The collection of this tune, in 1978, came near the very beginning of my time as a contra dance musician and at the very beginning of my connection to New Hampshire music and musicians.

I lived in Chicago at the time and played the autoharp in a band (Sweet Betsy from Pike) who all played the autoharp and all (except me, for lack of singing voice) sang traditional American songs. (35 gigs one year !!) Two years earlier our band had gotten invited to play the Fox Hollow Music Festival in mid-state NY. There, in 1976, I’d first heard New England dance music as played by Dudley Laufman’s Canterbury Country Dance Orchestra (CCDO), as well as by Bill Spence’s band. That was it; I was “home”; I knew I’d somehow play that music.

Two years later, Paul Bowes - a bandmate in Sweet Betsy, my son Greg (then almost 5), and I set out on a crazy Summer cross-country road trip in my ‘58 Chevrolet, to revisit the Fox Hollow Weekend Festival. We heard the CCDO again, and we’d heard there was a Dudleydance in the Canterbury NH Town Hall, and they allowed/encouraged sit-ins. We went, my having tuned all those strings with my strobe tuner. Paul watched Greg as he sacked out in the car, and I went inside with my autoharp (?autoharps; I think I had the one for the “sharp keys” by then) to figure out what “sitting in” meant.

I bumbled up on the stage with my instrument(s) to ask if I could sit in. There was Sylvia Miskoe (obviously an experienced musician here) unpacking her big piano accordion, followed by (gasp!!) a folding music stand and a fat looseleaf binder of sheet music. (Ya mean they don’t always all play just by ear??!!)

Sylvia introduced herself and invited me “of course you can sit in, right over there; do you want to look on my music”. I somehow managed to play “something” behind each tune, at dance speed (fortunately an unmic’d autoharp isn’t a very loud instrument) and got to watch dancers in front of me for the very first time.

Afterwards, in more conversation, Sylvia discovered that I was visiting w/ my buddy and my young son, asked us if we had a place to stay, and invited us all to stay the night at her big house on a horse farm a few miles away outside Concord NH.

The next morning we met her family, she fed us breakfast, and played Miss Murray of Lintrose into Paul’s cassette recorder. Hearing that we were after the coastal lobster experience, she gave us tourist instructions to cabins on Lake Winnipesaukee, where we could hole up for cheaps within striking range of the lobster shacks and restaurants on the NH coast and across the bridge in Maine.

I’d had as a goal to see if I could get tired of eating lobster breakfast, lunch, and dinner. We stayed in the cabin, playing autoharps (including learning Miss Murray’s), going out to eat and fetching in lobsters. It turned out that Paul and I could in fact eat lobster three meals/day for a couple days, but Greg got pretty tired of them; we had to fetch him some breakfast cereal, milk, and hamburgers.

I’ve returned many times over the years to stay at Sylvia’s, which (though not a commercial establishment) she characterizes as MMB&B - “Miskoe Musicians’ Bed and Breakfast”. I stay there before and after the Ralph Page Legacy Dance Weekend every January at UNH in Durham, and some years make it out for her birthday in November. This November g-d willing, I’ll visit for her 85th.