

Resources — a MUSICAL TRADITIONS Column

By Stewart Hendrickson

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Illustrated and Introduced & Concluded by Harry (doc) Babad for 3RFS Music Talk

Introduction

My chase for lyrics, and if practical, music and chords was due to an accidental recovery of song sheets when cleaning out our basement to create more living space. I found four 4" notebooks, long forgotten, of song sheets I'd either helped to produce for the Illini Folk Arts Society (ca. 1956); collected at meetings of folk groups in Chicago, Urbana IL, Boston/Cambridge, New York City and Denver. Other song sheets were those I'd assembled for personal use in days of old. That was before I acknowledged I sing in the key of flat and play guitar off rhythm.

I started turning a few of these found items into electronic copy song sheets for the Last Sunday Sing-Along; a slowly growing 3-Rivers Folklife monthly event. I soon realized my copy was often too faded to scan and work with or even Xerox. Thus an Internet search was need to get a better copy for us to sing to. Thereby I acquired a collection of Internet links to aide my search.

I've been accumulating notes for sources of Folk Song Lyrics article aimed at Music Talk when I ran across Stewart Hendrickson's Victory Review article entitled "*Resources*" in his Musical Traditions Series. With his permission, I've reprinted the article below.

Stewart Hendrickson's Resources

What are some sources of information on traditional music?

With the advent of modern recording techniques, and now the Internet, traditional music is no longer restricted to an oral tradition of transmission and dusty libraries. There are Internet sites with lyrics, many with accompanying midi files of tunes and other information. You can also listen to old recordings, including field recordings, on the Internet. This is the best of times to do research on traditional music.



On my music web site: www.stolaf.edu/people/hend/music.html) I have a page of resources for traditional Irish music www.stolaf.edu/people/hend/resources.html. In order to illustrate these and other sources I will lead you through several searches of mine.

In an early column I mentioned that I was looking for information on the tune *Bendemeer's Stream*. A search on several Internet sites gave the following information.

The Lester S. Levy Collection of Sheet Music (<http://levysheetmusic.mse.jhu.edu/index.html>) is part of the Special Collections at the Milton S. Eisenhower Library at The Johns Hopkins University. It contains over 29,000 pieces of music and focuses on popular American music spanning the period 1780 to 1960. "An image of the cover and each page of music will be retrieved if the music was published before 1923 and is in the public domain." A search for *Bendemeer's* gave sheet music to *Bendemeer's Stream*.

The Lesley Nelson (aka the Contemplator's) Folk Music Site (<http://www.contemplator.com/folk.html>) "Folk and Traditional Music and Popular Songs, with Lyrics, Midi, Tune Information and History behind the folksongs and ballads. Irish, British and American Folk Music including Francis J. Child Ballads and Sea Shanties." A search for *Bendemeer's* gave lyrics with Barry Taylor's lovely midi arrangement, and information and other links about the author, Thomas Moore (1779-1852).

Mudcat Discussion Forum (<http://www.mudcat.org/threads.cfm>) (includes Digital Tradition, a database of several thousand folksongs). A search for *Bendemeer's* in the "Digitrad and Forum Search" box found lyrics and a midi file in the Digital Tradition database, and several discussion threads in the Forum.

Google (<http://www.google.com>) search engine. A search for *Bendemeer* or *Bendermeer* gave many web pages, some of which pertain to the song *Bendemeer's Stream*.



The Internet is also a tremendous source of tunes.

Two of my favorite Internet research sites above are the Mudcat Forum (and Digital Tradition) and Google (my preferred search engine). The Mudcat Forum is an open (free) Internet discussion where anyone can post questions and answers about folk music. Unfortunately, about 90% of the discussion is now about topics unrelated to music (politics, gossip, BS, etc.); however, the music threads are a fantastic source of information. One can ask about an obscure song or tune and in a very short time receive replies from experts all over the world; it's quite fantastic! Or one can search the Forum for past discussions of particular musical interest.

Many years ago at Rainy Camp, a Seattle Folklore Society weekend singing retreat, I led a workshop entitled Bawdy Broadside Ballads. Beginning in the 16th century with the advent of the printing press, popular songs were printed on one side of sheet of paper and became known as broadsides (see the Contemplator's Short History of Broadside Ballads - [www.contemplator.com](http://www.contemplator.com/history/broadside.html) history/broadside.html). Only the words were printed; a well-known tune was often suggested. These sheets, often illustrated with a woodcut print, were sold on street corners and became a popular urban mode of song transmission.

They were often topical and told of noteworthy events. Censorship, if it occurred, was mainly restricted to political topics, bawdy ballads were rarely censored. One of these ballads I sought was The Wooden Leg'd Parson: A barber there was named Timothy Briggs, Quite famous he was for making good wigs; Till with a lass called Becky Bell, Slap over the ears in love he fell. Sing, rumble dum dairy, rumble dum day! Mark well the truth that I say.

An Internet search of the Bodleian Library of Broadside Ballads at Oxford University (<http://www.bodley.ox.ac.uk/ballads/>) gave a digital image of the original broadside (between 1842 and 1855), complete with a woodcut print of Parson Sly and his wooden leg. By the way, this ballad is only mildly bawdy; for more-blatant bawdy ballads you can search the Bodleian Library yourself! This library holds one of the largest collections of original broadsides, which can be viewed from the convenience of your own home computer. It is interesting to see how the words have, or have not, changed over the years. This is a fantastic resource.

The Internet is also a tremendous source of tunes.

As a fiddle player I am often interested in finding traditional fiddle tunes. One of the best sites for Celtic tunes is Ceolas (<http://www.ceolas.org/ceolas.html>). "Ceolas carries notation for several hundred traditional tunes, in various formats, along with music software and an index of most published tune sources and links to other sites with tunes and songs." Hosted on the Ceolas site is The Fiddler's Companion (<http://www.ceolas.org/tunes/fc/>) The Fiddler's Companion is a huge encyclopedia of

fiddle tunes from the Celtic, British and American traditions, created by Andrew Kuntz. Most tunes contain notes and anecdotes, references to published or recorded versions, and several thousand have abcformat tunes included.” The current version contains over 30,000 entries. There are many other sources for tunes on the Internet. I have listed some Irish Fiddle Links on my music web pages: (<http://www.stolaf.edu/people/hend/fiddlelinks.html>).

I have given here just a few of the many resources on traditional music on the Internet. If you hop on the Internet using Google and other search sites you will find many other useful music resources.

STEWART’S CONTACT INFORMATION: Stewart Hendrickson is Chemistry Professor Emeritus – St. Olaf College, Research Professor Emeritus University of Washington, and in his new career, an unemployed folk musician (voice, fiddle, guitar; <http://www.stolaf.edu/people/hend/music.html>)

In Closing Doc Sez

My song sheet collection stuff was eclectic since at the time I sang in Russian, Spanish, French, Hebrew and Yiddish as well as in English. Songs I liked included materials from Childe Ballads such as Mattie Grove, Andrew Rolland Summers’ Seeds of Love, The New Lost City Ramblers, Josh White, Theodore Bikel and the songs of the Spanish Civil War. ...An eclectic mix. In addition, there was the game of versions... you know *The Twa Corbies* vs. *The Three Ravens* as well as all those grrreat Gypsy Laddie-Gypsy Davie songs.



I’m digitizing the song sheets a few at a time, hoping to both recapture the memories that come with each song and to enhance my song collection. After all what are musical traditions but memories to times long ago and perhaps far away. So I’m still collecting links and will sometime this Summer provide Music Talk *Musical Resources On The Internet* to provide feedback on what I found and am using.