

## Songs from John Leeder

John Leeder's CD, *Fresh Forest Breeze*, is loaded with great songs, some traditional, some composed by John himself. We printed a transcription of one of our favourites, "Painting over the NAR", in a previous issue (37.1), but for anyone interested in songs about Canada there are many other items in John's repertoire that are well worth knowing (and singing). Look in issue 38.3 for another song that John has made his own, Richard Harrow's "Jerry Potts". And now, thanks to transcribers Maureen Chafe and Rosaleen Gregory, plus some digging in the archives, here are four more songs from *Fresh Forest Breeze* ("The 'Segwun' is Steamin' Again", "Will Ye Go To Flanders?", "The Hudson Bay Line" and "The Jam on Jerry's Rock"), plus one that I expect will be on John's next CD, along with "Jerry Potts". Since you can't yet read John's sleeve notes on "The Wreck of the 'Asia'", he has put together the following notes on the song:

Edith Fowke recorded "The Wreck of the 'Asia'" from C.J.H. Snider and included it on the LP *Songs of the Great Lakes* (Folkways FE 4018, now available on CD from Folkways Smithsonian, [www.folkways.si.edu](http://www.folkways.si.edu)). I learned it while preparing to do a concert in Gore Bay, Ontario, on Manitoulin Island. I wanted a song mentioning Manitoulin, and found this shipwreck song, which was, "next to 'The

Schooner *Persian's Crew*", the most widely remembered of tragic ballads of the Great Lakes", according to Edith's liner notes, which also quote extensively from a 1956 newspaper article (Rosemary Pitcher, "The Georgian Bay Tragedy", Toronto *Evening Telegram*, Oct. 19, 1956). On the evening of Sept. 13, 1882, the paddlewheeler "Asia" left Owen Sound, bound for French River and points between, with over 200 passengers as well as supplies for the lumber camps. Because horses were being carried belowdecks, much of the cargo was stowed on deck, and the ship was topheavy. Next day she ran into the worst storm in memory. The captain kept her afloat by steering into the wind, but at one point decided he could come about and run downwind for French River. In the process he was exposed broadside for a crucial moment, and the ship overturned. The accident occurred in broad daylight, less than 20 miles from shore. There were only two survivors.

Mr. Snider first heard the song in 1891. His version gives a passenger complement of 100 rather than 200, but in other respects seems factually compatible with the newspaper story, despite the florid dramatization typical of songs of the time. A man named Jack O'Brien sold broadside copies of the song in Orillia, and might have been the author.

The "Asia" tragedy plays a large part in the plot of a children's novel, *The Adventures of Tommy Smith* by Robert Sutherland (Toronto: HarperTrophy Canada, 2003).  
*John Leeder*

### The Wreck of the "Asia"

Loud roared the fearful tumult, and stormy was the day,  
When the Asia left her harbour to cross the Georgian Bay;  
One hundred souls she had on board, likewise a costly store,  
And on that trip, this gallant ship, she sank to rise no more.

With three-and-thirty shantymen, all hearty, stout and brave;  
They were all bound for French River, but found a watery grave;  
Men tried to save the captain as the waters round him raged;  
"Oh, no," he cried, "ne'er think of me till all on board are saved!"

I'll ne'er forget MacDougall, which was his honoured name,  
Immortalized by gallant deed and handed down to fame;  
The cabin boy next passed away, so young, so true, so brave;  
His parents weep, while his body sleeps in the Georgian's watery grave.

And likewise Willie Christie, with his lately-wedded bride,  
Were bound for Manitoulin, where her parents did reside;  
"If only we had left this boat last eve at Owen Sound! □  
O Willie dear, why came we here in these waters for to drown?"

"Mamma will say, 'Why such delay?', but she must be excused;  
'Twill make her sad, likewise my dad, to hear the awful news."  
Of all the souls she had on board, two only are alive,  
Miss Morrison and Tinkus, who only did survive.

Miss Morrison and Tinkus -- those names I'll ne'er forget --  
Protected by a lifeboat which five times did upset;

The boat was seen to hold eighteen, which into her did climb,  
 But it upset and down they went, there were seven at one time.

Now in the deep their bodies sleep, their earthly trials are o'er,  
 And on the beach their bones do bleach along the Georgian shore;  
 Around each family circle, how sad the news to hear,  
 The foundering of the Asia left sounding in each ear.

## The Wreck of the Asia

C. J. H. Snider

Loud roared the fear - ful tu - mult, and  
 stor - my was the day, When the A - sia left her  
 har - bour, to cross the Geor - gian Bay.... One  
 hun - dred souls she had on board, like - wise a cost - ly  
 store..... And on that trip, this gal - lant ship, she  
 sank to rise no more.

## The "Segwun" is Steamin' Again

Oh, the lakes of Muskoka are rugged and wide,  
 Renowned for their beautiful shores;  
 But their bays and their islands drive steamboat men mad,  
 With their rocks and their channels galore;  
 And once a proud fleet sailed these waters so deep,  
 They were captained by hard-bitten men;  
 Now the rest of the fleet are all lost or asleep,  
 But the 'Segwun' is steamin' again.

CHORUS: The 'Segwun' is steamin' again,  
 The 'Segwun' is steamin' again;  
 Come and spread the glad news of the Hundred Mile Cruise  
 For the 'Segwun' is steamin' again.

# The "Segwun" is Steamin' Again

John Leeder

Oh, the lakes of Mus-ko-ka are rug-ged and wide, Re-  
 -nowned for their beau-ti-ful shores..... But their bays and their is-lands drive  
 steam-boat men mad, With their rocks and their chan-nels ga-lore..... And  
 once a proud fleet sailed these wa-ters so deep, they were cap-tained by hard bit-ten  
 men..... Now the rest of the fleet are all lost or a-sleep, But the  
 'Seg-wun' is steam-in' a-gain..... The 'Seg-wun' is steam-in' a-  
 -gain....., The 'Seg-wun' is steam-in' a-gain....., Come and  
 spread the glad news of the Hun-dred Mile Cruise, For the 'Seg-wun' is steam-in' a-  
 -gain.....

When they built her they called her the 'Nipissing II',  
 From the shipyards of Glasgow she came;  
 After forty years' service they built her anew  
 And they gave her her present proud name;  
 She sailed as the 'Segwun' for thirty-three years,  
 And sat at the dock twenty-four;  
 The 'Segwun' committee they fitted her out,  
 And the 'Segwun' is steamin' once more.

She's two-sixty tons, with a fresh coat of paint,  
 She's completely refitted throughout;

When she raced with the flagship they made her hold back,  
 She's a speedy wee craft without doubt.  
 She's got double screws, she can turn in her tracks,  
 Or reverse to the wind without fear;  
 That's good honest coal smoke that pours from her stack,  
 There's no stinkin' old diesel fuel here.

When the crazy old city has your psyche a wreck,  
 And you can't see the woods for the trees;  
 Head up to Muskoka and stick out your neck,  
 For a faceful of fresh forest breeze;  
 The sunbeams and wavelets they dance their old dance,  
 While the waves on the rocks clap along;  
 You'll go back to the city a satisfied person,  
 Perhaps even singin' this song.

## Will Ye Go To Flanders?

Anon

Will ye go to Flan - ders, my Mall-ie - oh?

Will ye go to Flan - ders, my bon - nie Mall - ie - oh? They'll give ye wine and brand - y, and sacks of sug - ar cand - y, Oh,

will ye go to Flan - ders, my Mall-ie - oh?

Will ye go to Flanders, my Mallie-oh?  
 Will ye go to Flanders, my bonny Mallie-oh?  
 They'll give ye wine and brandy, and sacks of sugar candy,  
 Oh, will ye go to Flanders, my Mallie-oh?

Will ye go to Flanders, my Mallie-oh?  
 Along wi' all the Highlanders, my bonny Mallie-oh?  
 Ye'll hear the pipies skirling, ye'll see the plaidies swirling,  
 Oh, will ye go to Flanders, my Mallie-oh?

Will ye go to Flanders, my Mallie-oh?  
 To see the chief commanders, my bonny Mallie-oh?  
 Ye'll hear the captains calling, ye'll see the sergeants  
 brawling,  
 And the soldiers, how they're falling, my Mallie-oh.

Will ye go to Flanders, my Mallie-oh?  
 Along wi' all the Highlanders, my bonny Mallie-oh?  
 Ye'll hear the bullets flying, ye'll see the ladies crying,  
 And the soldiers, how they're dying, my Mallie-oh.

# The Hudson Bay Line

John Leeder

Well, the first time I rode on the Hud - son Bay Line, I  
 went to buy my tick - et, and I was do - ing fine; I asked the station a - gent how  
 soon my trip would end; He said, "You'll get to Churchill boy but on - ly God knows when." On the  
 Hud - son Bay Line, on the Hud - son Bay Line, Hell of..... a time on the  
 Hud - son Bay Line.

Well, the first time I rode on the Hudson Bay Line,  
 I went to buy my ticket, and I was doing fine;  
 I asked the station agent how soon my trip would end;  
 He said, "You'll get to Churchill, boy, but only God knows when.

CHORUS: On the Hudson Bay Line.  
 On the Hudson Bay Line,  
 Hell of a time  
 On the Hudson Bay Line.

Well, have you got a schedule? Let's have a look at it,  
 Yes, I have got a schedule, and it ain't worth two bits;  
 Just take along a lot of grub, enough to see you through,  
 You might get there in three, four days, or a week, or maybe two.

Well, the cars were old and draughty round the windows and the doors,  
 We sat on wooden benches and we slept on wooden floors;  
 A big pot-bellied stove, it was rusted all to hell  
 For heatin' and for cookin' and for spittin' on as well.

We stopped at creeks and clearin's, we stopped at lakes and fords,  
 We stopped beside the muskeg where mosquitoes come in hordes,  
 We stopped at bays and rivers, at rocks and waterfalls,  
 We even stopped at places where there was nothin' there at all.

Now boys, we've hit a washout, the conductor he did say,  
 And if she don't get mended, I'm afraid we're here to stay,  
 I need a bunch of volunteers, that's you and you and you.  
 I broke my back a-linin' track until the train got through.

Well now they've got a diesel train that's really mighty nice,  
 And now they've got a cat train that crawls across the ice,  
 And now they've got an airline, it's all the latest fad,  
 But they are never gonna have the good times that we had.

## The Jam on Jerry's Rock

Anon

The image shows a musical score for the song 'The Jam on Jerry's Rock'. It consists of six staves of music in 4/4 time, written in treble clef. The lyrics are printed below the notes. The first staff begins with a whole rest, followed by a quarter rest, then a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note B4, a quarter note C5, a quarter note B4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note G4, and a quarter note F4. The lyrics are 'Come all you true born shant-y boys and'. The second staff starts with a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note B4, a quarter note C5, a quarter note B4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note G4, a quarter note F4, a quarter note E4, a quarter note D4, a quarter note C4, and a quarter note B3. The lyrics are 'list-en while I re-late, The tale of one young'. The third staff starts with a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note B4, a quarter note C5, a quarter note B4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note G4, a quarter note F4, a quarter note E4, a quarter note D4, a quarter note C4, and a quarter note B3. The lyrics are 'riv-er boy and his un-time-ly fate. The'. The fourth staff starts with a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note B4, a quarter note C5, a quarter note B4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note G4, a quarter note F4, a quarter note E4, a quarter note D4, a quarter note C4, and a quarter note B3. The lyrics are 'tale of one young riv-er boy, so man-ly, true and'. The fifth staff starts with a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note B4, a quarter note C5, a quarter note B4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note G4, a quarter note F4, a quarter note E4, a quarter note D4, a quarter note C4, and a quarter note B3. The lyrics are 'brave, 'Twas in the jam on Jerry's rock he'. The sixth staff starts with a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note B4, a quarter note C5, a quarter note B4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note G4, a quarter note F4, a quarter note E4, a quarter note D4, a quarter note C4, and a quarter note B3. The lyrics are 'met a wat-ry grave.'

Come all you true-born shantyboys and listen while I relate  
The tale of one young river boss and his untimely fate,  
The tale of one young river boss, so manly true and brave,  
'Twas in the jam on Jerry's Rock he met a watery grave.

'Twas on a Sunday morning, as you shall quickly hear;  
Our logs were piled up mountains high, we could not keep them clear,  
Our foreman cried, "Turn out, brave boys, with hearts devoid of fear!  
We'll break the jam on Jerry's Rock, and for Signaltown we'll steer."

Now some of them was willing enough, but others they was not,  
For to work upon a Sunday they did not think they ought,  
But six of our Canadian boys did volunteer to go,  
To break the jam on Jerry's Rock, with foreman young Monroe.

They had not hauled off many logs when young Monroe did say,  
"I'll have you boys be on your guard, the jam will soon give way!"  
And straight these words were spoken when the jam did break and go,  
And carried away these six brave boys and foreman young Monroe.

They hauled him to the riverside, combed back his raven hair;  
There was one fair maid among them all whose cries they filled the air;  
'Twas handsome Anna Dennison, the girl from Signaltown,  
Come running to the riverside, to find her true love drowned.

Come all you true-born shantyboys, I'll have you come and see,

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Treasures from Our Archives

### *Fifteen Years Ago*

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

### *Ten Years Ago*

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

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