The Similkameen people, before there were trains,
Traded pipestone and paints all across the great plains.
The white man’s diseases brought most of them down
The rest took their horses and got out of town.

CHORUS:
Ranchers and miners and trappers and miners
And loggers and miners and tourists and miners.
Now it’s called “Princeton”, it once was Vermilion Forks.
Forks, and to us it's a town in a billion.  
The big cattle ranches worked well in their day,  
But the drive to the big cities just wouldn't pay.  
The trappers kept trapping a century or two,  
But trapping's a life that supports very few.

Mostly it's copper, but twice it was gold,  
A few tons of platinum, a mountain of coal.  
They followed wherever the ore could be found,  
And too many left blood and bones in the ground.

Now it's the logging that brings in our bread,  
And folks from the coast come to live here instead.  
The world keeps on changing as decades roll by,  
But, whatever we live on, this town will not die.

“A Miner’s Candlestick”, “The Hangup Stick” (a song from the Similkameen Star in 1900), a composition by Hedley miner John Henry titled “Splitting the Core” and a song by Paddy Graber, who worked at the Copper Mountain mine in the early 1950s, called “The Copper Mountain Raise”.

Logging is represented by two songs from the Thomas collection: “Hairwire Outfit” and “The Greenchain Song”. The topic of railways is accorded four items, including the popular songs “Kettle Valley Line” and “Gerry Go Ile the Car”, together with a poem and a song from the Similkameen Star, “Wanted, a Railroad” and “Wait Till the Railroad’s Finished”. About half the CD is devoted to songs and poems about settlers in the Princeton area and their experiences as pioneers, whether attempting to earn their living on the land, in the forests or in the mines. The songs include “The Banks of the Similkameen” (a B.C. variant of “Lakes of Ponchartrain”), and Paddy Graber’s moving “The Hope Slide”, while among the poems may be found “Dead Horse Upon the Tulameen” and the satirical “A Plea for Single Men”.

Taken together with Jon and Rika’s companion book, Dead Horse on the Tulameen (reviewed in the next section), this compilation of songs and poetry is an extraordinary accomplishment: a pioneering study of which any academic folklorist or historian would have been very proud. I cannot overemphasize the importance of this work, which will hopefully suggest to many local historians and lovers of traditional culture the feasibility of doing the same kind of research for their own town or region.

Yet, let me hasten to add, this very musical CD is not merely a documentary record. It is at the same time a highly entertaining re-creation and celebration of the vernacular culture of southern British Columbia, thereby helping the region to retain its uniqueness and to continue living its own cultural life in the face of TV, the Internet and the powerful, often dominating, culture of the big neighbour to the south.