

## Jimmy McCartney's Songs

I have lived in Manitoba since 1974 but was born and raised in Valcartier. All my ancestors are in graveyards in Valcartier. Now my generation is the oldest in the family.

I have been interested in Jimmy McCartney's songs for some time now as at least three of them reflect both the history of Valcartier and the area where I now live.

A few years ago when browsing through Charley Wolff's memoirs I came upon "The banks of Souris" and "The Far Saskatchewan" which were written by McCartney prior to World War 1. "The Banks of Souris" and "The Last Excursion" have some similar verses and were written during the harvest along the banks of the Souris River in Southern Manitoba. "The Far Saskatchewan" was written during the harvest in South-east Saskatchewan. It is not on-line so I attach a copy.

I will not get into the history of Valcartier farmers coming west to help out during the harvest as it is documented. I do not know how many years it took place but my uncle did talk about a time when he came west and did talk about Jimmy McCartney.

As it was not an interest to me at the time, I did not pay much attention and remember little about what he said. I think he only made one trip but seemed to have fond memories and would ask me questions about the west when I went home. He was born in 1904 so probably his trip was post World War 1. He talked about wanting to revisit but never got the chance.

I think Jimmy McCartney had a special talent and I have approached artists in Manitoba trying to get him some recognition. So far I have not had any luck. The three referred to above are historically important to both Valcartier and the west. I expect there are more of his songs lying in boxes and gathering dust, but many of the people who were interested in his songs have passed on or have lost interest. I encourage anyone who has other songs of his to send them in so that they can be put on-line.

I discovered that at least one of the songs on-line, "The Man Who Broke

the Bank at Monte Carlo" attributed to McCartney, was not written by him. It was published in 1891 by Fred Gilbert and was popularized in the early nineteen hundred by singer and comedian, Charles Coborn. There may be others on-line that he did not write. I expect that when he passed away most songs found in his home would be attributed to him.

Regardless most of my interest lies in the songs that he wrote during the harvest and the trips made west. Hopefully I can get someone else interested and get him some recognition. An update will be coming!

Written by Robert Hicks in March 2023

McCartney and Janet Wolff. He lived in Valcartier Village. He was born, March 16, 1899. He died April 1930, and is buried in the Presbyterian Cemetery, St. Andrew's. He left the farm to a Scottish Society. The farm was eventually sold to Wilfred Goodfellow.

#### THE FAR SASKATCHEWAN

Come all ye true born farming princes, come my brothers of the plow,  
And listen to the truthful tale which I will tell you now;  
Concerning three long, happy months that now have fled and gone,  
We spent them at sweet labour in the Far Saskatchewan.

My name I will not mention, I'm a chap that you all know well,  
Brought up by humble parents in my childhood days to dwell;  
I left Valcartier's sunlit banks on the third of August last,  
To try my lot in those Western lands, till harvest days were past.

There's a fleeting glimpse of Vallier Street and we are on our way,  
To the tramping of the conductor's feet the accordeons wildly play;  
Some sang the Lass of Lancashire and some the Banks of Boyne,  
While others heaped the measure with days of Ould Lang Syne.

There is a man called Charlie Streat, I mean to let you know,  
And with his threshing outfit, we have all laid out to go;  
But the harvest is not ready and the haying in full swing,  
I have hired with Cliff Lugham, could I do a better thing?

Oh, you little town of Kennedy, that nestles on the plain,  
Where the thunder cloud plays hide and seek with the sunshine and the rain;  
May Providence prove kind to you as in the days of yore,  
The only thing that I regret, we'll hear Hall's voice no more.

Here's to Christian Strangers that we met on this round,  
For the best in human nature by their firesides we found;  
Of the way that they befriended us when days were dark or clear,  
It would be much less than gratefulness not to make mention here.

It is no son of luxury that sings this little lay,  
But a tribute to Cliff Lugham and his charming wife I pay;  
To the higher points of success in life, may they bear themselves along,  
Till those noble hearts lie buried in the far Saskatchewan.

Here's to the gallant comrades that we now leave behind,  
The mountains may divide us, we will bear them still in mind;  
Mid the wheat fields of the prairie or Port Arthur's breaks of snow,  
They're a credit to Valcartier homes wherever they do go.

My train pulls out from Kennedy, I can no longer stay,  
A dear and patient mother writes: "What keeps my boy away?"  
So I'll hit the planks of Old Quebec, next Monday morn at dawn;  
Thus I quit bonanza farming in the Far Saskatchewan.