

The Ballad Of Samuel Slater

Where You Belong: A Song Cycle for Belper

Artist: Coope Boyes & Simpson

Written by Jim Boyes

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Oh, I was raised at Holyhouse, in Blackbrook I was born
Near Belper Town in Derbyshire, I learned to sow the corn
I quickly gained the labourer's skills, and the sun upon me shone
For my father found water for the mills, And the land to build them on

But then when I was fourteen years' apprentice,
I was bound To Jedidiah Strutt, whose fame had grown the country round,
To build machines and see the way those might be mills were o'er
But Father died in tragedy, Ere first that I be gone

T'was then I lived in my Master's house
Like an adopted son
And prove my worth in the cotton trade
With the work that I had done

So when the Milford Mills were built I had to supervise,
And all details and processes I quickly memorized
I'd read in the Philadelphia News, and I'd heard of the great Tom Paine
I knew that the Belper and Milford Mills would never be built again

Rich bounties lay across the sea, where cotton was spun by hand
To recreate an industry in a far-off distant land
Now plans and patents were just like gold, and guarded jealously
But even the closest of control can't fathom the memory

Disguised as a farm labourer, my indentures to my chest,
I boarded a ship on the London Quay and set sail for the West
Dear Mother, as you read this note, I'm journeying far away
On a sailing ship on the raging main, Bound for America

Oh, don't you worry, Mother dear,
For I am safe and well
And fortune will shine, Mother, have no fear,
Your loving son Samuel.

After six months working in New York, A message I received
There was cotton spinning in Providence, I hastened there with speed
T'was there I met Almy, Brown, and with them I did agree
When the new machines had proved their worth, some profit would come to me

I married a blacksmith's daughter fair in Portucket, where I did stay
Her father helped make the machines, which earned us both our pay
For many years we laboured on, and so our skill was grown,
And in 1798 we branched out on our own

Through good times and bad, the mill still grew, and the history books all say
That early American industry was made the Slater way
The Slater way was gruff but fair, as the workers would testify
Bought food and shelter and schools were there in plentiful supply

And though I made enormous wealth from those I did employ,
I worked as hard as them myself, those comforts to enjoy
Through all my life I saw the plight of the hungry and the poor,
And I helped those who would help themselves when they came to my door
I spoke out against slavery and forever would agree
The rights of all the populace, freedom and equality