Songs of French-Canada
Chansons du Folklore canadien-français
par
Hélène Baillargeon et Alan Mills
I WENT TO THE MARKET
SONGS of FRENCH CANADA

HELENE BAILLARGEON AND ALAN MILLS IN DUETS

guitarist: Gilbert Lacombe

No people has a richer heritage of song than the French-speaking people of Canada, and no one loves singing more than the French-Canadians. The singing of folk songs is a family tradition that is as much in evidence today among Canada’s five million French-speaking citizens as it was when their ancestors first landed in “New France” more than three centuries ago.

Just as most of the early American folk songs have their origin in the ancient songs of the British Isles, so the majority of the folk songs of French-Canada come from France. Most or them were brought to the soil of North America from the French coastal provinces of Normandy and Brittany by the early colonists of the Seventeenth Century.

It has been estimated -- conservatively -- that more than 15,000 French-Canadian folk songs, and their variants, have been collected to date, and that approximately 90 percent of this number was “inherited” from France. To be sure, many of these songs have undergone inevitable changes in words, tunes and rhythms in the course of their passage through succeeding generations, and from one location to another; but a surprising number of them have retained their “old world” charm and -- in some cases -- medieval character. One good example of the latter is the ancient Troubadour ballad “Au Marché de Falais” (on Side One of this recording). On the other hand, the lively “paddling” or “penceing” song, “PREMIER PUMEUR DE LA RIVIERE” (on the same side) is a typical example of how an ancient song of France was changed and adapted to new uses (in this case a “work” song) in the “New World”. The story this song tells, as is pointed out elsewhere, has nothing at all to do with paddling, or any of the pioneering work that Canada’s early French settlers had to do, and yet the same story is told to a hundred different tunes that have grown up in Canada’s soil.

All the songs here recorded are among the many favorites of French-speaking Canadians, and, like a great number of their songs, most of them invite group participation in the “repeat” lines and choruses, which are here printed or indicated in capital letters. Harmonies may -- or may not -- be added, as the participants wish, but in all cases, the harmonies must be simple and uncomplicated, such as the “third” above or below the melodic line, which falls most naturally on the untrained ear of unprofessional musical ear.

These songs are sung by two Quebeckers who have earned a wide reputation as outstanding interpreters of the folk songs of Canada. To FOLKWAYS collectors, Alan Mills is already known for his previous recordings of French-Canadian and other folk songs.

A native Montrealer, he was a newspaperman for a number of years and collected and sang folk songs as a hobby while pounding the “police beat” for the Montreal Herald the The Montreal Gazette, except for a two-year period when he left newspaper work to join John Goss & His London Singers, a male quintet which toured Canada and the United States in 1937-7, singing folk songs and lieder. The late John Goss, one of England’s outstanding singers of folk songs, had a great influence on the young Canadian and set him off on a semi-professional career as a singer after the group disbanded in 1937, too! he returned to newspaper work in Montreal to “pay the rent” during the later years of the depression. In 1944, he quit newspaper work again to devote all his time to singing and acting on Canada’s Government-owned radio network, and he has been heard regularly on the CBC ever since, chiefly in his own programs of folk songs.

Hélène Baillargeon, who is new to the recording field, is not new to folk songs. She is a thirteenth-generation Canadian, whose ancestors came from the ancient French province of Poitou to settle in Quebec’s picturesque Île d’Orléans in the 17th Century. Later, the family established itself in Beauce County, a farming and lumber district on the south shore of the St. Lawrence, and noted for its richness of song. It was in Beauce County that the Dean of Canadian Folklorists and musicologists, Dr. Marius Barbeau, was born and started his vast Canadian collection of more than 7000 (seven thousand) folk songs.

Hélène was weaned and brought up on folk songs. Her mother was a school-teacher and her father, a general merchant by profession, was known throughout Beauce County as a singer of folk songs and a “raconteur (story-teller) par excellence”. She was the youngest of twelve children, “who always sang folk songs at home and wherever we went”. Now she has three children of her own, and he, too! and -- André Coté, Q.C. Crown Attorney for the City of Montreal -- also has a reputation as a folk singer and “raconteur”.

Together with Alan Mills, Hélène has been co-featured on several series of CBC television and radio network programs for a number of years, and has been heard regularly in short-wave broadcasts to Latin-Americans and other countries over the CBC’s International Service (Canada’s equivalent to the “Voice of America”).
A very popular French Canadian folk song about a girl who asked her father to give her a present of a new home he’s building. He says yes - if she will promise not to fall in love with any young man. To which she replies “I’d rather see the house burn down to ashes and see you get your toas toasted.” The chorus is: “I hear the mill go ticka-ticka-tacka, I hear the mill go tacka.”

J’ENTENDS LE MOULIN

CHORUS:
J’ENTENDS LE MOULIN TIQUE TIQUE TAQUE
J’ENTENDS LE MOULIN TAQUE (Repeat)

Mon père a fait bâtir maison
J’ENTENDS LE MOULIN TAQUE
L’a fait bâtir à trois pignons
TIQUE TIQUE TAQUE

CHORUS:
L’a fait bâtir à trois pignons
J’ENTENDS LE MOULIN TAQUE
“Mon père, faites-moi un don”
TIQUE TIQUE TAQUE.

CHORUS:
“Mon père, faites-moi un don”
J’ENTENDS LE MOULIN TAQUE
Donnez-moi donc votre maison!
TIQUE TIQUE TAQUE

CHORUS:
“Donnez-moi donc votre maison!
J’ENTENDS LE MOULIN TAQUE
--- “Ma fille, promettez-moi donc
TIQUE TIQUE TAQUE

CHORUS:
--- “Ma fille, promettez-moi donc!
J’ENTENDS LE MOULIN TAQUE
De n’aimer les garçons!
TIQUE TIQUE TAQUE

CHORUS:
--- “De n’aimer les garçons”
J’ENTENDS LE MOULIN TAQUE
“J’aimerais mieux que la maison”
TIQUE TIQUE TAQUE

CHORUS:
“J’aimerais mieux que la maison”
J’ENTENDS LE MOULIN TAQUE
“Devienne en cendre et en charbon!”
TIQUE TIQUE TAQUE

CHORUS:

“Devienne en cendre et en charbon!”
J’ENTENDS LE MOULIN TAQUE
Et vous, mon père, sur le pignon,
TIQUE TIQUE TAQUE

CHORUS:

Et vous, mon père, sur le pignon,
J’ENTENDS LE MOULIN TAQUE
Vous vous chaufferiez les talons!
TIQUE TIQUE TAQUE

CHORUS:

(We repeat the CHORUS twice at the beginning and at the end of the song)

Side 1 Band 2

One of the most popular “paddling-songs” of French Canadian voyageurs. As very often happens, the story in these songs, with the exception of the chorus, has nothing-at all to do with paddling a canoe. It tells of a girl who is in love with a young carpenter employed by her father; and one day, she makes a pigeon-pie for lunch, and as she and the young carpenter sit together, eating, they make a secret vow, which -- according to the song -- was of such a nature as to make the sea and the fish therein tremble. That’s all there is to the story (the secret vow is not revealed).

FRINGUE! FRINGUE!

CHORUS:
FRINGUE! FRINGUE SUR LA RIVIERE
FRINGUE FRINGUE SUR L’AVIRON!
Repeat.

Mon père a fait bâtir maison
FRINGUE FRINGUE SUR L’AVIRON
L’a fait bâtir à trois pignons:
Tortille morfil, arrangeur de faucilles,
Tribouille marteau, Bonsoir lutin!

CHORUS:

Sont trois charpentiers qui la font
FRINGUE FRINGUE SUR L’AVIRON
Le plus jeune, c’est mon Mignon!
Tortille morfil, arrangeur de faucilles,
Tribouille marteau, Bonsoir lutin!

CHORUS:

“Qu’esportes-tu dans ton jupon?”
FRINGUE FRINGUE SUR L’AVIRON
--- “C’est un pêché de trois pigeons!”
Tortille morfil, arrangeur de faucilles,
Tribouille marteau, Bonsoir lutin!
Au bout d'un an se sont mariés;
DANSONS MA BERGERE 0 GAI!
Des p'tits moutards, ils ont donnes ... à l'ombre

CHORUS:

(Chorus is usually repeated after the last verse.)

Side 1  Band 4

Of the many soldiers' songs that have became favorites with the general public, one of the most popular tunes on the "hit-parade" not so long ago was a modernized English version of an old French marching-song which was dressed-up under the title of "I Want to Be Near You". In its older form, the song is called "Au Près de Ma Blonde", and it tells the story of a young wife who longs for the return of her soldier-husband.

"The nightingales sing for all un-married girls", she says. "They do not sing for me, because I have a husband; but alas, he went to war and was taken prisoner by the Dutch. If I could get him back, I would give anything, even Paris, Versailles and St. Denis".

AU PRÈS DE MA BLONDE

CHORUS:

AUPRÈS DE MA BLONDE
QU'IL FAIT BON, NON BON, FAIT BON!
AUPRÈS DE MA BLONDE
QU'IL FAIT BON DORMIR!

Au jardin de mon père, les lilas sont fleuris
(Repet)
Tous les ciseaux du monde viennent y faire leur nid.

CHORUS:

La caillée, la tourterelle et la jolie perdrix.
(Repet)
Et ma jolie colombe qui chante jour et nuit.

CHORUS:

Elle chante pour les filles qui n'ont point de mari.
(Repet)
Pour moi, ne chante guère, car j'en ai-t'un joli!

CHORUS:

Il est dans la Hollande, les Holländais l'ont pris
(Repet)
"Que donneriez-vous, Belle, pour ravoir vot's mari?"
(Repet)

CHORUS:

--- "Je donnerais Versailles, Paris et Saint-Denis" (Repet)
Les tours de Notre-Dame, les cloches de mon pays?

CHORUS:

Je suis dans mes champs, un beau jour de mai
(Repet)
Je suis déchaussée, débonnaire, sans souci.

CHORUS:
Mon père avait 500 moutons

Mon père avait cinq cents moutons, Oh la la!
Dont j'étais la bergeresse, lonlaire, lonlaire, lon la,
Dont j'étais la bergeresse.

Un jour, en revenant des champs, Oh la la!

(Repetit)
Le loup m'en a prit quinze, lonlaire, lonlaire, lon la,
Le loup m'en a pris quinze.

(Repetit)
M'a rendu la quinzaire, lonlaire, lonlaire, lon la,
M'A RENDU LA QUINZAINE.

"Quand je tondrai mes blancs moutons, Oh la la!
(Repetit)
Vous en aurez la laine, lonlaire, lonlaire, lon la,
VOUS EN AUREZ LA L A I N E ."

--- "C'est pas la laine qu'il me faut, Oh la la la!
(Repetit)
C'est voi' p'tit coeur, Bergeresse, lonlaire, lonlaire
lon la,
C'EST VOT' PETIT COEUR, BERGERE".

"Mon petit coeur n'est pas pour vous, Oh la la!
(Repetit)
Je l'ai promis à Pierre, lonlaire, lonlaire, lon la,
JE L'AI PROMIS A PIERRE".

MOI PIERRE AVAIT 500 MOUTONS

Moï Pierre avait 500 moutons, Oh la la!
Dont j'étais la bergeresse, lonlaire, lonlaire, lon la,
Dont j'étais la bergeresse.

Un jour en revenant des champs, Oh la la!

(Repetit)
Le loup m'en a prit quinze, lonlaire, lonlaire, lon la,
Le loup m'en a pris quinze.

(Repetit)
M'a rendu la quinzaire, lonlaire, lonlaire, lon la,
M'A RENDU LA QUINZAINE.

"Quand je tondrai mes blancs moutons, Oh la la la!
(Repetit)
Vous en aurez la laine, lonlaire, lonlaire, lon la,
VOUS EN AUREZ LA L A I N E ."

--- "C'est pas la laine qu'il me faut, Oh la la la!
(Repetit)
C'est voi' p'tit coeur, Bergeresse, lonlaire, lonlaire
lon la,
C'EST VOT' PETIT COEUR, BERGERE".

"Mon petit coeur n'est pas pour vous, Oh la la!
(Repetit)
Je l'ai promis à Pierre, lonlaire, lonlaire, lon la,
JE L'AI PROMIS À PIERRE".

SIDE 1  Band 6

Another song about a pretty shepherdess who was guarding her father's sheep (five hundred of them), when a wolf came along and managed to separate some of the sheep from the rest of the flock. But just as he was about to devour them, a fine young gentleman came to the rescue and chased the wolf away. And when he gallantly returned the unharmful sheep to their mistress, the little lady was so grateful that she promised him a load of wool. "I don't need any wool, says he... It's your heart I want!" "Alas," replies the girl, "my heart's not for you; I've already promised it to Pierre."

SIDE 1  Band 7

One of the most tender love-songs of French Canada is about a timid girl and her ardent sweetheart. He finds her crying one day and when he asks the reason for her tears, she says, "They are tears of tenderness" and she expresses the fear that she loves him too much. "To love too much", says he, "is not forbidden. One would have to have a hard heart not to love you. You fear love as the sheep fear the wolves."

LA-BAS, SUR CES MONTAGNES

Le-bas, sur ces montagnes, j'entends pleurer
Abi c'est la voix de maistresse,
Il faut aller la consoler.

"Abi qu'avez-vous, maistresse, à tant pleurer?"
--- "Abi si je pleur, c'est de tendresse:
C'est de vous voir trop aimé..."

"De trop aimer, la belle, Dieu l'endors pas;
Peut-être avoir le coeur bien dur,
Ma belle, qui vous aimera pas."

"Les moutons dans ces plaines ont peur des loups
Tout comme vous, Belle, que j'aime,
Et's en danger de l'amour..."
One of the favorite folk songs in Quebec, is a lively bit of nonsense called le P’tit Avocat, which tells the story of a little lawyer who had what might be called a "hat-fixation." For the song informs us that wherever he went, and whatever he did, he always had his hat with him -- not worn in the usual manner -- but carried under his arm. One day, he walked into a roadside inn (with his hat under his arm) and sat down to a meal of fish (with his hat under his arm) and while in the process of devouring said fish, the poor fellow swallowed a bone and choked to death (with his hat still under his arm). And there the hat remained, even when they lowered him into the grave, and on his tombstone was inscribed the following: "Here lies le P’tit Avocat, with his hat under his arm".

**LE P’TIT AVOCAT**

C'était un p'tit avocat,  
TOURNE MA ROULETTE, VIRE VIRE VIRE,  
C'était un p’tit avocat,  
TOURNE MA ROULETTE ET VIRE-VA  
Son p’tit chapeau sous son bras,

**CHORUS:**

Dans une auberge, il entra

**CHORUS:**

A manger, il demanda,

**CHORUS:**

Son p’tit chapeau sous son bras,

**CHORUS:**

Du poisson, on lui donna

**CHORUS:**

Une arête, il avala

**CHORUS:**

Son p’tit chapeau sous son bras

**CHORUS:**

Par malheur, il en crevât  
Dans la fosse, on l'égosla

**CHORUS:**

A l'église, on le portât  
Sur la tombe, on ériva

**CHORUS:**

Son p’tit chapeau sous son bras,

"Ci-gît le p'tit avocat!"

**CHORUS:**

Un service, on lui chanta,

**CHORUS:**

Son p’tit chapeau sous son bras
A fragment of an Old Quebec drinking song, which says in effect - it's not rotten grapes nor little sweethearts that make me dance. "C'est le Bon Vin" (it's the good wine that dances.)

C'EST LE BON VIN QUI DANSE!
Ce n'est pas du raisin pourri!
C'est le bon vin qui danse!

CHORUS:
C'EST LE BON VIN QUI DANSE ICI!
C'EST LE BON VIN QUI DANSE!
Ce n'est point de mes amoureuses
C'est le bon vin qui danse

CHORUS:
Passe par ici et moi par là!
C'est le bon vin qui danse!

CHORUS:

One of the many French-Canadian folk songs that tell the story of a shy girl who refuses to kiss a sailor because she's afraid Birds will report her misbehavior to her father. And no amount of persuasion on the part of the sailor can change her mind, for she is convinced that birds speak, not only French but Latin as well. To which the sailor replies: "What a sad world, when birds are taught Latin"

MARIE-MARIE-MADELEINE
Mon père n'avait fille que moi (Repeat)
Encoir sur la mer il l'envoie

CHORUS:
MARIE-MARIE-MADELEINE, SON P'TIT JUPON DE LAINE
SA P'TITE ROB' CARNEAUZE, SON P'TIT JUPON PIQUE!

Le marinier qui m'y menait (Repeat)
Il devint amoureux de moi ...

CHORUS:

"Na mignonette, embrassz-moi" (Repeat)
"Nenni, monsieur, je n'eserais ..."

CHORUS:
"Nenni, monsieur, je n'eserais" (Repeat)
Car s'il l'avarait, Papa n'apprazait"

CHORUS:
"Voyons, la Belle, qui lui dirait?" (Repeat)
"Ce seraient les oiseaux des bois ..."

CHORUS:
"Les oiseaux des bois parlent-ils?" (Repeat)
"Ils parlent français, latin aussi ..."

CHORUS:
"Hélas! que le monde est maali! (Repeat)
D'apprendre aux oiseaux le latin!

CHORUS:

Our next song is about a sailor, who comes home from war after a long absence, and be expects to find a warm welcome from his wife and family. But he discovers, instead, that his wife had presumed him dead and had re-married. This ancient song came to Canada from Brittany. It's called "Le Retour du Marin".

(The Sailor's Return)

LE RETOUR DU MARIN
Quand le marin revint de guerre, tout doux.
Tout mal chaussé, tout mal vêtu,
"Pauvre marin, d'où reviens-tu? tout doux.

"Madame, je reviens de guerre, tout doux.
(Repeat)
Qu'on apporte ici du vin blanc
Que le marin boit en passant, tout doux".

Brave marin se mit à boire, tout doux.
(Repeat)
Se mit à boire et à chanter
Et de belle hétéresse à pleurer, tout doux!

"Ah! dites-moi, la belle hétéresse, tout doux.
(Repeat)
Regrettez-vous votre vin blanc
Que le marin boit en passant? tout doux".

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"C'est pas mon vin que je regrette, tout doux.
(Repeat)
C'est la perte de mon mari,
Monsieur, vous ressemblez à lui, tout doux!"
---"Ah! dites-moi, la belle hôtisse, tout doux.
(Repeat)
Vous aviez de lui trois enfants;
Vous en avez six à présent, tout doux."
"On m'a donné de ses nouvelles, tout doux.
(Repeat)
Qu'il était mort et cachéri,
Et je me suis remarâlée, tout doux."

Brave mari viva son verre, tout doux
(Repeat)
Sans dir: "merci", tout en pléurant,
Il regagna son bâtiment, tout doux ....

Side 2 Band 5

A nonsense song that is a typical example of a category of French songs known in Canada as "Chanson de Cassé-Coux" (in other words, a "break-neck" song). It's "story" (if it can be called that) may be summed up as follows:-- A young girl goes into the garden, picks two peas, eats three, becomes sick, was ill for three months; during which time everybody came to see her, except her boyfriend.

FAMBELELO:

Derrière chez-nous y'avait un champ de pois
FAMBELELO PAN PAN LA BOBINO
J'en cueillis deux, j'en mangis trois

CHORUS: FAMBELO PAN PAN LA BOBINO
FAMBELELO PAN PAN LA BOBINO
FAMBELELO PAN PAN LA BOBINO
FAMBELELO PAN PAN LA BOBINO

J'en cueillis deux, j'en mangis trois
FAMBELELO PAN PAN LA BOBINO
J'en fus malad' au lit trois mois

CHORUS: Tous mes parents venaient m'y voir
FAMBELELO PAN PAN LA BOBINO
Celui que j'aime ne vint pas ...

CHORUS: VOlIA LA RECOMPENSE

Passant par la grand'rue, je vois une clarté (Repeat)
Ah! c'était ma maîtresse qui allait se coucher,
Arrivant à la porte, trois petits coups frappés.

Arrivant à la porte, trois petits coups frappés
(Repeat)
"Ouvre, ouvre, ma Belle, c'est votre amant
Qui revient de la guerre, dans un beau bâtiment."
--- "Je n'ouvre pas ma porte: il est minuit sonné;
(Repeat)
Mon père aussi ma mère, ils sont partis veiller;
Ils ont barré les portes, ont apporté les clefs."

"Je vais à la fenêtre, Belle, me l'ouvrires-vous?
(Repeat)
Je suis couvert de neige, dans l'eau jusqu'aux genoux;
Voilà la récompense que je reçois de vous!"

Side 2 Band 6

This drinking song is about a group of soldiers (wearing cloaks over their uniforms) who entered an inn to enjoy a few bottles of wine. But not one of them had a cent to his name, and when the innkeeper's wife discovered this she demanded their cloaks as payment for the wine. "Don't take our cloaks", begged the men ... "We're penniless soldiers, just returned from six long months of service". "Ah, soldiers!" beamed the hostess, "In that case, the drinks are on the house, right down to the last drop in our barrels."

C'EST A BOIRE

C'étaient cinq ou six bons bougres sur la rout' de Longjumeau
Ils entrèrent dans une suberge pour y boir' du vin nouveau
This is one of the rare bilingual folksongs of Canada. To my knowledge there are only a few such songs which make use of both our "official languages" to an equal extent. This one tells an amusing story which illustrates how difficult it is to do business with "la fille d'un avocat", the daughter of a lawyer. Briefly, the fellow goes to the market to sell some apples. The girl buys two dozen apples on the promise that her lawyer-father will pay for them. But "papa" doesn't do so. The chorus might be translated as follows: - "I love you, but you pay no heed".

**I WENT TO THE MARKET**

I went to the market, mon p'tit panier sous mon bras
(Repeat)
The first girl I met was la fille d'un avocat.

**CHORUS:**
I LOVE YOU, VOUS N'ATTENDEZ GUÈRE!
I LOVE YOU, VOUS N'ATTENDEZ PAS!

The first girl I met, was la fille d'un avocat
(Repeat)
"Monsieur, what have you got dans ce beau p'tit panier-là?"

**CHORUS:**
"Monsieur, what have you got dans ce beau p'tit panier-là?" (Repeat)
--- "I've got some apples, n'en achèteriez-vous pas?"

**CHORUS:**
--- "I've got some apples, n'en achèteriez-vous pas?" (Repeat)
"Oh! give me two dozens, pis l'bonhomme te paiera ça!"

**CHORUS:**
"Oh! give me two dozens, pis l'bonhomme te paiera ça" (Repeat)
I gave her two dozens, mais l'bonhomme y payait pas"

**CHORUS:**
I gave her two dozens, mais l'bonhomme y payait pas (Repeat)
Such is the "bizness" avec la fille d'un avocat!

**CHORUS:**

N.B. This is a "chanson farcie" where English and French are mixed.