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## The Picnic at Groshaut

Art Cahill

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Song: "The Picnic at Groshaut"

Singer: Art Cahill

Town: Groshaut, PEI

NA 68.2 CD 121 Track 11

Collector: Sandy Ives

Date: 1 April 1968

Roud: 12483

In *Drive Dull Care Away: Folksongs from Prince Edward Island*, Sandy Ives wrote, "This is one of those local songs you have to know something about ahead of time before it makes much sense, and the singing of it will almost always lead to comment on what really happened. In brief, then, outdoor 'tea parties' or picnics were common [Prince Edward] Island fund-raising events a hundred years ago, and great effort went into the preparations. There were booths for games, rides for children, and women set up tables where they politely hawked their specialties (floating island, chocolate cakes, whatever), while over it all was the constant sound of fiddle and pipe – sometimes even a band or two. Strong drink was ritually forbidden, but it could usually be found, if not on the grounds at least conveniently close by off them. Father Walker felt he could solve that problem by providing plenty of cider, and he managed to purchase a supply at a bargain rate.

The great day dawned lowery, but preparations went ahead until the rain came and forced postponement until the next day. But those who were there thought it too bad not to have a glass of cider before going home, so they broached a keg, only to discover that a wonderful mistake had been made. Father Walker's bargain turned out to be hard cider! Soon the rain moved off, people began arriving, and it wasn't long before the good Father had a real donnybrook on his hands. After it was all over and everyone had been sent home, he carefully and heavily watered what remained in the kegs, and the next day everything was sober and uneventful."

The recording heard here was the same version transcribed for *Drive Dull Care Away*, and if you listen closely, you may notice that Cahill used the tune for stanza 1 only once again (in stanza 7), and for all the rest used the tune for stanza 2. "**The Picnic at Groshaut**" was written by Lawrence Doyle, a native of PEI who wrote many songs about events in that Province.

1.

Oh, come listen to my song for it won't delay you long,  
'Bout what happened here a month or two ago;  
And I'm doubtful if my rhyme will do justice to the time  
That was held upon the tea grounds at Groshaut.

2.

The morning dawned upon us and the rain came down in torrents  
And the tables set so neatly in a row;  
And the ladies all prepared to do business on the square  
And to make the tea a credit to Groshaut.

3.

Another day we'll borrow, let the tea come off tomorrow  
And it's merry altogether we will go;  
And the violin sweetly droned and the cider barrel groaned  
Just the day before the tea was at Groshaut.

4.

About noon it turned fine and the sun began to shine,  
What was done was for the best you all well know;  
If it wasn't a success, 'twas a frolic none the less  
And 'twas time to have a picnic at Groshaut.

5.

There was scuffles through the crowd and the noise was rather loud,  
'Twas from jolting one another to and fro;  
And old men with foreheads bare threw their dusters in the air  
Wanting someone for to fight them at Groshaut.

6.

The boys and girls were dancing and the older ones a-prancing  
While the cider in their goblets did o'er flow;  
And they stepped so high and light, like a hen would in the night,  
'Twas a funny time that evening at Groshaut.

7.

It may rise the price of shirts but there's no one badly hurt,  
And I hope there's no ill feelings to bestow;  
There were picnics held before, a little nearer to the shore  
And they might be called twin brothers to Groshaut.

8.

See how Noah was respected, in the ark he was elected  
And from grapes he caused the richest wine to flow;  
When he made the wine, you see, he got as drunk as drunk could be,  
Just as drunk as any man was at Groshaut.

9.

Perhaps it was a shame but there's no one for to blame,  
'Twas nothing but an accident, you know;  
'Twas continued the next day but the spirit died away  
And the cider changed to water at Groshaut.

10.

So now the tea is over and the boys again are sober  
And they'll always taste the cider for to know;  
If it's hard they'll take it light, and if it's soft they'll leave it quite,  
But they'll not forget the tea was at Groshaut.

Source: Ives, Edward D. *Drive Dull Care Away: Folksongs From Prince Edward Island*. Charlottetown, PEI:

Institute of Island Studies, 1999, 177-180.

Maine Folklife Center