

The De-Grading Tale of 1970

words by Paddy Graber

music: Irish traditional "The Holy Ground"

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Paddy Graber is a delightful character with more songs in his hip pocket than anyone I know. His introduction follows:

This is a song that crosses back and forth from Canadian Territory to American Territory . . . a true account as printed in the (Vancouver) Sun newspaper. We have very, very few local folk heroes, and I'm sure this particular character is bound to become one.

Paddy Graber, Vancouver, B.C.

Oh, the yarn I'm goin' to spin you oc-
curred in the month of June, The twenty-second
was the date, and it end-ed 'round a-bout noon. Its a
bout a grader o-per-a-tor, by now you know him
well. He lives in beau-ti-ful B.C. and his
name is Er-nest As-tells.

The musical score is written in treble clef with a key signature of three sharps (F#, C#, G#) and a 4/4 time signature. The melody is simple and folk-like. Chords are indicated by letters A, E7, and D above the notes. The lyrics are written in a cursive, handwritten style below the notes. The piece ends with a double bar line.

If a man he works for another, he's entitled to his pay,
And that money should be paid to him without too much delay,
Oh, but if he cannot get it, and he takes back what he's done,
With private property involved, you can bet it'll cause some fun!

Astells climbed on his grader, and kissed his wife goodbye.
The sun shone bright and clearly, no cloud was in the sky.
"I'm going to Point Roberts for money that's owed to me,
And when I get it in my fist, I'll return to beautiful B.C."

"Oh the job was grade mixed paving in a place near Boundary Bay,
\$680.00 was the price I asked, but Sopow would not pay.
Three times I've asked him for it on his Cedar Point estate,
And every time I talk to him, he said I'd have to wait."

When Astells, he crossed the border, Sopow was waiting there,
"Not one dollar will I pay 'til the job's done fair and square."
"I have grade mixed your paving, and for that I will be paid,
I want my money right away, or again I'll use my blade."

A car bore down upon him with vigilante men,
The deputies they came that way with charge sheet and with pen.
Oh they worked for law and order, with pistols and with mace,
And to have a Cannuck flout their law was a down-right disgrace.

They tried to break his windshield with a 3-foot iron bar,
The deputy drove in too close, and the blade ripped in their car.
Astells revved up his grader, and then he dropped his blade,
And zig-zagged up that new black top, what a hell of a mess he made!

When Astells set out for the border, vigilantes had their fun.
They chased that grader up the street, and they blazed with every gun.
Yes, with pistol and with shot guns, they fired a fusilade,
And in that chase at 30 miles per hour - what a valiant team they made!

For three miles they chased that grader, firing all the way.
They really showed that wild Cannuck that crime it did not pay.
Oh, these men of law and order from the land of the brave and free,
They just ignored our border point, and dashed on into B.C.

Astells, he stopped his grader at the foot of a long hill,
The posse bore right down on him intent to make their kill.
With their guns and pistols waving, they kept on milling 'round,
But safely locked inside his cab, bravely he stood his ground.

A mountie came from Delta, and set our hero free,
How nice it was to be again in beautiful B.C.
Where a man can drive his grader all the livelong day,
And if he lives 'til the end of the job, he can always spend his pay.