

"THAT'S THE WAY THEY LIVED"

ANNE AND FRANK WARNER

WE FIRST met Yankee John Galusha, famous now among all who are interested in Adirondack folklore as a singer of fine songs and ballads, in August, 1939. Yankee John was then 80, somewhat bent with the weight of years, but vigorous and hearty. He had spent his life in the North Country as a lumberjack, game and fishing guide, forest ranger (Vanderwacker Mountain was his last charge), and farmer. He and Mrs. Galusha were then living in an Adirondack farmhouse in Fourteenth Road in Minerva.

On our second visit the following year we had our first recording machine, an early *Recordio*, and a supply of small paper disks. On to these, during that meeting and during our subsequent visits, Yankee John sang many songs, some of them rarely found in oral tradition. We had many a long talk with him during our visits, and he became a dear and valued friend. But it was not until 1950, when we saw him for the last time, shortly before his passing at the age of 91, that we had a tape-recording machine. Yankee John had been very ill, but had recovered sufficiently to be dressed and sit in the kitchen of the house (where he was staying with a grand niece and nephew) on that September day. We thought only of visiting a dear friend and not of "collecting." However, toward the end of our visit we mentioned the new gadget out in the car, and Yankee John said he would like to see it. So the tape machine was brought in and turned on, and we began to ask him some questions about his early memories. The following is a transcription from this tape, with the questions omitted because they break into the flow of his narrative. The tape is short because we did not feel we should overtax his strength,

though there were dozens of anecdotes and stories he had told us over the years which we would have liked him to retell for a permanent record. Alas, for all lost opportunities.

I was born in 1859, February 6th, 1859. . . .

I can remember when we used to farm it and raise all the stuff



*"Yankee John" Galusha in the yard of his home
on Fourteenth Road in Minerva in 1941.*

that we consumed mostly on our farm — everything like eggs and butter and cheese, and flour — we would have our grain ground into

flour and bring it home and use it, as they go to the stores and buy it today. . . .

I can remember as long ago as when I wore dresses . . . little boys wore dresses, lots of them, until they was, oh, three and four years old, and then they would go into their pants. And you ought to see them strut around when they got their pants on! They could thrash buckwheat then as good as a man, almost! Boys would wear their hair sometimes as long as a girl [while they were in dresses] . . . and then they would go straight along up to farm work. That's the way they lived.

[People made their own things then.] Generally there would be some shoemaker in the town could make shoes for children, or they could make a pair of boots for a man. They probably wouldn't be too slick looking, but they took the weather and the wear. That's the way they lived.

We had horses . . . and we used to use lots of oxen too. But they always had horses . . . they brought horses right into the country with them. I couldn't tell you when that was [the first coming]. My folks come in pretty early . . . I guess Galushas are all over the United States . . . the states seem to be full of Galushas now. I get letters from all different states. . . .

They say the first Galusha that ever came into the United States was kidnapped — what they call "shanghaied." The British used to shanghai men out of Ireland and put them on the ships and send them out. They would send press gangs and take a lot of men and put them to work on vessels in them days. This fellow [a Galusha who had come by to see him a few years earlier] claims that he got far enough to find out that that's the way the first Galusha came into the United States . . . he was shanghaied by what they called press gangs in Great Britain. . . .

I lived in several different places . . . they used to move around quite a lot in them days . . . a good deal more than now . . . but for quite a few years we lived in Thurman. My father . . . I stayed with my father until I was old enough to go out to work. He farmed it. He worked in the lumber woods in the winter time for other people . . . lots of people did that. They farmed it in the summer and worked in the wintry woods in the winter . . . that's they way they lived.

I'm goin to try to sing a song . . . it's the only one I am going to try to sing . . .



Musical transcription by Jean Kuebler.

O come on me bonnie lassie,
And let us appoint the time,
The time when we will be married
And I can call you mine;
The time when we will be married,
How happy we will be.
O, come on me bonnie lassie
And paddle the road with me.

To paddle the road with you, kind sir,
Cold winter is coming on;
Likewise my aged parents,
They have no child but one;
Besides, my aged parents,
They have no child but me . . .
Wherein my dad, he has picked out a lad
To paddle the road with me.

The lad your dad he has picked out
He is nought but a country clown,
He'll torment you and abuse you
And tear your beauty down;
He will cause you for to curse the day
That him you ever did see;

So, come on me bonnie lassie
And paddle the road with me!

Now this young couple are married,
They live in yonders town.
They are happy as their neighbors,
Their neighbors all around . . .
They are happy as their neighbors.
Their neighbors where'er they be;
Wherein, she blesses the day she happened that way
To paddle the road with me.

I don't know the name of it . . . I guess it's just "Come on me bonnie lassie, and paddle the road with me."

When I was a boy there was an old couple that come around . . . they had a horse and a wagon, a covered wagon, a small one, big enough, I guess, that they lived in it most of the time . . . traveling all around the country. Their name [his name] was Yankee Annan. I used to mimic people, when I was a kid, that I'd hear singing. I began to mimic him, and people named me "Yankee" after him . . . I was possibly somewhere between 8 and 10 years old. I know I learned songs from him, but I can't remember what they were to save my life. He tried to get my father to let me go with him . . . I wanted to until I found out what it was . . . kind of got it in my head what it was, and then I got a little skeptical. My father wouldn't let me go anyway . . . I had work to do . . . that was the time when people wanted children to work. That's the way they lived. . .

I can remember when my father went to the South and got my brother that was wounded in the battle of Cold Harbor . . . and he lived from in May until the next March. He died sometime in March from the effects of the wounds. He was hit twice . . . shot on the breast-works . . . on top of them. He fell back and laid there from quite early in the morning until after dark at night. He had a broken leg just above the knee and a bullet right through just above his hip. The bullet did not come out on the other side, and they never did get it out . . . too dangerous. Today, they would have had him fixed up and back in battle again.

My father went down and got him . . . carried him in his arms between the stations. He had to change cars coming home and there

was no conveyance they could get and he had to carry him. A wagon was sent to meet him quite a ways from home . . . it was quite a homecoming . . .

I had another brother that served three years and was in 13 different battles and never got a scratch. His term of enlistment expired and he was discharged and come home; and after he was discharged they called for volunteers again and there was a \$1,000 bounty offered to them that would enlist and he turned right around and enlisted again and got back just in time to get into the fight at Appomattox Courthouse and got his \$1,000 and came back home again! He had a streak of luck . . .

I heard that the boys used to whistle back and forth across the lines, and how they swapped hardtack for tobacco. The Southern boys wanted the hardtack and the Northern boys wanted tobacco! The Yanks called the Rebels "Johnny Grayback," and the Southerners used to call the Northern boys "Billy Yank." They say that they was quite friendly . . . The time they had that epidemic that the blackberries did such good — the Southerners and the Northern boys would be right out there together picking berries. I have heard three different soldiers tell of that — I heard Bill Hangsen and I heard my brother tell of it, and . . . Cameron . . . I forgot his given name. They wondered what in Old Harry they was fightin' for. They swapped songs, too.

[About that song, "The Red, White and Red"], I don't believe there *was* a flag in the South that was what you could call a red, white and red flag . . . there was blue on that flag somewhere. That means that most of those Southerners believed that the North was right!

I knew a Rebel Colonel — I guided him, fishing. Every time I looked at him I thought of my brother Stanley lying on his bed, groaning . . . and I wanted to kill him. I didn't like him . . . but he was an all right fellow. The Southern people are a generous race of people, if you can believe what you read and what other people tell you.

You know, I have been fixed for death . . . I am a Catholic, you know, and I have been annointed for death twice this spring . . . and now it is summer . . . I've got another one to go . . .

Well, goodbye . . . God bless you . . . and thanks for your blessing.

"The Irishtown Crew"

During our first visit with Yankee John, in August of 1939 (when we were first song-catching in the Adirondacks), he sang us many Irish-American songs. Among them was "The Irishtown Crew," a local song of a fine rollicking character, full of the names of people about whom the song was written — in the style of "Uncle Tom Cobleigh and All."

Irishtown, in 1939, was a deserted village some three miles from Minerva (now, re-occupied and rebuilt and flourishing as a part of Minerva itself). In the burying ground of the little white frame church there, we found stones bearing the names of a dozen of the boys in the song.

There are many tall tales in the York State tradition — tales which take an actual incident, perhaps, and build on it a magnificent structure to titillate pioneer risibilities. This song is in that tradition. We don't know another one like it.

In case any present-day descendants of any members of the "crew" feel that the account takes dignity or honor from their pioneer forebears (Irish pioneers in the Adirondacks were not many generations ago), we would like to reassure them. Mrs. Galusha, who was a most respectable lady, told us that she had gone to school with most of the boys in the song, and she obviously regarded them with affection. It was a favorite song of Yankee John's, and it is surely in the comic Irish tradition. Young Irishmen are noted for their willingness to go on a spree now and again — and, sure, they brought the trait over the water with them. Let's not begrudge them a bit of wishful thinking, then, or ourselves the fun of singing about it!

One word of explanation: the words of the song were taken down from Yankee John's singing and the spelling of some of the names may have suffered thereby. "Radigan's" was a bar in Irishtown, and there the adventures of the evening under discussion began. "The Corners" was another pub, run by a blind man nam-

THE IRISHTOWN CREW

VERSE

ON THE FIRST DAY OF A-PRIL, I'LL NE-VER FOR-GET THE
 I-RISH-TOWN BOYS - AT RAD-I-GAN'S MET, THEY
 FILLED UP THEIR GLASS-ES AND SWORE SOLEMN - LY THAT
 THAT VE-RY DAY THEY'D GO OUT ON A SPREE!

CHORUS

SING- FOL THE DOL LAD-DIE RI TOL THE DOL LAD-DIE. SING-
 FOL THE DOL LAD-DIE RI TOL THE LO DAY!

The musical notation is written on five staves. The first four staves correspond to the verse, and the last two staves correspond to the chorus. The key signature has one flat (B-flat), and the time signature is 3/4. The melody is simple and folk-like, with lyrics written below the notes.

Musical transcription by Jean Kuebler.

ed Gibney. Yankee John said that Gibney, since he could not see, measured out the whiskey by putting his thumb over the edge of the glass and pouring up to the thumb! This explains the last two lines of the song.

On the first day of April, I'll never forget
 The Irishtown boys at Radigan's met,
 They filled up their glasses and swore solemnly
 That that very day they'd go out on a spree!

Sing fol the dol laddie,
 Ri tol the dol laddie,
 Sing fol the dol laddie,
 Ri tol the lo day!

There was Holland and Blucher and Williams and Brinn
And one Mack and Ernie that drives the gray team,
There was Isaac and Letty and Paddy and Joe,
And one Micky Conners that lived down below.

They filled themselves up on Radigan's beer
And straight for the Corners they quickly did steer,
Resolved before morning they'd finish their spree
And spend a few hours with young Tommy Mee.

Arriving at the Corners, they met more of the boys,
There was Early and Duffy and Jimmy McCoy,
Yankee, Neely, Cub and Tom Flynn,
Joe Berto, Pete Lindsay, and one Danny Lynn.

There was Nelson Berto, a dear friend of mine,
He used to go courting one black Angeline,
With Tucker the mason that plastered our wall,
And Black Pete Mitchell, the pride of them all.

Money being plenty, the drinks they went round,
And glass after glass of the spirits went down.
In less than an hour not a man was in sight,
But was drunker 'n a fiddler and wanted to fight!

Tucker in the kitchen his way he did make,
There sit Wallace Plumly, all the way from Long Lake.
Says Gibney: I'd have you my house to respect,
This gentleman's here my house to protect.

I ask no odds of your house I'd have you to know,
Or this Long Lake pup you have up here for show!
So Plumley he quickly jumped out on the floor,
And Tucker, he kicked him right bang through the door!

Then out in the street Plumly run like a pup,
You couldn't see his coattails for the dust he kicked up,
Saying, I think myself I got in the wrong pew,
For the devil himself couldn't match such a crew!

Gibney, he bolted and barred up his door,
For love or for money wouldn't sell one drop more.
"You're all drunk now, and you'll get no more."
When slam! went the panels right out of his door!

Some built a big bonfire to keep themselves warm,
And others crawled off into Butler's barn;
And some under Sullivan's shed went to sleep,
And them that was *too* drunk, laid out in the street.

For to conclude and to finish my song,
Here's a health to Pat Radigan, may he live long.
To hell with you, Gibney, you're blind and can't see,
And you'll never thumb no more whiskey for me!