

BILL SMITH LIVES IN AN OLD FARMHOUSE a mile from Lorna's Diner, one of the social centers of South Colton. In the scrubby hills at the northwestern edge of the Adirondacks, it's the kind of hamlet you don't look twice at when whooshing by on the two-lane highway; there's no chic rustic-furniture shop or charming Victorian inn, just a convenience store and the brown-sided diner, hemmed in by woods.

Sixty-one years ago, when Smith, the youngest of ten children, was born in a farmhouse three miles from here, this country was all dirt roads and pasture. Families were large, to ensure there were enough hands to help with the farm chores. Men spent part of their time working in the woods, women tended the animals, and most everybody sang or fiddled and square danced until dawn on Saturday nights in the local grange hall or the schoolhouse at Cooks Corners.

Smith's father was a jobber for the logging camps, hiring out with a team of horses to work as far away as Cranberry Lake. His mother took care of the kids, kept the books for a lumber company, milked the family's fifteen cows, fed the pigs and horses, and tended the large vegetable garden. But no matter what she was doing, "she always sang," he says. "We'd sit around at night on the porch and sing songs, her and I."

Some songs she learned from the lumbermen who stayed at the farmhouse for a day or two on their way into or out of the woods. "Mother would give them a handout and say, 'Sing a song.'" They'd sing not only logging songs like "Once More A-Lumbering Go" and "Tebo" but also old songs—ballads like "The Dying Soldier" and "Barbara Allen"—and cowboy songs. "There was a relationship between loggers and cowboys and gold miners and wandering-type people," says Smith. "They were never warm, they were never dry, and they went from one place to another."

His mother also learned songs from Grace Green, who lived down the road and had eighteen children. "She used to sing a song about a guy that got lost and died in a sandstone cave in North Carolina," but both women had different styles, notes Smith. Grace Green "sang a cappella. She could belt it right out," whereas his mother "sang more tune songs. She'd whistle a melody. I'm the same way, there's always a tune going in my head."

Smith opens up a blue-green notebook in which he's listed "a small sampling" of the songs he knows. In big scrawling script he's written them down by category—parlor songs, ethnic songs, farmer songs, logging songs, tragedy songs, prison songs, hobo songs, square-dance songs, Adirondack songs, funny songs, love songs.

Singing wasn't an activity limited to the home. On weekends Smith

"In the Shanty,"
from a 1920s
Frontenac
Beer calendar.



In traditional
Adirondack
music, the
landscape
calls the tune

BY

LYNN WOODS

striking a ch





Above: Bill Smith knows hundreds of old-time tunes.

JUDY PHILLIPS

Facing page: The Keeseville Harmony Band was one of many all-male community musical groups.

COURTESY OF THE ADIRONDACK MUSEUM, BLUE MOUNTAIN LAKE

"THE BALLAD OF BLUE MOUNTAIN LAKE" AND "ONCE MORE A-LUMBERING GO" REPRINTED FROM *AMERICAN TRADITIONAL FOLK SONGS FROM THE FRANK AND ANNE WARNER COLLECTION* (SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY PRESS, 1984)

went with his mother to Tupper Lake, the base for his father's logging operations, to see his dad and buy groceries for the lumber camp. He recalls visiting hotels that were "full of smoke, spittoons, brass rails and barroom women hanging out looking at the loggers." Big barrel-chested men like Eddie Ashlaw, a logger who later rented the Smiths' farmhouse (he was memorialized in Robert Bethke's 1981 book on lumbermen singers, *Adirondack Voices*), would get up to sing tragic ballads recounting the risks of their livelihood. A favorite was "The Jam on Gerry's Rock," which tells the story of a young man who drowned while breaking up a log jam. Smith also remembers visiting logging camps that had "every kind of person you

could think of—Scotsmen, Irish, Frenchmen, Native Americans, Polish, Russians, Swedes. They all had music. They'd sit around and play the squeezebox, they'd fiddle or dance with each other."

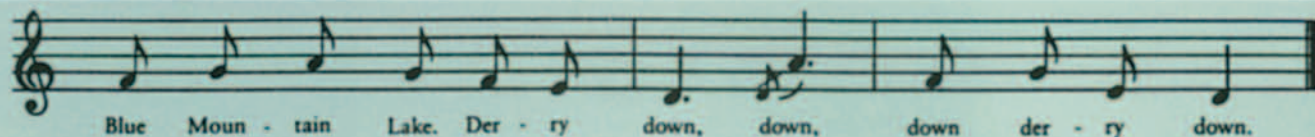
Square dances were another part of Smith's musical education. Popular melodies, including "Red Wing" and "Mockingbird," were transformed into dances, with the calls sung out. At age nine, he played guitar and learned to chord to a fiddle melody and thereafter accompanied fiddlers at the dances, some of which were held "in this very house," then owned by a farmer named Forrest Laws. "There were two sets in this room and a set in the kitchen," says Smith, gesturing around the living room. "The beams under my house are all cracked from people dancing."

The get-togethers—kitchen hops—started at seven or eight in the evening and often didn't end until dawn, when the dancers straggled home. Sometimes, Smith says, he'd play so long and so hard that "blood was dripping down my fingers." Provided that no one got drunk, which often resulted in a fracas, "everybody had a good time."

Smith's family also learned songs listening to country music on their radio, which was powered by a car battery and picked up stations from Nashville; Cincinnati; Wheeling, West Virginia; and Canada. "All of them songs had southern influence," Smith says. But even before there was radio, the songs the lumbermen sang came from other places, since "anywhere there were trees there were loggers."

It was a rich musical heritage, and one that was pretty typical, up until the 1950s, for a country person living in the Adirondacks. Today Smith draws from that repertoire in his own performances of traditional music and storytelling. Bill Smith, however, is an anomaly. While he says a few of the old timers in South Colton still know and sing the songs, it's a musical currency that's pretty much died out.

When paved roads and modern technology opened up the woods in the 1930s



and 1940s, lumbermen stopped living in the camps, ending the tradition of after-dinner singing along the "deacon board," a long bench in the bunkhouse where the men sat chewing tobacco and telling stories. Electricity, which didn't arrive in the South Colton countryside until the fifties, also played a role in killing the singing tradition: People could listen to the radio and records without having to worry about conserving batteries or wearing out their arms winding up the Victrola. Greater mobility—when Smith was growing up, "if you knew somebody five miles away, it was like they lived in another country"—and the passing of logging and farming as viable local ways to make a living caused the younger generation to move away and lose interest in the old music.

A handful of Adirondackers like Smith, who learned the music by ear, along with a new generation of singer/songwriters, including Dan Berggren, Chris Shaw, Peggy Eyres, and George and Vaughn Ward, have resuscitated a few of the traditional ditties, ballads and logging songs in performances at churches, schools and outdoor festivals. But singing, fiddling and dancing as an unselfconscious, communal activity that people in the mountains did to relieve long days of hard work have passed the way of the crosscut saw and the quilting bee.

FORTUNATELY, THOSE MUSICAL traditions have not been entirely lost, nor has their significance to the folk culture at large gone unrecognized, thanks to the efforts of a few prescient collectors. Early in this century, when British folklorist Cecil Sharp discovered British ballads in the southern Appalachians, people believed that the music reflected a tradition that had died out everywhere else. But the collectors in the Adirondacks found that the same tradition of songs from England, Scotland and Ireland had been preserved in the repertoires of loggers and farmers.

In the 1930s Hamilton College professor Harold Thompson and his students

recorded and transcribed folksongs from New York State, including lumber songs and historical ballads from the Adirondacks, which became Thompson's 1939



book, *Body, Boots & Britches*. Another noteworthy collector was Frank Warner, a performer who searched out and compiled traditional songs throughout the East. Warner's friendship with maverick collectors John and Alan Lomax led to the publication, in their 1947 songbook *Folk Song USA*, of "Blue Mountain Lake," which Warner had learned from Yankee John Galusha, probably the best known of the Adirondack traditional singers.

Warner had met Galusha in 1940 through writer Carl Carmer. Born just before the Civil War, Galusha was a retired lumberman, guide and fire observer from Minerva with a stock of ballads that "reflected the entire history of the United States," according to one folklorist. Rarities sung by Galusha included "The Flying Cloud," a sixteen-stanza pirate ballad dating from the early nineteenth century; "The Irish Sixty-Ninth," about an Irish regiment that fought in the Civil War, and "The Irishtown Crew," a song commemorating a spree at a local bar. (The music and words for each are included in Anne Warner's *Traditional American Folk Songs from the Frank and Anne Warner Collection*, published in 1984.)

Galusha's songs and stories were also collected by Marjorie Lansing Porter, a newspaper columnist and local historian

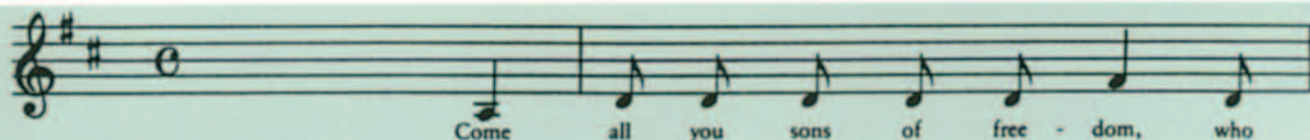
BRASS BANDS

As pioneer Adirondack crossroads became full-fledged communities, one civic institution that emerged was the brass band. Often comprised of volunteer firemen, the band was typically a male province, second only to baseball as a refuge from women.

Jeanne Robert Foster, an Adirondack writer whose poems memorialize many stoic mountain characters, recalls the band in Chestertown as "a good band with two sets of instruments,

best and second-best; and long red coats and white horse tails for their helmets and gold braid and fringe at the shoulders." She writes, "They had a little bandhouse down by the creek where the members practiced nights. Village wives were in the habit of speaking of the band as wives now speak of the club: its attractions were the menace of their evening at home. The bandhouse was always the retreat of the henpecked husband."

But other kinds of musical entertainments embraced the whole community. Mary Jenkins, of Olmstedville, remembers singalongs in the school and a chorus in Minerva organized by an enterprising citizen named Alice Switzer. And in the 1920s and 1930s, impromptu bands playing old-timey music supplanted the lone fiddle player at square dances. Chuck Traver, the barber in Lake Luzerne for fifty years, recalls a band consisting of a fiddle, drums, banjo and piano that performed for dances in the Odd Fellows hall.



FIDDLING AROUND

The fiddle's portability and sweet, piercing notes made it the instrument of choice at Adirondack grange halls, logging camps and farmhouse kitchens. Vic Kibler, an old-time fiddler from Vails Mills, says that when he was growing up in Broadalbin, "every old man in town played the fiddle. There used to be a tavern there, right in the middle of town near the monument, and they had a great big room. Every once in a while all the men would go in there with their fiddles and play, just for the fun of it."

Kibler, who's won the New York fiddlers' contest a number of times, grew up in a family of fiddlers. His grandfather Billy Fountain, "one of the best Adirondack fiddlers that ever lived," used to run through his stock of Irish jigs, reels, polkas, English and Scottish hornpipes, waltzes and Canadian breakdowns while baby-sitting Kibler; by the time Kibler picked up the instrument, as a young boy, he already knew the tunes.

Another state-champion fiddler, Donny Woodcock, who owns a dairy farm near Rensselaer Falls, played backup piano to his father's fiddling at age ten and took up the violin when he was a teenager ("I started late," he comments.) Fiddling, of course, is indistinguishable from dance music. Woodcock remembers attending square dances at the Ogdensburg Masonic temple in the late 1940s and early 1950s that featured "the best caller, Kenneth Parrow. He kept a tempo that was danceable, and his voice was always on key with the music."

Old-time fiddling may no longer be the ubiquitous activity it once was, but it has survived, thanks in part to the Adirondack Fiddlers Association, a thriving organization with seventy-two registered fiddlers, ranging in age from four to ninety-one. The group holds monthly meetings at the Schuylerville American Legion hall from fall to spring, and during the summer members tour state and county fairs.

Last August, fiddle-playing farmers,

kids and retirees showed off their stuff at the club's first annual fiddlers' jamboree, held at a campground on the Schroon River. One performer was Corinth native Dick Richards, who despite the loss of a hand at the age of seventeen in a paper-mill accident, has played the fiddle his entire life. "Music is food for the soul," he says. "Without it, it would be a pretty dull life."

Other participants were farmer Steve Lopuch, who as a kid practiced the "Nashville Shuffle" while making sure the family cows didn't wander into the garden. Seventy-three-year-old Hank John, from Queensbury, took up the fiddle ten years ago, after he retired from his job in a cement plant and finally had the time to learn what he calls "the hardest instrument in the world to play. Kids who say, 'That guy's good,' don't realize it took me three or four years to learn to play that one-minute tune." And two of the most accomplished fiddlers were Cedar Stanistreet, thirteen years old, and his ten-year-old sister, Joy, both classically trained.

But the star attraction was a thirteen-year-old fiddler named Sara Milanovich, a prodigy from Amsterdam who performed an array of Celtic, Civil War, bluegrass, ragtime and old-time melodies with equal ease and perfection. A member of the Empire State Orchestra, Milanovich says her link with country fiddling goes back to her grandfather, Earl Harris, a founding father of the Old-Time Bluegrass Association. "One thing I don't like about classical music is there's too many boundaries," she comments. In contrast, "Fiddling allows room for creativity."



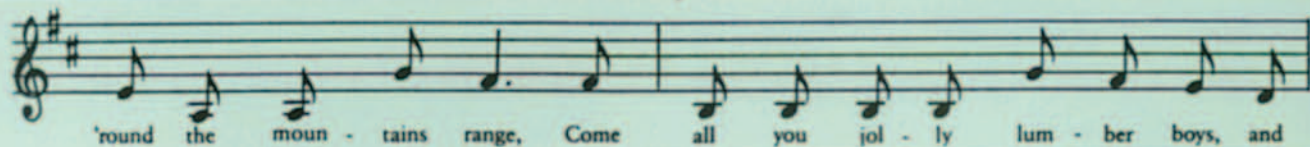
from Keeseville, whose recordings of retired loggers, miners, farmers and their wives singing, fiddling and reminiscing in the late 1940s and early 1950s constitute a comprehensive portrait of Adirondack traditions. Porter was intent on capturing

not just mountain music but every aspect of the history of Clinton and Essex counties, from medicinal folk remedies to how to wield a pike pole to the names and occupations of individuals living in Plattsburgh during the War of 1812.

Having roots in the region going back several generations, Porter was unique in that "she recorded whole families," notes folklorist Vaughn Ward. "She didn't just go and catch a song as an isolated artifact, which is a lot like taking the weathered siding off your barn and putting it up on the wall."

While Porter's encyclopedic collection of Adirondack music unfortunately was never published, she was instrumental in drawing the attention of nationally known folk performers like Pete Seeger and Milt Okun to Adirondack music. Seeger, who first met Porter in 1950, remembers her as "a spry, independent woman, proud of her family." Initially, she was put off by Seeger's politics, telling him the second time they met, "you're not who you said you were," he recalls. However, she eventually agreed to work with Seeger, who tape-recorded some of the songs on her original wax disks and used them in his album *Champlain Valley Songs*, released by Folkways Records in 1960.

Today Porter's collection of songs, which was transferred by the Library of Congress in the 1980s onto thirty-three reel-to-reel tapes, resides at the Feinberg Library, at the State University of New York at Plattsburgh. Scratchy, full of skips and in places almost impossible to hear, the recordings nonetheless provide a powerful and moving testimonial to the mix of Adirondack musical styles. They range from the plain, unaccompanied singing



of Galusha, Lily Delorme (who contributed a hundred ballads) and others; to group singalongs of sentimental lyrics; and to the high-pitched twangs of hillbilly singers, their lachrymose yearnings enlivened by catchy licks picked out on a guitar. The French-Canadian influence is evident too, in the occasional French lyric and rollicking fiddle tunes.

Despite this variety, ballads predominate. So many are recorded that it is possible to get a sense of which ones enjoyed the widest popularity, and the kinds of changes that happened as a song went from singer to singer. Some of the most popular songs, such as "Young Charlotte," based on the story of a woman who froze to death during a sleigh ride because she refused to bundle up in a blanket, and "Barbara Allen," a tragic song of unrequited love, are so-called broadside ballads. Often recounting a sensational event such as a murder, these appeared as early popular sheet music, according to Vaughn Ward. Less common are the older Child ballads, named after Francis James Child, a Harvard professor who in the 1880s catalogued all the known Irish and Scottish

ballads. The origins of most Child ballads are obscure, but many are believed to predate the sixteenth century. Because of their antiquity they have many variants, including fragments that survive as children's riddles.

Not every traditional Adirondack singer was fated to be relegated to a library shelf or a footnote in a book. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, when the folk movement was at an all-time high, local music finally received faces and names in the personages of Lawrence Older, a machinist and woodsman from Middle Grove, and Sara Cleveland, a grandmother from Brant Lake. The exposure they gained helped move Adirondack music out of the realm of purely academic, antiquarian interest into the sphere of performance. Along with Catskill fiddler Grant Rogers, Older and Cleveland "appeared at many folk festivals around the country together and were sort of the representative New York State captive tradition singers, people from whose families

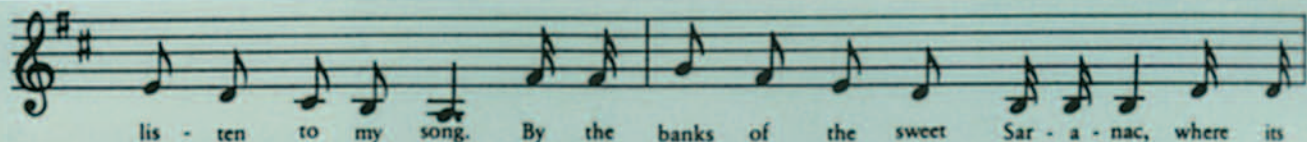


Top: Guests at a nineteenth-century Adirondack hotel pose with fiddle, banjo, guitar and rifle.

COURTESY OF THE ADIRONDACK MUSEUM

Above: Sandy Paton (right) sets up a microphone to record Sara Cleveland for a Folk-Legacy album.

PHOTOGRAPH BY SUZANNE SZASZ, COURTESY OF SANDY AND CAROLINE PATON



Above: Mick Changelo, Peggy Eyres, Curt Stager and Dan Berggren (left to right) in a performance of Adirondack music at the Lake Placid Center for the Arts.

JUDY PHILLIPS

Facing page: Illustration by Frederick Simpson Coburn from *The Voyager*.

(G. P. PUTNAM'S SONGS, 1905)

the songs had actually come down," says George Ward, who met Older while Ward was a student at Union College. Both Older and Cleveland made recordings for Folk-Legacy Records, which was founded by Sandy and Caroline Paton in 1961.

The two performers each had extensive knowledge of archaic Anglo-Celtic songs that included Child ballads, although their renditions differed significantly. For example, the song Child catalogued as the "Elfin Knight," concerning two lovers who impose on each other a series of impossible tasks, appears on Older's record as "Flim-A-Lim-A-Lee," a short song consisting of two-line riddles interspersed with nonsense syllables. (It begins, "Tell her to make me a cambric shirt, / Without one stitch of needlework.") Cleveland's version is far more complete. Its title and refrain, "Every Rose Grows Merry in Time," is believed to be a corruption of "parsley, sage, rosemary and thyme," which, according to Sandy Paton's liner notes, "may have been intended as an incantation or charm against the supernatural suitor, as each of the herbs mentioned is believed to have magical properties." (If that refrain sounds familiar, check out your old records—the song was popularized by

Simon and Garfunkel as "Scarborough Fair.")

Cleveland's remarkable repertoire consists of 450 songs. One is a version of a Child ballad that had never before been collected in America—"Queen Jane," a ballad that recounts the incestuous rape of a princess. Cleveland learned it from her mother, who "sang it rarely and then only when alone or working around the house," according to the Folk-Legacy album.

While Older accompanied himself on guitar and also played the fiddle, creating more playful versions of a type of song that Cleveland sang unaccompanied in the old style, both

singers preserved the dissonance that is a trademark of the oldest Child ballads. Probably originating from Gregorian chants, this modal sound is reinforced by a plain, straightforward singing style, a reflection of their Scotch-Irish heritage.

Colleen Cleveland, who grew up learning the songs from her grandmother and still lives in Brant Lake, is continuing the tradition of ballad singing, performing not only at local schools and festivals but also at traditional-ballad-singers' gatherings up and down the East Coast and in Scotland. She says singing these old songs is challenging: Their length—some ballads run on for six minutes or more—requires a prodigious memory, and "the song doesn't quite go exactly where you want it to go," demanding the singer's attention. She adds, "A lot of the tunes have a huge range from low to high, like an octave and a seventh, so you've got to have that much range in order to sing these things."

Sitting on the banks of the Schroon River one morning last August, she gave an impressive demonstration of those skills in a powerful rendition of "Come All You Maidens," a warning to young women to beware of deceitful men. With her eyes closed, body still, resonant voice

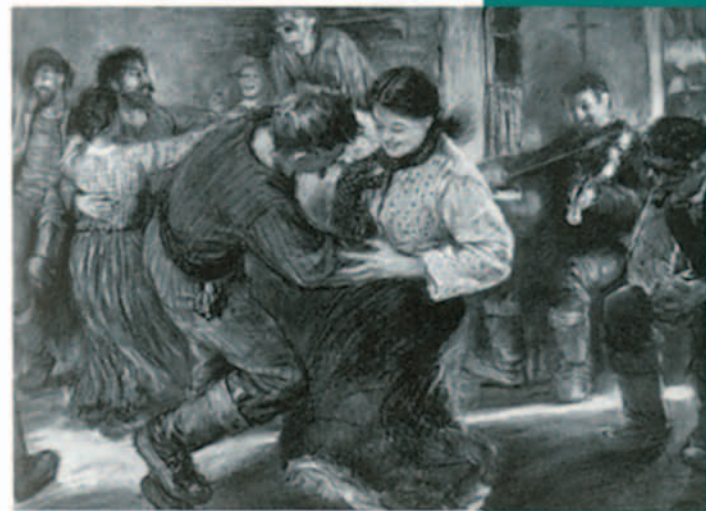


drawing out each phrase, her performance was exquisitely understated, intensifying the bone-chilling impact of the somber words and mournful soaring notes.

FROM A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE. Colleen Cleveland is unusual; most ballad singers in the Adirondacks—at least those who sang for an audience, either in homes, at the camps or in barrooms—were men. Mary Jenkins, an octogenarian from Olmstedville and former square-dance caller, remembers that “men especially would go to other homes and visit and sit and sing and tell stories.” One was Jim Dougherty, a ballad singer from Minerva who taught her “The Irishtown Crew,” the same song that Frank Warner had learned from Yankee John Galusha.

The reason that most public singers were men is related to the logging industry, the force that more than any other shaped Adirondack music. Housing itinerant workers who might have wandered from Quebec to Michigan in search of employment, the primitive bunkhouses were not only fertile places in which to swap songs and build impressive repertoires, but also forums in which a talented singer could make his mark. Referring to woods balladeer Eddie Ashlaw, recorded in the early 1970s, folklorist Bethke

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AN ADIRONDACK DISCOGRAPHY AND BOOKLIST

All selections are cassette tapes unless otherwise indicated.

Bill Smith, Singing by the Fire with Old Friends. Adirondack songs with Dan Berggren, Peggy Eyres and others. Available from Bill Smith, (315) 262-2436

Lawrence Older of Middle Grove, NY. Accompanying himself on guitar and fiddle, Older sings Child ballads and tunes from his traditional repertoire. Available from Folk-Legacy Records, (860) 364-5661

Sara Cleveland: Ballads and Songs. Unaccompanied ballads learned from her family and neighbors. Folk-Legacy Records

Vic Kibler, Adirondack Fiddler. Old-time fiddle with piano, hammer dulcimer and guitar. Sampler Records, (800) 537-2755

Don Woodcock, St. Lawrence River Valley Fiddling. Includes tunes Don learned from his father, who picked them up from Jerry Streeter, a famous fiddler at the turn of the century. Accompanied by piano, drums, guitar and bass. Available from Don Woodcock, (315) 344-2346

Adirondack Green. Traditional & Original Songs of the Adirondacks by Dan Berggren and friends. Includes a few loggers' favorites, plus compositions by Berggren. Sleeping Giant Records, (716) 672-4858

Cloudsplitter: Peggy Eyres and Dan Berggren. Songs about North Country people and places by Eyres

and Berggren. Dulcimer, guitar, fiddle, piano and other accompaniment. On CD. Sleeping Giant Records

Chris Shaw, Adirondack. Folk-style songs of his own composition along with some traditional tunes. Keyboard, guitar, bass, pedal steel and fiddle accompaniment. On CD. Hudson River Company, (518) 674-8282

BOOKS AND ARTICLES

Body, Boots & Britches. Harold Thompson (J. B. Lippincott, 1939; reprinted by Syracuse University Press, 1979)

Adirondack Voices: Woodsmen and Woods Lore. Robert D. Bethke (University of Illinois Press, 1981; reprinted by S.U. Press, 1994)

Traditional American Folk Songs from the Frank and Anne Warner Collection. Anne Warner (S.U. Press, 1984)

Folk Song USA: 111 Best American Ballads. Alan Lomax (Duell, Sloan & Pierce, 1947)

“Anglo-American Folk Song Collecting and Singing Traditions in New York State” by Vaughn Ward. *New York Folklore*, (Volume XXIV, Number 34). New York Folklore Society, (607) 273-9137

Old-Time Music Makers of New York State. Simon J. Bronner (S.U. Press, 1987)

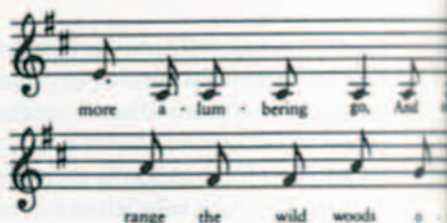
Shantymen and Shantyboys: Songs of the Sailor and Lumberman. William Main Doerflinger (MacMillan, 1951)

Adirondack Portraits: A Piece of Time. Jeanne Robert Foster; edited by Noelle Riedinger-Johnson (S.U. Press, 1986)

Books listed above published by Syracuse University Press are still in print; (800) 365-8929

STRIKING A CHORD

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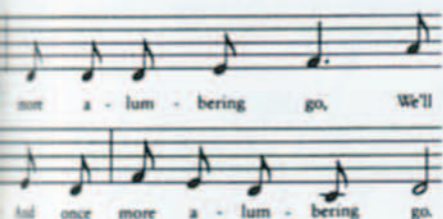
notes in *Adirondack Voices* that "the songs he once sang in bunkhouses and barrooms became an important part of the man and his public identity. Knowing them brought status and esteem."

The loggers sang all kinds of songs, from minstrel tunes to turn-of-the-century tearjerkers, but it was lyrics that spoke to the men's experience, related to the hazards of the job, their separation from women and their footloose ways, that stuck. Logging songs that came from the Midwest or Maine, like "Once More A-Lumbering Go," were localized through the insertion of names of local places and people (in this case the river mentioned is the Saranac and the town is Glens Falls). Some songs might have been made up from bits of other songs, with verses from a ballad and a minstrel-tune refrain, for example, and they might have been adapted from other trades. The jam boats in "Jump Her, Juberju," for instance, are equipped with riggings that hint at the song's roots as a Great Lakes schooner tune.

Was there a tradition that could be called exclusively Adirondack? A few songs, while they borrowed from other tunes, seem almost definitely to have been written and popularized in the Adirondacks. "Blue Mountain Lake" recounts a fight in a lumber camp between two loggers, Jimmy Lou and Bill Mitchell ("as mean a damn man as you ever did see"). According to Harold K. Hochschild's book *Township 34*, Lou was a tough woodsman from Minerva and Mitchell "was a well-known Blue Mountain Laker." The other characters, "Dandy Pat" and Nellie, the camp cook, were also actual people. Versions of the song collected outside New York retain the integrity of its Adirondack locale.

Adirondackers also claim "Tebo" as an original. It describes the drowning

STRIKING A CHORD



of a lumberman, who by popular tradition was believed to be a French-Canadian working on a log drive on the Jordan River. Bill Smith says that his parents actually knew Tebo, but that doesn't prove the song wasn't adapted from one that recounts a similar tragedy that occurred in the wilds of Maine or Michigan.

Two other examples of Adirondack songs are "Grace Brown and Chester Gillette," which chronicles the murder of Brown in Big Moose Lake, and "Bert La Fontaine's Packard," which describes the capture of a bootlegger. A rendition of that song recorded in the Porter collection is prefaced by Porter's remarks that it "was written by Dorothy Sequin, who was traveling at the time it was written with this bootlegger Bert La Fontaine."

The actual authors and origins of these songs are perhaps of less interest than what they say about the tough, laconic men who lived and worked in the woods, and their relationship to the music. "Some of the men who made up those songs were pretty mean poets," says George Ward. The songs were about real people and were meant "for teasing your friends, to entertain, and to memorialize," he comments.

Even today, Ward says, the old songs can trigger a memory. Once, during a performance at the arts center in Blue Mountain Lake, Ward was prompted to sing "Blue Mountain Lake" by a guy who "sidled up to us and said, 'You know that song about Blue Mountain Lake that Yankee John used to sing? It's kind of a rough song. I don't know if people want to hear it.'" Taking the bait, Ward sang it, assuring the man that the crowd would love it. But afterwards "a woman came up to me with her husband in tow and said, 'This is my husband, Frank, a direct descendant of Bill Mitchell in that song.'" ♦