Olde Coleraine:
A Musical Hilltown History

a new play with music

By Jonathan Mirin
Music and Additional Lyrics by Carrie Ferguson

In Association with Susan Tracy, Professor of History, Hampshire College

Working script VERSION 5

Piti Theatre Company
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CHRIS
Dad?

FATHER
Yeah?

CHRIS
Did you know your Great-Grandpa?

FATHER
Yep. I did.

CHRIS
What was he like?

FATHER
Well . . . he liked to tell stories.

CHRIS
About what?

FATHER
A lot of things . . . but especially about the town where he grew up. Coleraine Massachusetts.

CHRIS
Where's that?

FATHER
Just a couple hours south. It's a town next to a river. Surrounded by hills. The hilltowns, they call it. When he told those stories it was like he was back there again, like he was a child in Olde Coleraine. He liked to tell one about these two beekeepers named Carey and Langstroth who were best friends. He was outside playing one day down in Foundry Village when William W. Carey received a very important package.

TRANSITION
Children playing outside in an orchard. Carey enters with a package.

CAREY
Finally, it's here!

SOME CHILDREN
What is it? What is it?

ALL CHILDREN
What did you get in the mail?

CAREY
The first Italian Queen ever to be imported into the U.S.
CHILD
How did she get so small?

CAREY
No - a queen bee.

CHILDREN
Ohhhh.

CAREY
She's going to be a very important addition to our cider business.

CHILD
I thought bees made honey.

CAREY
They do but . . .
THE BEE AND THE BLOSSOM THE BLOSSOM AND THE BEE
APPLES AND HONEY GO TOGETHER YOU SEE
THE BEE AND THE BLOSSOM THE BLOSSOM AND THE BEE
THAT'S WHY I HAVE AN ORCHARD AND AN APIARY

CHILDREN
A what?

CAREY
An apiary - that's a place where honey bees are kept.

CHILDREN
Ohh . . .

CAREY
Here comes my friend Lorenzo Langstroth. He's the minister down at 2nd Congregational in Greenfield, you know.

CHILDREN
Hello Minister.

LANGSTROTH
(Entering carrying hive frames and a sketch explaining his idea).
Hello children.
(to CAREY and the children showing the sketch)
I think I've got it - it's taken awhile but I've figured it out - a bee hive made from stackable boxes and sliding frames that are easy for the beekeeper to take in and out AND for the bees to make their comb. Let's try catching a swarm and see how they do. Oh . . .
(Song as bees are shaken from a tree into Langstroth's hive)

ALL
THE BEE AND THE BLOSSOM THE BLOSSOM AND THE BEE
APPLES & HONEY GO TOGETHER YOU SEE
THE BEE AND THE BLOSSOM THE BLOSSOM AND THE BEE
THAT'S WHY YOU HAVE AN ORCHARD AND AN APIARY

LANGSTROTH

It seems . . . they like it!

CHILDREN

Yeah!

CAREY

Let's start production.

LANGSTROTH

Right!

CHILDREN

Right!

LANGSTROTH

(Looking at his pocketwatch).

Don't you children have to be back in school?

CHILD

We went to school this morning.

CHILD

Now we have to go back to the mill.

CAREY

Well, you can all take an apple for the road.

CHILDREN

Thank you sir . . .

ALL

THE BEE AND THE BLOSSOM THE BLOSSOM AND THE BEE
APPLES & HONEY GO TOGETHER YOU SEE
THE BEE AND THE BLOSSOM THE BLOSSOM AND THE BEE

CAREY

THAT'S WHY I HAVE AN ORCHARD AND AN APIARY

CHILDREN

THAT'S WHY YOU HAVE AN ORCHARD AND AN APIARY

TRANSITION

FATHER

That minister's stackable frame bee hive is still the most popular kind all around the world! I also remember Great Grandpa saying how he and his friends would sled to school. Kids of all different ages were learning together in the same one room. I think I still have his old sled.
CHILDREN enter classroom, bowing and curtseying.

MS. JONES

Good morning class.

CLASS

Good morning Ma'am.

MS. JONES

Let's start with a spell down.

*BOYS go to one side of the room. GIRLS to the other.*

Jean?

JEAN

Yes, Ma'am.

Snow.

JEAN

Snow. One syllable. S - N - O - W. Snow.

Good, Margaret?

MARGARET

Yes, ma'am.

Cat

MARGARET

Cat. One syllable. C - A - T. Cat.

Very good. Arthur?

ARTHUR

Yes, Ma'am.

Lament

ARTHUR


MS. JONES

M-E-N-T. M-I-N-T spells what Elizabeth?
ELIZABETH
M-I-N-T spells Mint ma’am.

MS. JONES
Okay class, let’s switch to some mathematics on your slates. If you bought a cow for 13 dollars and a calf for 3, how much more did the cow cost than the calf? (Overhears whispering).

Myra?

MYRA
Yes ma’am?

MS. JONES
Why are you whispering?

MYRA
I was talking about the question ma’am.

MS. JONES
Be that as it may, there is no whispering in class. (places ”TALKATIVE” sign around her neck and she sits on the boy’s side) Now, who knows the answer to the question. Yes, Arthur?

ARTHUR
If you bought a cow for 13 dollars and a calf for 3, the cow cost ten dollars more than the calf, ma’am.

MS. JONES
Correct. Now let’s play Buzz with the number 3. You start Jean.

JEAN
1

NEXT CHILD

2

NEXT CHILD

Buzz

4

NEXT CHILD

5

NEXT CHILD

Buzz

(They Go to 12)

MS. JONES
ALL
ARE YOU SLEEPING, ARE YOU SLEEPING,
BROTHER JOHN? BROTHER JOHN?
MORNING BELLS ARE RINGING! MORNING BELLS ARE RINGING!
DING, DANG, DONG. DING, DANG, DONG.

MS. JONES
Very nice. Jean would you like to teach us how they sing it in Canada?

JEAN
Oui, yes ma’am.

FRÈRE JACQUES, FRÈRE JACQUES,
DORMEZ-VOUS ? DORMEZ-VOUS ?
SONNEZ LES MATINES ! SONNEZ LES MATINES !
DING, DAING, DONG. DING, DAING, DONG.

MS. JONES
Now let’s all try. Ready?

ALL
FRÈRE JACQUES, FRÈRE JACQUES,
DORMEZ-VOUS ? DORMEZ-VOUS ?
SONNEZ LES MATINES ! SONNEZ LES MATINES !
DING, DAING, DONG. DING, DAING, DONG.

MS. JONES
Good. Bon.

(Knock on the door.)

MS. JONES
Yes?

(A man enters.)

MR. FLAGG
Good morning, class.

CLASS
Good morning, sir.

MR. FLAGG
Can I have a moment of your time Ms. Jones?

MS. JONES
Of course. Elizabeth, please lead the younger ones in a game of Blind Man’s Bluff outside.

ELIZABETH
Yes, ma’am.
(Students leave.)

MR. FLAGG
I'm sorry to interrupt your class Ms. Jones, but the School Board met yesterday evening and I am off to Boston for a week so I wanted to stop in before leaving.

MS. JONES
Of course.

MR. FLAGG
And we want to commend you on the fine work you are doing here in Griswoldville.

MS. JONES
Thank you.

MR. FLAGG
But we also determined a few areas for improvement.

MS. JONES
Oh.

MR. FLAGG
The most concerning of these areas is that we have a report that you have introduced one or two books not on the prescribed list of books. Is that true?

MS. JONES
Yes, Mr. Flagg, it is.

MR. FLAGG
Do you have copies of those books here now? I will be removing them.

(MRS. JONES retrieves books, gives them to him.)

We will be instructing parents that it is their responsibility, not yours, to pay for the prescribed books and that sum will be given to the assessor who will add it to their taxes. So don't worry you will still have sufficient books with which to teach.

MS. JONES
I should hope so.

MR. FLAGG
You must know so.

MS. JONES
Do you have another concern, sir?

MR. FLAGG
Thank you for asking. Our other concern has to do with the lack of science in the curriculum. Reading, elocution, writing, arithmetic - of course these are all essential. But we must find room for a strong base in science. Without science, how can children really learn to think to judge, to reason, to truly investigate natural law? In the coming century science will be more and more the center of the wheel, Ms. Jones, not simply a spoke. We
must start now. Is that amenable to you, Ms. Jones?

MS. JONES
I can do my best, Mr. Flagg.

MR. FLAGG
Excellent. Then I wish you good day, Ma'am.

MS. JONES
And a good day to you sir.

(MS. JONES closes door behind him.)

TRANSITION

CHRIS
What was that all about?

FATHER
Just like today, there was a committee whose job was to try and improve the schools. At the end of the 1800's there were 13 one room school houses in Colrain. Great-Grandpa was always interested in education. He was even a teacher for a few years himself.

CHRIS
Maybe I'll be a teacher some day.

FATHER
Maybe. But when he was a child, Great Grandpa split his time between school and Joseph Griswold's cotton mill.

CHILD
Did a lot of children work at the mill?

FATHER
Yep. Generally the girls were spinners and weavers. Both girls and boys were spinners, warpers and spoolers.

CHILD
I don't know what those words mean.

FATHER
It was something like this . . .

TRANSITION

SUPERVISOR checks pocketwatch. Rings bell for start of workday. Children and adults come in to start work.

MUSICIAN
THE WATER TURNS THE WHEEL TURNS THE WHEEL TURNS THE WHEEL
THE WATER TURNS THE WHEEL ROUND AND ROUND AND ROUND AND ROUND
THE WHEEL TURNS THE ROD TURNS THE ROD TURNS THE ROD
THE WHEEL TURNS THE ROD ROUND AND ROUND AND ROUND AND ROUND

THE SPINNER MAKES THE COTTON INTO THREAD INTO THREAD
THE SPINNER MAKES THE COTTON INTO THREAD WHITE BLUE OR RED

THE SPOOLER COMBINES THE BOBBINS COMBINES THE BOBBINS COMBINES
THE BOBBINS THE SPOOLER COMBINES THE BOBBINS INTO EVEN BIGGER SPOOLS

THE WARPER THREADS THE LOOMS THREADS THE LOOMS THREADS THE LOOMS
THE WARPER THREADS THE LOOMS LOOK HOW FAST SHE ZOOMS

THE Weaver weaves the fabric weaves the fabric weaves the fabric
THE Weaver weaves the fabric I know it seems like magic

When the bobbin is empty take it off quick as you can
When the bobbin is empty take it off and thread it again

MILL DAYS ARE LONG DAYS ARE LONG DAYS ARE LONG
MILL DAYS ARE LONG EVEN WHEN WE SLEEP WE HEAR THEIR SONG
(REPEAT 1X)

(Children are sleeping AND dreaming. Thread breaks. Everything stops. Foreman enters.)

FOREMAN
Mrs. Lemieux, this is the third break this morning. Regular interruptions are not good for the machines or our schedule. Is there a problem?

MADAME LEMIEUX
English pas bien. Slower please.

FOREMAN
No, not slower. We need faster.

Slower

MADAME LEMIEUX

Faster!

FOREMAN

Slow slow speak

MADAME LEMIEUX

Faster do, faster do, no breaking!

Foreman leaves. Ballet Renversé - dance of the dream of the work at the mill, end with a bell sound and everybody leaves).
CHRIS
I thought doing my chores was bad.

FATHER
I think they found ways to have fun even though it was hard to be working for 12 or 14 hours a day. And not every day was a work day. When the weather warmed up, everyone liked to be down by the river.

TRANSITION

MUSICIAN

IT'S BEEN A LONG WINTER
UP ON CATAMONT HILL
AND IT'S BEEN A LONG WINTER
DOWN IN GRISWOLDVILLE

BUT NOW WE'RE PLANTING SEEDS
AND THE AIR IS STILL
DOWN BY THE RIVER
SURROUNDED BY HILLS

LET'S GO SWIMMIN'
YEAH
DOWN IN THE NORTH RIVER
FIVE NICE SPOTS TO CHOOSE FROM
THAT'S JUST COUNTIN' THE CLOSE ONES
STILL MIGHTY COLD WHEN YOU'RE NOT IN THE SUN

IT'S BEEN A LONG WINTER
DOWN IN ADAMSVILLE
AND IT'S BEEN A LONG WINTER
OUT IN LYONSVILLE

BUT NOW WE'RE PLANTING SEEDS
AND THE AIR IS STILL
DOWN BY THE RIVER
SURROUNDED BY HILLS

LET'S GO FISHIN'
YEAH!
DOWN IN THE NORTH RIVER
FOUR NICE SPOTS TO CHOOSE FROM
WE CAN GO WHEN WORK THE IS DONE
WHEN WE'VE CAUGHT ENOUGH WE LET'EM RUN

IT'S BEEN A LONG WINTER
UP IN GIMLETVILLE
AND IT'S BEEN A LONG WINTER
DOWN IN SHATTUCKVILLE
BUT NOW WE'RE PLANTING SEEDS
AND THE AIR IS STILL
DOWN BY THE RIVER
SURROUNDED BY HILLS

LET'S GO PICNICIN' YEAH
DOWN BY THE NORTH RIVER
THREE NICE SPOTS TO CHOOSE FROM
PACK BREAD AND APPLE PIE THICK AS YOUR THUMB
WATCH THE BIRDS COME AND EAT OUR CRUMBS

IT'S BEEN A LONG WINTER
DOWN AT ELM GROVE
AND IT'S BEEN A LONG WINTER
HUDDLED ROUND THE STOVE

BUT NOW WE'RE PLANTING SEEDS
AND THE AIR IS STILL
DOWN BY THE RIVER
SURROUNDED BY HILLS

LET'S GO CROSSIN'
YEAH
LET'S CROSS THE RIVERS
TWO RIVERS TO CHOOSE FROM
THE NORTH AND WEST BRANCH ARE THE ONES
BUILD ENOUGH BRIDGES TO GET THINGS DONE

IT'S BEEN A LONG WINTER
AT TAYLOR BROOK
WHEN THE WIND BLEW
AND THOSE SAWMILLS SHOOK

BUT NOW WE'RE PLANTING SEEDS
AND THE AIR IS STILL
DOWN BY THE RIVER
SURROUNDED BY HILLS

LET'S GET ON THE TROLLEY
YEAH
DOWN BY THE NORTH RIVER
WE'VE ONLY ONE TRACK TO CHOOSE FROM
KEEP THE WINDOWS OPEN, SIT WITH YOUR CHUM
LISTEN TO YOUR HEART BEAT LIKE A DRUM

SO LET'S GO LET'S GO LET'S GO . . .
DOWN BY THE RIVER
(ANOTHER DAY AT THE MILL)
DOWN BY THE RIVER
(WE CAN DRINK OUR FILL)
DOWN BY THE RIVER

LET'S GO LET'S GO LET'S GO . . .
DOWN BY THE RIVER
(WE'LL SWIM EVERY DAY)
DOWN BY THE RIVER
(WE'LL FISH OUR WAY)
DOWN BY THE RIVER

LET'S GO LET'S GO LET'S GO . . .
DOWN BY THE RIVER
(DOWN FROM THE RIDGE)
DOWN BY THE RIVER
(ACROSS THE COVERED BRIDGE)
DOWN BY THE RIVER

LET'S GO LET'S GO LET'S GO . . .
DOWN BY THE RIVER
(NO NEED FOR A BOAT)
DOWN BY THE RIVER
(LET YOURSELF FLOAT )
DOWN BY THE RIVER

IT'S BEEN A LONG WINTER
UP ON CATAMONT HILL
AND IT'S BEEN A LONG WINTER
DOWN IN GRISWOLDVILLE

BUT NOW WE'RE PLANTING SEEDS
AND THE AIR IS STILL
DOWN BY THE RIVER
SURROUNDED BY HILLS

BUT NOW WE'RE PLANTING SEEDS
AND THE AIR IS STILL
DOWN BY THE RIVER
SURROUNDED BY HILLS

TRANSITION

FATHER
In the summer, you could open the windows of the Coleraine Shelburne Falls Trolley as you rode along beside the North River.

CHRIS
Coleraine had a trolley?

FATHER
A lot of children had never seen anything like it. In 1896 they put in the tracks and they called it an "electric road."
MUSICIAN
HEY HEY LOOK AT THEM GO
THEY’RE GONNA MAKE AN ELECTRIC ROAD
HEY HEY WHAT DO YOU KNOW
TROLLEY’S GONNA CARRY ALL OF OUR LOADS

PUT ON THE MILK AND THE MAIL
PUT ON THE APPLES AND HEAD DOWN THE TRAIL
IT’S A BEAUTIFUL DAY
WE DON’T HAVE TO WALK WE CAN RIDE THE WHOLE WAY!

HEY HEY WHEN WE GROW OLD
WILL WE STILL RIDE THE ELECTRIC ROAD
HEY HEY WHAT DO YOU KNOW
DON’T NEED A CAR TO GO FASTER THAN SLOW

GET YOUR FAMILY AND FRIENDS
WE’VE GOT PEOPLE TO SEE AND LETTERS TO SEND
GET ON THE TROLLEY GO TO TOWN
HEAR THE TROLLEY MAKIN’ IT’S SOUND

DING DING, THE CONDUCTOR RINGS
CLICK CLACK, ROLL DOWN THE TRACK

DING DING, THE CONDUCTOR RINGS
CLICK CLACK, ROLL DOWN THE TRACK

DING DING, THE CONDUCTOR RINGS
CLICK CLACK, ROLL DOWN THE TRACK

DING DING, THE CONDUCTOR RINGS
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GET YOUR FAMILY AND FRIENDS
WE’VE GOT PEOPLE TO SEE AND LETTERS TO SEND
GET ON THE TROLLEY GO TO TOWN
HEAR THE TROLLEY MAKIN’ IT’S SOUND

DING DING, THE CONDUCTOR RINGS
CLICK CLACK, ROLL DOWN THE TRACK

DING DING, THE CONDUCTOR RINGS
CLICK CLACK, ROLL DOWN THE TRACK

(“EVERYBODY NOW!”)
DING DING, THE CONDUCTOR RINGS
CLICK CLACK, ROLL DOWN THE TRACK

(“ONE MORE TIME!”)
DING DING, THE CONDUCTOR RINGS
CLICK CLACK, ROLL DOWN THE TRACK

PUT ON THE MILK AND THE MAIL
PUT ON THE APPLES AND HEAD DOWN THE TRAIL
IT'S A BEAUTIFUL DAY
WE DON'T HAVE TO WALK WE CAN RIDE THE WHOLE WAY!

HEY HEY WHEN WE GROW OLD
WILL WE STILL RIDE THE ELECTRIC ROAD
HEY HEY WHAT DO YOU KNOW
DON'T NEED A CAR TO GO FASTER THAN SLOW

HEY HEY WHEN WE GROW OLD
WILL WE STILL RIDE THE ELECTRIC ROAD
HEY HEY WHEN WE GROW OLD
WILL WE STILL RIDE THE ELECTRIC ROAD

CONDUCTOR
Hey, where is everybody going all dressed up?

WOMAN
You know where we're going William. Aren't you coming along?

CONDUCTOR
I have to drive back to Coleraine. But don't worry you can tell me all about Memorial Hall's Opening Dedication Ceremony on the ride home tomorrow. Shelburne Falls sure has come a long way from when I was a kid.

CHILD
Let's get seats up front!

WOMAN
Shhhh . . . it's almost starting.
(To the audience.)
This was billed as a program of "Intellectual Entertainment" you know.
EDWIN BAKER

Fellow citizens, ladies and Gentlemen. All days are not alike to the individual nor are they the same to a community like ours. Some are full of gloom and darkness, others of sunshine and light. May we not congratulate ourselves that as a community we are this evening, so to speak, in the sunshine and light. We are assembled to dedicate this building, a building the town has long needed for the purposes to which it will be dedicated. On behalf of the Building Committee, I would like to thank the Town for appropriating fifteen thousand dollars for the construction of Memorial Hall and five thousand dollars for the Arms Library whose 8000 volumes will be housed downstairs. This Hall will be dedicated to education, to patriotism and to good government but first of all it will be dedicated to the memory of those who gave their lives so that this country might be a united country and its people a free people. Twenty five of Shelburne's sons were lost in our great civil conflict and now in this hall our ballots will be cast, from the highest officer in our United States to the humblest official of Shelburne. And the men from the Ozro Miller Post, who have returned, will have a home. But enough by way of introduction to the interesting exercises which are to follow. May I present to you Mr. William Joy who will share with us Bach's Suite No. 4 in E Flat. Sarabande. Thank you, Mr. Joy. Now one son of Shelburne Falls who I knew particularly well was young Silas Nims. And Silas was particularly fond of traditional country dances and of all these dances, his favorite was the Galopede. Now in his memory, may we all enjoy it in the hope that no more young persons will be lost in conflict on our soil or the soil of other nations.