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## ***Once Upon a Tune***

*Musical Tales of Two Continents and Four Centuries*

Ballads, the story-songs that served as an early-day National Enquirer, told of love and loss, of deeds chivalric and dastardly and ghostly, of gossip and legend and of other lore beloved by “enquiring minds” of ages past. Many American story-songs have their roots in the British Isles and Australia. This program features traditional and historical songs, many of them paired with their “ancestor songs” from the old country.

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## ***Going Out West to See the Elephant***

*How the West was Sung*

“How happy am I as I crawl into bed, a rattlesnake rattles a tune at my bed,  
A coy little centipede, void of all fear, crawls over my pillow and into my ear.”  
“Seeing the elephant,” they called it. It was the pioneer’s term for getting wised up and fed up. When the 19<sup>th</sup> century settlers started West, they sang songs about the land of milk and honey. By the time they got here, they rewrote the same songs to tell of rattlesnakes and alkali water.

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## ***All the News that’s Fit to Sing***

*Scandals, politics and slanders in song*

American traditional songs often pass the word – and pass judgment. This is musical oral history from the back porch rather than from the recording studio, or perhaps the musical version of the tabloid magazine. Few of the songs are polished, but many of them are hilarious, and they have guts and directness that make up for what they lack in finesse. And they tell what *really* happened. No lie. Honest.

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## ***Who Shall Sing of the Valiant Woman (With Sharon Rossiter)***

These songs celebrate women of tradition, fiction and fact through the songs that tell their stories and praise their courage. Some valiant women are quietly strong, and others are warriors; some are famous and some obscure; some are fireworks and some are flowers. And all followed their convictions and their vision, and all are worthy of our notice – and often our admiration. The songs and tales come from several centuries of Anglo-American tradition, although some of them are the descendants of tales as old as civilization itself.

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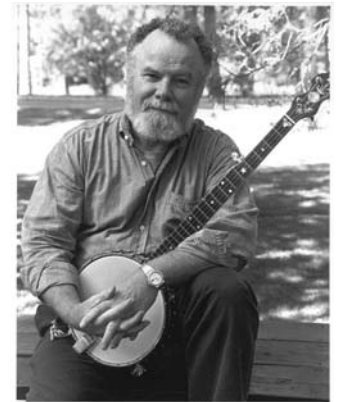
## ***Songs for Your Supper***

This program of songs and stories shows how our food reflects who we are, who we were, where we come from; we sing of the food we love to eat, love to remember, and love to hate, the *real* food that sticks to your ribs and tastes like home. It’s fall-back food when times are tough and go-to grub when we need to get back to basics: t-bones and spuds, grandma’s soup, fried chicken, lutefisk (not for the sissy), garden tomatoes, grits, lefse, biscuits and gravy, and watermelon. The songs recall a simpler time when the basic rule of nutrition was “fill ‘er up.”

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## ***Home, Home on the Ranch***

These songs and stories detail the values, experiences, humor and tragedies unique to building a life in the rural West. Carving a home out of the high plains wilderness was tough enough, but this presentation – sometimes serious, sometimes funny, and sometimes seriously funny – show that sticking it out for the long haul added flint to the soul. Mr. Rossiter encourages audience members to share their own stories about life on the range.



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**William Rossiter** taught literature and folklore for 25 years at Kalispell’s Flathead Valley Community College before retiring in 1999. He now performs around the Northwest, singing songs of several eras of American history. Before going on the road, he played with a Milwaukee Dixieland band, “The Beer City Six,” then traveled with a Denver bluegrass band, “Bear Creek Canyon.” He still plays with the “Grin and Bear It String Band.”

Rossiter has performed for western and heritage museums, art centers, town festivals, library series, and various other clubs and organizations.

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*Even though Rossiter is out of state, he is willing to travel to Idaho if an organization is willing to share in his travel expenses. Please contact the IHC staff for more information.*

### **No Presentation Needs**

**Bill Rossiter’s repertoire includes several other topics not listed – including tall tales, Irish-American songs, 1930’s songs, railroad songs, Civil War songs, mining songs, songs of heroes/heroines and bad guys/good guys, and a presentation about how Dickens’ personal life influenced his novels. He is willing to tailor a presentation to any group’s special interest.**