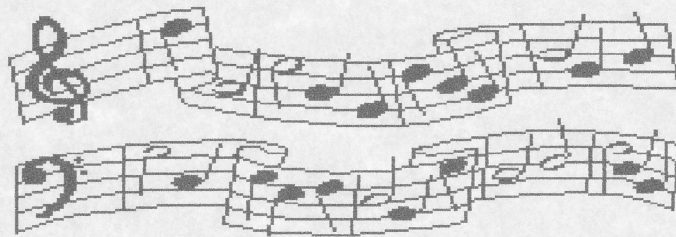


# FROM WHENCE COMETH THAT SONG?



A Paper for the Hopkinsville, Kentucky  
Athenaeum Society  
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With many of the words, phrases and sayings we use every day we often don't think about where they come from or even what they mean. The same is true with reference to the origin of many of the songs we know. I have always had a great love of music although I don't claim to be trained in music. I have sung in a few choirs in college and churches, and for years led the singing in my churches and in revivals for various rural churches. There have been many hymns and songs I have enjoyed over the years but I never thought about their origin until somewhat recently. One of my earliest musical memories dates back to my 5<sup>th</sup> grade class in south Georgia. I recall our class project of painting a mural on butcher paper that hung on the wall all around the room. We painted scenes that represented the words to "America the Beautiful": spacious skies, amber waves of grain, purple mountain majesty and alabaster cities. Perhaps this was an early seed for my much later interest in rocks and minerals since I do recall asking what alabaster is. As long as I can recall I have been inspired by this song because I love the beauty of our land from coast to coast, but ironically for so many years I didn't know anything about the origin of these inspiring words or their music.

For years Miss Katherine Lee Bates was Professor of English Literature at Wellesley College in Massachusetts. In 1893 Miss Bates began serving on the faculty of a notable summer school in Colorado. On her way there that summer she stopped at the Chicago World's Fair ( the World's Columbian Exposition ) and was impressed by the symbolic beauty of the "white city." She then traveled on to Colorado Springs where she saw the Rockies for the first time and spent

three weeks at the foot of their “purple mountain majesties.” At the end of the summer Miss Bates noted that, “One day some of the other teachers and I decided to go on a trip to 14,000-foot Pikes Peak. We hired a prairie wagon. Near the top we had to leave the wagon and go the rest of the way on mules. I was very tired. But when I saw the view, I felt great joy. All the wonder of America seemed displayed there, with the sea-like expanse.” “It was then and there, as I was looking out over the sea-like expanse of fertile country spreading away so far under those ample skies, that the opening lines of the hymn floated into my mind. When we left Colorado Springs the four stanzas were penciled in my notebook.” When she returned to Wellesley her work absorbed her time and attention such that it was two years later when she copied the words of the hymn and sent them to *The Congregationalist*, where they first appeared in print July 4, 1895. She reported that the hymn attracted an unexpected amount of attention and was quickly set to music by Silas G. Pratt. Other tunes were written for the words and she continued to get so many requests regarding the hymn that she rewrote it to, “make the phraseology more simple and direct.” The new version first appeared in the *Boston Evening Transcript*, November 19, 1904. Later, part of the third stanza was changed with the final version ( as we know it today ) being published in 1913. The hymn found its way into the lives of people all over the land and has been sung to a variety of music. Today, “America the Beautiful” is almost exclusively sung to Samuel A. Ward’s Materna. In 1926, a strong push was made to adopt the hymn as the national anthem, but the older, more established “Star-Spangled Banner” won that official status in 1931. Not only has this inspiring hymn received great popularity in this country, but it has been sung in Australia, substituting that country’s name for America, and in Canada with the refrain “O Canada,” and in Mexico with the refrain “Mi Mejico.”

Becoming aware of the history of two other popular patriotic songs was the inspiration for my choosing this particular topic for this paper. In 1843 Daniel Decatur Emmett, born in Ohio, helped organize the Virginia Minstrels, one of the earliest minstrel troupes, competing for this position with only the Christy Minstrels. In 1858, after some difficult times with his group, Emmett joined the Bryant Minstrels. Minstrel shows of that time were a popular form of entertainment in which black men, or more likely white men in black face, played banjo, fiddle, tambourine and bones while singing and dancing in what whites believed was authentic “Negro style.” When Emmett joined the Bryant Minstrels he both composed and performed comic songs and plantation Negro “walk-arounds.” Walk-arounds were the songs sung at the end of the show as a solo performer walked around the stage. One Saturday night in 1859, the manager of the company stopped him after a somewhat unsuccessful performance. “Dan, I must have a fresh tune. Can’t you compose a new walk-around, something lively in the git-up-and-git style? Make it lively, something the bands will play and the boys will whistle in the streets. I’ll expect it on Monday morning at rehearsal.” Sunday was cold and wet, and Dan sat in the kitchen without any inspiration. When his wife Catherine come into the room, he said, “What a morning! I wish I was in Dixie.” This was an expression he had learned during his earlier years working with a circus. “You show people,” Catherine said, “you keep talking about being in Dixie. What does it mean?” “Well, it’s a common expression. When it’s cold we yearn to be south of the Mason and Dixon line, or in Dixie, where the weather is fair and mild. When things aren’t going well where you are, you wish you were in Dixie – Dixie – Dixie.” That was a magical moment. “Suddenly,” he later told a reporter, “I jumped up and sat down at the table to work. In less than an hour I had the first verse and chorus. After that it was easy...” At the rehearsal the next day,

the wife of the manager expressed her fears that the first stanza might offend the religious-minded in the audience, so it was never used, though Emmett sometimes included it in souvenir copies. The deleted stanza was as follows:

Dis worl' was made in jiss six days,  
An' finished up in various ways;  
Look away! Look away! Look away! Dixie Land!  
Dey den made Dixie trim and nice,  
But Adam called it "paradise,"  
Look away! Look away! Look away! Dixie Land!

Remember that the words to this song were written to supposedly express the thoughts of the black character in the minstrel, not to express Emmett's personal thoughts. The original title of the song was, "I Wish I Was In Dixie."

Historians do not all agree with reference to the origin of the term, "Dixie," but the most popular explanation of the name has to do with the fact that prior to 1860 the Citizens' Bank of New Orleans issued \$10 notes that were used largely by French-speaking residents. On the reverse side of these notes was imprinted the word "dix", the French for "ten." From this came the phrase, "the land of Dixies," or "Dixie Land." At first the term applied to Louisiana but eventually included the whole South.

Other persons and groups, including some African Americans, have tried to claim authorship of the song, "Dixie," but their claims have been pretty well disproved. With the song being written prior to the War it had no political intent. In fact, Emmett was loyal to the North during the War and often apologized for writing the song that became such an inspiration for the

Confederacy. Soon after being written, "Dixie" became very popular in both the North and the South. Later, some Northerners wrote their own words to the tune but they didn't last. "Dixie" was a song of the South. One report indicates that the first performance of "Dixie" in the Southern states appears to have been in Charleston, South Carolina, in December, 1860, but it was in New Orleans that it became accepted as a Southern war song. In March, 1861, after Louisiana had seceded, the theatrical troupe of Mrs. John Wood was opening in "Pocahontas" at the Varieties Theater. At the first evening performance, as the last number, the gaudily dressed Zouaves, members of a French infantry unit, marched onstage, led by Miss Susan Denim singing "I Wish I Was in Dixie." The audience went wild with delight, and demanded seven encores. From that evening on "Dixie" was the favorite song of the Confederacy. In *The Cambridge History of English and American Literature* it is stated that, "Emmett's original words and music still bring people to their feet as no other song in America does. They stand in deference to the tradition of "The Star-Spangled Banner", but they rise to "Dixie" itself." In response to some who today try to put down the song as evil just as they do the Confederate flag, I like the statement I saw recently next to a Confederate flag: "Heritage, not hatred." Two lines from the song have special meaning to me: "In Dixie Land whar' I was born in, Early on one frosty mornin'." I was in fact born in Vicksburg, Mississippi at 9:00 O'clock in the morning on the 6<sup>th</sup> of December.

So, the song that inspired the Confederates during the war and many Southerners ever since, ironically was written in the North by a Northern sympathizer and was never intended for the purpose it achieved. But this is only half of the irony.

Down in Charleston, South Carolina, in the 1850's there was a man by the name of

William Steffe who wanted to write a hymn for use in the Methodist Camp Meetings which he was a part of. It was to be a revival type hymn in keeping with the spirit of those camp meetings. Several dates have been given for the year this hymn was written but the Cambridge History of English and American Literature indicates that it came into being early enough to have been included in Henry Ward Beecher's Plymouth Collection of 1852. The words to Steffe's hymn were simple and included these: "Say, brothers, will you meet us, Say, brothers, will you meet us, Say, brothers, will you meet us, On Canaan's happy shore? Glory, glory, hallelujah, Glory, glory, hallelujah, Glory, glory, hallelujah, Forever, evermore!" Two other verses included in part these lines: "By the grace of God we'll meet you, ... Where parting is no more. (and) Jesus lives and reigns forever, On Canaan's happy shore." The hymn had such an infectious swing that it caught on and became quite popular, remaining in use for at least 40 years. It was just stated that it was noted by Henry Ward Beecher in 1852, and I found it in a copy I have of the 1892 edition of the Hymn Book of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. Sometime after that, the hymn faded out of use. That is, the words faded out of use and unless you are familiar with this history you probably have never heard them before now. However, the music that he wrote for this hymn is a different story. You know the music quite well.

As just indicated, William Steffe's hymn was quite popular and was sung in both South and North even after the Civil War started. In the North the 12<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts Infantry was organized in 1861 and was sent to Fort Warren. Four men in this unit formed a quartet and through this glee club the entire company learned the Methodist hymn. One of the men in the quartet, a Scottish sergeant, was one who always joined in the fun at the fort and was at times the good-natured butt of their jokes. At one point they began joking about the fact that his name,

John Brown, was the same as the great Abolitionist. When word came that the Abolitionist had been hanged, someone started writing words for a song, partly about the Abolitionist, John Brown, and at first partly in jest toward their own John Brown. The words were set to the popular tune of William Steffe's hymn that they all knew, and rather quickly the song caught on and spread out far beyond Fort Warren. With more and more verses being added, soon "John Brown's Body" was sung as a marching song by many of the Northern troops. One of the many early verses included, "We'll feed old Jeff Davis sour apples (3x) 'til he gets the diarhee." Later, in published versions, this verse was changed to, "We'll hang old Jeff Davis (3x) from a sour apple tree." The change was made since it was socially unacceptable at that time to publicly discuss, let alone sing about, diarrhea!

The 14<sup>th</sup> Regiment came to Fort Warren and, like others, learned to enjoy singing the popular song. After a short stay they were sent to a fort near Washington for a time. At this point the details of the history vary from source to source, but it was in November or December, 1861, that Julia Ward Howe, wife of Dr. Samuel Gridley Howe, a member of President Lincoln's Military Sanitary Commission, was one of a party to visit the camp of the Massachusetts soldiers. The party, apparently including President Lincoln, heard "John Brown's Body" being sung and reportedly Lincoln was impressed with the stirring tune but Mrs Howe was not very pleased with the words. Some reports say it was a friend, some say it was Mrs. Howe's minister, Rev. James Freeman Clarke, and some say it was Lincoln himself who suggested that Mrs Howe write some more appropriate words for this tune.

One source says that Mrs. Howe later reported that the following morning she, "awoke...in the gray of the early dawn, and to my astonishment found that the wished-for lines



were arranging themselves in my brain. I lay quite still until the last verse had completed itself in my thoughts, then hastily arose, saying to myself, 'I shall lose this if I don't write it down immediately.'" Most sources agree that this was in December, 1861, but her lyrics first appeared publically when they were published on the front page of the Atlantic Monthly in February of 1862. Editor James T. Fields, who had paid Mrs. Howe \$5 for the lyrics, is credited with having suggested the name for this new song, "The Battle Hymn of the Republic." It is noted that in today's version the final verse includes the phrase, "As He died to make men holy, let us live to make men free, ...," whereas Julia Ward Howe's original phrase here was, "...let us die to make men free...," much more fitting in the wartime context for which this hymn was written.

So, the song that inspired the Confederates during the war was written in the North by a Northern sympathizer and was never intended for the purpose it achieved and the song that inspired the Union during the war, and countless others since then, was to a tune written in the South that was never intended for the purpose it achieved.

There is another song which, in a certain part of the country, has also achieved a status near that of a national anthem. In fact, some residents of the home state of our new president would probably claim it as one of their national anthems. Part of the story that will be related here has previously been presented to Athenaeum in a paper, I believe, by Danny Guffey in November, 1998. Originally conceived as a folk song in early Colonial Texas history, the first recorded copy of "The Yellow Rose of Texas" was handwritten on a piece of plain paper about 1836 and is now stored in the archives at the University of Texas in Austin. Who or what was "The Yellow Rose of Texas," and what is behind the writing of this song? History, legend or folklore? This story is probably a mixture of all three. Much of this account is taken from a

report by a Mark Whitelaw who suggests historical evidence to substantiate the legend. In 1830 a wealthy entrepreneur, James Morgan, from Philadelphia migrated to Texas which was at that time a colony of Mexico. Morgan hoped to capitalize on the cheap land and business opportunities and had established partnerships with several New York speculators. He wanted to bring his 16 slaves with him but slavery was not allowed in Texas, so to get around the law he converted his slaves into 99-year indentured servants. During the next few years an effort was planned to flood Texas with non-Mexicans from the United States, and as a part of this Morgan returned to New York in 1835 to get more workers for his settlement. One of these was a twenty year old woman named Emily D. West described as, "an eastern import with extraordinary intelligence and sophistication." She was a mulatto possibly from Bermuda. According to some records, West volunteered to be indentured, probably to escape the prejudice against her mixed race, and as was the custom changed her last name to that of Morgan's. An interesting aside is with reference to the word "mulatto." The word refers to a person who is one-half Negro and one-half Caucasian, having one parent from each race. The word is from the Spanish and Portuguese word, "mulato," meaning young mule. The mule is of course, one-half horse and one-half donkey, a hybrid.

By 1836 the war for Texas' independence from Mexico was fully engaged and led by General Sam Houston. Morgan's now successful settlement, known as New Washington, was strategically located near the mouth of the San Jacinto River, and Morgan was very active in his support of the cause of Texas independence. Morgan was appointed a Colonel and in March, 1836, was sent to the Port of Galveston. When he went he left Emily West Morgan in charge of loading flatboats with supplies to feed the army. In the afternoon of April 18, 1836, General

Santa Anna had moved his Mexican troops into position to attack the Texas rebels nearby . On his way to this spot he had passed through New Washington. Most of the residents knew of his coming and had fled, but not Emily. Santa Anna saw her, was struck by her beauty, and captured her along with a young “yellow boy” named Turner. Santa Anna convinced Turner to lead his Mexican scouts to the Houston encampment, but as they were preparing to leave, Emily convinced Turner to escape from Santa Anna’s men and to rush to Houston’s camp to inform him of the Mexican general’s arrival.

General Santa Anna was quite a ladies’ man, and although he was already married to a woman in Mexico, he remarried one of his teenaged captives from his Texas campaign. However, since he had been without his most recent bride for two weeks, Emily looked like she would make a very suitable replacement. Santa Anna ordered the immediate setting up of his encampment on the plains of the San Jacinto despite protests from his colonels who insisted the location violated all principles of wartime strategy. Houston, having heard of Santa Anna’s location from Turner, moved his troops into the woods within about a mile of the general’s headquarters. On the morning of April 21, Houston climbed a tree to spy into the Mexican camp. There he saw Emily preparing a champagne breakfast for Santa Anna, and reportedly remarked, “I hope that slave girl makes him neglect his business and keeps him in bed all day.” By afternoon, the great final battle for the independence of Texas was engaged. The Mexican army was caught completely by surprise, and Santa Anna was literally caught “with his pants down.” Emily West Morgan survived the battle and made her way back to New Washington. James Morgan did not hear of the battle until he returned to New Washington two days later. When he heard the story, he made sure everyone knew of Emily’s heroism for years to come.

This is some of the report of history behind the song and here are some comments about the song itself. The lyrics tell of a black American (probably a soldier) who left his sweetheart and yearns to return to her side. "Yellow" was a term given to Americans of mixed race in those days - usually mulattos - and "Rose" was a popular feminine nineteenth century name, often used in songs and poems as a symbolic glorification of young womanhood. Thus the "Yellow Rose of Texas." One historical note says the original title of the song was, "Emily, the Maid of Morgan's Point." The original transcription of the song was poorly made and full of spelling errors and was signed only with three embellished initials. A suggestion of something about the author comes from several of the original lines including the fourth line in the chorus which infers the soldier is from Tennessee. It is reported that many men from Tennessee were in Texas during its colonization and war of independence. The original version of the song is different in places from the 1955 Mitch Miller version with which we are familiar and in fact it is reported that lyrics were changed some 25 years or so after the original because of the racial references. In the original, some of the lines that were changed included: "No other darky knows her, no darky only me...," "She's the sweetest rose of color this darky ever knew...," and "You may talk about your Dearest May, and sing of Rosa Lee, But the Yellow Rose of Texas beats the belles of Tennessee."

The following account does in one part deal with religious convictions, and while I am aware of the Athenaeum ban on religious topics, I trust the context in which this is used will make it acceptable. I hope so because here it is. John Newton was born in London, England, July 24, 1725, the son of a commander of a merchant ship which sailed the Mediterranean. His mother, a Godly woman, died when John was not quite seven years old. When he was eleven, he

went to sea with his father and made six voyages with him before his father retired. In 1744 John was impressed into service on a man-of-war, the H.M.S. Harwich. Finding conditions on board intolerable for him, he deserted but was recaptured and publicly flogged and demoted from midshipman to common seaman. His early years were, in fact, one continuous round of rebellion. At his own request he was exchanged into service on a slave ship where he worked for a period of time on the islands and mainland of the West African coast collecting slaves for sale to visiting traders. At one point he became the servant of a slave trader and was brutally abused but early in 1748 he was rescued by a sea captain who had known his father. John eventually became a captain of his own ship, one which plied the slave trade – a cruel and vicious way of life. Slave ships would make the first leg of their voyage from England nearly empty until they would anchor off the African coast. There tribal chiefs would deliver to the ships stockades full of men and women, captured in raids and wars against other tribes. Buyers would select the finest specimens, which would be bartered for weapons, ammunition, metal, liquor, trinkets, and cloth. Then the captives would be loaded aboard and packed for sailing. They were chained below decks to prevent suicides, laid side by side to save space, row after row, one after another, until the vessel was laden with as many as 600 units of human cargo. Captains would then seek a fast voyage across the Atlantic's infamous "middle passage," hoping to preserve as much of their cargo as possible, yet mortality sometimes ran 20% or higher. When an outbreak of smallpox or dysentery occurred, the stricken were cast overboard. Once they arrived in the New World, blacks were traded for sugar and molasses to manufacture rum, which the ships would carry to England for the final leg of their "triangle trade." John Newton made several such journeys.

In 1748, while on a voyage, John found on board ship a copy of the book, "Imitation of

Christ,” by Thomas a Kempis – a book that is still printed today as a religious classic. Reading in this book began to sow some seeds for changes in thought for John. He was on the way back to England when his ship encountered a violent storm, and while attempting to steer the ship through the storm, he experienced what he later referred to as his “great deliverance.” He recorded in his journal that when all seemed lost and the ship would surely sink, he exclaimed, “Lord, have mercy upon us.” Later in his cabin he reflected on what he had said and began to believe that God had addressed him through the storm and that grace had begun to work for him. He continued in the slave trade for a time after his conversion, but saw to it that the slaves under his care were treated more humanely.

In 1750 John married Mary Catlett, with whom he had been in love for many years. By 1755, after a serious illness, he had given up seafaring forever. During his latter days as a sailor he had begun to educate himself, teaching himself Latin, among other subjects. From 1755 to 1760 Newton was a surveyor of tides at Liverpool, where he came to know George Whitefield, deacon in the Church of England, evangelistic preacher, and leader of the Calvinistic Methodist Church. Newton became Whitefield’s enthusiastic disciple. During this period Newton also met and came to admire John Wesley, founder of Methodism. Newton’s self-education continued, and he learned Greek and Hebrew. He then decided to become a minister, and after considerable persistence, was ordained. Newton was extremely popular as a minister, and during his ministry wrote literally hundreds of hymns. One of his hymns reflected on his past notorious life and his remembrance of his conversion, and became one of the best loved hymns of all time. It is a hymn that you hear in all walks of life today. By now, I’m sure you know what the hymn is. “Amazing grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me! I once was lost, but now am found, was

blind, but now I see.”

My choice for the last of the songs I will review was based partly on the enthusiasm associated with the recent Summer Olympics and partly on my fascination with “The Land Down Under.” I recall that in my early youth when I was attending church youth groups, church camps, and scout activities, one of the many songs we learned had a very catchy tune and it was one that I often found myself singing. However, it was one of those songs that was memorized without having the foggiest notion of what the words meant. I always thought it had something to do with some guy dancing with his girlfriend, but with no idea about what the rest of the words meant. After hearing some explanation during the Olympics and later doing some research for this paper I found out that one of my old favorites of long ago has quite a different story to tell than I had imagined. “Waltzing Matilda” is not a story about a dance after all.

To understand the story behind this song it is necessary to look at one or two factors in the history of Australia. Aside from the native Aborigines, Australia was initially colonized by convicts sentenced to “transportation” from England, often for trivial property offences. One author suggests that ever since then, Australians have been suspicious of authority, and cynical about the pomposity and hypocrisy of the judicial and police systems. As the land was settled there was at first little or no authority and the people “squatted” on patches of land, grazed their animals, grew their crops and built their houses and fences. In time, as authority arrived it generally accepted the claims of whoever was in apparent possession of the land, and in good quality grazing country “squatters” became very well off, and the authorities worked with them to maintain law and order. To non-land-owners, squatters were an object of much resentment.

Another factor took place during the 1800's when sheep shearers would travel over the

country, following the shearing season. They would shear millions of sheep, at times enduring appalling conditions but performing their back-breaking task with a sense of wit and humor. These were the men who formed the term “mateship,” and through their unity and trust bonded together to form unions in the 1890's. It is said that Australia owes these men a great debt, since without their unshakable resolve, Australia would have been burdened by British class distinctions. A series of significant and violent events that are representative of the 1894 Shearers Strike, were very significant in the breaking down of class distinctions and social privilege.

Now, about the song. A.B. Patterson, born in 1864, was a lawyer by profession who reached a point in his life where he became very concerned about the plight of the smaller property-holders and other underdogs of the bush and city life. He wrote political pamphlets and articles supporting his views and wrote at least one ballad. It was during the Shearers Strike of 1894-95 that Patterson was traveling with his fiancée, Sarah Riley, and they visited the Dagworth Homestead, a station in outback Queensland owned by the family of one of Sarah's school friends, Christina Macpherson. While there, in January, 1895, Patterson heard Christina play a tune called, “Craigielee,” a march arrangement of a Scottish ballad. She had heard the tune several months earlier and was playing it from memory. Patterson liked the tune and indicated that he wanted to write some words for it. There are several accounts of possible detailed events that prompted the story that he wrote but it appears that it was another attempt to express his empathy for the less fortunate – in this case more specifically the shearers who had been on strike with many of them out searching for work. “Waltzing Matilda,” then, was not a frivolous ditty, but a ballad based on serious social and political significance.



Even with all this background it is not possible to understand the song without an explanation of many of the words in it. As suggested earlier, "Waltzing," though spelled the same, in this case has nothing to do with dancing. It is derived from the German term "auf der walz" meaning "to go on the walz" or "on the tramp." The expression referred to the custom where an apprentice in various trades or crafts, was required to serve an allotted period traveling around the country or outside Germany gaining experience and new techniques for their trade. The word, "Matilda," comes from Teutonic origin meaning, "Mighty Battle Maiden." Then through the years the name was given to the females that followed the soldiers in the thirty year European war. These "Matildas" that followed the soldiers would "keep them warm" at night, so the word was eventually used to describe the grey army coats that the soldiers wore or the blankets the soldiers wrapped themselves with. These were rolled into a "swag" tossed over their shoulder while marching. These terms and their usage apparently came across to Australia with the German settlers. There the phrase, "Waltzing Matilda," came to mean to go walking about looking for a job with your tools of trade and the things that kept you warm at night. "Swagmen" is the term that was used in Australia to indicate the shearers who traveled from place to place in search of work, carrying their belongings on their back wrapped in a blanket or cloth.

Other words in the song include, "billabong," an Aboriginal word for a section of still water adjacent to a river, cut off by a change in the watercourse, and "billy", a tin can, perhaps four pints in capacity, usually with a wire handle attached to the top rim, in which the swagmen boiled water or other things. "Coolibah tree," a particular kind of eucalyptus that grows beside billabongs. "Jumbuck," a sheep. It is suggested in one dictionary that the term is an Aboriginal corruption of, "jump up," or possibly is from the Aboriginal word, "jombok," referring to white

fluffy clouds which the sheep reminded them of. "Squatter," the more wealthy land owner referred to earlier. "Troopers," a cavalry soldier, or perhaps a mounted militia-man or policeman. "Tucker-bag," a bag to keep tucker in, tucker being grub or food.

Finally, with all this in mind, let me put it all together with a reminder of the song itself. Three versions are mentioned by one author, with Patterson's original version written in 1895, another version written about 1900 and a third version written by Marie Cowan in 1903. There is very little difference in the wording of the three versions with the 1903 version being the most popular version today and is the one quoted here. I will read the chorus only one time following the first verse.

"Once a jolly swagman camped by a billabong - Under the shade of a Coolibal tree - And he sang as he watched and waited till his billy boiled - You'll come a-waltzing Matilda with me."  
(The original version had, "Who'll come a-waltzing Matilda with me?")

"Waltzing Matilda, Waltzing Matilda - You'll come a-waltzing Matilda with me - And he sang as he watched and waited till his billy boiled - You'll come a-waltzing Matilda with me."

"Down came a jumbuck to drink at that billabong - Up jumped the swagman and grabbed him with glee - And he sang as he shoved that jumbuck in his tuckerbag - You'll come a-waltzing Matilda with me."

"Up rode the squatter mounted on his thoroughbred - Down came troopers one two three- Whose that jumbuck you've got in the tuckerbag? - You'll come a-waltzing Matilda with me."

"Up jumped the swagman and sprang into the billabong - You'll never catch me alive said he - And his ghost may be heard as you pass by that billabong - You'll come a-waltzing Matilda with me."

So the shearer (later seen as heroes by many Australians) was caught taking a sheep, and rather than being taken in by the squatter and the authorities, jumped into the water where he drowned (accidentally ??). Perhaps the feelings about the contribution the shearers made to Australian society, and the history of many Australians not liking authority both contributed to the great popularity of this song. “Waltzing Matilda” is truly a national song in Australia. It is interesting to note that when the Australian national anthem was selected in 1974, “Waltzing Matilda” was in second place with “Advance Australia Fair” being the winner.

I hope that perhaps now when you hear, or sing, one of the songs that have been reviewed here, you will remember the story behind it and how it came to us as we know it today, and I hope that this will make the song even more enjoyable. Also, if for any reason you did not like this paper, just be thankful that I did not try to sing each of the songs!