

The Ballad of the Shoemaker Family

(The Overflow of the Cowlitz)

words & music by Miss Angie Magill

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The memory of loved ones lost in our waters has filled many an eye with tears at the singing of this song. I learned it from a Mossyrock resident, Beef Williams, who sang it simply and beautifully, as it should be sung. The ballad is one of the few original unpublished songs I've found from around the turn of the century, and was widely sung around the Mossyrock area where the tragic event occurred. Several versions have been recovered from the memories of local people, although none can remember the full 26 verses the song was rumored to have originally contained. Thanks to Beef, Curt Lydic who gave me the words, the Lewis County Historical Society who provided other versions and background information, and Martha Fleming who wrote out the tune.

The musical score is written on four staves in treble clef, 3/4 time. The melody is simple and folk-like. The lyrics are written in a cursive script below the notes. Chord symbols (C, F, G7) are placed above the notes. The piece ends with a double bar line and repeat signs.

*Twas on a cold No-ven-ber day when the
wind was 'round the side, When we
heard the dread-ful news of a fam-ily
lost in the tide.*

The warm winds on the Mount Rainier had melted off the snow,
And this had raised a neighboring stream and caused an overflow.

A family living near the banks, not dreaming of the fear,
Were startled by the crashing waves that were coming now so near.

No doubt the father's loving heart was filled with a noble thought,
Of a way to save his family dear from the horror the storm had brought.

He first secured some cedar boards, and hurriedly made a raft,
And quickly putting his family on, dashed down upon the craft.

A father's love for his family, he tried to save them all,
His lifeboat soon began to sink, and his hopes began to fall.

The father from the raft did leap, and tried in vain to hold,
The floating boards of a drifting craft, as the water dashed 'round
so cold.

The family parted here, in grief, and when the night came ... none
But the father was left alive, to bear his grief alone.

A darling wife and four dear sons, a daughter brave and true,
Were lying now in the vail of death, but where they were, who knew?

The mother was found on a bed of sand, one son had washed ashore,
The daughter lodged upon a drift, and three they saw no more.

Oh, for that blessed and glorious time, when pain and sorrow is o'er,
And the sting of death shall never be felt, on that bright celestial
shore.