

Red River Valley

Traditional North American folk song (with versions in at least five Canadian provinces before 1896)

*G*⁶ *D*^{7sus4} *C* *G*⁶ *C*

From this valley they say you are going,

C *C*^(F) *C*^{add11} *C* *G*^{add#11}

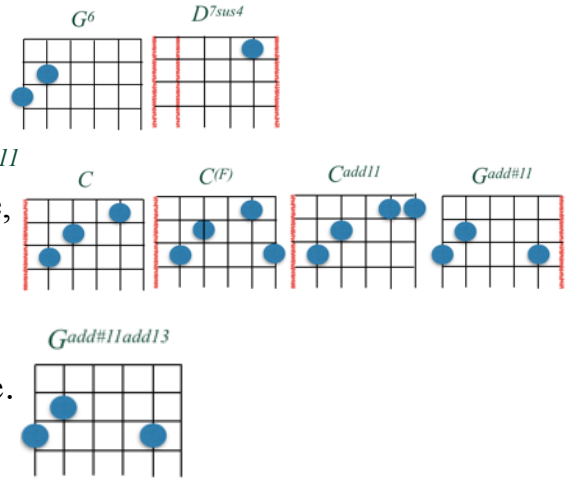
We will miss your bright eyes and sweet smile,

C *C*⁷ *F* *D*^m

For they say you are taking the sunshine,

*G*⁷ *G*^{add#11} *G*^{add#11add13} *C*

That has brightened our path - - ways awhile.



CHORUS

Come and sit by my side, if you love me.

Do not hasten to bid me adieu.

Just remember the Red River Valley,

And the cowboy who loved you so true.

I've been thinking a long time, my darling,

Of the sweet words you never would say.

Now, alas, must my fond hopes all vanish,

For they say you are going away.

Do you think of the valley you're leaving.

O how lonely and how dreary it will be,

And do you think of the kind hearts you're breaking,

And the pain you are causing to me.

CHORUS

They will bury me where you have wandered,

Near the hills where the daffodils grow.

When you're gone from the Red River Valley,

For I can't live without you I know.

History

"Red River Valley" is a folk and cowboy song standard of uncertain origins that has gone by different names ("Cowboy Love Song", "Bright Sherman Valley", "Bright Laurel Valley", "In the Bright Mohawk Valley", and "Bright Little Valley"), depending on where it has been sung. It is listed as Roud Folk Song Index 756 and by Edith Fowke as FO13.

Edith Fowke offers anecdotal evidence that the song was known in at least five Canadian provinces before 1896. This finding led to speculation that the song was composed at the time of the 1870 Wolseley Expedition to Manitoba's northern Red River Valley. It expresses the sorrow of a local woman (possibly a Métis) as her soldier lover prepares to return to the east.

The earliest known written manuscript of the lyrics, titled "The Red River Valley", bears the notations "Nemaha 1879" and "Harlan 1885." Nemaha and Harlan are the names of counties in Nebraska, and are also the names of towns in Iowa.

The song appears in sheet music, titled "In the Bright Mohawk Valley", printed in New York in 1896 with James J. Kerrigan as the writer. The tune and lyrics were collected and published in Carl Sandburg's 1927 American Songbag.

Jules Verne Allen, an early singing cowboy from Texas, recorded it as "Cowboy's Love Song" (Victor 40167, March 28, 1929). That recording gave the song its greatest popularity. Allen himself thought the song was from Pennsylvania, perhaps brought over from Europe.

Wikipedia

