

# Tom Russell, The Ballad Of William Sycamore

My father was a mountaineer  
His fist was a knotty hammer  
He was quick on his feet like a runnin' deer  
And he spoke with a Yankee stammer

And some are wrapped in linen fine  
And some like a godling's scion  
But I was cradled on twigs of pine  
In the skin of a mountain lion

I lost my boyhood and found my wife  
A girl like a Salem clipper  
A woman as straight as a hunting knife  
With eyes as bright as the Dipper

We cleared our camp where the buffalo feed  
Unheard of streams were our flagons  
And I sowed my sons like apple seed  
On the trail of the Western wagons

They were right, tight boys, never sulky or slow  
A fruitful, goodly muster  
The eldest died at the Alamo  
And the youngest fell with Custer

The letter that told it burned my hand  
I smiled and said, "So be it!"  
But I could not live when they fenced my land  
Oh it broke my heart just to see it

I saddled the red, unbroken colt  
I rode him into the day there  
But he threw me down like a thunderbolt  
And he rolled on me as I lay there

Now I lie in the heart of the fat, black soil  
Like the seed of a prairie thistle  
It has washed my bones in honey and oil  
And it's picked 'em as clean as a whistle

And my youth returns, like the rains of Spring  
My sons, like wild geese flying  
And I lie and I hear the meadowlark sing  
And there's much content in my dying

Go play with the town you have built of blocks  
The towns where you may have bound me  
I sleep in the earth like a tired old fox  
And my buffalo have found me

I sleep in the earth like a tired old fox,  
And my buffalo have found me