

# AWAY IN THE MANGER – CRADLE SONG

Lyrics, v.1, v.2, Anonymous, v.3, John T. McFarland, Early 1900's  
Tune: CRADLE SONG, William J. Kirkpatrick, 1895

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For some time *“Away in the Manger”* was titled *“Luther's Cradle Hymn”*. This is due to the association of the name of the tune: CRADLE SONG often associated with this hymn. The tune: CRADLE SONG was written by William J. Kirkpatrick for the musical, *“Around the World with Christmas”* in 1895 and is an adaptation of the melody originally composed in 1837 by Jonathan E. Spilman to *“Sweet Afton”*. This beloved children's Christmas carol is generally sung to one of two melodies. In the U.S. the most popular tune is MUELLER, while the United Kingdom prefers the melody: CRADLE SONG, the one discussed here,

The first two stanzas of *“Away in the Manger”* are reportedly anonymous. This carol was first published as an untitled poem. The song was later published in 1885 with the two verses in an Evangelical Lutheran collection, *“Little Children's Book for Schools and Families”*, where it simply bore the title *“Away in a Manger”* and was set to the tune: ST. KILDA credited to J.E. Clark. In the early 1900's, the third stanza, *“Be near me, Lord Jesus”* was written by Methodist minister, John T. McFarland (1851-1913).

Whoever he or she is, the unknown songwriter probably didn't live to see the song reach children the world over with its poignant message. Yet, while the mystery of origin remains, the song's message, depicting the precious moment when a Savior came to Earth bringing peace, joy, and hope, is so strong and so profound that it leaped from a single night, from a single household, to become one of the world's most beautiful Christmas messages in song.

~Tull