



Songs & Ballads



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"Going Across The Mountain"

Sunday, March 16, 2008

This song comes from the singing of **Frank Proffitt** of the Beech Mountain area of North Carolina. It was recorded by **Frank and Anne Warner** in 1959, and by **Sandy Paton** in 1961 .



Graves of Union Soldiers from Madison County, NC, along side of the Appalachian Trail. They "went across the mountain", but were ambushed when they tried to return home to help with the harvest. {photo by jdm}

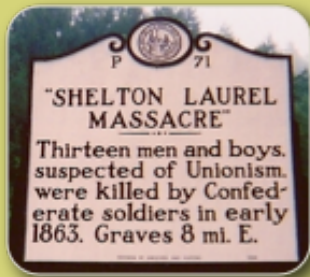
*"Going across the mountain,
Oh, fare you well,
Going across the mountain,
You can hear my banjo tell."*

I was born in Knoxville, Tennessee, and spent the first ten years of my life growing up in Blount County, Tennessee, "across the mountain" from Frank Proffitt's family. I was always told that the area around Maryville had fought for the Union. Ironically, by my life time, Blount County had become a major gathering place for the KKK.

These mountain states and the other border states were torn in two by the Civil War. Even families were split. Some got "drafted" by the Confederate "recruiting" squads and some "went over the mountain" to join the boys in blue.

Up in Tucker County, West Virginia, it was the same way. My great-great Grandfather, Enoch Minear, went with the Union, but his neighbors went with the Confederacy. He was captured at one point but released, and later went out to California to his daughter's home to help out there for the remainder of the war.

Frank Proffitt's song, about "**Going Across The**

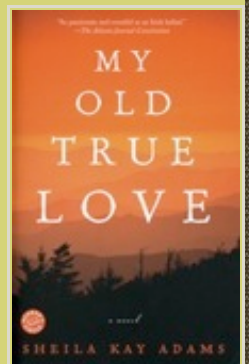


Mountain", came from his daddy, Wiley Proffitt, who probably learned it from his father, who had gone across the mountain. These divisions left deep scars in the mountain communities for the next several generations. The infamous "Shelton Laurel Massacre" in

Madison County, North Carolina was another example of this division.

Sheila Kay Adams has written a fine novel about this called

My Old True Love, which is set in Madison County. Click on the book cover to the right to learn more about Sheila and her book. Her husband, Jim Taylor, has recorded a very fine rendition of Frank Proffitt's song on his album of Civil War songs called "**Bright Sunny South**".



Rayna Gellert and "the Lonesome Sisters" have recorded Frank's song on their album "**Follow Me Down**". You can hear a brief portion of it by clicking on the link above. **Judy Cook** has recorded the song on her album of Civil War songs, called "Tenting Tonight". And the Mill City Grinders have recorded it on their album "**No Corn In The Crib**".



Tobacco growing in the Big Laurel Valley of Madison County, North Carolina, 2002. Photo by jdm

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