

THE BALLAD OF ALEXANDER KELLY

(Mark Kelly Hall)

Born in County Armagh, in the 18th century
He was just a wee one when he sailed across the sea
He grew up in Virginia, and fought to make it free
And helped to build a nation out of 13 colonies

He headed for the frontier, his fortune there to seek
In-the-foothills of the Smokies, in a valley by a creek
His waterwheel a-windin', his reputation grew
A farmer and a miller workin' 'til the day was through

The river was his neighbor, the river was his friend
Alexander Kelly loved the river to the end

He went on the warpath to defend his family
He followed Nolichucky Jack to chase the Cherokee
He swam across the Coosa to fool the enemy
And when they fell into his trap, how sweet the victory

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The former territory, now the state of Tennessee
Elected Alexander, to help make history
They needed a new college and appointed him trustee
And now that little schoolhouse is a university

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Even as an old man, he felt the need to roam
Sequatchie Valley charmed him and he made it his new home
One day down by the riverbank, he dared to dip a toe
The rushing water took him in and never let him go

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Where he ended up at last, the Good Lord only knows
Perhaps he's up in heaven's pub, a-wringin' out his clothes
We can guess that he was Presbyterian for life
But counted it a blessing to be thoroughly baptized

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Few men have the luxury to choose a destiny
There are chapters I might change if it were up to me
But courage is a virtue, and loyalty is, too
So raise a glass and give an Irish pioneer his due

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Alexander Kelly loved the river to the end, the end