



AN INFORMANT IN SEARCH OF A COLLECTOR: CAPTAIN PEARL R. NYE OF OHIO

Captain Nye often wrote that he had lived beyond his time: That he belonged back in the late 19th century when "The Silver Ribbon,"¹ as he sometimes called it, was still economically feasible and the Canal was a way of life that, at least in retrospect, he found completely fulfilling. In fact, he was several decades ahead of his time in his recognition of the value of his material and his efforts, often frustrated, but never abandoned, to see that his songs and memories of the Canal were preserved. In an undated note in the Summit County Historical Collection of Nye material he wrote: "Four [of the songs] are over 500 years of age according to some writers I saw in a book of the Chicago Public Library in 1926," and he was in correspondence with the Ohio Archaeological and Historical Society in Columbus about his Canal material as early as 1932. It is unfortunate that his efforts to preserve his culture resulted for the most part in a series of lost opportunities and missed chances on the part of collectors; and that there is still the possibility of the loss of a major part of the unique oral tradition of which Captain Nye was an intelligent and articulate carrier.

Coffin points out in Uncertain Glory, as he and others have pointed out before, "folklore rises and flourishes in homogeneous groups. In America these groups are invariably bound together by ethnic, regional or occupational interests that isolate them from the mainstream of our ... culture."²

Captain Nye demonstrates, as perhaps no other informant yet studied does, these factors in the survival and transmission of traditional oral literature. His family constituted a homogeneous group in itself. Born on the boat, "Reform," on February 5, 1872, he was one of eighteen children, the 15th child, the 9th boy.³ His father's boat, he reports, was known up and down the Canal as "Bill Nye's Circus" or "Bill Nye's Orphan Home," and it was a boat on which singing was a common pastime, both within the family group and at Canal gatherings.

His parents sang to entertain the children, using "song and music as a mind developer," he commented.⁴ There were "Singing Bees" and "jollifications," and he often noted that one or another of the many songs he wrote out was popular on the Canal and much called for at get-togethers.

Lionel Wyld, in his book on the Erie Canal, noted that "The canaler and his culture represented a ... definite, separate social grouping, one apart from the mainstream of society. He was both mobile and caught."⁵ The mobility compensated for the formal schooling not possible for the Nye children except when the boat was frozen in. "Father promised to make it a 'daylight trip' so we would get better acquainted with "Indian" and "Canal History," he wrote Alan Lomax;⁶ and it exposed him to what Wilgus has called the two Ohio folksong traditions⁷ as well as a variety of other influences. If Miss Eddy's collection represents the northern tradition and can be called, as Wilgus calls it, largely vertical,⁸ Captain Nye's material encompasses elements of all the various traditions that drifted across Ohio and along its canals and rivers.

He was very aware of the "apartness" of the canalers, the "clannish side,"⁹ to use his term, and of the fact that many of the traditional songs in his family were different. Of his very full version of "Pretty Sally," Laws second type, much called for on the Canal, he says "We seemed to sing this different than others."¹⁰ He thought the Canal versions much prettier.

The canalers also had a language of their own, and one part of the book Captain Nye was working on during the last years of his life consisted of a listing of Canal words and terms with definitions. There was evidently a very strong sense of community, and when the Canal closed in 1913 and Captain Nye burned his boat¹¹ and tried to take up life on shore he never felt at home there.

The "last of the Canal Boat Captains" first came to national attention through John Lomax, who recorded 33 of his songs in June, 1937. In a letter, now in the Summit County Historical Society Collection,¹² Lomax outlines what he is interested in: "...a very large percentage of the songs are published songs of a generation

ago.... This particular type of song I make no effort to collect. My interest is confined to the songs that have been passed down by word of mouth for an indefinite time... the words of which come from an unknown source." This explains, no doubt, why so many of the Nye songs in the Library of Congress manuscripts contain the note "Age and author unknown."

Songs recorded in this session included a few Child ballads and "Perry's Victory," "Edwin in the Lowlands," which Nye called "Edward Bold," and a version of William Reily in its first two parts, "Reily's Courtship" and "Reily's Trial." Laws pointed out that the third part of the three overlapping ballads had not been recovered from the oral tradition and it is the second that was usually printed in American song books.¹³ Miss Eddy located neither "Pretty Sally," "Perry's Victory," "Edwin in the Lowlands," nor "William Reily,"¹⁴ although Buckley found a version of "Edwin in the Lowlands."¹⁵

In November of 1937 Alan Lomax recorded 39 songs, including a ballad Captain Nye called "On the Banks of Salee" and an interesting version of "The Cruel Ship's Carpenter," also not in the Eddy collection but in that of Ridenour, and a number of minstrel and Negro songs learned south of the Ohio River in Kentucky. Also recorded were a few Canal songs and didactic songs which Nye had composed or re-composed. In September of the next year Ivan Walton recorded three Canal songs: "The Old Skipper," also recorded by Alan Lomax, "A Trip on the Canal" and "We're Going to Pump Out Lake Erie."

Although Nye often wrote and asked the Lomaxes to come back, promising 300 to 400 songs, sometimes 600 to 700, and trying a little judicious blackmail — representatives of the state were very anxious to get his material¹⁶ — I can find no evidence that Alan ever got back, although he arranged for the Captain's participation in the Folk Festivals of 1938 and 1942, no small problem in logistics. He obviously felt a great personal affection and sympathy for him and was extremely faithful in writing and trying to provide him some of the psychological support he needed by encouragement when he was ill, praise of his songs, and assurances that his letters were being kept in the Library of Congress for "the pleasure of future generations."¹⁷

It was a period in the history of collecting that can, perhaps, from the safe perspective of thirty years later, be called skimming — covering as much territory and finding as many singers as possible. As his father had felt in 1910 that "Education and civilization always put an end to the making of ballads,"¹⁸ Alan felt in the 1940's that the impending collapse of civilization might put an end to folksong. As he wrote Vance Randolph in June, 1942, "I fear there will be little work for us folk-lorists to do after the war is over.... Everything that can be got down now, especially the older material, will be that much saved from the wreck."¹⁹ An examination of the various Nye manuscripts in three libraries shows that the Lomaxes were successful in preserving most of the Child ballads and traditional songs which Captain Nye could recall, certainly a demonstration of their genius as collectors in view of the extensive body of song which he knew. The fact that this was a necessary stage in the history of collecting cannot be seriously argued by anyone who has listened to the field recordings made in the 1930's and 1940's by the Lomaxes and other distinguished collectors of the time.

Fortunately Captain Nye was not deterred in his efforts to preserve the rest of his material. He made frequent references in his correspondence with the State Historical Society to the "400" of his songs which had been "microfilmed" by the "Congressional Library." Although there was no record of this at the Library of Congress, in 1963 Rae Korson discovered this valuable manuscript. "The statement in Nye's correspondence... led me to pursue this matter very thoroughly.... I requested one of our stack boys to go through old boxes of microfilm and after several weeks of searching he found a reel of microfilm containing, in addition to other material... texts of Nye songs."²⁰ There are, indeed, 400 songs with notes, comments and tantalizing glimpses into the richness of Captain Nye's knowledge of Canal life. He speaks parenthetically of the decoration of the boats, the language, the customs, the games, the jingles he was trying to recall, and most of all the songs and his feeling for them. Almost a decade after the Lomaxes visits, in March, 1945, Miss Edith Keller, Music Supervisor of Elementary and Secondary

Education in Ohio, wrote to Botkin that she was in touch with Captain Nye and had secured a number of his manuscripts and Canal pictures.²¹ Miss Keller, Miss Cloea Thomas, of the Ohio State University School of Music, and Dr. James Rodabaugh, representing the Historical Society, went to Captain Nye's home to get him.²² They found him alone and ill and there was a note on the table that in the event of his death he left all his materials to the Historical Society. He was taken to a Columbus hospital and after he recovered recorded a group of songs at Ohio State. There were 52, very few duplicating those he had done for the Lomaxes. These were his Canal songs — "Canal Ball," "Last Trip in the Fall," "Winter on the Canal," interspersed with the religious songs which he had learned on the Kentucky side of the Ohio River in his youth: "Resurrection Car," "What Trouble I've Had," "The Gospel Train."²³ These recordings, which were kept in the Music Library at Ohio State have, in one of those inexplicable happenings that occur in the best run libraries, now disappeared.²⁴

In December of 1948 John Ball, then at Miami University in Oxford, wrote Emreich of his plans for the Ohio Folklore Archive. "Our objective will be to concentrate on the collection, the preservation and the study of the folklore of Ohio, particularly the canal songs and river songs of our region."²⁵ In December of 1949 he wrote, "I am currently at work on a plan to enlist the aid of newspapers in the cities and towns along the routes of the Old Canal to save the canal folklore before it is too late."

It was too late for Captain Nye. On January 4, 1950 he died in Hawthornden State Hospital, where he had been for some two and a half years.²⁶ That year, Ohio finally established a folklore society, one of the last states to do so.²⁷

The loss that resulted because Captain Nye never found the in-depth collector that he needed, wanted, and deserved is tempered somewhat by the fact that he was an obsessive and eloquent letter writer, and it is possible, even more than twenty years after his death, to re-construct, at least in outline, his life as a folk singer and Canal poet, to determine his feelings for his songs, and to draw some very tentative conclusions about the personal qualities and characteristics that made it impossible for him to adjust to life off the Canal. Although it is highly probable that Captain Nye was an active carrier of a tradition, not primarily a performer as his father seemingly was,²⁸ he illustrates Phillip Barry's comment that "no greater mistake was ever made than to suppose that ballads survive best among the most illiterate and ignorant."²⁹ He had a fine intelligence, and like Loman Cansler's contributor, William Henry Scott, he never succumbed to the anti-intellectualism that surrounded him, though like Scott he could not escape its looming presence.³⁰ "How scared people are of song and poetry" he once³¹ wrote Alan Lomax when reporting on his difficulties with the newspaperwoman who was writing a book on his family. There were to be only 25 songs included and this seemed not right when singing "was one of the great features of canal life."³² He wrote, rewrote, and added to songs himself: "Little Birdies" in the Ohio State Historical Society Collection has the note "By R. P. Nye except verses 1, 2, 3, and 4." In a letter to the Historical Society he reported: "I wrote songs on all subjects...and they were sang on all the Canals because they were in Canal language."³³ His brothers, who worked on the lakes, reportedly heard his songs there.³⁴

Like Larry Gorman he freely used the traditional ballad and song commonplaces³⁵ in his "original" compositions or he would take a song and "canalize" it by mention of local places and persons, touches much appreciated in the respective towns.³⁶ His "The Old Canal," a few verses of which are in Scenes and Songs of the Ohio-Erie Canal,³⁷ published by the Historical Society two years after his death, is some 80 stanzas long and mentions virtually ever "town, lock, store, mill or mine"³⁸ along the way.

He wrote Alan Lomax, asking for "coaching" before his appearance at the Folk Festival: "You are aware that I have them from 3 to 100 verses — but reason would not permit such a thing — as "sing" such a poem."³⁹ When he could not remember the words to a tune he would compose a song "to preserve the melody" and "The Scioto Valley Mills" was composed to the tune of "Marching on to Old

Quebec."⁴⁰ Some of his songs are as modern as Nashville — "The Coshocton County Jail," for instance in the Summit County Historical Society Collection. Laws has pointed out that it is possible to write poetry without ever writing a poem,⁴¹ and this was Captain Nye's predicament. Most of his real poetry occurs in his letters, but his songs are interesting for reasons other than their literary excellence, and he did often hit upon a happy combination of traditional elements.

Abrahams, in his study of Almeda Riddle,⁴² has reported that she learned all the songs she came across in certain categories. Although he tried to recall what he thought people would want — "old songs" for the Lomaxes and "Canal songs" for the Historical Society, judging from the songs Captain Nye wrote out and deposited in the various libraries his favorite categories of songs were religious songs, those that related to the Canal and anything that praised mother and warned of married life, not necessarily in that order. He was inordinately fond of songs about mistreated — and submissive — husbands: "Don't be angry with me, darling/Everything you do is right/Even those big swolled blackeyes that you plastered there last night/I'm your⁴³ little puppet husband..." Etc.

Alan Lomax closed a letter to him in 1938 with "my best wishes for your matrimonial aspirations,"⁴⁴ but he never married. In squaring off against the newspaper reporter who was writing a book about him, he said: "Thank God I was careful...regarding her wiles."⁴⁵ He added: "I used to be quite a "scrapper" in the by-gones and carry a crooked arm, broken nose, broken toe and other marks as a result of fistic exercise — and I did not always come out worsted either." Yet one cannot quite imagine this very vulnerable man engaging in a black snake duel as Garfield is said to have done when working as a boy on the Canal.⁴⁶

As a man of over 60 he wrote Alan:⁴⁷ "They [his parents] treated us all alike except me and I needed so much more "attention" than the others...I was tied to mother's apron strings and father's suspenders." He never cut loose. In an earlier letter he had written that he had been "within an inch" of seeing the world on a tramp steamer. "One thing kept me from it and that was I promised mother to keep off the "seas".... I hired out on the Missouri, but when I went for my clothes...I could not drown her...voice in my ears. That settled it for all time."⁴⁸ This was in a family where a favorite game was "Clear the Deck," in which "It" pushed every little Nye he could catch overboard;⁴⁹ one wonders if it was his mother's fear of the unknown or his own that kept Captain Nye from the seas.

Whatever the undoubtedly very complex psychological reasons for Captain Nye's attitudes — there is, for instance, some indication in his correspondence⁵⁰ that members of his Virginia family were Union sympathizers, which could have contributed to the sense of apartness which as a canaler he felt anyway — there is no doubt that his feeling toward women was very ambivalent. The bliss of married life does not last very long in his songs, and the bald headed end of the broom is often raised.⁵¹ Of course, carried to its ridiculous end this line of reasoning could lead one to the conclusion that a singer fond of "The Little Black Mustache" must surely have been jilted by a man sporting one.

However, we might tentatively suggest that Captain Nye's tendency toward a certain kind of song may account for his remembering one of the Child ballads rarest in America. "On the Banks of the Salee," recorded by Alan Lomax in 1937, is the most unusual version of Child 112, "The Baffled Knight," recorded from the oral tradition in the United States.⁵² Textually related to the version of the Old Revolutionary Soldier in the Green Mountain Songster and to several of the versions in Child,⁵³ it contains the verse in the Greig and Keith "The Shepherd Laddie"⁵⁴ about the little rooster — who flapped his wings but never crew. (In the GMS "The Shepherd's Son" the roosters "flop their wings and crow" but to no avail).

ON THE BANKS OF SALEE

One evening a young lady fair/Her state rode out to see When a roguish knight stepped out — and
said:/Fair maid,— you will ride with me!

Chorus

So it's you and I together, Love/How happy we will be and we'll both sport together/On the
Banks of Salee

She looked at him — and then about/And said "Let me lead the way,— For I know these parts
quite well/And it's many hours till day

She was sly, — Just like a fox/She went round and round and so When she saw her plans
would work/She was cautious, -very slow

She rode on a dapple gray/And he on a dapple brown

They rode in the chilly green woods/Three hours before it came down

So often he was very rude/And on him then she would frown

At last she said at my father's house/There would be a bed of down

At last they reached her father's house/And she rode in through the gate And said "Now—I
am safe at home/You go before it is too late!

Second Chorus

So it's you and I together Love/How happy we will be — But we'll not sport together/On
the Banks of Salee

Oh, curse all women, then said he/They will always men deceive And he is ever fool
enough/Their stories to believe

She pulled out a little pen knife/Then she stuck it in the ground

I wish this was in any man's heart/That would ride for a "bed of down.

You're like the little white rooster/That runs among the hens

He flaps his wings but dare not crow/You're just like one of them.

This is the manuscript version in the Nye folder in the Library of Congress, and Captain Nye's comment is: "The above was old when I was a child, —as I heard father sing it many times at 'our gatherings' by request.... Author and age I do not know, but they were among our favorites."

There have been at least two other versions of Child 112 collected in Ohio ~ Miss Eddy's "The Shrewd Maiden" and Anne Grimes' very fine "The Little Wench" contributed by John Bodiker. It is not in the Ridenour collection, and to my knowledge Buckley did not find it.⁵⁵ The Grimes and Eddy versions are different from each other and very different from Captain Nye's "The Banks of Salee."

Of course none of the American versions I have seen or heard contain the amoral advice of the girl or the narrator that occurs frequently in the English versions to the point that if you do chance to meet a lady in the woods don't be foolishly distracted from the matter at hand. However, most have certain playfulness, and some turn out happily in the end in that the man is so impressed with the virtue and

shrewdness of the girl that he marries her, as in Miss Eddy's version. (We are speaking of happiness in ballad terms, of course).

Captain Nye's version is deadly serious and contains a curious reversal of a stanza in Child A. After the "roguish knight" says "Oh, curse all women...", a fairly frequent commonplace in the ballad, the lady reacts very violently. "I wish this was in any man's heart..." (see the penultimate stanza). Clearly, there was little safety for men in a woman's world.

Reviewing Mountain Minstrelsy of Pennsylvania in 1932 Mellinger Henry remarked that the songs were not collected in a musty museum or library — rather in the fresh mountain air.⁵⁶ Forty years later the air may be much fresher inside than out and song collecting in archives may be as urgent as field collecting. As they used to say of the old singers,⁵⁷ the old recordings are fast disappearing and the old manuscripts fast fading. And as Daniel Hoffman said on two occasions some twenty years ago,⁵⁸ somebody ought to do something about Captain Nye before it is too late.

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Mrs. Schroeder edits the Missouri State Library Newsletter. Her M.A. thesis (Kent State University, 1964, Library Science) was on "Library Collections of Ohio Folksong." She became interested in folksong in the 1950's while living in Columbus through Dana Vibberts' programs over WOSU. After Vibberts left, Mrs. Schroeder researched and co-authored, with her husband, some 80 programs on folksong which were broadcast over WOSU and WMUA (the University of Massachusetts station). She is particularly interested in the history of the collection of folksong, particularly in the work of the great pioneer collector-scholars of the midwest — Beldon, Pound, Tolman. This paper was originally read at the 1973 meeting of the American Folklore Society in Nashville, Tennessee.

¹ Pearl R. Nye on "The Ballad Hunter," Part V, ed. by John Lomax. The Library of Congress, Music Division, L51. However the title of Captain Nye's manuscript was "The Romance of the Big Ditch." See John A Botzum, "When Akron Was a Lake Port," The Akron Times Press, January 8, 1938.

² Tristram P. Coffin, Uncertain Glory; Folklore and the American Revolution (Detroit: Folklore Associates, 1971), p. 2.

³ Pearl R. Nye, op. cit.

⁴ Letter dated "8-19-37," Nye Folder, Library of Congress Archive of Folksong. The comments about "Bill Nye's Circus" appeared in an article by Lewis K. Cook in the Columbus Sunday Dispatch, May 26, 1940.

⁵ Lionel D. Wyld, Low Bridge 1 Folklore and the Erie Canal (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1962), p. 51.

⁶ Letter dated "2-13-39," loc. cit.

⁷ D. K. Wilgus, Foreword in Mary O. Eddy, Ballads and Songs From Ohio, rev. ed. (Hatsboro, Pennsylvania; Folklore Associates, 1964), p. viii.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Letter dated "4-6-39," loc. cit.

¹⁰ Note following manuscript copy of song, Nye Folder, loc. cit. Captain Nye wrote his songs out and pasted the sheets of paper together into long rolls. This method had dual disadvantages. The rolls posed a

storage problem for the libraries receiving them; and since the pasted sheets have come apart it is often difficult to determine the order in which material was sent.

¹¹ Program of National Folk Festival, 1938, Washington Post, p.10. There seems to be some confusion regarding the date of this Festival, since the program is undated, but the Post library reports that it was 1938.

¹² April 20, 1937.

¹³ G. Malcolm Laws, Jr., American Balladry From British Broadside (Philadelphia: The American Folklore Society, 1957), p. 185.

¹⁴ Miss Eddy located a broadside of this ballad inside a copy of The Christian Minstrel which she had bought in an antique store in Clear Springs, Maryland. See Mary O. Eddy, "William Reily's Courtship," MP, II (1952), 113 f. Miss Eddy gave this interesting copy of the broadside to me in 1964.

¹⁵ Bruce Buckley, "Ballads and Folksongs in Scioto County, Ohio" (M.A. Thesis, Miami University, 1952). Mr. Buckley follows the Child first convention, and "Edwin in the Lowlands" is included in Chapter V, "Imported Ballads and Folksongs."

¹⁶ Letter dated "1-22-39," loc. cit. "Well, I must tell you something — about our State Capital" There is an Institution there — of the same nature as yours — which is a little or more jealous of you — getting my "stuff" and hint that Charity should begin at Home." On other occasions Captain Nye mentioned visitors from the Cleveland area who were interested in his pictures. He used underlining and capitalization for emphasis and quotation marks when he felt he was using a slang term.

¹⁷ Letter dated "12-9-38," loc. cit. Alan Lomax writes: "I am always delighted to receive your letters and I am keeping them all on file in the Library for the pleasure of future generations...We all remember you with great affection."

¹⁸ This is quoted from a flyer sent out by Mr. Lomax. A copy is in the Tolman papers at Harvard.

¹⁹ Vance Randolph papers, Library of Congress Archive of Folksong.

²⁰ Letter from Mrs. Korson to me, January 21, 1963.

²¹ Letter dated "March 24, 1945," Nye Folder, Library of Congress Archive of Folksong.

²² Telephone interview with Dr. Rodabaugh, February 18, 1964.

²³ As he grew older Captain Nye's mind dwelt on the religious songs he knew and he often wrote Alan Lomax of the spirituals he had learned as a boy. Dr. Rodabaugh reported that it was the religious songs he seemed to recall most clearly.

²⁴ These recordings were in the Library in 1964. In a telephone interview August 1, 1973 I learned they had been lost.

²⁵ Letter dated "December 5, 1948," Ohio Folklore Archive Folder, Library of Congress Archive of Folksong.

²⁶ Obituary, Akron Beacon Journal, January 6, 1950. Information was also obtained from the Summit County Health Department.

²⁷ For a very interesting account of "The State of Folklore and the State of Ohio," see Tristram Coffin's article in MF, III (Spring, 1953), 19 f. He attributed the deplorable circumstance that Ohio has produced more presidents than folklorists to the fact that the three big graduate schools in Ohio have never developed strong folklore programs.

²⁸ Captain Nye often commented to the Lomaxes about his father's singing of such favorites as "Pretty Sally," "The Cumberland Crew" and "On the Banks of Salee."

²⁹ Bulletin of the Folksong Society of the Northeast, No. 1, p. 2.

³⁰ Loman D. Cansler, "He Hewed His Own Path; William Henry Scott, Ozark Songmaker," Studies in the Literary Imagination, III (April, 1970), 63. Captain Nye had certain other characteristics in common with Mr. Scott. Cansler reports that his son wrote of Mr. Scott that "...as a boy in school he was quick to learn but was disagreeable and hard to get along with and loved to fight," adding that "at the midpoint of his life, William Henry reached the height of his disagreeableness." (p. 37) Captain Nye's patience was short with those who did not appreciate his material or who did not return typed copies of his manuscripts to him in what he considered a reasonable time.

³¹ Letter dated "1-10-38," Nye Folder, loc. cit.

³² Ibid.

³³ Letter dated "11-25-32," Nye Folder, Ohio State Archaeological and Historical Society Collection.

³⁴ This is in a note attached to "Take a Trip on the Canal If you Want to Have Fun," in the Nye Folder, Ohio State Archaeological and Historical Society Collection. This work is twenty stanzas long, and Captain Nye reports that it seemed that the 1st and 18th stanzas were the most popular.

³⁵ In the Bulletin of the Folksong Society of the Northeast, No. 2, p. 14, Phillips Barry noted that "Lawrence Gorman...had a knack at the use of the ballad style and the traditional commonplace." However, much of Barry's argument on this point is based on a version of "Peter Emery," which Edward D. Ives in Larry Gorman, The Man Who Made the Songs (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1964), p. 61 notes has been shown to have been made by someone else. Ives places Gorman in the tradition of the satirical song and points out that he took the well-known "Come all ye" pattern and "kidded the corners off it." (p. 66)

³⁶ Note accompanying manuscript copy of his version of "Shortenin' Bread," Nye Folder, Library of Congress Folksong Archive.

³⁷ Pearl R. Nye, Scenes and Songs of the Ohio-Erie Canal (Columbus: The Ohio State Archaeological and Historical Society, 1952). This pamphlet is unpagged.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Undated letter, Nye Folder, Library of Congress Archive of Folksong.

⁴⁰ Note on Portage Hotel stationery, Nye Folder, Library of Congress Archive of Folksong. "Captain Nye has forgot the words to *We are Marching on to Old Quebec,' which his father & mother sung, and so he composed these words to preserve the tune."

⁴¹ G. Malcolm Laws, Native American Balladry, Rev. ed. (Philadelphia: The American Folklore Society, 1964), p. 3.

⁴² Roger D. Abrahams, "Creativity, Individuality and the Traditional Singer," Studies in the Literary Imagination, III, (April, 1970), 12.

⁴³ Nye Folder, Library of Congress Archive of Folksong.

⁴⁴ Letter dated "5-5-38," Nye Folder, ibid.

⁴⁵ Letter received August 30, 1938, Nye Folder, ibid.

⁴⁶ B. F. Sproat, "The Canal." A paper read before the Sunset Club at its meeting on Friday, January 20, 1911 (Chillicothe: Ohio Valley Folk Publications, New Series, No. 85), 17. This is reprinted from the Scioto Gazette of January 23, 1911.

⁴⁷ Undated letter, Nye Folder, Library of Congress Archive of Folksong. However, the letter was apparently written just prior to his participation in the 1938 Folk Festival.

⁴⁸ Letter dated "8-19-37," Nye Folder, ibid.

⁴⁹ Letter dated "2-13-39," Nye Folder, ibid.

⁵⁰ Letter dated "4-25-39," Nye Folder, *ibid.*, reports his grandfather freed his slaves and "came North" before the Civil War. In a letter received January 9, 1939 he complained that his copy of "Cumberland Crew" had not been sent back and added: "Most of my 'relations' are 'Southerners' but I do not believe in 'garbling' history." In a note accompanying the manuscript version of "Cumberland Crew" he wrote: "My mother's people were all Virginians — and two of her brothers were in the Union Army. The whole affair used to make grandfather and grandmother very sad."

⁵¹ Captain Nye reported this type of song very popular on the Canal, much more so than "Crime Does Not Pay." (Letter dated "3-8-38," Nye Folder, Library of Congress Archive of Folksong.)

⁵² Tristram P. Coffin, Uncertain Glory, p. 51 notes that the GMS "The Shepherd's Son" is rare enough "to make a ballad scholar sniff the air."

⁵³ Child A, C, and E. have similar stanzas.

⁵⁴ This is in Bertrand Bronson, The Traditional Tunes of the Child Ballads (4 vols.; Princeton University Press, 1959-), II, p. 551.

⁵⁵ Buckley identifies 14 Child ballads in his thesis.

⁵⁶ Bulletin of The Folksong Society of the Northeast, No.4, 18-19.

⁵⁷ Helen Hartness Flanders, Ancient Ballads Traditionally Sung in New England (4 vols.; Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1960) I, p. 22.

⁵⁸ Daniel G. Hoffman. Review of Scenes and Songs of the Ohio-Erie Canal. MF, III (Spring, 1953), 70. "It would be a shame not to publish the whole collection. Its appearance with adequate notes...would be a service to the study of native balladry." Review of Library of Congress Recording, L29, "Songs and Ballads of American History." MF, IV (Spring, 1954), 55. "The second is sung by Captain Pearl Nye....the hope....I now repeat that more of his repertoire will be made available...."