

Phil Thomas: An Odyssey in Song

David Gregory, Athabasca University

After a spell in the Canadian military during World War II, Phil Thomas earned his living for most of his adult life as an elementary school teacher and art teacher. He graduated with a B.Ed. from the University of British Columbia in 1949, but during the Cold War his left-wing political opinions made it difficult to obtain a teaching position in either Victoria or Vancouver. In consequence, his first teaching post was in the small coastal community of Pender Harbour, located on the western shore of the Sechelt Peninsula. It was there that he also began his unpaid career as a collector of B.C. vernacular songs, which spanned a more than twenty-year period, from 1953 to 1975. This article surveys his activities as a collector of folksongs from oral tradition in British Columbia. It also examines the way in which he combined

his oral material with manuscript and printed sources to create a social history of British Columbia through the medium of vernacular song.

Thomas encountered novelist and short-story writer Bill Sinclair in Pender Harbour in 1951. They had similar intellectual interests and political views, and they became fast friends. Sinclair had been born in Scotland, lived for a while as a cowboy in Montana, and by the early 1950s was working as a trollerman in the local fishing industry. He had developed considerable respect and admiration for the hard-working but fiercely independent local fisherman, and had written a dramatic narrative poem titled *Bank Trollers*. Thomas found a suitable melody and created a seven-stanza song based on Sinclair's text, which he also called "Bank Trollers".

Bank Trollers

Bill Sinclair/Phil Thomas

Voice

When the buds swell green on the B. C. coast, And win-ter is on - ly a
fad - ing ghost, The trol - lers drive for the off - shore banks, With ice in their holds and
gas in their tanks. You will see them leave from the land - ing slips, Turn - ing sea - ward,
small wood - en ships.

The musical score is written on four staves in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. The melody is simple and folk-like, with a mix of quarter, eighth, and half notes. The lyrics are written below the notes, with hyphens indicating syllables that span across notes. The piece concludes with a double bar line.

When the buds swell green on the B.C. coast
And winter is only a fading ghost,
The trollers drive for the offshore banks
With ice in their holds and gas in their tanks.
You will see them leave from the landing slips,
Turning seaward – small wooden ships.

From Port of Vancouver, from snug James Bay,
From Rupert Harbour at break of day,
From tide-swept Juan de Fuca Strait,
From the narrow gut of the Lions Gate,
Or out from the mouth of Queen Charlotte Sound
You will see them roll to the salmon ground.

They go to plough in a Hell's Half-Acre
On the breast of the old gray widow-maker,
With hook-scarred fingers they ply their trade,
In the place where the ocean storms are made,
From dawn till a bloodshot sun goes down
To feed hungry folk in some distant town.

From Umatilla to Icy Strait,
From gaunt Cape Beale to Skidegate,
The troller's poles go waving by,
Etched against a bleared gray sky,

Where millions of herring and needlefish breed
And springs and cohoes upon them feed.

And the men that man them are men who have come
From the Labrador and the coast of Maine,
From the shallow Baltic, the cold North Sea,
From the shores of Japan and Italy.
Finns and Norskys, Canucks and Yanks
Drag trolling gear on the salmon banks.

No weekly paycheck, no eight-hour day,
Not so many hours for so much pay,
Out there beyond pierhead or harbour docks
They take no orders, they punch no clocks.
They won their boats (if not always clear),
Their souls are their own and so is their gear.

Why do they plow in the Hell's Half-Acre
On the breast of the old gray widow-maker?
In rain, fog, sunshine, in calm or blow,
Loaded or empty they come and go;
They fish for a living, as you and I
Must work for a living until we die.

Phil Thomas seems to have collected his first folksong in 1953, perhaps in Pender Harbour, although the singer from whom he recorded it was Norman Klein, who lived in North Vancouver. It was also about the local fishermen, although it portrayed them in a more jocular fashion, repeating in self-mockery the slurs perpetrated by coastal loggers against their neighbours (often family members) who preferred the water to the forests.

Come all you jolly listeners and hear me while I hum,
A story I will tell you of the salty fisherman.
From all the little rivers and inlets of the coast
He seems to like Pender Harbour to bum around the most.

Oh, early on a summer's morn when the breakers pound,
He eases from his greasy bunk and gazes all around.
The sky's a little cloudy and breezes fan the sea;
He crawls again into his cave, a breakfast for the flea.

Or he may crank his lemon and through the waters plough
To swing some bull and gossip over at the scow.
They never wash their carcasses, that's why they always drown,
The bilge, the grease, the weight of fleas always drags them down.

They wear their shirts until they rot and fall into the chuck,
Their feet stick out of rubber boots, their pants themselves could walk.
Most of them are lazy born, others say they're tired,
They walk a low and shuffling gait as if their feet were mired.

Siwash bums, quarterbreeds, big Swedes, Scots, and Poles,
The scum of many different blends that should be on the coals.
One always smells a fisherman before he's seen or heard,
He leads a free and careless life; oh, what a funny bird!

They tell you stories by the mile of fish that they have nailed,
They tell you of creatures of the deep and of the seas they've sailed.
Now, all you jolly listeners, believe me if you can—
It's all the truth I'm telling you, 'cause I'm a fisherman.

Pender Harbour Fisherman

Anon

Voice

Come all ye jol - ly listen - ers and hear me while I hum, A
 stor - y I will tell you of the salt - y fish - er - man. From all the lit - tle riv - ers and
 in - lets of the coast He seems to like Pen - der Har - bour to burn a - round
 the most.

The next recordings in the P.J. Thomas Collection date from three years later, in 1956. They consist of a CBC interview with Captain Charles Cates, a retired seaman and shanty-singer from Halifax, along with performances of three songs: “Shenandoah”, “Drimmindoon”, and “The Mutiny of the *Saladin*”. Cates had been discovered and recorded by Helen Creighton while living in Nova Scotia, but it appears that by 1958 at the latest he had moved to Vancouver. For the next three years he would be Phil Thomas’ most forthcoming and prolific informant. Thomas initially concentrated on Cates’ repertoire of shanties and other sea songs. He recorded seven of them in 1958, namely “Blow, Boys, Blow”, “Old Horse”, “The Stately *Southerner*”, “Captain Kidd”, “The Flash Packet”, “The *Cumberland’s Crew*” and “The

City of Baltimore”. During the next two years Cates continued to occasionally supply Thomas with songs from his repertoire. There were some more shanties, such as “Sacramento”, “Leave Her, Johnny, Leave Her” and “Stormalong”, and more sea songs about the fate of particular ships, including “The *Florida*”, “The *Merrimac*” and “The *Mary Sommers*”. Cates knew a version of “The Sailor’s Almanac” and a few humorous ditties such as “Jerry, Go Ile the Car”, “I Wonder If They’d Know Me Now”, and the homes-tading song “A Life in a Prairie Shack”. He also sang a couple of mining songs. “In the Days of ‘Forty Nine’” was about the California Gold Rush, but “Klondike!” was a booster-song about its later Canadian equivalent in the Yukon:

Oh, come to the place where they struck it rich,
 Come where the treasure lies hid!
 Where your hat full of mud is a five-pound note
 And a clod on your heel is a quid!

CHORUS:
 Kondike! Klondike!
 Label your luggage for Klondike.
 Oh, there ain’t no luck in the town today,

There ain’t no work down Moodyville way,
 So pack up your traps and be off, I say,
 Off and away to the Klondike!

Oh, they scratches the earth and it tumbles out,
 More than your hands can hold;
 For the hills above and the plains beneath
 Are crackin’ and bustin’ with gold!

Klondike!

Anon

Voice

Oh, come to the place where they struck it rich, Come where the treasure lies
hid! Where your hat full of mud is a five - pound note, And a clod on your heel is a
quid! Klon - dike! Klon - dike! lab-el your lug-gage for Klon - dike. Oh, there
ain't no luck in the town to - day, There ain't no work down Mood - y-ville way, So
pack up your traps and be off, I say, Off and a-way to the Klon-dike!

Charlie Cates was not the only retired mariner that Thomas got to know in the late fifties. There was also Captain William R. Hall of Campbell River. Bill Hall was not a prolific informant, but his material was very interesting, and Thomas would return to record him again in 1962. In addition to “The Preacher and the Slave” and a humorous logging song titled “The Potlatch Fair” (which is included in *Songs of the Pacific Northwest*, p. 145), Hall contributed a song in pidgin Chinook called “Seattle Illa-hee”. This, Thomas concluded, was probably the old-

There'll be mowitch,
And klootchman by the way,
When we 'rive at Seattle illahee.

CHORUS

Row, boys, row! Let's travel
To the place they call Seattle,
That's the place to have a spree!
Seattle illahee.

est song yet found orally on the Canadian west coast. It probably dated from the fur trade era when the Hudson's Bay Company had a post at Fort Vancouver in what is now Washington State, and the “illa-hee” in the title translated either as “that place” or, more specifically, “that place with a bawdy house”. The word “klootchman” meant “women”, so Seattle was evidently a location that offered female companionship as well as good food (clams and venison are specifically mentioned) and drink.

There'll be hiyu clams,
And klootchman by the way,
Hiyu tenas moosum,
Till daylight fades away.

Kwonesum kwonesum cooley,
Kopa nika illahee,
Kunamokst kapswalla moosum,
As the daylight fades away.


Seattle Illahee

Anon

Voice



There'll be mow-itch, And klootch-man by the way, When we



rive at Se-at-tle Il-la - hee. Row, boys, row! Let's trav-el _____ To the place they call Se-




at-le, _____ That's the place to have a spree! Se - at-le Il-la - hee! _____ They'll be



hi-yu clams, And klootch-man by the way, Hi-yu ten-as moos-um, Till day-light fades a-way.



Kwone-sum kwone-sum cool-ey, Ko-pa ni-ka il-la hee, Ku-na mokst kaps-wal-la moos-um, As the



day - light fades a - way.

Thomas' other most valuable informant in the late 1950s was Ed Dalby of Campbell River. Dalby had paid his dues in the forestry industry, and he could still sing some of the old logging songs. He contributed three of them, all of which Thomas would print in *Songs of the Pacific Northwest*. They were "The Old Go-Hungry Hashhouse" (p. 70),

"Buck's Camp Down at Monroe" (p. 142), and this short but atmospheric ditty, "Way Up the Ucletaw". The Ucletaw, incidentally, is now known as the Yuculta Rapids and is situated between Quadra and Sonora islands at the northern end of the Strait of Georgia.

Way Up the Ucletaw

Anon

Voice

Come all you bull-necked log-gers ___ And hear me sing my song, ___ For
it is ver-y short And it will not keep you long. ___ We had blan-kets for to trav-el, ___
Bis-cuits for to chaw, ___ We were in search of pitch-backs ___ Way up the Uc-let - aw. ___

Come all you bull-necked loggers
And hear me sing my song,
For it is very short
And it will not keep you long.

CHORUS:
We had blankets for to travel,
Biscuits for to chaw,
We were in search of pitchbacks
Way up the Ucletaw.

We're leaving Vancouver
With sorrow, grief and woe,
Heading up the country
A hundred miles or so.

We hired fourteen loggers,
And we hired a man to saw,
We had a Chineese cook,
And he run the hotcakes raw.

Collecting in the 1960s

After a short break, Thomas resumed collecting vernacular songs in 1961, by which time he was living and teaching in Vancouver. His most celebrated informant during the early 1960s was Stanley G. Triggs, who would go on to make an LP for Folkways Records titled *Bunkhouse and Forecastle Songs of the Northwest* (FG 3569). Thomas taped Triggs singing some of the songs that would appear on that record, including "The *Oda G.*". Other titles by

Triggs in the Thomas collection are "Pretty Words and Poetry", "The Wreck of the *Green Cove*", "The Lookout in the Sky", "The Homesick Trapper", a mandolin tune called "The Lake of Crimson", and this song, "The Wreck of the *C. P. Yorke*", about a tragedy that occurred in December 1953. At the time Triggs had been working as a cook-deckhand on a similar tugboat, so the incident struck close to home and inspired him later to write the song.

The Wreck of the C. P. Yorke

Stanley G. Triggs

Voice

Oh, come all ye ship - mates and lis - ten to me, To a
stor - y that will make you grieve, Of a tug that went down off Tat - ten - ham
Ledge, 'Twas on a Christ - mas Eve.

The image shows three staves of musical notation in treble clef, 3/4 time. The first staff begins with a red 'Voice' label. The lyrics are written below the notes, with red underlines under 'mates', 'grieve,', and 'Eve.' in the original image.

Oh, come all ye shipmates and listen to me,
To a story that will make you grieve,
Of a tug that went down off Tattenham Ledge,
'Twas on a Christmas eve.

The *C. P. Yorke* she was headin' north,
She was headin' north for Duncan bay,
And though 'twas the mate that stood watch at her
wheel,
'Twas the devil that guided her way.

She was just about five miles up in the Stretch
When a south-east gale began to blow;
They headed for shelter in Buccaneer Bay,
That's the only place there was to go.

Stanley Triggs was not Thomas' only informant in 1961. Indeed, it was the year when he started traveling to different regions of the province in search of songs. In the southern Okanagan he found two female singers, Mrs. Corkel of Keremeos and Mrs. Venables of Oliver (their first names do not seem to have been recorded). The former contributed "The Beautiful Nicola Valley", "Dunglebeck's Machine" and a lullaby, "Rock-a-bye Baby", while the latter sang such comic and children's songs as "Sweetly Sings the Donkey", "I Saw Esau Kissing Kate" and "The Cock Sat Up the Yew Tree". At nearby Vaux Lake Thomas found Louis Thompson, who knew a pidgin Chinook fragment called "Hiyu Clams and Mowitch" which was evidently a variant of "Seattle Illahee". A few miles further north, on the eastern shore of the

In Welcome Pass the mate was alert
For the sight of the marker ahead,
But he cut her too short comin' out of the Pass
And grounded on Tattenham Ledge.

The barge dragged the tugboat off into the deep,
She sank twenty fathoms down;
Only the chief and the skipper survived,
The five other men were drowned.

They salvaged the tugboat and she's working yet,
She has a new crew brave and bold,
But she'll never forget that cold Christmas eve,
Nor the ghosts of the five in her hold.

Okanagan Lake, lived Stanley Botting, and it was from him that Thomas recorded, for the first time, British Columbia versions of such well-known North American vernacular songs as "The Jam on Gerry's Rocks" and "The Dying Cowboy". Botting's repertoire was quite varied, comprising logging songs ("I Went to the Woods"), sea songs ("The Wreck of the *Mary L. Mackay*"), and cowboy songs ("Tying a Knot in the Devil's Tail"), as well as "Pat Riley", "The Dying Outlaw" and "All On a Summer's Day".

At Okanagan Falls Thomas found Vernon Fetterly. Fetterly appears to have given him just one song, but it was a good one, based on his own experience working in a local sawmill when he first arrived in British Columbia. Fetterly used the tune and text of "Arkansas" as his model.

My Name 'Tis Vernon Fetterly

Vernon Fetterly

Voice



My name 'tis Vern-on Fet-ter-ly, I was born in Hunts-ville town. For
sev-en long years - or long - er I've trav-elled this wide world round. I ram-bled to the
west, my boys, And bit-ter times I saw, But I nev - er knew what hard times was till
Brit-ish Col-umb - i - a.

My name 'tis Vernon Fetterly,
I was born in Huntsville town.
For seven long years or longer
I've traveled this wide world round.
I rambled to the west, my boys,
And bitter times I saw,
But I never knew what hard times was
Till British Columbia.

In eighteen hundred and sixty-two
In the merry month of June
I landed in British Columbia
On a Saturday afternoon.
Up stepped a long-legged skeleton,
His name was Harry Robb,
He invited me to his hotel
The best in British Columbia.

I rose from bed next morning
To look around the place,
Before I wandered very far
Harry stared me in the face:
Said he'd give me board and lodging
If in his mill I'd saw,
He said I'd ne'er regret the day
I hit British Columbia.

Well, I took the job with Harry Robb,
I'll ne'er forget his frame,
He stood six-foot-seven in his shoes,
As lean as any crane;
His hair hung down in rat tails,
He had a lantern jaw;
A specimen of the men you see
In British Columbia.

He fed me on corn dodgers
Just as hard as any rock,
Till my teeth began to loosen
And my knees began to knock.
You should have seen the look of me,
I could hide behind a straw;
You bet I regretted the day I came
To British Columbia.

I've little flesh upon my bones,
Just enough to shiver;
Before the ice has froze me in
I'm going down the river.
If I ever see your land again
I'll hand to you my paw,
But it will be through a telescope
That I see British Columbia.

The next year found Thomas collecting on Vancouver Island and in the Gulf Islands. In the forestry and mining community of Cumberland, south of Courtenay. George Clark sang him “Fifty Years from Now”, and further south, at Ladysmith, he found two informants, Dick Morgan and George Clark, who both knew versions of “Bowser’s Seventy-Twa”, a satirical song about the provincial government’s resort to military action in 1913 to suppress a coal miner’s strike (included on pp. 166-167 of *Songs of the Pacific Northwest*). It was on Mayne Island, however, that Thomas located his most prolific informant of the year, Jimmy ‘Scotty’ Neal, from whom he recorded seventeen songs and a banjo tune. Some of Neal’s repertoire were music hall ditties (“The Old Cuckoo Clock”), some were of Irish origin (“Mollie Flynn” and “The Irish Annie Laurie”), and some were self-composed (“Here, Home Here on Mayne”) but none struck Thomas as good enough to publish.

He had better luck in 1963, his first bonanza year as a vernacular song collector. He went back to the Okanagan, and it was down by the border with the U.S.A., in Osoyoos, that he discovered Kate Lacey and heard for the first time “Sunset”, a poignant reli-

gious song about a dying cowboy that would find a place in *Songs of the Pacific Northwest* (p. 196).

Even more exciting was discovering the Kehoe family, who had land on nearby Anarchist Mountain but lived in Osoyoos some of the time. John Kehoe’s repertoire was a mix of children’s songs (“Hey, Mister, Let’s Build a Snowman”), seasonal songs (“Christmas Day”), comic songs (“The Cook at Cummins Creek”), local songs (“Out in the North End of the Kootenays”), transportation songs (“The Mack Truck”) and logging songs (“The Kinthead Logging Crew”), and Thomas recorded nearly twenty items from him. Jim Kehoe’s stock of songs was smaller, but with items such as “Jesse James” and “Roll on, You Log Haulers” he made up in quality for what he lacked in quantity. Perhaps the best of them all was a Western version of “The Lakes of Ponchartrain” that had been transformed into “The Banks of the Similkameen”. The Similkameen River, incidentally, rises in what is now Manning Provincial Park (south of Princeton) and makes a loop north through the western Okanagan before heading south through Keremeos and across the U.S. border.

Banks of the Similkameen

Anon

Voice

It was one Sun-day morning I bid Grand Forks a-dieu, To beat my way to
Or-a-ville, a place that I once knew, Ov-er ties and rail-way cross-ings I beat my wear-y
way, Un-til I met a maid-en at the close of one hot day.

It was one Sunday morning I bid Grand Forks adieu,
To beat my way to Oroville, a place that I once knew;
Over ties and railway crossings I beat my weary way
Until I met a maiden at the close of one hot day.

“Good eve, good eve, fair maiden! My money does me no good,
If it hadn’t a-been for the coyotes I’d a-stayed out in the wood.”

“You’re welcome, welcome, stranger, although our home is plain—
We ne’er have turned a stranger out on the Banks of the S’ milkameen.”

She took me to her mother’s home—she treated me quite well,
Her hair in dark ringlets about her shoulders fell;
I tried to paint her beauty, but true, it was in vain,
For perfect was the Oroville girl on the banks of the S’ milkameen.

I asked her to marry me; she said it ne’er could be;
She said she had a lover, and he lived in B.C.,
She said she had a lover, and true she would remain
Until he came to claim her on the banks of the S’ milkameen.

So adieu, adieu, fair maiden, I never shall see no more,
But I’ll never forget your kindness, nor the cottage by the shore.
So adieu, adieu, fair maiden, I’ll drink to the flowing stream,
I’ll drink to the health of the Oroville girl on the banks of the S’ milkameen.

Thomas did a lot of other collecting in 1963. Much of it took place in Vancouver. From the children at Livingstone School he recorded fourteen skipping rhymes, and from Anice Halpin three songs: “McCarty”, “Puddings and Pies” and “Marguerite”. His best informant in the city, however, was undoubtedly Russell Miller. Miller knew a couple of World War I songs, “We Are, We Are, We Are Canadians!” and “D’Ye Ken Sam Hughes?”. He also knew comic Irish songs (“Pat Malone’s Wake”), children’s verses (“The Owl and the Pussycat”), sentimental religious songs (“When Earth’s Last Picture is Painted”) and early country music standards (“Wreck of the Number Nine”), but he also sang a goodly number of traditional folksongs, English and Canadian. These included “The Derby Ram”, “No, Sir, No” and “Jack Monroe”, as well as a broadside ballad, “The Irish Captain (The *Lady Leroy*)”, and two traditional ballads, “The Gypsy Davy” (Child # 200) and “Lady Isabel and the Elf-Knight” (Child # 4). In all, Thomas recorded twenty items from Miller, although only the two World War I songs appear in *Songs of the Pacific Northwest* (pp. 98 & 102).

Back in the B.C. interior, Thomas found a valuable informant in Pritchard, on the South Thompson River east of Kamloops. This was Nels McKim, who knew several railway songs, such as “The Soo Line Cannonball” and “Working on the Northern Railroad”. The influence of Wilf Carter was evident in

Well, a loggin’ outfit, so they say,
Has got to be good, or it will not pay;
But let me tell you ‘bout one I know
That was broke down more than she ever did go.

CHORUS

Haywire crew, haywire riggin’,
Haywire truck and an old H.D.
When the boys come home in the evenin’,
Oh, how haywire can an outfit be?

“When It’s Springtime in the Rockies”, and “A Great Big Coon” was apparently American in origin. McKim’s more traditional material included a murder ballad, “The Wexford Girl”, a B.C. version of a well-known logging song (“The Jam on Garrett’s Rocks”), and the broadside ballad called “The Faithful Sailor Boy”. Other notable items in his repertoire were “The *Mary Ellen*” and the ranching song “Tying a Knot in the Devil’s Tail”.

Further south, in Princeton, on the banks of the Similkameen, Thomas discovered Pinky Foster, who sang him “The Sheepherder’s Lament”, “Yavapai Pete” and “Molly Darlin’”. Bob Baird was another interesting informant living in the same community. He had a varied repertoire that included “Jack is Every Inch a Sailor” and the ubiquitous “Dying Cowboy”, but also “Railroad Nick” and a couple of mining songs, “Gold in the Tullameen” and “Come All You Coal Miners”. The latter—a laconic lament about miners’ pensions being funded by liquor store profits provided by the thirsty miners themselves—would turn out (along with “Hard Rock Miner”) to be one of the most common vernacular mining songs of the B.C. interior, and it was duly included in *Songs of the Pacific Northwest* (p. 96). But Baird’s most striking contribution was undoubtedly “Haywire Outfit”, a humorous song with an underlying note of bitterness that castigated the old and poorly-maintained equipment with which loggers were forced to work:

We were loadin’ logs that were short and small,
Buildin’ a load that was wide and tall,
It was just at the face when the hook pulled free—
Oh, how haywire can an outfit be?

The teamster’s face was black and grim,
He reached for an axe to chop a limb,
The team took off and straddled a tree—
Oh, how haywire can an outfit be?

One fell down and we caught him fine,
 The other took the spreaders and lines,
 Down the road and through the trees—
 Oh, how haywire can an outfit be?

The cat-man's pullin' the winch line back,
 The hot sun's melting him in his track,
 The sweat's in his eyes and he cannot see—
 Oh, how haywire can an outfit be?

The boys at the mill are good in their way
 But they watch the log trucks every day,
 When the White comes in, they shout with glee—
 "Oh, how haywire can an outfit be?"

The mechanics wait in the evening light
 And wonder what will be wrong tonight,
 They grin and say, as they look and see,
 "Oh, how haywire can an outfit be?"

Haywire Outfit

Anon

Voice

Well, a log-gin' out-fit, so they say, Has got to be good, or it
 will not pay. But let me tell you 'bout one I know, That was broke down more ___ than she
 ev-er did go. Hay-wire crew, hay - wire ___ rig-gin', ___ Hay-wire truck and an
 old H. D. When the boys come home ___ in the evənin', Oh, ___ how hay-wire ___ can an
 out-fit be?

Thomas went back to Nels McKim in Pritchard in 1964, obtaining from him versions of "Seattle Illa-hee", "Drill, Ye Tarriers, Drill" and "Tying a Knot in the Devil's Tail". While he was in the Kamloops area he picked up the freighting song "Teaming up the Cariboo Road" (*SPNW*, p. 112) from Gerald Currie in Chase (located at the west end of Shuswap Lake) and eight items from Fred Thompson of Heffley Creek. These included sentimental religious songs ("The Mother's Prayer" and "Railroad to Heaven") and

comic ditties ("Mouse Ran Up My Nightie") but also folksongs such as "The Wild Colonial Boy" and "The Jolly Shanty Boy".

Thomas went back to Vancouver singer Russell Miller for a version of "The Frog and the Mouse", while another city singer, P.L. Tait, sang him "The Dark-Eyed Sailor". Raymond Hull was the most prolific singer-songwriter Thomas encountered that year, and he recorded seventeen of Hull's songs, which were mainly satirical and/or political in nature. They

included “I Gave My Love Some Sherry”, “Sticking Up the Union”, “Blushing in High Places” (about the Christine Keeler affair), “Talking Capitalist Blues”, “When the Freeway Goes Through”, “The Great Railroad Robbery” and “The Ballad of Red Ducharme”. South of Vancouver, in Surrey, Thomas discovered Bill Baldwin, whose contributions included “When We Loggers Come to Town”, “The Alberta Homestead” and “Cross-Eyed Sarah Jane”.

The remainder of Thomas’ 1964 collecting was done in a number of diverse locations. He returned to the Princeton area between the Okanagan and the Cascade Mountains and in Coalmont located Bill Frew. Frew’s songs were mainly about mining and homesteading, and they included “Sod Shanty on my Claim”, “This Coalmont’s a Wonderful Sight” and the autobiographical “Bill Frew’s Coal Mine”. Thomas expected to find mining songs also on Vancouver Island, and in Port Alberni he did obtain another

version of “Hard Rock Miner” from Barry Black, while in the same town he recorded Harry Raven singing “The Ocean Falls Song”.

The furthest north Thomas’ search took him that year was to Smithers on the CN line between Prince George and Prince Rupert; here, in the Bulkley River valley, he recorded two informants, Gladys Bury singing “Will You Come Along, John” and R. Jeffrey singing a local composition about “The Skeena River” (of which the Bulkley was a tributary).

Thomas also traveled to north-east B.C., to the upper basin of the Peace River on the eastern side of the Rockies. Here, at Fort St. John, he found Cecil P. Pickell, from whom he obtained three songs: “Fort Nelson Freighter’s Song” (included in *Songs of the Pacific Northwest* on p. 137), “The Two Flies”, and this paean to the Peace Country, “Where the Great Peace River Flows”.

Where the Great Peace River Flows

Anon

Voice

The musical score is written on five staves of a single treble clef. The key signature has one sharp (F#), and the time signature is 4/4. The lyrics are: "There's a riv - er that is flow - ing up to - ward the north - ern sea; It's not famed in song or stor - y, still it has a charm for me. It has called me from the south - land, where the star - ry ban - ner blows, And I've set - tled down for ev - er where the great Peace Riv - er flows." Red underlines are placed under the words "flow - ing", "me.", and "flows." in the original image.

There's a riv - er that is flow - ing up to - ward the north - ern
 sea; It's not famed in song or stor - y, still it has a charm for
 me. It has called me from the south - land, where the star - ry ban - ner
 blows, And I've set - tled down for ev - er where the great Peace Riv - er
 flows.

There's a river that is flowing up toward the northern sea,
It's not famed in song or story, still it has a charm for me.
It has called me from the southland where the starry banner blows,
And I've settled down forever where the great Peace River flows.

I've a little moss-chinked cabin just beyond its northern shore,
Where I hope to live contented till this span of life is o'er;
May life's cares pass lightly o'er me, all its troubles and its woes
Be to me a fleeting memory where the great Peace River flows.

In this little bit of Eden where the sun at midnight gleams
All our girls are just like visions from the pleasant land of dreams,
Pretty as our dainty bluebells, fair as our native rose,
They make all our lives seem brighter where the great Peace River flows.

We have come from every nation, we have done our very best
To uphold the flag of Britain in this great and glorious west,
And no foeman's feet dare trample on our own true prairie rose,
'Tis the emblem of our country where the great Peace River flows.

Where the great Peace River's flowing, where the pretty bluebell grows,
And the prairies they are glowing with the beauties of the rose,
Where the sun is always shining, no-one sits down here repining,
And each cloud has a silver lining where the great Peace River flows.

When I get the final summons from the courthouse in the skies
From the Judge of all the judges, may He deem it no surprise
If I ask Him just one favor—He may grant it—no one knows:
“Send me back beside the Rockies where the great Peace River flows!”

Phil Thomas did very little collecting, at least with a tape recorder, during the next two years, but he resumed his visionary project in 1967. His principal collecting trip that year was to Beaton, a small community in the Columbia River valley in the northern Kootenays. Here he found George and Stuart Lindsley. Stuart regaled him with “When You Wore a Tulip” (a sentimental pop song) and “One-Eyed Riley” (a bawdy comic song), but George had more of the kind of thing that Thomas was looking for. Much of his repertoire, such as “The Big Rock Candy Mountain”, “The Great American Bum”, “It Ain't Gonna Rain No More”, “Casey Jones”, “The Wreck of the 97” and “Little Old Log Cabin in the Lane” was American and had probably been learned from old 78s, but he also had some railroad songs (“Ridin' On an East-bound Freight Train” and “There's Been Many Men Killed on the Railroad”). Moreover, he had local material, including “The Fish River Trail”, “Where the Lardeau River Flows”, “Little Camp Above Beaton” and “They Say They Are

Hello, stranger, how do you do?
There's something I'd like to say to you.
You seem surprised I recognize;
I'm no company stool but I just surmise
You're from the place I'm longing to be.
Your smiling face seems to say to me
You're from the island, your land and my land,

Flooding Old Beaton” (about the damming of the Columbia to turn the Arrow Lakes into a reservoir).

The next year saw Thomas staying in Vancouver, his main informants being Tom Vincent and Jacob Erikson. Erikson was a sailor, and his repertoire consisted entirely of shanties; Thomas recorded him singing “Rolling Home for Dear Old England” and “Leave Her, Johnny, Leave Her”. Tom Vincent contributed only one song, but it was “We Are Sam Hughes' Army”, an interesting World War I song that Thomas thought good enough to include in *Songs of the Pacific Northwest* (p. 104). In 1969 he went back to Vancouver Island to look for logging and mining songs, but the only informant he found worth taping was John Strachan of Union Bay. As the text indicates, Strachan's song, “Are You from Bevan?”, was about a strike and lockout in coal mines of the Cumberland district (south and east of Courtenay) between 1912 and 1914. Strachan could only remember the chorus, so Thomas filled in the missing verses and the rest of the tune himself.

So tell me can it be—

CHORUS

Are you from Bevan? I said from Bevan,
Where those fields of stumps they beckon to me?
I'm glad to see you! Tell me how be you,
And those friends I'm longing to see.

Are You From Bevan?

Anon/Thomas

Voice



He-lo, stran-ger, how do you do? There's some-thing I'd like to say to you.



You seem sur-prised I re - cog-nize, I'm no com-pan-y stool but I just sur - mise —



You're from the place I'm long-ing to be. Your smil - ing face seems to say to me,



You're from the is - land, Your land and my land, So tell me can it be... Are you from



Bev - an? I said from Bev - an, — Where those fields of stumps they



beck-on to me? I'm glad to see you! Tell me how be you, — And those friends I'm longing to



see. If you're from Un - ion Bay or Courte-nay or Cumb-er - land,



An - y place be - low that Bev - an sec - ond dam, Are you from Bev - an? I said from



Bev - an, — 'Cause I'm from Bev - an too!

If you're from Union Bay or Courtenay or Cumberland,
Any place below that Bevan second dam—
Are you from Bevan? I said from Bevan,
'Cause I'm from Bevan too!

It was way back in nineteen and twelve
Our gas committee was put on the shelf.

First we walked out, then we were locked out—
Then by a foul we were all but knocked out.
Our union miners faced guns and jail,
Hundreds of us were held without bail,
But by August 1914 our labour they were courting,
But they blacklisted me—

Collecting in the 1970s

Thomas resumed collecting with his tape-recorder in a very determined fashion in 1970. In the summer he headed back towards the Okanagan and the Kootenays. On the way, at Princeton, he encountered (and recorded) three singers who shared the same first name: Art Hewitt sang “The Cops’ll Have a Hell of a Time”, Art Shenton “The Faithful Sailor Boy”, and Art Rider “The Tullameen Mine” (the Tullameen River has its source in the Cascade mountains and flows eastwards to join the Similkameen at Princeton). Then at Keremeos he found Herbert Clark, and recorded four songs from him: “Come, Klootchman”, “Windy Bill”, “The Dying Cowboy” and a version of “The Banks of the Similkameen”.

When he reached the Okanagan Thomas got in touch again with some of the singers he had met seven years before, including Jim and John Kehoe. He found Jim on Anarchist Mountain and recorded him singing “Grampa’s Gone” and “Goodbye, I’m Going Home”. The more prolific John Kehoe had to be tracked down in Osoyoos and contributed another ten songs from his extensive repertoire. They included regional items such as “Logging on Cobalt” and “She Was Bred in the Okanagan”, but most, such as “Vietnam”, “The Cost of Living” and “The News is Getting Better All the Time”, were in a satirical or overtly political vein. A new singer from the area was Bruce Chapman of Okanagan Falls, from whom Thomas obtained another variant of “The Banks of Similkameen”, demonstrating that the song had achieved considerable popularity in the region.

Further east, in the Kootenays, Thomas discovered another singing family, the Irvings of Castlegar. Hazel Irving provided him with the best version of “Hard Rock Miner” that he had yet heard. The family patriarch, Joe Irving Sr., also knew that song but in addition contributed “When It’s Winter in the Kootenays”, “The Northern Lights are Gleaming”, “The Squaws Along the Yukon” and “The Doukhobor Girls”. His son, Joe Irving Jr., had an interesting repertoire, comprising “The Time of the Chimes”, “Red Iron, Hard Rock and Deep Water”, “The High Arrow Dam”, “The Fishermen’s Union” and “I Don’t Work for a Living”, while Jack Irving provided “Sun-Sun-Sunflower Seeds”, “Big Chief Buffalo Nickel” and

“The Game Was Held on Sunday”. Another Castlegar resident, Shannon Graham, was the source for a catchy, if rather silly, comic song about a local railroad, “The Kettle Valley Line”, while Mildred Roylance of the Kettle Valley District contributed a mining song, “The Prospector’s Home”. Moving on to the Kootenay Lake area, Thomas obtained yet another version of “Hard Rock Miner”, this time from Luigi del Puppo of Nelson, who provided seven other songs, including “North to Krestova”, “The Fireman’s Lament” and “The Red Light Saloon”. At Argenta, a small community at the northern end of the Kootenay Lake, Thomas located Dick Pollard and recorded him singing a hard-hitting song about the hardships and dangers of the logging industry, “The Greenhorn Song”; naturally it was included in *Songs of the Pacific Northwest* (p. 150).

After putting so much time and effort into collecting in 1970, Thomas gave his tape-recorder a break the next year, apart from one session with Jon Bartlett that captured “Free, Free Beer for All the Workers” for posterity. In 1972 Thomas recorded several Vancouver residents, including the topical songwriter Vera Johnson. He made another visit to the mining area on Vancouver Island where he had previously located John Strachan, and on this occasion found Karl Coe in Cumberland. Coe sang “My Sweetheart’s the Mule in the Mine”.

Thomas continued his quest for industrial songs further north on the Island, visiting the west coast communities of Zeballos and Tahsis. At Zeballos he found a worker of Irish descent, Vic O’Hara, who sang him “Skibbereen”, but it was at Tahsis that he found what he was looking for. Bill Lore of Tahsis knew “Haywire Outfit” and he also contributed four other solo songs, “Ten of Us Left Tahsis”, “The Mountain at Green’s”, “The Death of Maxwell” and “Farewell, Prince Rupert”. With his wife Audrey he also performed “The Shithouse On Our Farm”, “The Squaws Along the Yukon”, and a mining song that Thomas knew instantly was destined for inclusion in *Songs of the Pacific Northwest* (on p. 169), “Taku Miners”.

The next year, 1973, was perhaps Phil Thomas’ most successful year as a collector, certainly in terms

of the quantity of material that he obtained. He taped another set (twenty items) of children's game songs, visiting various schools in the Greater Vancouver area, and from Vern Seidelman picked up an old patriotic song that he would include in *Songs of the Pacific Northwest*, "Hip-Hip-Hoorah for Our Native Canada!" (p. 76). One of the best logging songs in his collection, "The Greenchain Song", was proffered by Don Fraser of Vancouver, while Ozzie Hutchings of Victoria came up with "The B.C. Logger" and "Where Are the Lads of Old Anyox Tonight?".

Back in the B.C. interior, a trip up the Fraser River to Lillooet found several local singers. Mrs. Annie Paul sang "The Lillooet Song", while Frank Bunner knew a number of folksongs and cowboy songs. The latter included "The Gay Cowboy", "The Lonely Cowboy", "I Don't Want No Indian Girl" and "The Little Mohee", while his other North American items included "The Lethbridge Girl", "Columbia Valley" and "The Boston Burglar". He also knew the ballads "Molly Bawn" and "Barbara Allen". Jim Akers was another valuable Lillooet informant. His repertoire, too, was long on American material, including several cowboy songs: "Bury Me Not in the Lone Prairie", "The Cowboy Greenhorn", "The Dying Cowboy", "Git Along, Little Dogies", and "The Old Chisholm Trail". He also sang "Are You From Dixie?" and "North to Alaska", as well as "The Sailor Boy" and "The Fatal Wedding". Earlier in his life he had tried his hand at homesteading in Alberta, and he provided Thomas with one of the relatively few homesteading songs that he collected in B.C. It was called "The Pembina River Homestead", and it explained quite eloquently why the Akers family had moved on across the Rockies (*SPNW*, p. 79).

Retreating south to the junction of the Fraser and Thompson rivers and then following the Thompson upstream in a northerly and then easterly direction, Thomas came to where the Deadman River joins the Thompson, near the western end of the Kamloops Lake. Near here, at Deadman's Creek, he was in ranching country, and cowboy Ronnie Craig gave him the best version—a localized one—of "Tying a Knot in the Devil's Tail" that he had come across. It was the one he would choose for publication. Going north up the Deadman River, Thomas eventually came to the small community of Vidette, where the Lomon family lived. They were ranchers with Scandinavian and British ancestry, and it showed in their songs. Curtis Lomon sang "My Name is Ben Ole Olsen" and "The Strawberry Roan", Anne Lomon offered "When the Ice-Worms Nest Again", and Frank Lomon contributed "The Derby Ram", "I Ben a Swede" and "Five Nights Drunk". Finally Anne and Frank combined forces on "Log Cabin For Sale",

"Roll On, Little Dogies", "Waitin' for a Train", and "Paddy McGinty's Goat".

Returning to the Trans-Canada near Kamloops, Thomas' next destination was the northern Kootenays. Turning south down the Columbia River valley at Revelstoke, he soon came to the hamlet of Beaton, where he had discovered the Lindsleys in 1967. Sure enough, they were still there, and still devotees of 1920s hillbilly music. From Stuart Lindsley Thomas recorded "Silver Threads Among the Gold" and "Fifty Years From Now", while George offered a local song, "Working in the Lardeau"; for good measure they performed "He's In the Jailhouse Now" together, while neighbour Fred Lade came in to play "The Kootenay Waltz" and another unnamed tune on his concertina. An hour or so drive further south Thomas came to Nakusp, where he found truck driver and forester K. M. "Mutt" Papov. Papov sang a local logging song "In the Woods Around Nakusp" and two transportation songs: "Truck Driver's Song" and "The *Minto*", the latter about a paddle-wheeler that had served the logging communities on the Arrow Lakes. Thomas found that the controversy over damming the Columbia River at the Arrow Lakes had not disappeared. Such local songsters as the Lindsleys and Papov lamented the passing of the old days, and the same was true of a new informant Thomas found further south in the Kootenays, Earl 'Skip' Fraser of Castlegar, who sang about the impact of "The High Arrow Dam".

The final destination on Thomas' journey across the B.C. interior towards the Rocky Mountains was the eastern stretch of the Columbia River where it flows north between the Rockies and the Purcell Mountains. At Canal Flats he found Julius Crozier, who sang "Oh, We Jumped in the Buggy" and "When the Snowbirds Cross the Rockies". Further north, at Brisco, Buster Tegart proved to know a bundle of songs, although several were such cowboy items from the U.S.A. as "Buckin' Bronco", "Little Joe the Wrangler" and "The Strawberry Roan". His repertoire also included "On Top of Old Smokey", "North to Alaska", "The Indian Maid", and a well-known logging song in the form most often found in B.C., "The Jam on Garry's Rocks".

Much of Thomas' other extensive collecting in 1973 was done in the greater Vancouver region. Thomas Martin of Vancouver gave him another version of "Bowser's Seventy-Twa", while Paul Phillips contributed a railroad song ("Cumberland CPR Song"), a political song "The Banker Calls It 'Interest'", and a comic ditty ("Fifteen Men on a Boarding House Bed"). Another Vancouver resident, Fred Paubst, provided one of the few French language songs collected by Thomas, "Enroulez-vous le crise

de fou”, as well as the satirical political song “Bennett Loves Me” and “When It’s Springtime in Oakalla”. Thomas also caught up again with Stanley Triggs and taped him singing six items: “Farther Along”, “There is a Happy Land”, “The Blue Velvet Band”, “Meadow Blues”, “Moonlight and Skies” and the traditional song “Jim Whalen”. Across the Strait of Georgia Thomas taped local residents Douglas Leechman, who contributed an “Old Timer’s Song”, and D.W. Wilkinson, whose repertoire included “Bo-

tany Bay”, “All You Young Ladies”, “Servant Isabel-la”, “The Cascade Fire”, and several soldiers’ songs (“The Glen Whorple Highlanders”, “I Dreamed That I Died”, “We Were Marching Along”, “Eyes Right!”, and “A Soldier I Will Be”). Perhaps the most poignant song that Thomas recorded that year came from Bill Booth of Coquitlam. It was a mining song, but one which looked back with a jaundiced eye on his entire life’s experience with the exploitative industry.

I'm Only a Broken-Down Mucker

Anon

Voice

I'm on-ly a brok-en down muck-er, _____ My life in the mines I have
 spent, _____ I've been fooled and played for a suck-er, _____ My back's all
 brok-en and bent. _____ The drift-ing ma - chine was my fid - dle, _____ The stop-er my
 big _____ bass drum, _____ The pick and the shov-el my clap - pers, _____ My spir-its the
 de - mon rum. _____

I'm only a broken-down mucker—
 My life in the mines I have spent;
 I've been fooled and played for a sucker,
 My back's all broken and bent.
 The drifting machine was my fiddle,
 The stoper my big bass drum,
 The pick and the shovel my clappers,
 My spirits, the demon rum.

My youth was happy-go-lucky—
 Scarlet women were my delight,
 As soon as a wrong word was spoken
 I'd put up my dukes and fight.
 But pay-day was my hey-day—
 On beer and rum I'd get drunk,
 Then I'd wake up in the morning
 Broke and feeling so punk.

I scoffed at the man in the office,
 Called him belittlin' names;
 But I realize now that I'm older
 I used my back where he used his brains.
 The drifting machine done for my hearing,
 The mine gases dimmed my sight;
 I know my last days are nearing,
 But I'll rally for one last fight.

Phil Thomas kept on collecting with his tape-recorder for another two years. 1974 saw him doing more recording in the Greater Vancouver area. Ulrich Livingstone of New Westminster sang "I Was Born in Cincinnati" and "Britannia Mine" and played tunes on harmonica and bones. Leo Harris of Port Coquitlam offered "The Profiteering Blues" and a fishing song that Thomas would include in *Songs of the Pacific Northwest* (p. 190), "Bring Back That Gill Net to Me".

Thomas also went north that summer. One trip took him into the northern interior, first stopping at Lillooet to revisit Jim Akers, who regaled him with a version of Woody Guthrie's "Pastures of Plenty". Further north, at Smithers, he found a new informant, Jack Maki, who remembered old Wobblies songs including Joe Hill's "Where the Fraser River Flows", and performed a two-part recitation titled "Joe Hill's Will". At Telegraph Creek, well on the way to the Yukon, Thomas located Bobby Ball, the composer and singer of "Moose Hunter's Blues" (p. 88 in *Songs of the Pacific Northwest*).

Thomas' exploration of the remoter parts of northern British Columbia also took him to the

I'm only a broken-down mucker—
 My life in the mines I have spent,
 I've been fooled and played for a sucker,
 My back's all broken and bent.
 I know my last days are nearing,
 I know it only too well—
 I'll be working and sweating and swearing
 With a pick and a shovel in Hell.

Queen Charlotte Islands. On Graham Island he recorded Charles Hartie of Queen Charlotte City singing "The Red River Valley" and, perhaps surprisingly, "The Wild Barbaree", a variant of Child # 285, "The *George Aloe* and the *Sweepstake*", which was in fact an early seventeenth-century broadside ballad about a sea-battle between the English and the French.

There were no such exciting adventures during 1975, Thomas' last year of collecting with a tape-recorder. He apparently stayed on the Lower Mainland and recorded several local Vancouver Folk Club stalwarts, including Paddy Graber and Vera Johnson. New informants included Jim Taylor, Keith O'Brien, and Margerie Bonner Lowry, who contributed "On Such a May Morning" and "The Faithful Sailor Boy". It was with some satisfaction, however, that Thomas finally found in British Columbian oral tradition a logging song that he had known (from Ed McCurdy's singing and from Edith Fowke's 1954 publication *Folk Songs of Canada*) and loved for some time. The singer was Bennett King Lesley and the song was "The Grand Hotel".

There's a place in Vancouver you all know so well,
 It's a place where they keep rot-gut whiskey to sell;
 They also keep boarders and keep them like hell,
 And the name of the place is the Grand Hotel.

In the Grand Hotel when the loggers come in,
 It's amusing to see the proprietor grin;
 He knows they've got money, he'll soon have it all;
 "Come on, boys, have a drink!" you will hear Tommy call.

Oh, the bartender laughs as the money rolls in;
 They drink beer and whiskey, champagne, rum, and gin,
 Till they all get so boozy they can't drink no more,
 And the loggers lay scattered all over the floor.

In the morning the loggers wake up from their bed,
 Their money's all gone, and, oh Lord, what a head!
 They rush for the bar and call for a drink,
 And Tommy gets busy a-slinging the ink:

"Four bits for your bed, though you slept on the floor,
 And the breakfast you missed will be four bits more;
 And a four-dollar meal ticket, good at the bar,
 And a pass back to camp on the old *Cassiar*."

The Grand Hotel

Anon

Voice

There's a place in Van - cou - ver you all know so well _____ It's a
place where they keep rot - gut whis - key to sell, _____ They al - so keep board - ers and
keep them like hell _____ And the name of the place is the Grand _____ Ho - tel. _____

The image shows a musical score for the song 'The Grand Hotel'. It consists of four staves of music in treble clef, 2/4 time. The first three staves contain the vocal line with lyrics underneath. The lyrics are: 'There's a place in Van - cou - ver you all know so well _____ It's a place where they keep rot - gut whis - key to sell, _____ They al - so keep board - ers and keep them like hell _____ And the name of the place is the Grand _____ Ho - tel. _____'. The fourth staff is empty, indicating the end of the piece.

British Columbia: A History in Song

We have now followed the saga of Phil Thomas' collecting from oral tradition in British Columbia from 1953 to 1975. At that point he decided it was time to put in print some of the best items that he had found, and he determined to do so in a form that pointed up their relationship to the social history of British Columbia from its very earliest days as an English colony. The result, of course, was the first edition of *Songs of the Pacific Northwest*, published by Hancock House in Saanichton, B.C., in 1979.

It would be quite misleading, however, to leave the impression that *Songs of the Pacific Northwest* was based entirely on Thomas' song-collecting with his tape-recorder. Quite the contrary. A considerable number of the items in the book (new edition as well as first edition) were found by Thomas in the Provincial Archives, or in print publications. The citation PABC (Public Archives of British Columbia) features quite heavily in the section at the back of the book titled "Sources of Text, Tunes and Emenda-

tions", and one of the manuscripts Thomas found particularly useful gives J. Lawrence as the author of such items as "Victoria Christmas Song" and the stunning "Know Ye the Land". He also wrote "The Skedaddler". Another name from the past on whose work Thomas drew was James Anderson, who was either the author or editor of *Sawney's Letters and Cariboo Rhymes*, the source for "The Young Man from Canada", "Bonnie Are the Hurdies O!" and "Cheer, Boys, Cheer for the Dominion Nation". Old newspapers proved to be a third valuable source, and among the most useful were the *Cariboo Sentinel* and the *Vancouver Sun*. In many cases the printed documents failed to give tunes, and Thomas had recourse to either the original songs parodied by the B.C. songwriters or to his own creativity in finding good melodies that fitted the words.

As Thomas intended, one of the great virtues of *Songs of the Pacific Northwest* is that it teaches you the social (and political and economic) history of

British Columbia in an entirely painless manner. For that reason it is an excellent resource for teachers at all educational levels. In the second half of this account of Phil Thomas' legacy of B.C. song I want therefore to illustrate the way in which the book achieves this. For reasons of space I can include only one song for each of the categories into which the collection can be divided when viewed from this historical angle. A few of the following examples are taken from Thomas' collecting in the field, but most come from his research in libraries and archives.

Pre-Colonial Times

The place to begin is the western coast of North America before the Pacific Northwest had even been explored overland by Hudson's Bay Company fur-traders or claimed as a British colony. The first section (Thomas calls them chapters) of *Songs of the*

Pacific Northwest is titled "Pre-Colonial Times". It comprises three items: "The Bold Northwestman", "The Poor Armourer Boy", and "Annexation", the first two of which pre-date British settlement on Vancouver Island and are broadside ballads.

"The Bold Northwestman" tells the story of a violent encounter between an American merchant ship and the Haida of the Queen Charlotte Islands in 1791. Neither side comes out very well. Although the incident is presented from the perspective of the victorious American sailors, one can read between the lines that the native people were attempting to take revenge for a previous humiliation. It is also evident that they were profoundly dissatisfied with the terms of trade that were being forced upon them. The resultant conflict was not an auspicious beginning for native/white relations in the Pacific Northwest.

The Bold Northwestman

An on

Voice

Come all you bold North-westmen who plough the rag-ing main, Come
lis-ten to my stor-y, while I re-late the same. 'Twas on the "Lad-y
Wash-ing-ton," de-coyed as she lay At Queen Char-lotte's
Is-land, north west of Am-er-i-kay.

Come all you bold Northwestmen, who plough the raging main,
Come listen to my story, while I relate the same,
'Twas on the *Lady Washington*, decoyed as she lay,
At Queen Charlotte's Island, Northwest of Amerikay.

On the sixteenth day of June, boys, in the year of ninety-one,
The natives in great numbers on board our ship did come,
And for to buy the furs of them, our Captain did begin,
But mark what they attempted before long time had been.

Abaft upon our quarterdeck, two arm-chests did stand,
And in them there was left the keys, by the gunner's careless hand,
When quickly they procuring of them did make a prize,
Thinking we had no other arms for to defend our lives.

Our Captain spoke unto them, and unto them did say,
"If you'll return to me those keys, I for the same will pay."
No sooner had he spoke those words than they drew forth their knives,
Saying, "The vessel's ours, Sirs, and we will have your lives!"

Our Captain then perceiving the ship was in their power,
He spoke unto his people, likewise his officers,
"Go down unto the cabin, and there some arms prepare;
See that they are well loaded, be sure and don't misfire."

Then down into the cabin straightway we did repair,
And to our sad misfortune, few arms could we find there;
We found six pistols, a gun, and two small swords,
And in short time we did agree: "Blow her up!" was the word.

Our powder we got ready, and gun-room open lay,
Our souls we did commit to God, prepared for a watery grave.
We then informed our Captain, saying, "Ready now are we."
He says, "The signal I will give; it shall be 'Follow me!'"

All this time upon the quarter deck [the] poor man was forced to stand
With twelve of those cursed savages, with knives all in their hands,
Till one of those bloodthirsty hounds he made a spring below,
And then he sang out, "Follow me!" and after him did go.

Then with what few firearms we had, we rushed on deck amain,
And by our being resolute the quarter-deck we gained;
Soon as we gained our arm-chests, sad slaughter then made we,
And in less than ten minutes, our ship of them was free.

We threw overboard the dead that on our deck there lay,
And found we had nobody hurt, to work we went straightway;
The number killed upon our deck that day was sixty good,
And full as many wounded, as soon we understood.

'Twas early the next morning, at the hour of break of day,
We sailed along abreast the town which we came to straightway
We called all hands to quarters, and at the town did play;
We made them to return what things they'd stolen that day.

I'd have you all take warning and always ready be,
For to suppress those savages of North Amerikay;
For they are so desirous some vessel for to gain
That they will never leave it off till most of them are slain.

The Colonial Era

Although an official boundary between British and American territory on the Pacific coast of North America had yet to be determined, Vancouver Island and the coastal mainland across from it had effective-

ly become a British colony by the 1840s. Although Thomas includes it in his first section, "Annexation" is really a political song from the early colonial era of British Columbia. Dating from 1846 and employing

the tune of “Yankee Doodle”, it warns—perceptively enough—of American designs on the colony and points out the standard technique used by the American government to legitimize such territorial aggran-

Yankee Doodle wants a state,
Oregon or Texas,
Sends some squatters in it straight,
And quietly annexes.

CHORUS
Yankee Doodle, Doodle Do,
Yankee Doodle Dandy,
He can do the Britishers
And Mexicans so handy.

Canada’s a pleasant place,
So is California;
Yankee Doodle wants them all,
But first he cribs a corner.

Yankee Doodle he went to sleep
Among his bills of parcels;
President Polk he stirred him up
And cocked his tail so martial.

General Cass he made a speech,
Archer called it splutter,
He swore he’d tear the British Jack

dizement: infiltrating settlers into the coveted region and then annexing it under the guise of protecting them. The song was first published in *Bentley’s Miscellany* (London, 1846).

And wipe it in the gutter.

Jabez Honan took an oath,
By the living Jingo!
Cuba soon shall be our own
And so shall Saint Domingo.

Yankee has some public works,
Well he may parade them;
English money paid for all,
And Irish labour made them.

Then hey for Yankee Doodle’s luck,
And for Annexation;
Hey for Yankee Doodle’s pluck,
And for Repudiation

LAST CHORUS
Yankee Doodle Doodle Do,
Yankee Doodle Dandy,
And hey for Sherry Cobbler too,
Mint julep and peach brandy.

Annexation

An on

Voice

Yan-kee Dood-le wants a state, Or-e-gon or Tex-as, Sends some squat-ers
in it straight, And quiet-ly an-nex-es. Yan-kee Dood-le, Dood-le Do, Yan-kee Dood-le Dan-dy,
He can do the Brit-i-shers And Mex-i-cans so handy.

Pressure of this sort on the British government to negotiate a border with the American government—and thereby safeguard Vancouver Island from annexation—was successful. By giving up its claim to the

lower Columbia River basin Britain secured in exchange a boundary that dipped below the southern tip of Vancouver Island instead of cutting across it along the 49th parallel. That was no doubt a relief to the

residents of Victoria. With an easier mind they could now participate in the commercial development of the small British colony, and the gossips among them could enjoy such scandals as the elopement of Governor James Douglas' daughter in 1861 and the failure (four years later) of the expensive dredging machine that was supposed to deepen Victoria's harbour. These incidents are reflected in two of Thomas'

The Fraser River and Cariboo Gold Rushes

The border settlement with the United States had the fortuitous result that when the Fraser River and Cariboo Gold Rushes occurred they were indisputably on British territory and were therefore subject to British law and taxes. The California Gold Rush had taken place in 1849; the first one on the soil of what would later become Canada occurred in 1857-59. It was located on the lower reaches of the Fraser River between Hope and Yale, but it proved to be a disappointment, a "Fraser River Humbug", as it was dubbed by some of the unsuccessful prospectors. The truth was that the deposits of gold-bearing sand in the lower Fraser could be panned but they were thin and sparse compared to the seams of gold that did indeed exist upriver, on the other side of the fearsome Fraser Canyon. The Cariboo Gold Rush began in a signifi-

I'm a young man from Canada
Some six feet in my shoes,
I left my home for Cariboo
On the first exciting news.
In New York City I met a gent,
Introduced himself to me:
Said I, "I come from Canada,
So you can't come over me!"

CHORUS

Said I, "I come from Canada,
So you can't come over me!"

I sailed on the crazy *Champion*
All in the steerage too,
I thought I'd got among the fiends
Or other horrid crew.
If you had only seen them feed!
It quite astonished me,
And I'd been years in Canada
In a lumberman's shanty.

With seventy-five upon my back
I came the Douglas way,
And at an easy-going pace
Made thirty miles a day.
I landed here without a dime
In eighteen sixty-three,
But I'd been raised in Canada
'Twas nothin' new to me.

songs in the second section of the book, titled "Victoria, Vancouver Island"; a third song celebrates Christmas in the colony's capital, and was the work of J. Lawrence, a mining prospector wintering in Victoria in 1864; he was also the author of two songs, "Know Ye the Land" and "The Skedaddler", about his experiences as a miner in the Cariboo (*Songs of the Pacific Northwest*, pp. 48 and 50).

cant way in 1861 and continued for another two years, although it fairly quickly became evident that most of the deposits were in underground seams that required tunnels and shafts for extraction. As a result, gold mining became an industry that required considerable capital and equipment. Thomas puts it accurately and succinctly when he remarks that "people who understood deep placer mining quickly recognized that Cariboo was a rich man's goldfield" (p. 38). Barkerville was the centre of this new mining industry, and most of Thomas' six songs in this section describe life there or reflect disenchantment with the entire enterprise. They are "Far From Home", "Old Faro", "Bonnie Are the Hurdies, O!", "Know Ye the Land?", "The Skedaddler", and this song, "The Young Man from Canada":

In best of home-spun I was clad
So I was warmly dressed;
The wool it grew near Montreal
At a place in Canada West.
On Williams Creek they called me green
And 'Johnny-come-late-lee';
Said I, "I come from Canada,
I ain't from the old country!"

I started out my mining life
By chopping cord wood,
But I was born with axe in hand
So I could use it good;
My chum was from the state of Maine,
Somewhere near Tennessee,
But, ah, I came from Canada
And he couldn't chop with me.

In a short time I'd made a 'raise'
And bought into a claim;
There they called me engineer
Or carman—'tis the same.
The drifters then did try it on
To boss it over me,
Said I, "I come from Canada,
And I'm on the shoulder-ee."

In two weeks I got a 'div'
Which drove away all care—
I went over to the 'Wake up's'

And had a bully square—
 I danced all night till broad daylight
 And a gal smiled sweet on me,
 Said I, "I came from Canada
 And I'm on the marry-ee."

Now all young men who are in love,
 And sure I am there's some—

Don't count your chicks before they're hatched
 For they may never come;
 Oh, when I asked that gal to wed
 She only laughed at me:
 "You may come from Canada,
 But you can't come over me!"

The Young Man from Canada

Anon

Voice

The musical score is written on four staves in G major (one sharp) and 2/4 time. The melody is simple and rhythmic, with lyrics written below the notes. The lyrics are: "I'm a young man from Can-a-da, Some six feet in my shoes, I left my home for Car-i-boo, On the first ex-cit-ing news. In New York Ci-ty I met a gent, In-tro-duced himself to me; Said I, 'I come from Can-a-da, So you can't come ov-er me!' Said I, 'I come from Can-a-da, So you can't come ov-er me!'"

I'm a young man from Can - a - da, Some six feet in my shoes, I
 left my home for Car - i - boo, On the first ex - cit - ing news. In New York Ci - ty I
 met a gent, In - tro - duced himself to me; Said I, "I come from Can - a - da, So you can't come ov - er
 me!" Said I, "I come from Can - a - da, So you can't come ov - er me!"

Confederation


If the old British colony on Vancouver Island (and particularly its Governor, Frederick Seymour) was unenthusiastic about the idea of becoming a province of Canada, there was widespread enthusiasm for the idea in the interior of British Columbia. The motive was primarily economic. A railway across the Rockies would mean commerce with the east and the opportunity to sell British Columbia's abundant natural resources (especially minerals and timber) to a large and growing market; moreover, eastern Canada

would be a ready source of the capital badly needed to fully exploit all of those resources. To overcome Seymour's reluctance and British foot-dragging, a propaganda campaign in favour of confederation was organized by those who stood to benefit from it. Not surprisingly, songs were part of the campaign. Thomas recovered two of them: "Cheer, Boys, Cheer for the Dominion Nation" and this "Song of the 'Dominion Boys' in B.C.":

Dominion Boys' Song

Anon

Voice



Come, boys, let's sing a song! For this day it won't be long When u-



nit - ed to our count - ry we will be; Then the Map - le Leaf en-twined, And the




Beav - er too, com-bined with Old Eng - land's flag shall float up-on the sea.



Tramp! tramp! tramp! the New Dorn - in - ion now is knock-ing at the door. So, good



bye, dear Un - cle Sam, As we do not care a clam For your green-backs or your bun-kum an - y



more.

Come, boys, let's sing a song!
For the day it won't be long
When united to our country we will be;
Then the Maple Leaf entwined
And the Beaver too, combined
With Old England's flag shall float upon the sea.

CHORUS

Tramp! tramp! tramp! the New Dominion
Now is knocking at the door.
So, goodbye, dear Uncle Sam,
As we do not care a clam
For your greenbacks or your bunkum any more.

With your *Alabama* claims
And your other little games,
You thought 'Old John' would gladly let us go;
And although Bright may be your friend,
That's a game that has an end
When you trod upon the British Lion's toe.

Then, boys, fill a bowl
And let each jolly soul
Labour as he never dared to do before.
And here's to thee, Sir John,
Whom we go our pile upon
And the Conjuraton knocking at the door.

Industry and Labour

Railroads were built across the Rockies, and Confederation did stimulate the industrial development of B.C., although the process had its ups and downs and the wealth generated remained largely in the hands of an economic and political elite. Industry, whether mining, logging, construction or transportation, was labour-intensive, so the province gradually expanded its labour force of skilled and unskilled manual workers. Pay was poor and working conditions often extremely dangerous, so some workers attempted to unionize in order to bargain for better wages and at

least minimal safety standards. British Columbia was one region where the Wobblies (the International Workers of the World) gained a toehold, setting up nine locals during the years 1906-1913. Founded in Chicago in 1905, the I.W.W. was led by an exceptional individual, the charismatic, courageous and dedicated (if rash and foolhardy) Joe Hill. Hill would become a martyr and legend, but before he died he wrote some union songs that lived on after him. One was "Where the Fraser River Flows":

Fellow workers, pay attention to what I'm going to mention,
For it is the fixed intention of the Workers of the World—
And I hope you'll all be ready, true-hearted, brave, and steady,
To gather round our standard when the Red Flag is unfurled.

CHORUS

Where the Fraser River flows, each fellow worker knows,
They have bullied and oppressed us, but still our union grows;
And we're going to find a way, boys, for shorter hours and better pay, boys,
We're going to win the day, boys, where the Fraser River flows!

Now these 'gunny sack' contractors have all been dirty actors,
They're not our benefactors, each fellow worker knows.
So we've got to stick together in fine or dirty weather,
We will show no white feather where the Fraser River flows.

Now, the boss the law is stretching, bulls and pimps he's fetching,
They are a fine collection, as Jesus only knows;
But why their mothers reared them, and why the devil spared them,
Are questions we can't answer, where the Fraser River flows.


Where the Fraser River Flows

Joe Hill


Voice




Fel-low work-ers, pay at-ten-tion to what I'm going to men-tion, For it



is the fixed in-ten-tion of the Work-ers of the World, And I hope you'll all be read-y, true-




heart-ed, brave and stead-y, To gath-er round our stand-ard when the Red Flag is un-furled.



Where the Fras-er Riv-er flows, each fel-low work-er knows, They have bul-lied and op-pressed us, but



still our un - ion grows, And we're going to find a way, boys, for short-er



hours and bet-ter pay, boys, We're going to win the day, boys, where the Fras-er Riv-er flows.

Prohibition

The song I have chosen to illustrate the tensions in British Columbia society during World War I and the early 1920s, “Prohibition Song”, comes from the fifth section of *Songs of the Pacific Northwest*, which is titled “Pioneering, Sod-busting and Settling In”. This is a rather amorphous section, and it brings me to a rare criticism of the book. On first glance, given the title, one assumes that this chapter will include at least some British Columbia versions of homesteading songs. In fact, there are none. There are indeed two homesteading songs, one positive and one negative, but they are both about Alberta. “Where the Great Peace River Flows”, as we have seen, is a celebration of peaceful life in the farming country of north-western Alberta. Admittedly the B.C./Alberta border runs through the region, but the majority of the Peace Country is in Alberta. So is the Pembina River, the site of the failed homesteading experience described in “Pembina River Homestead”. Thomas did, of course, collect both songs in B.C., one from Cecil Pickell of Fort St. John and the other from Jim Akers of Lillooet.

The closest he came to a genuinely B.C. homesteading song (at least among those he chose to include in *Songs of the Pacific Northwest*) was perhaps “Hip-Hip-Hoorah for My Native Canada”, a genial and pretty piece of patriotic boosterism that apparently originated at Mud Bay School, located between Delta and Surrey, although it is not clear how early it should be dated (it was collected in 1974, but the informant remembered it from childhood). “The Banks of the Similkameen” also comes close, although it is actually set just south of the U.S. border (near Oroville) and the protagonist appears to be an American traveler rather than a Canadian homesteader (the girl with the B.C. lover does, however, live on

Oh, Jamie, did you hear the news,
The news that’s spreading round?
They’re going to pour out all the rum
Upon the blooming ground.
And when we’re coming home from work
All thirsty, tired and late,
We’ll have to be content with tea
Or else cold water straight.

CHORUS

‘Tis goodbye now, Old Demijohn,
And goodbye Little Brown Jug,
‘Tis goodbye now, O Nutbrown Ale
That foams in the schooner-mug!
And goodbye Scotch, ‘twas first-rate stuff
That made us canty feel,
And makes old folks feel young enough
To dance a rousing reel.

a homestead). “The Old Go-Hungry Hash House” probably does date from the 1890s, but it is not about homesteading; rather, it depicts the difficulties facing unmarried men forced to live in urban boarding houses. And as for Vernon Fetterley, he certainly came to B.C. looking to start a new life, but he worked in a sawmill and, at least in the song, made no attempt to farm a government claim.

Three of the other songs in the section, namely, both versions of “Seattle Illahee” and “Mary, Come Home”, date from fur-trading times and might well have been included in the first section. “Klondike!”, of course, is about the third Canadian Gold Rush, and might have fitted better with the other gold mining songs in chapter 3. “Moose Hunter’s Blues”, which deals with winter hunting in northern B.C., is a recent creation by singer-songwriter Booby Ball which Thomas recorded in 1974. “Come All You Coal Miners” is, as its title suggests, another mining song, dating from the 1920s, and it clearly fits in a later section, section 9.

Which leaves us the “Prohibition Song”. This probably dates from 1916, since that was the year when a plebiscite produced a 54% vote in favour of prohibition. A Prohibition Act subsequently came into force in 1917 and resulted in the rapid growth of a bootlegging industry. In response the provincial government decided in 1921 to permit the sale of alcohol but regulate it through liquor stores run by a newly-created Liquor Control Board. Bars and saloons were still out of business, but in 1925 ‘beer parlours’ were permitted in hotels, but only in such local communities as voted to license them. The author of the song evidently had no idea that such a complicated compromise would eventually save John Barleycorn in B.C.

The brewers and hop-raisers then
Will all be hopping mad;
And, oh, the prohibitionists,
They will be whopping glad.
They say we’ll have fair weather then,
That B.C. will be dry
From Nelson and Kelowna towns
Far west to Alberni.

‘Tis said that soon John Barleycorn
Will have no place to go;
He’ll have to mount the watercart
Or else go down below.
He’s had his day, he’ll have to go,
How can he longer stay?
So we must all give him a foot
To help him on his way.

Prohibition Song

Anon

Voice

The musical score is written on a single treble clef staff in 2/4 time. It consists of seven lines of music with lyrics underneath. The lyrics are: "Oh Jam-ie, did you hear the news, the news that's spread-ing round? They're going_ to pour out all the rum up - on the bloom-ing ground. And when we're com-ing home from work, All thirst-y, tired and late, We'll have to be con - tent with tea, Or else cold wat-er straight. 'Tis good-bye now Old - Dem - i-john, And good - bye Lit-tle Bown Jug, 'Tis_ good-bye now, O Nut-brown Ale That foams in the schoon-er mug! And good-bye Scotch! 'twas first-rate stuff That made us cant - y feel, And makes old folks feel young e-nough To dance a rous - ing reel." The lyrics are aligned with the notes on the staff, with some words underlined or followed by a dash to indicate a long note.

Oh Jam-ie, did you hear the news, the news that's spread-ing round? They're
going_ to pour out all the rum up - on the bloom-ing ground. And when we're com-ing
home from work, All thirst-y, tired and late, We'll have to be con - tent with tea, Or else cold wat-er
straight. 'Tis good-bye now Old - Dem - i-john, And good - bye Lit-tle Bown Jug, 'Tis_
good-bye now, O Nut-brown Ale That foams in the schoon-er mug! And good-bye Scotch! 'twas
first-rate stuff That made us cant - y feel, And makes old folks feel young e-nough To
dance a rous - ing reel.

World War I

In a previous issue of *Canadian Folk Music* (37.4, Winter 2003) Phil Thomas contributed an article titled “‘D’ye Ken Sam Hughes?’ and Two Other Songs from the Great War, 1914-1918”. The other two songs were “Sam Hughes’ Army” and “We Are, We Are, We Are Canadians!”. As Thomas pointed out, the Canadian war effort, although undoubtedly heroic, was hampered by poor quality equipment (especially the notoriously bad Ross rifle), inefficient organization, and profiteering on the part of military contractors. Sam Hughes, as Minister of Militia and Defence in the Borden cabinet from 1911 to 1916, was the man primarily responsible for allowing these severe problems to develop and then for failing to

solve them. The lives of many Canadian soldiers were squandered as a result of his bull-headed incompetence.

The sixth section of *Songs of the Pacific Northwest* is titled “Canada’s Army and Navy” and it includes all three songs. Canada’s naval contribution to World War I is often overlooked, but Thomas’ new chapter also contains a fourth item, a navy recruiting song titled “We Are the Boys of the Old *Rainbow*”. It celebrates one of the first Canadian warships—a cruiser—to patrol the coastal waters of British Columbia during the years 1910 to 1917. It was named *HMCS Rainbow*.

Transportation

The second half of *Songs of the Pacific Northwest* is structured not chronologically (as with chapters 1-6) but in terms of topics. There are five topics, and each relates to a major form of employment in the province. They are, respectively, transportation, forestry, mining, fishing, and ranching.

“Transportation by Land and Water” is the title of section 7. Of the nine items in the section one, “Where the Fraser River Flows”, sticks out like a sore thumb because, as we have seen, it is an I.W.W. union song and has nothing specifically to do with river transportation. “If I Had a Plane Like Pattullo” is also a rather dubious candidate for this chapter, because it is an anti-Ottawa political song that merely uses the birth of Trans Canada Air Lines as a hook for expressing a grievance. The other seven songs,

however, are genuinely about different forms of transportation.

There are two freighting songs, “Teaming Up the Cariboo Road” and “The Fort Nelson Freighter’s Song”, and one about a more modern equivalent, “The Truck Driver’s Song”. Only two songs treat transportation by water: “The *Minto*” (a lament for a steam-powered paddle-wheeler that used to ply on the Arrow Lakes), and “The Wreck of the *C. P. Yorke*” (Stanley Triggs’ song about the loss of a coastal tug and its crew). Two items are railroad songs: a B.C. version of the well-known “Drill, Ye Tarriers, Drill” (about the hardships and dangers of railway construction), and this song about the much-delayed completion of what was initially billed as the Pacific Great Eastern Railway .

Up in that far north country where the skies are always blue,
They’re waiting for the happy day when the P.G.E. goes through,
The squawfish will be squawking and the moose will start to moo,
The grizzly bears will grizzle when the P.G.E. goes through.

CHORUS

Oh, Lord! I know my toil will end,
When I hear that whistle coming round the bend.

They say that all the members of Urquart’s survey crew
Will be working on the extra gang when the P.G.E. goes through;
Bill Herlihy, he’s got a squaw, her name is Buckskin Sue,
They’re going on the trapline when the P.G.E. goes through.

The hornets build their little nests up in the spruce and pine,
They love to sting the axemen who are cutting out the line;
So if the railroad bends a bit like railroads shouldn’t do,
Just blame it on the hornets when the P.G.E. goes through.

When running line on snowshoes, the snow got very deep,

Old Ab Richman he dug a hole, crawled in and went to sleep;
 The snow blew in and covered him, but we know what to do—
 We'll dig him out in springtime when the P.G.E. goes through.

The P. G. E. Song

Keith Crowe

Voice

Up in that far north count-ry where the skies are al-ways blue, They're
 wait-ing for the hap-py day when the P. G. E. goes through; The squaw-fish will be
 squawk-ing and the moose will start to moo, The griz-zly bears will grizzle when the P. G. E. goes
 through. Oh, Lord! I know my toil will end, When I hear that whis-tle com-ing round the
 bend.

Logging

Chapter 8 of *Songs of the Pacific Northwest* is titled “Logging and Sawmilling” and it has to be said that the forestry industry songs collected by Thomas are among the glories of the book. We have seen three of them already, “Way Up the Ucletaw”, “Haywire Outfit”, and “The Grand Hotel”. Others in this section are “Buck’s Camp Down at Monroe” (Monroe is actually located in the state of Washington, but Ed Dalby first heard it on Vancouver Island circa 1900), and “The Potlatch Fair” (a companion song to “The

Grand Hotel” about loggers losing their money fast in the city of Vancouver). “The Greenhorn Song” depicts graphically a day in the life of a rookie logger who tries his hand at the dangerous job of hooking chokers (lengths of cable tied around sets of logs to allow them to be moved from the harvesting area to a landing area). “The Greenchain Song” describes the toils and tribulations of a worker whose job is to pull lumber off a moving belt in a sawmill.

You who live a life of leisure, you who live a life of ease,
 In your mansions in the country, or your yacht upon the seas,

Does your conscience ever picture on the tablet of your brain
The sad thought of men in misery, pullin' lumber off the chain?

When the pond is full of timber, the jack ladders running wild,
And the sawyer in his carriage has the bandsaw set and filed,
From the headrig to the trimsaw the planer moves the chain
Of that endless pile of lumber out upon that long greenchain.

Now the pond-men think they're Bunyans and the scaler thinks he's God,
And the sawyer thinks that each of them's a lazy, useless sod;
But if the truth were ever looked for in the lies that pour like rain,
You would find out that the heroes are the workers on the chain.

When the shift-boss hits that button, then you'd better look alive
'Cause the lumber comes a-rollin' like the bees out of a hive,
And you'll feel that sweat come pouring as each muscle screams with pain,
And you'll wonder if it's worth it, working on the long greenchain.

See the grader eye the lumber as it moves along the chain;
With his keel he makes the grading, marks it down for knot and grain;
These salutes to profiteering we treat with complete disdain,
For what's it mean to we who toil out on that long greenchain?

When I go to meet my Maker, there is just one hope I hold,
That St. Peter at the Golden Gate won't leave me in the cold;
But if he sends me down below, this truth to you I'll tell:
I still won't be unhappy, 'cause that greenchain's worse than Hell!

The Greenchain Song

Jim Munro & Lynn McGown

Voice

You who live a life of leis-ure, you who live a life of ease, In your
man-sions in the count-ry or your yacht up-on the seas, Does your con-science ev-er
pic-ture on the tab-let of your brain, — The sad thought of men in mis-ery, pul-lin'
lum-ber off the chain?

Mining

Like logging songs, mining songs have a prominent part in the Phil Thomas Collection and there are six of them grouped in chapter 9, which bears the title “Mining: Prospecting, Coal and Hard Rock Mines”. We have already met the poignant “I’m Only a Broken-Down Mucker”, one of the gems of the collection, and the equally sad, if catchier, “Are You From Bevan?”. “Bowser’s Seventy-Twa”, a favourite of Thomas, deals with a similar subject to the latter, namely, an armed intervention by the provincial government in a long-running labour dispute on Vancouver Island (on this occasion near Nanaimo in 1913: Bowser was the Attorney General and the military force used to break the union was the 72nd Seaforth Highlanders).

“Way Up in the Monashee Range”, in contrast, is a pleasant song about the joys of prospecting in the

mountains of the Kootenay region, while “Taku Miners” (which adapts the tune of “Clementine”) takes pride in the job of working as a driller and a blaster in an underground mine. “Hard Rock Miner”, although common in the Okanagan and Kootenays, actually references mines in Montana, Idaho, Manitoba, the Yukon, and Ontario rather than the Le Roi Mine at Rossland, although, to be fair, the mine at Kimberley, B.C., is included in the list.

One should remember, however, that these six items are far from exhausting the mining songs in *Songs from the Pacific Northwest*. There are in addition seven gold-mining songs, of which this, a parody of Burns’ “Green Grow the Rashers, O”, may serve as an amusing example. The scene is a dance hall in Barkerville, and “hurdies” in Scottish dialect means “buttocks”.

Bonnie Are the Hurdies, O!

Anon

Voice

There's naught but care on il - ka han', On ev - 'ry hour that pass-es, O! An'

Saw - ney, man, we hae nae chance To spark a-mong the lassies, O! Bon-nie are the

hur - dies, O! The Ger-man hurd - y - gurd - ies, O! The daft - est hour that e'er I spent Was

danc - in' wi' the hurdies, O!

There's naught but care on ilka han',
On every hour that passes, O!
An' Sawney, man, we hae nae chance
To spark among the lasses, O!

CHORUS
Bonnie are the hurdies, O!
The German hurdy-gurdies, O!
The daftest hour that e'er I spent,
Was dancin' wi' th hurdies, O!

A wardly race that riches chase,
Yet a' gangs tapselteeie, O!
An' every hour we spend at e'en,
Is spent without a dearie, O!

Last summer we had lassies here
Frae Germany—the hurdies, O!
And troth I wot, as I'm a Scot,
They were the bonnie hurdies, O!

There was Kate and Mary, blithe and airy,
And dumpy little Lizzie, O!
And ane they ca'd the Kangaroo,
A strappin' rattlin' hizzy, O!

They danced at night in dresses light,
Frae late until the early, O!
But oh! their hearts were hard as flint,
Which vexed the laddies sairly, O!

The dollar was their only love,
And that they lo'ed fu' dearly, O!
They dinna care a flea for men,
Let them court hooe'er sincerely, O!

They left the creek wi' lots o' gold,
Danced frae our lads sae clever, O!
My blessin's on their 'sour kraut' heads,
Gif they stay awa for ever, O!

Fishing

As we have seen, Phil Thomas began his career as a collector of vernacular song at Pender Harbour and two of the earliest songs in his collection date from that location in the early fifties, namely, “The Pender Harbour Fisherman” and “Bank Trollers”. Both are included in chapter 10, “Fishing for Salmon and Halibut”.

There are three other songs in the section. “Bring Back That Gill Net To Me”, a parody of “My Bonnie Lies Over the Ocean”, was a late addition to Thomas' store, having been recorded from its author, Leo Harris, in Port Coquitlam in 1974. “The Doryman”, which actually describes deep-sea fishing for halibut off the coast of Alaska, is an example of a song picked up initially from a printed source, Ralph Andrews and A.K. Larson's *Fish and Ships* (Seattle, 1959), although Thomas subsequently interviewed Larson and discovered that the song was anonymous

Oh, hark to the song of the sockeye
Like a siren's call of old;
When it gets in your blood you can't shake it:
It's the same as the fever for gold.

There's a hole in the B.C. coastline,
Rivers Inlet's the place I mean;
And it's there you will find the old-timer
And also the fellow who's green.

Oh, the boats head for there like the sockeye
And some are a joy to the eye,
While others are simply abortions
And ought to be left high and dry.

Now they go to the different canneries
And before they can make one haul
It's three hundred bucks for net, grub, and gas
Which they hope to pay off before fall.

Then it's off to the head of the inlet
At six o'clock Sunday night,

and that Larson had found it in 1939 in an abandoned locker on the diesel schooner *Aleutian*. By then the Pacific halibut fishery was in decline, due to over-fishing. It was predominantly American in ownership, although many Canadians were employed on U.S. boats and a small fleet of Canadian schooners with their associated dorymen operated in the boom years of the 1890s and first two decades of the twentieth century.

If “The Doryman” is technically an American song, there is no question that “The Song of the Sockeye” reflects the daily life of independent fishermen on the B.C. coast. The text was written by Ross Cumbers around 1940 but it was only discovered twenty years later on a glass-covered notice-board at the deserted Wadhams Cannery on Rivers Inlet on the mainland coast south of Bella Coola. Thomas composed the tune.

But when morning comes and you've got about three
The prospects don't look very bright.

Of course there is always an alibi
To account for a very poor run—
The weather is wrong, the moon's not full,
Or the big tides will help the fish come.

Now, along about dusk, when you're starting to doze,
And you think you've got a good night's set,
An engine will roar, and you look out the door
As some farmer tows into your net.

Now some of us think of the future,
While others have things to forget,
But most of us sit here and think of a school
Of sockeye a-hitting the net.

And when the season is over
And you figure out what you have made,
You were better off working for wages
No matter how low you were paid.

For the comforts of home are worth something,
 So take it from me, my friend,
 Oh, frying-pan grub and no head room
 Will ruin your health in the end.

So hark to the song of the sockeye,
 Like a siren's call of old;
 When it gets in your blood you can't shake it,
 It's the same as the fever for gold.

The Song of the Sockeye

Ross Cumbers

Voice

Oh, hark to the song of the sock-eye, Like a sir-en's call of
 old; When it gets in your blood you can't shake it, It's the same as the fev - er for
 gold.

The musical notation consists of three staves in a 4/4 time signature with a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The first staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one flat, and a 4/4 time signature. The melody starts on a whole rest, followed by quarter notes G4, A4, Bb4, C5, D5, E5, F5, G5, A5, Bb5, C6, D6, E6, F6, G6, A6, Bb6, C7. The second staff continues the melody with quarter notes D7, E7, F7, G7, A7, Bb7, C8, D8, E8, F8, G8, A8, Bb8, C9, D9, E9, F9, G9, A9, Bb9, C10. The third staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one flat, and a 4/4 time signature. The melody starts with a whole note G4, followed by a whole rest, and then a whole note G4.

Ranching

Thomas' last chapter is titled "Ranching: Dairy and Cattle" and comprises just four songs. "The Young British Rancher", which we have printed previously in *Canadian Folk Music*, is one of the highlights, an amusing and catchy satire on inexperienced but arrogant Englishmen trying their hand at the cattle industry in its early days in British Columbia.

"Hanging in the Barn" and "Sunset" are both cowboy songs that express nostalgia for the good old

days, but "Tying a Knot in the Devil's Tail" catches the aggressive and optimistic spirit of the rancher at his most successful and confident of his skills. Thomas came across slightly different versions of it on a number of occasions during his collecting trips, but the version he chose to print was that recorded in 1973 from Ronnie Craig of Deadman's Creek.

Oh, high up on the Deadman
 Where the jack pine trees grow tall,
 Bruce Webb and Larry Massy
 Had a round-up way last fall.

Now every little doggie with the big long ears
 That chanced to come their way,
 Oh his little ears wriggled and his little hide sizzled
 In a most artistic way.

Said Bruce Webb to Larry,
 "I think I'll take a ride."
 For it was in the days, boys,
 A man could sure oil his insides.

They headed for the Savona Bar,
 Way down on Whisky Row—
 Ended up way late that night
 Some fifty drinks below.

The house it ordered up a round
 And headed them down the road;
 And who should they meet but the Devil himself
 Come a-joggin' down the road.

"Come all you ornery cowboys,
 You better hunt your holes;
 For I am the old Devil himself
 And I've come to collect your souls."

Said Bruce Webb to the Devil,
 "I know us boys are tight,
 But before you collect our souls
 You'll have one heck of a fight!"

So he took down his rope and he built him a loop,
 And he cast it straight and true;
 And he caught the Devil by his two horns
 And he pulled his dallies through.

Now Larry Massy was a lariat man
 With a hemp rope coiled so neat;
 He took down his rope and he cast his loop,
 Caught the Devil by his two hind legs.

They stretched him out right there on the road
 While the running irons grew hot;
 With a whoop and a holler and a half silver dollar
 They branded him on the spot.

They tied nine knots in the old Devil's tail,
 And for a joke they turned him loose;
 And he got up and he loped to the shade,
 To the shade of a mountain spruce.

Now if you ever ride up on the Deadman,
 And you hear one hell of a wail,
 You'll know it's the Devil howling from the pain
 Of the knots tied in his tail.

Tying a Knot in the Devil's Tail

Gail Gardner

Voice

Oh, high up on the Dead-man, Where the jack pine trees grow tall, Bruce
 Webb and Lar - ry Mas - sy Had a round - up way last fall.

It may be that for Phil Thomas that song caught part of the spirit of the Old West. Yet on the whole he was fonder of the old mining songs, labour songs, logging songs and fishing songs that he found. This can be seen from the items that he chose to record on his LP/CD *Where the Fraser River Flows and Other Songs of the Pacific Northwest* (1980, reissued by Cariboo Road Music in 2004) and on the CD *Phil Thomas and Friends Live at Folklife Expo 86* (Cariboo Road Music, 2004). Both CDs are, of course, essential listening, because there is a limit to what can be conveyed by words and music notation. Vernacular songs come alive when sung, and no one gave them livelier performances than Thomas himself, perhaps especially when teamed up with the love of his life, his wife, Hilda.

The new edition of *Songs of the Pacific Northwest* is an equally essential purchase. It is a treasure trove of B.C. vernacular song, and there is simply nothing else like it available. The entire section on the songs of the Great War is new, and there are nine other new songs: "Victoria Christmas Song", "Know Ye the Land", "If I

Had a Plane Like Pattullo", "Seattle Illahee II", "Prohibition Song", "Come All Ye Coal Miners", "The Greenhorn Song", "Haywire Outfit" and "Bank Trollers". So even if you have the old version of the book, you should pick up the new edition for the revised commentary, the improved documentation, and, above all, the thirteen additional songs that it contains. It is due to be published by Hancock House Publishers this fall of 2007.

FONDATION
 SOCAN
 FOUNDATION

Publication of *Canadian Folk Music/Musique folklorique canadienne* is assisted by a grant from the SOCAN FOUNDATION