

Shantyman's Life

As sung by
Emery de Noyer

Originally in e minor
07-27-1941 Rhinelander, WI

[All you jol - ly fel - lows]* — come li - sten to my song; it's

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all about the pin-ery boys and how they get a-long. They're the jol-liest lot of fel - lows, — so

6
mer - ri - ly and fine, they will spend their plea-sant win - ter months in cut-ting down the pine.

Verse 1.

[All you jolly fellows]* come listen to my song;
It's all about the pinery boys and how they get along.
They're the jolliest lot of fellows, so merrily and fine,
They will spend the pleasant winter months in cutting down the pine.

Verse 2.

Some would leave their friends and homes and others they do love dear,
And into the lonesome pinewoods their pathway they do steer.
Into the lonesome pinewoods all winter to remain,
A-waiting for the springtime to return again.

Verse 3.

Springtime comes, oh glad will be its day!
Some return to home and freinds, while others go astray.
The sawyers and the choppers, they lay their timber low,
The swampers and the teamsters they haul it to and fro.

Verse 4.

Next comes the loaders before the break of day,
Load up your sleighs five thousand feet to the river haste away.
Noon time rolls around, our foreman loudly screams:
"Lay down your tools, me boys, and we'll haste to pork and beans."

Verse 5.

We arrive at the shanty, the splashing then begins,
The banging of the water pails, the rattling of the tins.
In the middle of the splashing, our cook for dinner does cry,
We all arise and go, for we hate to lose our pie.

*from Peters.

Verse 6.

Dinner being over, we into our shanty go.
 We all fill up our pipes and smoke 'til everything looks blue.
 "It's time for the woods, me boys," our foreman he does say,
 We all gather up our hats and caps, to the woods we haste away.

Verse 7.

We all go out with a welcome heart and a well-contented mind,
 For the winter winds blow cold among the waving pine.
 The ringing of saws and axes until the sun goes down.
 "Lay down your tools, me boys, for the shanties we are bound."

Verse 8.

We arrive at the shanties with cold and wet feet,
 Take off our overboots and packs, its supper we must eat.
 Supper being ready, we all arise and go
 For it ain't the style of a lumberjack to lose his hash you know.

Verse 9. (first two lines of music repeats)

At three o'clock in the morning, our bold cook loudly shouts,
 "Roll out, roll out, you teamsters, it's time that you were out."
 The teamsters, they get up in a fright and manful wail:
 "Where's my boots?" "Oh where's my pack?" "My rubbers have gone astray!"
 The other men they then get up, their packs they cannot find,
 And they lay it to the teamsters and they curse them 'til their blind.

Verse 10.

Springtime comes, oh glad will be its day!
 "Lay down your tools, me boys, and we'll haste to break away."
 The floating ice is over, and business now destroyed.
 And three hundred able-bodied men are wanted on the Pelican drive.

Verse 11.

With jam pikes and peaveys, those able men do go,
 All up that wild dreary stream to risk their lives, you know.
 Cold and frosty mornings, they shiver with the cold,
 So much ice upon their jam pikes they scarcely can them hold.

Verse 12.

Now whenever you hear those verses, believe them to be true,
 For if you doubt one word of them just ask Bob Unson's crew.
 It was in Bob Unson's shanties where they were sung with glee
 And the ending of my song is signed C, D, F, and G.

(Spoken)

Melvin Sydon

Critical Commentary

Transcriptions by MB, Peters, pp. 81-82; HST transcribed one tune.

HST notes:

In the Professional Papers series:

Sung by Emery De Noyer, age 63, Rhinelander, 1941.

*This song is generally known as *The Shanty Boys and the Pine*, but Mr. De Noyer called his version *The Shantyman's Life*.*

Sung by Henry Humphries, age 75, Hancock, 1940.

Since routine life in any of the lumber camps was much the same before the coming of electricity, the songs of the shantyman's life carried by lumberjack singers from camp to camp as they followed the course of the lumber industry. There is enough similarity in the tunes of the collected versions to lead one to believe that some stock Irish tune was employed by the composer of the song, but it suffers from the singers' inability to tune their voices to the delicacies of an old modal melody. In the minds of many a lumberjack singer, the melody is merely something on which to hang the words.

Mr. Humphries' song has been collected by Rickaby in Minnesota, in Wisconsin by Beck, in Michigan by Gardner and Chickering, and by Barry in Maine. The stream, in the Maine version, is called the Bonne Chère. It is so named in the version which Rickaby collected from George M. Hankins of Gordon, Wisconsin, who had learned it from another shanty-boy, Jim Graham, Menominee, in 1876. In the version Rickaby collected in Bemidji, Minnesota, the stream is the Wisconsin; in Gardner and Chickering's version, the Susquehanna.

Version C sung by Charles Ring, age 63, Hayward.

*Mr. Ring went to work in the woods, when 13, driving oxen. He also called this song the *Shantyman's Life*. He said his mother taught it to him and that it was written on the St. Croix River. His version parallels Mr. De Noyer's in text and melody.*

*Rickaby collected a version known as *Jim Porter's Shanty Song*. It takes its specific title from the final stanza which reads,*

"But if you doubt a word of it, go as Jim Porter's crew.

For it was in Jim Porter's shanty this song was sung with glee.

So that's the end of me shanty song. It was composed by me."

As Rickaby points out, however, this is no proof of its origin for such a stanza is easily adapted to fit any crew.

Beck states that this song is sung in Michigan from Lake Huron to Lake Michigan. He has collected the versions which name Lockwood's Murphy's Porter's Francisco's, Dorcey's, Gilbert's, and Robertson's Camp. As well as Robbins' hotel as the place where the song was composed. Mrs. Isabel Ebert collected a version from James Fliegel of Lake Tomahawk, Wis., which names the place of origin as Mike Dolan's shanty.

Editor's notes:

Gardner and Chickering give other sources, one of which "carries the song back to 1857": Shoemaker, Henry W., *Mountain Minstrelsy of Pennsylvania*. Third edition of North Pennsylvania Minstrelsy. Philadelphia, 1931.

Alternate titles/related songs: "Pinery Boy," "The Dreary Life," "The Shanty Boys and the Pine," "Shanty Boy's Song."

Sources:

- Doerflinger, William Main, coll. *Shantymen and Shantyboys: Songs of the Sailor and Lumberman*. New York: Macmillan, 1951. Words similar, tunes have some similarities (though HST is in major while WD is in minor with some raised 6's).
- Gardner, Emelyn Elizabeth, and Geraldine Jencks Chickering, colls. and eds. *Ballads and Songs of Southern Michigan*. Hatboro, Pa.: Folklore Associates, 1967. Reprinted from original, c1939.
- Larkin, Margaret, coll. and ed. *Singing Cowboy: A Book of Western Songs*. Piano arrangements by Helen Black. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1931. "The dreary life" is similar, but about cowboys rather than shantymen
- Peters, Harry B., ed. *Folk Songs out of Wisconsin: An Illustrated Compendium of Words and Music*. Madison, WI: The State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1977.
- Rickaby, Franz, coll. and ed. *Ballads and Songs of the Shanty-boy*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1926.
- Sandburg, Carl. *American Songbag*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1927. Words very similar, tunes have some interesting similarities (Sandburg's cadences on 6 [or minor 1] when HST uses flat 7-1).

K.G.