

# New Encodings for Select Helen Creighton Historic Field Recordings

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The dissemination of historic field recordings through contemporary commercial audio technology and online resources has revolutionized access to enable their study regardless of geographic boundaries. As a Nova Scotian teaching undergraduate aural skills, I was interested in transcribing some of these songs to compare my encodings alongside those previously-published transcriptions made by individuals such as Helen Creighton, Kenneth Peacock, Doreen Senior, and Eunice Sircorn. The following contains a sampling of songs that I transcribed as part of my doctoral work. These are transcriptions of the first stanza for each song, drawn from recordings made by Helen

Creighton that are commercially available through the Helen Creighton Folklore Society's *Songs of the Sea* (2003), Folkways' *Folk Music from Nova Scotia* (FW04006, 1956), and *Maritime Folk Songs: from the Collection of Helen Creighton* (FW04307, 1962). Although the Folkways Records were initially released as long-playing records (LPs), the digital versions that I consulted are currently available through the music database Music Online: Smithsonian Global Sound for Libraries. For each transcription, I list the preexisting source and supplemental comments for those interested in comparing these encodings alongside each other.

**“Captain Conrod”, as sung by Edmund Henneberry on band 4 of *Folk Music from Nova Scotia* (Folkways Records, FW04006), 1956.**

The musical notation is presented in five staves, each with a bass clef and a key signature of three sharps (F#, C#, G#). The first staff begins with a 3/4 time signature, followed by a common time (C) signature, and ends with a 3/4 time signature. The lyrics are: "Come all you young fel - lows that fo - llow the sea, Bring your". The second staff continues the lyrics: "ship to an an - chor and lis - ten to me. Three". The third staff continues: "weeks in the hor-rors I lay drunk on the shore, like some". The fourth staff continues: "fro - lick - e mute I have wa - sted my store. Sing". The fifth staff concludes the stanza with the lyrics: "fall di - ddle da - ddle di - ddle - e - dle I day."

\*Compare with transcription by Helen Creighton, *Songs and Ballads From Nova Scotia*, p. 232.

Our transcriptions are similar to each another, with some discrepancies concerning pitch, rhythm, and meter. The recording is at a lower pitch than the published version. My encoding spans an octave and a major third, whereas Creighton's transcription spans an octave and a minor second. My tran-

scription employs simple triple meter (3/4) with a singular measure of common time (C) in mm. 4, 8, and 10, to reflect the singer's pauses and held notes, whereas Creighton employs simple triple meter throughout.

**“He’s Young but He’s Daily A-Growing”, as sung Mr. Nathan Hatt (1952) on band 4 of *Maritime Folk Songs: from the Collection of Helen Creighton* (Folkways Records, FW04307), 1962.**

The leaves they are green and the trees they are tall.

5 All those ha - ppy su - mmer days are all past and gone.

9 Here I am left on the cold - est win - ter's day. He is

13 you - ng but he's dai - ly are a grow - - - ing.

*\*Compare with transcription by Kenneth Peacock, Maritime Folk Songs, p. 100.*

The transcriptions are largely similar to each other. Both transcriptions span the Dorian mode. Peacock’s transcription supports a tonic of A, whereas my transcription matches the audio recording’s

lower tonic of D. Both encodings employ a simple duple (2/4) meter, although there are slight rhythm duration issues. The melodies are identical in contour, although there are slight note discrepancies.

**“The Chesapeake and Shannon”, as per track 4 of *The Helen Creighton Folklore Society – Songs of the Sea* (2003).**

Twas on the glo - rious fourth of June,

at ten o' clock in the forenoon,

That we sailed out of Bos - ton Bay. That

we sailed out of Bos - - - ton Bay,

For to fight the Che - sa - peake boys.

*\*Compare with transcription by Doreen Senior, Traditional Songs From Nova Scotia, p. 266*

These transcriptions bear resemblance to one another, although there are notable discrepancies concerning meter and note durations. While my

transcription spans the Dorian mode, Senior’s contains a variable scale-degree six. My transcription reflects a simple duple meter (2/4) with singular

measures of simple triple (3/4) in mm. 11 and 13, whereas Senior's transcription has sections in compound duple (6/4) and simple quadruple meter (4/4). This curious use of time signatures was addressed a decade ago in the *Canadian Folk Music Bulletin* Special Issue on Helen Creighton (2004,

38/2). In "The Creighton-Senior Collaboration, 1931-52", David Gregory identified that Doreen Senior had concerns about her music transcriptions being published in *Traditional Songs From Nova Scotia* (1950) without being consulted, or having an opportunity to review and make final versions.

**"J'ai fait laver mon cotillon", as sung by Mme Henri Pothier (1948) on track 5 of *Acadian Songs from Pubnico and Grand-Étang From the Helen Creighton Collection* (2008).**

J'ai fait la - ve - r mon co - ti - lon, je fait la - ver  
mon co - ti - lon. La - ve - zi la - ve - zon, la - ve - zon don don,  
vi - rons donc la - ve - zi Et tour - nons donc la - ve - zon don don.

\*See transcription by Eunice Sircom in *La Fleur du Rosier* No. 9, p. 16.

This encoding shares many features with Sircom's published version. They span identical ranges and scalar patterns, and are related by transposition. Both transcriptions are largely in simple duple meter (2/4). There are some rhythmic differences in the initial line of text. Sircom identifies the word *laver* as being two syllables (*la-ver*), whereas I hear the singer's voice on the recording as being three syllables (*la-ve-r*). While Sircom employs a three dotted-eighth note anacrusis to facilitate the beginning of the verse, I employ a measure of 2/8 to serve as an anacrusis to what I perceive as a 3/8-2/8 grouping that I collectively label as a single measure of 5/8 before resuming an otherwise stable simple duple meter (2/4). I opted to begin my encoding with a complete measure of 2/8 instead of using a quarter note anacrusis in 2/4 as I labeled the initial full measure as 5/8.

### Bibliography

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### Discography

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