

The Navvies on the Canal

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chorus: Huzzah! Ye Navvies! We dug this Big Ditch
 From Toledo to the Ohio River
 With laborer's wages we'd never get rich
 But our work will love on forever.

I'm Paddy O'Rourck. From Dublin I came To dig this canal in Ohio.
There were thousands just like me. We were promised good pay
And a better life on the morrow.

 What we found was a place called the Great Black Swamp
 T'was land like I'd ne'er seen before.
 A thick cover of forest. The ground wet or damp
 In the shadow of the Maumee River.

We slogged through the swamp with shovels and picks
The wheelbarrows hauled the muck out.
My back was sore from the heavy digging
And wet soil ate leather from my boots.

 Every day we toiled for a thirty cent wage
 And a jigger of whiskey to drink
 When we asked about payday, the boss said, "Next week"
 And he said it with a wink.

We lived in small shanties in the worker's camp
We dug from sunup to sundown.
Mosquitoes brought death in the heat and the damp
And burials made the canal sacred ground.

 When our work on the canal was over and done
 And mules pulled canal boats along.
 We saw pioneers and villages that made our country strong
 And saw the progress our hard work had won.