,
"O father, dear father, do you know what I've done?"

"Her apron flew around her, I took her as a swan,
And I shot my own darling at the setting of the sun.

"Her apron flew around her, I took her as a swan,
And I shot my own darling, and where shall I run?"

His old father in the corner with his locks turning grey:
"O Jimmy, dear Jimmy, don't you run away.

"Only tarry in this country until your trial goes on,
You never shall be hung by the laws of the land."

O after three spaces to his uncle appears:
"O Jimmy, dear Jimmy, young Jimmy is clear.

"My apron flew around me, he took me as a swan,
And his heart lies a-bleeding for his own Molly Bond."

Back in St. John's

On the 26th of October Karpeles took the train back to St. John's. The Emersons had invited her to stay with them, and Maud really appreciated the modern conveniences of their house. Sorting through her notebooks to see what 'finds' she could show the Emersons, she recognized for the first time just how successful her trip had been. As she commented in her diary, "Mr. E[merson] is delighted with [my tunes] and I realise more than I did what a high standard they are. They compare very favourably with the English collecting although they fall far short of the Appalachian."²⁹ Mr. Paton (from Memorial College), whom she had consulted at the beginning of her expedition, turned up to see what she had found, and was suitably impressed. He immediately asked her to give a lecture at the college. Maud "inwardly cursed, but consented."³⁰ She delivered it to an audience of about two hundred students and some invited guests, including Lady Middleton, the Governor's wife. Illustrated by Mr. Emerson's singing and playing melodies on the piano, the talk seems to have been pronounced a "great success" by all.³¹

Confronted with dirt, flies, primitive outhouses and long waits for delayed trains and steamers, Karpeles had not found collecting in rural Newfoundland easy. In the letter home quoted earlier she remarked ruefully that comfort was inversely related to success in song-collecting. Her sense of relief at finally returning to hot running water in St. John's was palpable. But she had done what she set out to do, and she had made a lot of friends. The warmth with which she had been welcomed into outpost communities, especially those at Stock Cove and North River, meant a great deal to her, as did the close friendship she made with the Emersons.

Maud knew that she had explored only one part of Newfoundland, the bays of the north-east coast, and that there was a good chance that the outports of the Southern Shore and the south coast would yield a similar treasury of old songs. But she was also well aware of the logistical difficulties she would encounter travelling in the south of the island. It was therefore with mixed feelings that she decided to return to Newfoundland in the summer of 1930.

Notes

- ¹ Maud Karpeles, *Cecil Sharp: His Life and Work*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967.
- ² The Late Victorian/Edwardian folksong revival has yet to find its historian, although Georgina Boyes has written a post-modernist critique titled *The Imagined Village* in which she interprets it as an ideological construct of middle-class English nationalists who allegedly invented “the folk” and “folksong.” See Georgina Boyes, *The Imagined Village: Culture, Ideology and the English Folk Revival*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993.
- ³ Maud Karpeles, ed., *Folk Songs from Newfoundland*, Vol 1, p. iii. 2 Vols., London: Oxford University Press, 1934.
- ⁴ Maud Karpeles, *Draft Autobiography* [unpublished], p. 157. The manuscript is in the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library, Cecil Sharp House, English Folk Dance and Song Society, Camden Town, London, U.K.
- ⁵ Karpeles, *Draft Autobiography*, p. 157.
- ⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 137a & 157-158.
- ⁷ E. David Gregory, with Rosaleen Gregory, “Before Newfoundland: Maud Karpeles in Canada,” *Canadian Folk Music/Bulletin de musique folklorique canadienne*, Vol 37, No. 1 (Spring 2003), pp. 1-12.
- ⁸ See also E. David Gregory, “Maud Karpeles, Newfoundland, and the Crisis of the Folk Song Revival, 1924-1935,” *Newfoundland Studies*, Vol 16, No. 2 (Fall 2000), pp. 151-165.
- ⁹ Karpeles’ method of song-collecting in Newfoundland has been denounced as “ethnocentric,” extensively influenced by “conservative ideological biases” and, to use Carole Henderson Carpenter’s phrase, “paternalistic-colonialist.” These pejorative labels have a political ring, and they are misleading. They project a picture of her world-view that is fundamentally inaccurate. Karpeles was far from ethnocentric; on the contrary, cosmopolitan would be a better way of describing her outlook. In one sense, “colonialist” is fair enough, since she did think of Newfoundland as a British colony, despite its formal status as an independent Dominion with representative government. In another sense, however, it is misleading, since she in no way opposed Newfoundland’s autonomy or supported such English politicians as Joseph Chamberlain and Alfred Milner who strove to create an imperial federation centred on the United Kingdom. Nor was she ideologically conservative. She was not much interested in party politics, but her general outlook might be best described as liberal, progressive and internationalist. “Paternalistic” also seems too harsh. It is true that Karpeles came from an urban, middle-class background and that she embraced wholeheartedly Cecil Sharp’s mission of collecting English rural vernacular song before it had vanished entirely. But she was not overbearing or snobbish in her dealings with the singers she located. On the contrary, she treated her Newfoundland informants as equals, she was pleased when they showed interest in her project, and she established several enduring friendships while visiting the island. In particular the communities of Stock Cove and North River took her to their hearts. Moreover, she had no notion of “saving” Newfoundland songs for Newfoundlanders who were unable to do so for themselves, and she spent so little time in Newfoundland that it would be difficult to convict her of in any way damaging the local culture.
- ¹⁰ Peter Van der Merwe, *Origins of the Popular Style*, pp. 223-76. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989.
- ¹¹ Elisabeth B. Greenleaf & Grace Y. Mansfield, eds., *Ballads and Sea Songs of Newfoundland*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1933.
- ¹² Letter from Maud Karpeles to Helen Kennedy, 11th September 1929; also “Field Diary # 1 (July 20th – October 29th, 1929).” Entries for 9th & 10th September, 1929.
- ¹³ Doyle, Gerald S. *Old-Time Songs and Poetry of Newfoundland*. St. John’s, NF: Gerald S. Doyle Ltd, 1927.
- ¹⁴ Karpeles, Maud. “Field Diary # 1 (July 20th – October 29th, 1929).” Entry for 11th September, 1929.
- ¹⁵ Letter from Maud Karpeles to Helen Kennedy, 11th September 1929.
- ¹⁶ Karpeles, *Draft Autobiography*, pp. 165-166.
- ¹⁷ Letter from Maud Karpeles to Helen Kennedy, 11th September 1929.
- ¹⁸ Karpeles, Maud. “Field Diary # 1 (July 20th – October 29th, 1929).” Entry for 13th September, 1929.
- ¹⁹ Karpeles, Maud. “Field Diary # 1 (July 20th – October 29th, 1929).” Entry for 17th September, 1929.
- ²⁰ Karpeles, Maud. “Field Diary # 1 (July 20th – October 29th, 1929).” Entry for 18th September, 1929.
- ²¹ Carbon copy of letter from Maud Karpeles, dated 28th September, 1929. No recipient indicated.
- ²² Karpeles, Maud. “Field Diary # 1 (July 20th – October 29th, 1929).” Entry for 20th September, 1929.
- ²³ Karpeles, Maud. “Field Diary # 1 (July 20th – October 29th, 1929).” Entry for 21st September, 1929.
- ²⁴ Carbon copy of letter from Maud Karpeles, dated 28th September, 1929. No recipient indicated.
- ²⁵ Carbon copy of letter from Maud Karpeles, dated 28th September, 1929. No recipient indicated.
- ²⁶ Letter from Maud Karpeles to Douglas Kennedy, 13th October, 1929.
- ²⁷ Karpeles, Maud. “Field Diary # 1 (July 20th – October 29th, 1929).” Entry for 15th October, 1929.
- ²⁸ Karpeles, Maud. “Field Diary # 1 (July 20th – October 29th, 1929).” Entry for 19th October, 1929.
- ²⁹ Karpeles, Maud. “Field Diary # 1 (July 20th – October 29th, 1929).” Entry for 26th October, 1929.
- ³⁰ Karpeles, Maud. “Field Diary # 1 (July 20th – October 29th, 1929).” Entry for 27th October, 1929.
- ³¹ Karpeles, Maud. “Field Diary # 1 (July 20th – October 29th, 1929).” Entries for 28th & 29th October, 1929.