

Boring For Oil II – Gordon Howard

The third man from whom I recorded bawdy songs was Gordon Howard, a Toronto sports writer and broadcaster, who was born in Toronto in 1898. He went to school in Gravenhurst, a small Ontario town, and then worked for the Canadian Pacific Railway and travelled through the prairie provinces.

In 1921 he settled in Ottawa and later moved to Toronto, thus living a more urban life than either Mr. Abbott or Mr. Brandon.

Of the nine songs Mr. Howard sang for me in May 1960, six were more or less bawdy. They included the old and widely known "Foggy Dew" and "The Old Man Came Home One Night" (Child 274), along with four more recent pieces. Of most interest is "Boring for Oil," a modern counterpart of the many older songs using trade symbolism, which he sang to the tune of "Villikens and His Dinah":

Edith Fowke – *A Sampling of Bawdy Ballads from Ontario*

I arrived in Calgary October the tenth
And a week in that city on pleasure I spent—
A week in that city prospecting the soil
In search of a spot to go boring for oil.

One bright sunny day as I strolled down the street
A pretty fair damsel I happened to meet.
Said I to this damsel: "Your family I'll foil
If you'll show me a spot to go boring for oil."

Oh, the damsel looked up and she says: "I declare
Oh, I know of a spot and I've watched it with care,
And no one has seen it since I was a child,
And if you go there I am sure you'll strike oil."

So I fondly embraced her on the very top floor.
I hugged and I kissed her a thousand times o'er,
And I lifted her garments for fear they might soil;
Then she showed me that spot to go boring for oil.

Well, I scarcely had bored in six inches or more
When the oil from her well so freely did pour,
And she looked up at me and she said with a smile:
"Come down on your auger—I'm sure you've struck oil."