

Folk & Traditional Song Lyrics

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Driving Logs on the Cass

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Come all you river drivers, wherever you may be,
That's standin' round the fire tonight, come listen unto me,
While I relate the dangers and the hardships that we pass
While driving logs for Miller on the winding River Cass.

It was early in the season ere the winter's ice and snow
Began for to diminish and the streams began to flow,
When Miller's logs went pounding from off the river's side
And started on their voyage 'way down the sweeping tide.

'Twas in the early morning before the sun rose in the sky
Lotus, our foreman, would come around, and " Daybreak " was his cry.
Cold, wet, and hungry we'd roll out into the frosty air;
And soon in haste we would partake of the all too scanty fare.

Although we know that Miller had provided for his men
The best the country could afford and had it with them then,
We scarce could get enough to eat, and what we did, I own,
Was never more than half prepared. 'Twas then we thought of home.

'Twas all the fault of Old Black Joe, our dirty greasy cook;
For fixing up the grub for us no pains at all he took.
Hot biscuits were nothing but raw dough and heavy as stone;
And ofttimes we had to make a meal of them alone.

The most of them were young men who worked at this employ ;
The most of them were young men whose hearts were filled with joy.
And often when the jam ahead was broken with a cheer
It was heard the whole length of the drive and answered by the rear.

Although we were detained by some of Raynard's crew
Who tried their best to hold our rear and force a passage through,
As our brave boys came flocking up to assist those in the rear
'Twas then they began to scatter, thinking some danger near.

At length with joy we reached the forks and halted for the night.
The drive we had been following lay plainly in our sight,
All grounded on the rapids a little space below;
And for the want of water no farther could we go.

'Twas in the morn that Miller saw that they were thus detained.
With sorrow he discharged the crew; not even one remained.

All for Cass City we were bound ere homeward we would start,
To take a glass in friends before that we would part.

Arguing at George Tennant's house, the drinks went freely round.
The boys were all in merriment; the barroom did resound.
As our foreman did not try our feelings for to mar
As each made his appearance he was hoisted o'er the bar.

A few hours were briefly spent and then the word "good-bye"
We heard from almost every man as night was drawing neigh
Thus gay as summer flowers we all left Miller's drive
Happy to think through dangers wild we all were yet alive

JAY SMITH, Of Traverse City, provided this version of the " Cass River Song." It is known also, but not in so complete a form, to jacks in the Thumb district. According to Miss Ruth Craig, of Marquette, Jay Smith got the song from a man who flipped a cant hook in the Saginaw River country for Wright and Ketchum, the company mentioned in the ballad known as the " Wright and Ketchen Line "

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From Earl Beck, Songs of Michigan Lumberjacks

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