

Folk & Traditional Song Lyrics

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River of the Big Canoe

River of the Big Canoe
(Bob Dyer)

You can see her in the mountains in the melting snow
See her in the falling rain
See her dancing down through a thousand valleys
She's got at least a thousand names

She's the spawn of the ice of another age
The river of the big canoe
And she's rolling on down from the Rocky Mountains
Carrying the Great Plains news

From the Yellowstone, the Musselshell
The Milk and the Little Mo
The James, the Grand, the White and the Bad
The Cheyenne and the wide Moreau

When the Frenchmen found her she was Pekitanoui
A muddy river wild and free
Gave her the name of the Indians who lived there
The people called it Missouri

She's been a river of coal, a river of fur
A river of crazy schemes
Steamboat wrecker and a river of gold
She's been a river of broken dreams

She's the ghost in the night when the moon is full
The spirit in the mist of dawn
She's the light in the eye of the painter's mind
The music in the poet's song

Sung by Dave Para and Cathy Barton

Recorded by Ed Trickett

Bob Dyer wrote it in 1975. He says the name Pekitanoui
(Muddy Water) was given to the river by Pere Marquette; Pere
Marest named it Missouri in 1712, and this name was long
thought also to mean muddy water. [JN]

JN

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