

Ontario

Before the Second World War there seems to have been only sparse and sporadic recognition of Ontario's vernacular song traditions, usually as part of a more general collection of folksongs intended to be national in scope, such as John Murray Gibbon's *Canadian Folk Songs, Old and New*.¹ The centuries-old and widespread activity of the forestry industry was known, of course, and so the existence of a song-legacy about logging and the men who made their livings in the shanty camps of the north woods was recognised, if not yet well documented.² And the occasional foreign collector made brief forays into Ontario, for example Maud Karpeles, who for a short time noted songs in Lakefield, Peterborough County, while on vacation in 1929.³ These were swallows that would herald the coming of summer in the postwar era, as the growing Canadian folk music revival stimulated interest in the older anglophone folksong tradition in Ontario as well as in Newfoundland and the Maritimes.

Recovering the traditional song culture of Upper Canada was the aim of one of Canada's most celebrated collector/scholars, Edith Fowke. Fowke was far and away the most dedicated and prolific collector-scholar to work primarily in Ontario, although her interests ranged wider than the province. A socialist who had grown up in Tommy Douglas's Saskatchewan, she was also particularly interested in labour and industrial songs and the folk sub-genre of protest songs. For a short introduction to Fowke's career, collecting and scholarship, one can initially consult the *Encyclopedia of Music in Canada* article on her,⁴ but this needs to be supplemented by the informative obituary contributed by Sheldon Posen to *Folk Music Journal* in 1996⁵ and Philip Thomas's earlier account of her publications in *Canada Folk Music Bulletin*.⁶

The scholar who has most intensively studied Fowke's career is Alan Kirby, who is writing her biography. Two of his articles are particularly valuable. "What Ordinary People Do Is Important": Edith Fowke's Life and Publications" was a contribution to *Canadian Journal for Traditional Music* in 1998.⁷ This, as its title suggests, was a survey of her career with a focus on her writings. The second, which appeared in *Canadian Folk Music* in 2002, was a more detailed examination of her early collecting in Ontario, titled "Edith Fowke and Traditional Music in Rural Ontario."⁸ There is as yet no book-length account of Fowke's life and *oeuvre*, so one way to go beyond Kirby is to explore the Fowke archive in Special Collections at the University of Calgary. A guide to this may be found in David Gregory's "Fonds Edith Fowke" in the same 2002 issue of *Canadian Folk*

Music.⁹ Fowke usually did her fieldwork in Ontario with a tape recorder, and some of her recordings, including those of the singing of one of her best informants, O.J. Abbott, are housed in Calgary. Her other archival material there provides an excellent research opportunity for anyone located in or near that city.

Another way, of course, is to follow the chronology of Fowke's most important publications, an evolutionary path that also reflected her fieldwork and her expanding interests in the related worlds of labor politics and vernacular song. Fowke was not only a song-collector and a folklorist, she was also a pioneering publicist of Canadian folk song who played a significant role in the post-war Canadian folk song revival through her editions of Canadian folk songs. These included *Folk Songs of Canada* (1954),¹⁰ *Canada's Story in Song* (1960),¹¹ *More Folk Songs of Canada* (1967),¹² and *The Penguin Book of Canadian Folk Songs* (1973).¹³ She was also a political activist who strongly supported the labour movement, and she contributed *Songs of Work and Freedom* (1960) to the cause.¹⁴

Fowke's career as a folklorist and song-collector was reflected in her scholarly articles and her published collections of the material she had found in the field. Her first important discussions of Ontario folksongs came in two 1963 articles: "Folk Songs in Ontario"¹⁵ and "British Ballads in Ontario."¹⁶ They were followed two years later by the publication of her first major collection of Ontario folksong, *Traditional Singers and Songs from Ontario*.¹⁷ In 1966 she discussed "A Sampling of Bawdy Ballads from Ontario,"¹⁸ but it was towards the end of the decade that she contributed "Labour and Industrial Protest Songs in Canada"¹⁹ and edited with Keith MacMillan *Sally Go Round the Sun: 300 Songs, Rhymes and Games of Canadian Children*.²⁰ The new decade saw the publication of another major work, *Lumbering Songs from the Northern Woods*.²¹ Fowke was a regular contributor to and sometime editor of *Canadian Folk Music Journal*, and "Songs of a Manitoba Family" in the 1975 issue is just one example of the articles by her that can be found in its pages.²² She also wrote shorter pieces for *Canadian Folk Music Bulletin*, for instance "Two Canadian Macaronic Songs" in a 1984 issue.²³

Fowke regarded the discovery of two particularly fine traditional singers as one of her greatest achievements. They were O.J. Abbott and LaRena Clark. O.J. Abbott was a Canadian of British extraction who had been strongly influenced in his youth by Irish-Canadian singers. Edith Fowke not only discovered

him; she also tape-recorded much of his repertoire. She promoted him as a traditional singer, and he went on to perform at various folk clubs and folk festivals, including the famous Newport Folk Festival. He was also recorded by Folkways Records. The field recordings made by Fowke of Abbott's singing have been transcribed in Laszlo Vikar and Jeanette Panagapka, eds., *Songs of the Northern Woods, As Sung by O.J. Abbott and Collected by Edith Fowke*.²⁴ Henry Hadeed contributed an analysis of Abbott's melodic repertoire in a 1981 *Canadian Folk Music Journal* article titled "The Songs of Mr. O.J. Abbott: A Survey of Tune Types,"²⁵ and David Gregory wrote a review of the Vikar and Panagapka book in a 2005 issue of *Canadian Folk Music*.²⁶

Fowke's other famous discovery was LaRena Clark. In addition to taping Clark she helped her obtain a recording contract, and in 1979-80 Bill Sargeant reviewed two of Clark's LPs in *Canadian Folk Bulletin*.²⁷ Then in 1994 Fowke and Jay Rahn published a book, *A Family Heritage: The Story and Songs of LaRena Clark*, which included biographical information as well as transcriptions of many of Clark's songs.²⁸ Rahn has also written for the *Canadian Journal for Traditional Music* a series of articles analyzing Clark's style and repertoire. The titles are "An Introduction to English-Language Folk-Song Style: Metre, Phrasing, Rhythm and Form in LaRena Clark's Traditional Songs,"²⁹ "An Introduction to English-Language Folk-Song Style (II): Tonality, Modality, Harmony, and Intonation in LaRena Clark's Traditional Songs,"³⁰ and "Prosody, Performance and Perception: Tempo in LaRena Clark's Ballad-Metre Songs."³¹ These are among the most thorough analyses of any Canadian folksinger and his/her songs yet to be written, so they are recommended here not only as a source of information about Clark's singing style and repertoire but also as a model of ethnomusicological scholarship.

It is hardly surprising that such an important, influential and controversial figure as Edith Fowke has attracted a considerable body of secondary literature. Kirby's valuable articles have already been cited, but also interesting are Vera Johnson's "Fowkelore" in *Canadian Folk Music*³² and a composite obituary by Johnson, Phil Thomas and Robert Rodriguez in the same 1996 issue.³³ Musician and educator Richard Johnston was on several occasions a close collaborator of Fowke's, and his reminiscences of her can be found in a 1997 issue of *Canadian Folk Music*.³⁴ Jeanette Panagapka also contributed her memories of Fowke, titled "Edith Fowke: Reflections," to a 2002 issue of *Canadian Folk Music*.³⁵ Two more concerted evaluations of Fowke's life and work are well worth reading: one by her disciple and co-editor, ethnomusicologist Jay Rahn, in *Canadian Journal for Trad-*

tional Music,³⁶ and one more critical piece by folklorist Pauline Greenhill in *Canadian Folk Music*.³⁷

Exploring Ontario folksong by means of Edith Fowke's publications is a good way to approach the subject but not the only way. Other collectors and scholars have focused on aspects or places that Fowke missed. We can conclude by recognizing that Ontario is divided into sub-regions. Certain areas have received more attention from folklorists and song-collectors than others. For example, Ivan Walton has surveyed "Songs of the Great Lakes,"³⁸ while the Ottawa region has been studied by both Laurel Doucette and Sheldon Posen. Doucette's "The Gatineau Valley Singing Tradition: A Contemporary View" was printed in the 1979 issue of *Canadian Folk Music Journal*,³⁹ while Posen's "Tracking Down the Chapeau Boys" appeared in a 1985 issue of *Canadian Folk Music Bulletin*.⁴⁰ And we have already seen that francophone song has survived in the countryside near Windsor and Sudbury. Urban Ontario is another story entirely, one in which the music of ethnic minorities features strongly.

Notes

¹Gibbon, John Murray, ed. *Canadian Folk Songs, Old and New*. Toronto: Dent, 1927.

²See Knapp, Liz. "Logging and Lumbermen's Songs of the United States and Canada: A Selected Bibliography," *Canadian Folk Music Society Newsletter—Bulletin*, 15:2 (Summer 1979), 6-8. Also Rickaby, Franz. *Ballads and Songs of the Shanty-Boy*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1926.

³Gregory, E. David. "Before Newfoundland: Maud Karpeles in Canada", *Canadian Folk Music/Bulletin de musique folklorique canadienne*, 37:1 (Spring 2003), pp. 1-12.

⁴"Edith Fowke," *Canadian Encyclopedia Online*.

⁵Posen, I. Sheldon. "Edith Fowke 1913-1996," *Folk Music Journal*, 7: 2 (1996), 275-276.

⁶Thomas, Philip J. "Edith Fowke's Publications," *Canada Folk Music Bulletin* 1:6 (November-December 1978), 12-13.

⁷Kirby, Allan. "'What Ordinary People Do Is Important': Edith Fowke's Life and Publications," *Canadian Journal for Traditional Music* 26 (1998): 1-16.

⁸Kirby, Allan. "Edith Fowke and Traditional Music in Rural Ontario," *Canadian Folk Music Bulletin/Bulletin de Musique folklorique canadienne*, Vol. 36, No. 1 (2002), 12-18.

⁹Gregory, E. David. "Fonds Edith Fowke," *Canadian Folk Music/Musique folklorique canadienne*, 36.3 (2002), 26-29.

- ¹⁰Fowke, Edith & Richard Johnston, eds. *Folk Songs of Canada*. Waterloo: Waterloo Music Co., 1954.
- ¹¹Fowke, Edith, Alan Mills and Helmet Blume, eds. *Canada's Story in Song*. Toronto: Gage, 1960. Expanded edition as *Singing Our History: Canada's Story in Song*. Toronto: Doubleday Canada, 1984.
- ¹²Fowke, Edith and Richard Johnston, eds. *More Folk Songs of Canada*. Waterloo, Ont: Waterloo Music Company, 1967. Reprinted as *Folk Songs of Canada II*, 1978.
- ¹³Fowke, Edith, ed. *The Penguin Book of Canadian Folk Songs*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973.
- ¹⁴Fowke, Edith and Joe Glazer, eds. *Songs of Work and Freedom*. Chicago: Roosevelt University, [1960]. Reprinted as *Songs of Work and Protest*. New York: Dover, 1973.
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- ¹⁶Fowke, Edith. "British Ballads in Ontario," *Midwest Folklore*, 13 (1963), pp. 133-162.
- ¹⁷Fowke, Edith, ed. *Traditional Singers and Songs from Ontario*. Ontario: Burns & MacEachern Ltd, 1965. Hatboro, Pa.: Folklore Associates, 1965.
- ¹⁸Fowke, Edith. "A Sampling of Bawdy Ballads from Ontario," in Bruce Jackson, ed., *Folklore and Society: Essays in Honor of Benjamin A. Botkin*, 45-61. Hatboro, Pa.: Folklore Associates, 1966.
- ¹⁹Fowke, Edith. "Labour and Industrial Protest Songs in Canada," *Journal of American Folklore* 82 (1969), 34-50.
- ²⁰Fowke, Edith and Keith MacMillan, eds. *Sally Go Round the Sun: 300 Songs, Rhymes and Games of Canadian Children*. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1969.
- ²¹Fowke, Edith, ed. *Lumbering Songs from the Northern Woods*. Austin, Texas: American Folklore Society and University of Texas Press, 1970.
- ²²Fowke, Edith. "Songs of a Manitoba Family," *Canadian Folk Music Journal* 3 (1975), 35-46.
- ²³Fowke, Edith. "Two Canadian Macaronic Songs," *Canadian Folk Music Bulletin de musique folklorique canadienne* 18: 4 (December 1984), 21-23.
- ²⁴Vikar, Laszlo and Jeanette Panagapka, eds. *Songs of the North Woods, As Sung by O.J. Abbott and Collected by Edith Fowke*. Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2004.
- ²⁵Hadeed, Henry V. "The Songs of Mr. O.J. Abbott: A Survey of Tune Types," *Canadian Folk Music Journal* 9 (1981), 54-58.
- ²⁶Gregory, E. David. "Songs of the North Woods," *Canadian Folk Music/Musique folklorique canadienne* 39:2 (Summer 2005), 18-25.
- ²⁷Sarjeant, William A.S. "Review: *Canada's Traditional Queen of Song — LaRena LeBarr Clark*," *Canada Folk Bulletin* 2: 3 (May-June 1979), 14-15.
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- ²⁹Rahn, Jay. "An Introduction to English-Language Folk-Song Style: Metre, Phrasing, Rhythm and Form in LaRena Clark's Traditional Songs," *Canadian Folk Music Journal* 17 (1989), 3-18.
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- ³¹Rahn, Jay. "Prosody, Performance and Perception: Tempo in LaRena Clark's Ballad-Metre Songs," *Canadian Journal for Traditional Music* 30 (2003), 64-83.
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- ³³Johnson, Vera, Phil Thomas, and Robert Rodriguez. "Edith Fulton Fowke (1913-1996): *Ave atque vale*," *Canadian Folk Music Bulletin* 30.4 (December 1996).
- ³⁴Johnston, Richard. "'And That's How It Began...': Richard Johnston Interviewed by Philip J. Thomas," *Canadian Folk Music/Bulletin de musique folklorique canadienne* 31: 3-4 (September-December 1997), 13-17.
- ³⁵Panagapka, Jeanette. "Edith Fowke: Reflections," *Canadian Folk Music/Bulletin de musique folklorique canadienne*, 36: 3 (Fall 2002), 23-26.
- ³⁶Rahn, Jay. "Edith Fowke (1913-96)," *Canadian Journal for Traditional Music* 24 (1996), 1-5.
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- ³⁸Walton, Ivan H. "Songs of the Great Lakes," in *Folklore of Canada*, ed. Edith Fowke, 196-212. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1976.
- ³⁹Doucette, Laurel. "The Gatineau Valley Singing Tradition: A Contemporary View," *Canadian Folk Music Journal* 7 (1979), 18-22.
- ⁴⁰Posen, I. Sheldon. "Tracking Down the Chapeau Boys," *Canadian Folk Music/Bulletin de musique folklorique canadienne* 19: 4 (December 1985), 11-15.