

## *Irish Music Circa 1825* Summary by Ed Schroeter

Many traditional Irish folk songs, the street ballads of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, continue to survive in the Peterborough County area today. They were chronicled by a music historian, Edith Fowkes, and published in 1967 in the book Peterborough, Land of Shining Waters. Edited by Ronald J. Borg, it was published by the University of Toronto Press.

This music, brought over by the Irish immigrants of 1823 and 1825, owes its survival to the lumber camps. For many years in the mid-1800s Peterborough was a great lumbering centre. Even when the camps moved north many Peterborough men followed them. Thus, these Irish songs have been preserved as shanty songs.

The songs which continue to survive today are about a variety of themes. They are about subjects such as fighting in foreign wars, Irish independence, famous highwaymen, the return of absent lovers, and women who followed their sweethearts to sea or war. Here are some of the themes and the related titles still being played today:

Fighting In Foreign Wars/Irish Independence: *Old Erin Far Away, Kelly the Fenian Boy, The Croppy Boy, Patrick Sheehan, Kevin Barry, Erin's Green Shores*

Famous Highway Robbers: *Brennan on the Moor, Bold Jack Donahue, The Wild Colonial Boy, Dick Turpin's Bonny Black Bess*

Girls Murdered by their Sweethearts: *The Wexford Girl, Pat O'Brien, The Old Oak Tree, The Cruel Ship's Carpenter*

Girls Who Follow Their Lovers to Sea or War: *The Lady Leroy, The Female Warrior, William and Nancy*

Long Absent Lovers Return In Disguise To Test Sweetheart's Faithfulness: *The Mantle So Green, Bloody Waterloo, John Riley, The Fair Maid in Her Father's Garden*

Irish Music Hall Ditties: *Finnegan's Wake, Erin Go Bragh, Skewball (famous Irish racehorse)*