

CHERRY TREE JOE McCREERY*

Attributed to Henry Wilson

You Rivermen have surely heard
About the appropriation
That was made to clean our little ditch
And benefit the nation;
That we might run through Chest Falls
Nor get the least bit weary,
So they raised the stamps and gave the job
To Cherry Tree Joe McCreery.

Chorus

Looking out for number one,
Spending all the money,
And getting nothing done.



*Joe McCreery was a real person. He was born in Lycoming County, 1805, and died in Cherry Tree, 1895. He is buried with Bob McKeague and other great raftmen at Cherry Tree. The greatest of "jam-crackers," he broke the famous Seven-Mile Jam at the mouth of Chest Creek in or about 1875. It is said that he once bluffed John L. Sullivan in Dwyer's Saloon in Renovo. Sullivan, who was standing at the bar, took exception to something that Joe McCreery, who was seated at a table, said. Sullivan remarked, "I'm going to wipe the floor with you." When Joe McCreery stood up, a tall, slender, perfectly-formed man of six feet five inches in height, Sullivan—at that time the world's heavyweight champion—backed down.—Note by Henry W. Shoemaker.

There's Bob McKeague and E. B. Camp,
 Who held the ready ginger;
 Some men of sense said, "Build a dam,"
 But they would not raise a finger.
 "We will blow the rocks sky high," said they,
 "So Porter* don't get skeery,
 But let her rip and she'll go through,"
 Said Cherry Tree Joe McCreery.

Now you all know and I can show
 That fate is a cruel master;
 When once you're going down the hill,
 He's sure to push you faster!
 And that's the way, mind what I say,
 And don't you see, my dearie,
 That everything that happens now
 Is blamed on Joe McCreery.

One day this Spring as I came up,
 I met somebody's daughter,
 Who held her apron to her eyes
 To catch the salty water.
 "Dear girl," said I, "what makes you cry?
 You must feel very dreary."
 "My Daddy stoved in Chest Falls
 And I am hunting Joe McCreery."

The other day they had a splash
 And jammed her tight as thunder,
 A circumstance that caused our folks
 To gaze around in wonder.
 They prayed and tore, ripped and swore,
 Until they all grew weary.
 Sheff cut his Bill Raft into sticks,
 And cursed Cherry Tree Joe McCreery.

Now Captain Dowler the other day,
 He struck a raft of timber
 That was hanging up to Sliding Point,
 And tore the rope asunder;
 The Captain winked and scratched his head,
 saying, "This kind of dreary."
 Then he jumped his oar, went on shore,
 And prayed for Joe McCreery.

*Porter Kinports of Cherry Tree, former owner of the Kinports Dam on the Susquehanna above Cherry Tree.

Our Squire Riddle on the hill,
Who deals out justice even,
His head is very bald, you know,
No hair twixt him and heaven.
I asked how his hair came out,
And he answered sort of dreary
That it must have come out thinking about
Cherry Tree Joe McCreery.

In years to come when no rafts run
On our dear little river,
And the cheery cry of "Land! Tie up,"
Shall be heard no more forever;
Down Rocky Bend and through Chest Falls
On winter nights so dreary,
You'll see the phantom raftmen chasing the ghost
Of Cherry Tree Joe McCreery.



Grave of Joe McCreery at Cherry Tree.

