

This distinctively Western farewell song is really a folk refinement of *The Bright Mohawk Valley*, a song published in New York State, which was itself likely based on earlier Canadian sources from Manitoba's Red River region. The Canadian version was eventually adopted by an American pioneer home perfectly suited, even in name, to its country roots: the Red River region between Texas and Oklahoma. The song's sentiments are poignant, yet buoyed by flowing melody and a direct awareness of beautiful natural surroundings. Where parting lovers in the East and South softened their good-byes with religious faith or domestic comforts, the singers of *Red River Valley* turned to the gorgeous western expanses everywhere around them. Carol Barnett's atmospheric arrangement is a clear departure from the straightforward tunefulness and upbeat quality of most of the song's arrangements. Harp and oboe contribute impressionistic effects, and the voices' ethereal lines, threading in and out of unexpected pitches and chords, leave listeners with a haunting sense of great space and tragic, remembered loss. (note by Vaughn Ormseth)