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## Story of Seth Noble and the Naming of Bangor, and Several Performances of the Hymn

WLBZ Radio

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**University of Maine Raymond H. Fogler Library Special Collections Department**

Transcript of a sound recording in MS 608, WLBZ Radio Station Records, Bangor, Maine, 1931-1973

Title: The Story of Seth Noble and the Naming of Bangor and Performances of the Hymn

Date: August 20, 1956

Recording number: Tape 14

Length of recording: 21:44

[Transcript begins]

FORD: This is Paul Ford speaking from the studios of WLBZ in Bangor, Maine. We have recently completed a recording of the hymn for which our city was named, the hymn *Bangor*. And this is the first time since the name was incorporated in 1791 that the words and the music of this lugubrious old hymn have been recorded. At the organ console of the historical symphony house here in Bangor, Maine, you're hearing Mrs. Oaksman Smiley as she renders this old hymn. We will hear from Mrs. Smiley later in the program but now to give us a bit of the background of this old Welsh melody is the Minister of the Hammond Street Congregational Church here in Bangor, the Reverend Edward G. Ernst.

[Music]

ERNST: In the year 1790, Maine was still a district of Massachusetts. In May of that year the officials of the Plantation of Kenduskeag sent the Reverend Seth Noble to Boston as their representative. His instructions were to petition the General Court for incorporating the settlement under the name of Sunbury. While waiting in the outer office to be summoned before the court, the Reverend Noble sat on one of the waiting benches meditating. As the crawling minutes turned into quarter hours, he was singing unconsciously to himself. It was an old Welsh melody to which the words of a hymn had been set. Suddenly his reverie was shattered. He was snapped into reality by the acerbic question of a clerk who demanded the name. Reverend Noble hurdled so suddenly from abstraction to reality, was momentarily confused. Believing that the clerk had asked him the name of the hymn, the clergyman replied oh, that's Bangor, yes Bangor. The clerk entered the name Bangor on the document. By the time Mr. Noble realized that he had misinterpreted the question, the clerk had disappeared into the inner office. Thus it was that when Mr. Noble was summoned, he learned that the name Bangor had progressed too far into the labyrinth of legislation to warrant its rescission. Therefore on February 25th 1791, the settlement was officially named not Sunbury, as the town fathers had intended but Bangor.

Today there are a few who know this old hymn. There are fewer who know the music which coupled with a clerk's abruptness and a minister's disconcertion resulted in our city's being named Bangor rather than Sudbury. It is hoped that this presentation will stimulate interest in this long forgotten and neglected hymn.

FORD: Thank you, Mr. Ernst, for that very interesting account of how Bangor was named. I understand that that story is a compilation of several legends. Now we here at WLBZ have asked several singers to

render this historical hymn, and our first soloist is Mrs. Lester Knapp. She is accompanied by Mrs. Mary Rowe.

[Music, and vocalist sings the following lyrics.]

Hark! from the tombs a doleful sound;  
My ears, attend the cry;  
“Ye living men, come view the ground  
Where you must shortly lie.

Princes, this clay must be your bed,  
In spite of all your towers;  
The tall, the wise, the reverent head  
Must lie as low as ours!

Great God! is this our certain doom?  
And are we still secure?  
Still walking downward to our tomb,  
And yet prepare no more?

Grant us the powers of quickening grace,  
To fit our souls to fly,  
Then, when we drop this dying flesh,  
We’ll rise above the sky.  
Amen.

FORD: From the studios of WLBZ in Bangor, Maine, we are presenting several soloists who are interpreting the historical hymn Bangor for which our city was named. We are very honored now to present two well-known Bangor artists who will render this old number Mr. William J. Cuppe, baritone, accompanied by Harold G. Anise.

[Music]

FORD: Hark from the tomb, a doleful sound, the opening words of the hymn Bangor and that him Bangor is presented now as a tenor solo by Mr. Rodney Shane and he is accompanied at the studio organ by Mrs. Oaksman Smiley.

[Music]

FORD: From the Historic Symphony House here on Union Street here in Bangor we now present an organ solo of Bangor. Mrs. Oaksman Smiley is at the console.

[Music]

FORD: You are listening to a rare recorded version of the hymn Bangor as it is being interpreted by Mrs. Oaksman Smiley at the console of the historical Old Symphony House organ. We now return to the Symphony House for the rendition of Bangor as interpreted in a different manner by Mrs. Smiley. Mrs. Smiley.

[Music]

FORD: The hymn Bangor is being rendered next by Mrs. Helen Spearing Leonard, contralto. She is accompanied at the piano by Mrs. Barbara Kingsbury Pulk.

[Music]

FORD: The hymn Bangor has just been rendered by Mrs. Helen Spearing Leonard contralto and Mrs. Leonard was accompanied at the piano by Mrs. Barbara Kingsbury Pulk. This brings to a conclusion the various interpretations of the hymn Bangor. Paul Ford speaking this is WLBZ Bangor Maine August 20th 1956.

[Transcript ends]

For more information about this transcript, audio recording, or other materials in Special Collections at the University of Maine, contact:

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