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placed the black cap over his head, and adjusted the noose. "As the minister began chanting the opening lines of the Lord's Prayer, the stillness of the interior was broken slightly by the dropping of the trap door, as the lever was sprung, sending the body of the unfortunate Beckett to a seven-foot drop. "Thirteen minutes after the trap was sprung Beckett was pronounced dead by Dr. C. J. Sparrow of Reserve, County Jail physician--the immediate cause of death being a broken neck." And Phil Penney of Glace Bay wrote a song, "George Beckett's Lament"--generally known today as "George Alfred Beckett," We do not know exactly when he wrote the song. Penney had copies printed and took them to sell in St. John's, Newfoundland--but the printed sheet we've seen is not dated. It is likely he wrote the song not long after the hanging (which took place on April 31, 1931). Ray Penney (Phil's son) told us: "He made a lot of little songs, and then he made songs of different murders that took place in the town here.... And when anything serious happened--a murder or something in Glace Bay--I'd say within a day he'd have the song put together." But Phil Penney was not a public singer, and that might explain why the song is sung today to a variety of airs. "He was a poet," Ray told us. "And he also played accordion • And he also used to prompt dances, same as I do...." But Ray makes it clear that by the time he wrote "George Beckett's Lament," Phil Penney's singing was in his own kitchen, for his family. Phil suggested on the printed song sheet that "Peter Emberley" was the air he had in mind. This is a traditional song and the tune would have been widely known in his day. But singers we've heard so far have felt free to choose different airs. Ray, for instance, sings it in a decidedly country style. Phil Penney's song seems to us a good place to start thinking aloud about folk songs. While we continue our search for Cape Breton folk songs, questions arise, such as why songs are made and why certain ones have been remembered. It seems to us, for instance, that the coal miner, Phil Penney, felt he had this other role to play in his community--that of songwriter, poet, bard. We know of at least 4 murder songs he made. While he may have had some fascination with local murders, we find he did not particularly play on the crime in making his song. After reading the newspapers of the day, it is interesting to consider what he chose not to include in his Songwriter Phil Penney, and his son Ray

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