



KelticDead Music

Stories, Tunes and Songs in the Traditions of our Celtic Dead

To the Four Ayrts to Guide Us, and
For the Four Winds to Get Us There!

The mission of the **KelticDead Music** initiative is to find tunes and songs from around the world that have Celtic, Folk, World, Americana, and Seafaring origins, and arrange them into simple sheet music formats for folk musicians to use and share. In addition, the KDM initiative provides the in-depth stories with possible lyrics that follow the video-based, **KDM Broadside**s for a more complete music-education experience.



KelticDead Music Broadside

*All the selections and sheet music content provided in the **KelticDead Music** initiative are from traditional, made-public, made-public with credits, or cited credits where applicable. This material content is the personal interpretations of the subject and provided by **Patrick O-Shaun Young, KelticDead Music**.*

Lily of the West

The melody of this folk song originally evolved from an Americana based song known as “**Banks of the Pontchartrain**” (also known as “**Lakes of the Pontchartrain**”). The Pontchartrain lake in Louisiana was central to a lot of trade with Great Britain in around the 1820s, and the American tune probably came from a time when the railroad line was created. That railroad went around the lake and connected New Orleans with Jacksonville, Florida starting in around the 1840s-60s.

The Banks of the Pontchartrain song concerned a man (probably a traveling Scotsman) who was befriended by a Creole girl, and he fell in love with her. Unfortunately, she was betrothed to marry a sailor who was far out at sea. He accepted that, but he always remembered her beauty and her kindness throughout his life.



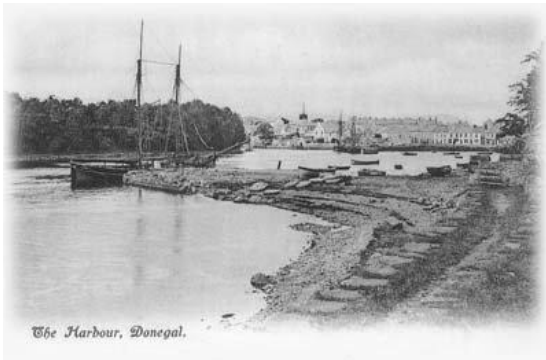
A made public painting image by Daniel Eckridge of a girl watching a ship sail off across the ocean.

The sailors took the folk song back with them to parts in Great Britain, and like with many folk tunes and songs, they changed the song into several versions where the girl was beautiful, but fickle, and she betrayed the love of the man by seeing someone else on the sly.

This version, now called “**Lily of the West**” or “**Molly O**,” was a song about betrayal, jealousy and murder.

Lily of the West

When first, I came to “Donegal” Some pleasure there to find,
I met a maid, so rare and fine, So pleasing to my mind,
Her rosy cheeks; her ruby lips, Like arrows pierced my breasts,
The name she bore was Molly-O, The lily of the West.



A made public image of Donegal Harbor in the 1850s.

As mentioned, the Lily of the West song became popular throughout the British Isles, but depending upon the local, the lyrics changed to adapt to the bias and opinions of the communities.

This lyric variant centered upon the communities found in Donegal county. The name “Don-e-gal” fits nicely with the three-beat phrase. Other variants used “Ireland” in general, but also fitted into the song as a three-syllable.

I courted lovely Molly-O, that cailin soft and fine.
But then, she met with another man, which sorely stressed my mind.
She robbed me of my liberty, Deprived me of my rest.
Then go my lovely Molly-O, The lily of the West.

He met her in a shady grove, This man of high degree.
I spied this fancy English lord conversing with my love.
She told me he was JUST a friend, while I was sore oppressed.
Betrayed was I by Molly-O, The lily of the West.

This lyric version used the vernacular of many in Donegal. The word, “cailin” means young girl.

She was also fickle and betrayed the man’s love by meeting another suitor who she felt offered a better life for her. The man also happened to be an English “Lord” with whom many in the county Donegal in that time were believed to be outsiders. Most in Donegal were Ulster-Scots and not English.



Made public image of painting by Brožík Vaclav (Czech, 1851 – 1901).

Lily of the West

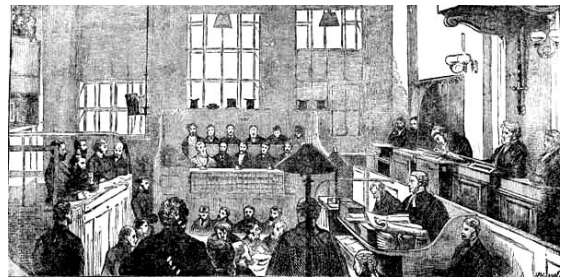
I stepped up to my rival, A dagger .. in my hand.
I seized him by the collar, And boldly bade him stand.
So being mad within my rage, I stabbed him in the chest.
Deceived was I by Molly-O, The lily of the West.

I then did shortly stand my trial. It was a waste of breath,
And only through court's mercy, I fled from certain death.
And though she swore my life away, my life is still a mess.
I love that faithless Molly-O, The lily of the West.



In this ballad, the man was overcome with jealousy. So much so, that he became enraged, and in his madness, he stabbed the English Lord in the chest and was promptly captured to stand trial for murder.

Several versions of the song implied that it was a "clerical error" that allowed him to escape death, while in other versions the judge offered him mercy, as Molly O was somehow to blame for the poor man's condition.



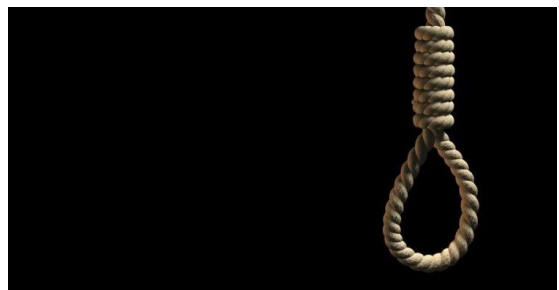
Other added lyrics can be found where the man spent his years afterwards traveling throughout Ireland singing the ballad as a way of warning others.



A non-descript painting of a young maiden, Molly O.

The ballad eventually made its way back into America into Kentucky in 1891 as a folk song known as "**Flora**." It had very similar lyrics and even the name, "Molly O" was used.

However, the difference was that the young man was convicted of his crime and sang the song before being hung. Other versions of "Flora" had him rotting in his prison cell.



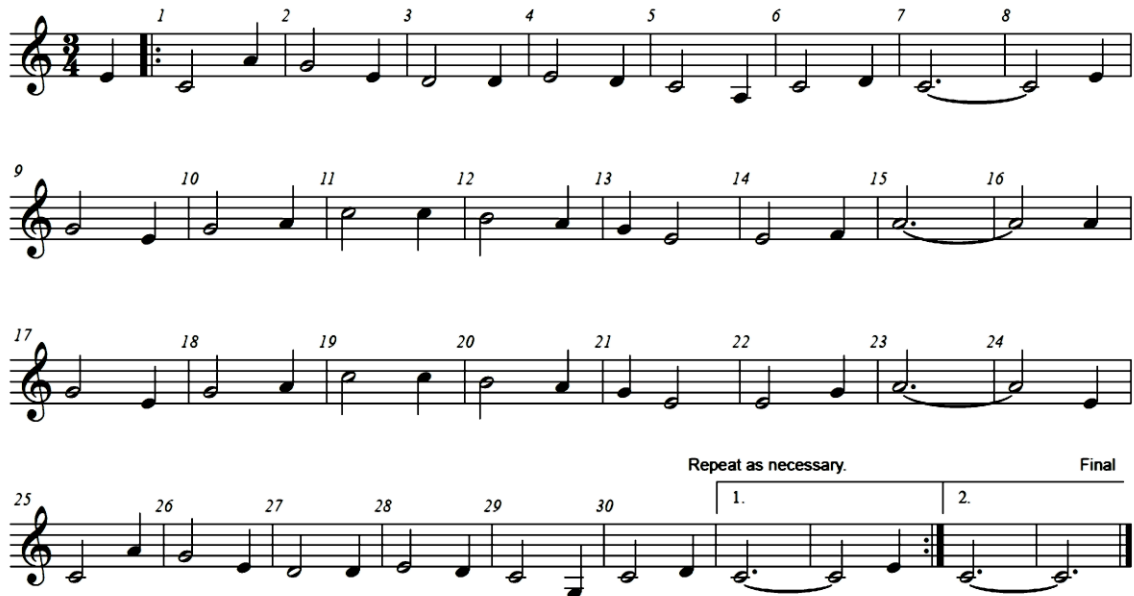
Lily of the West

Also known as "Molly-O" and "Flora"

Arrangement by KelticDead Music

Americana-Sea Faring

Irish Infusion



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kuqqmTexWlw>

The melody is keyed in C Major to provide a deeper voice. It can be played slow or at a moderate rate to allow for the rich emotion conveyed in the story.

Linda King brought this melody in with her guitar along with my playing in the background with the low-octave, Irish-tuned, Bouzouki. I joined into the selection with my voice with the lyrics in this broadsided and used my Kerry, Messo-C whistle with my bouzouki and Linda's guitar.

At the second verse, **Earnie Taft** joined into the mix with his fiddle as a blend of alternating melody and harmony. I added an MK1 Low C whistle in the middle instrument part and at the end of the selection. My bodhran gave the tune a heartbeat feel about it.

Visit <https://www.reverbNation.com/kelticdead2> for a growing list of KDM audio and video broadsides.



Shaun,
That KelticDead Guy
Patrick O. Young

KelticDead Music Initiative

is a private, on-line music-education initiative. All the music projects are recorded with live, acoustic instruments and performed in accordance with simplified sheet music arranged in eight bar formats (whenever possible) in accordance with the guidelines that are within the Celtic music traditions. For more music videos and stories visit ...

<https://KelticDeadMusic.org>