

Hank Snow, Ballad Of Hard Luck Henry

Now wouldn't you expect to find a man an awful crank
That's staked out nigh three hundred claims and every one a blank
That's followed every fool stampede and seen the rise and fall
Of camps where men got gold in chunks and he got none at all
That's prospected a bit of ground and sold it for a song
To see it yield a fortune to some fool that came along
That's sunk a dozen bed-rock holes and not a speck in sight
Yet sees them take a million from the claims to left and right
Now aren't things like that enough to drive a man to booze
But Hard-Luck Smith was hoodoo-proof he knew the way to lose

Twas in the fall of nineteen four leap-year I've heard them say
When Hard-Luck came to Hunker Creek and took a hillside lay
And lo! as if to make amends for all the futile past
Late in the year he struck it rich the real pay-streak at last
The riffles of his sluicing-box were choked with speckled earth
And night and day he worked that lay for all that he was worth
And when in chill December's gloom his lucky lease expired
He found that he had made a stake as big as he desired

One day while meditating on the waywardness of fate
He felt the ache of lonely man to find a fitting mate
A petticoated pard to cheer his solitary life
A woman with soft soothing ways a confidant a wife
And while he cooked his supper on his little Yukon stove
He wished that he had staked a claim in Love's rich treasure-trove
When suddenly he paused and held aloft a Yukon egg
For there in pencilled letters was the magic name of Peg

You know these Yukon eggs of ours some pink some green some blue
A dollar per assorted tints assorted flavors too
The supercilious cheechako might designate them high
But one acquires a taste for them and likes them by and by
Well Hard-Luck Henry took this egg and held it to the light
And there was more faint pencilling that sorely taxed his sight
At last he made it out and then the legend ran like this
Will Klondike miner write to Peg Plumhollow Squashville Wis

That night he got to thinking of this far-off unknown fair
It seemed so sort of opportune an answer to his prayer
She flitted sweetly through his dreams she haunted him by day
She smiled through clouds of nicotine she cheered his weary way
At last he yielded to the spell his course of love he set
Wisconsin his objective point his object Margaret

With every mile of sea and land his longing grew and grew
He practised all his pretty words and these I fear were few
At last one frosty evening with a cold chill down his spine
He found himself before her house the threshold of the shrine
His courage flickered to a spark then glowed with sudden flame
He knocked he heard a welcome word she came his goddess came
Oh she was fair as any flower and huskily he spoke
I'm all the way from Klondike with a mighty heavy poke
I'm looking for a lassie one whose Christian name is Peg
Who sought a Klondike miner and who wrote it on an egg

The lassie gazed at him a space her cheeks grew rosy red
She gazed at him with tear-bright eyes then tenderly she said
Yes lonely Klondike miner it is true my name is Peg
It's also true I longed for you and wrote it on an egg
My heart went out to someone in that land of night and cold
But oh I fear that Yukon egg must have been mighty old
I waited long I hoped and feared you should have come before
I've been a wedded woman now for eighteen months or more

I'm sorry since you've come so far you ain't the one that wins
But won't you take a step inside I'll let you see the twins