



Till the Lordly Hudson Seaward

Though I did win a second place ping pong ribbon in 8th grade, which I've probably bragged about in previous Whither Zithers, I've never been much of a sports guy, nor much of a school spirit guy.

But I have to admit I watch the occasional Packer game. My wife Kristi and I were watching one today as a matter of fact (Packers 37, Dallas 36), and I asked her a question that everyone in Wisconsin knows the answer to except us: Do the Packers have a *fight song*? I Googled and found that they do indeed. It's called **Gnaw Out Their Guts**. No it isn't; I'm kidding. It's **Tote Thy Spheroid Spritely**. Kid-ding again. It's **Go, You Packers, Go**.

This had me thinking about the fight song in general and the yang to its yin, the school song or as it's often called, the alma mater ("nourishing mother"). I suppose the true flip side of a fight song should be a *flight* song (*Cower, tremble, timid be; Flee, oh Grey Squirrels, up the tree*). But it's usually a lofty vintage-styled and romanticized lyric about school pride and honor and such spirited but vague emotions. I remember only a few of the school songs of my youth in Appleton WI, the earliest being the first two lines from Franklin Elementary's anthem:

Take off your hats to Franklin
Where safety is a rule...

That's all I remember. Then came Roosevelt Junior High, whose song I do not remember at all, if there was one. Those were the dark years of pimples and braces. I must have sub-consciously decided not to memorize any song commemorating those dismal days. Then came Appleton High, with not one but at least TWO songs that I recall; I must have been feeling a little better. I think this first one was as close as they came to having a fight song, pretty mild even though the team was called the Terrors and had

as a logo the face of a devil. And note that oddly it features another mention of removing hats, just like the Franklin Elementary song:

*Appleton, our hats off to thee,
To our colors true we will ever be
Firm and strong, united are we,
Rah, rah, rah for Appleton,
Rah, rah, rah for Appleton,
Rah for our dear old high*

Then there was the school song:

*In the rolling river valley,
Where the Fox flows by,
A famous highschool rears the banner
Appleton on high (etc)*

CHORUS:
*Sing her praises through the valley
Send them ringing on,
Do great deeds for Alma Mater
Splendid Appleton*

As it turns out, this song is based on and uses the same melody as the alma mater of Cornell College in Ithaca NY. Appleton's is a valley song, Cornell's is a hill song. My music partner Lou and I have played on the Cornell campus, and it is indeed on a hill with a lovely view of Ithaca:

*Far above the busy humming
Of the bustling town,
Reared against the arch of heaven,
Looks she proudly down (etc.)*

CHORUS:
*Lift the chorus, speed it onward,
Loud her praises tell;
Hail to thee, our alma mater!
Hail, all hail, Cornell!*

According to Cornell's FAQ, Cornell's anthem was the first of many school songs to come, all based on the melody of a song called **Annie Lisle**, written in Boston by H.S. Thompson in the late 1850s, about a dying woman, a subject popular back then for some weird reason (see half of Steven Foster's songs). Another of Thompson's dying woman songs, **Down by the River Liv'd a Maiden**, is believed to have been the inspiration for **Oh My Darling Clementine**.

In an incomplete list, Wikipedia shows dozens and dozens of schools and universities whose official songs use the **Annie Lisle** melody. I say "in-

complete" because Appleton Sr. High isn't mentioned, though Ripon College is. Anyway, here are some of the original **Annie Lisle** lyrics. If any of your schools had a song, you probably already know the tune:

*Sweet came the hallow'd chiming
Of the Sabbath bell,
Borne on the morning breezes
Down the woody dell*

*On a bed of pain and anguish
Lay dear Annie Lisle,
Chang'd were the lovely features,
Gone the happy smile (etc.)*

CHORUS:
*Wave willows, murmur waters,
Golden sunbeams, smile!
Earthy music cannot waken
Lovely Annie Lisle.*

The melody of **Annie Lisle**, and the style of language, is the template for school songs of pimpled and braced ping pongers the world over. And I love the strange phony-archaic language stylings. Here are snippets:

*Till the lordly Hudson seaward
Cease to roll his heaving tide,
Stand, Columbia! Alma Mater
Through the storms of Time abide
(Columbia)*

—
*Every student, man and maiden,
Swells the glad refrain,
Till the breezes music laden,
Waft it back again
(U of Missouri)*

—
*Whenever we're put to the test
We'll remember our spirits grand
Instructing, persuading and guiding
Throughout our Dixie Land
(Dixie State College)*

—
*Stuyvesant High School now and ever
Deep graven on each heart.
Shall be found unwavering true
When from life we part.
(Stuyvesant High School)*

So there you go. Countless other examples can be found online. I am fighting the urge to go back and write school songs more in line with my unfair memories of such institutions, but they'll have to wait for my next series, **Whither Zither: The Dark Side**.