

Hush My Babe

Isaac Watts, Lyrics, 1715; Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Music, 1755

The lyrics for "*Hush My Babe*" come from a poem written by Isaac Watts and published in 1715 in his book of verses entitled "*Divine and Moral Songs*". It is often referred to as, "*The Cradle Hymn*". It was first set to music around 1755, but the original tune used was called "*Greenville*", a variation on a French folk tune arranged by Jean-Jacques Rousseau for his comic opera "*The Village Soothsayer*". In Kentucky, "*Cradle Hymn*" stanzas are often sung to the tune of "*Go Tell Aunt Nancy*."

Sometime in the mid-1800's in the Appalachian region of the United States, the lyrics were paired with a tune, from a Tennessee singer, closely related to the Southern Harmony shape-note hymnal, "*Restoration*". This is also the tune commonly used with "*I Will Arise and Go To Jesus*" (aka "*Ten Thousand Charms*"). Its haunting modal quality seems a much better fit for the original poem, and has become known as the "*Kentucky Carol*". It has been recorded in that form by a number of artists, notably Doc Watson, which has also been called, "*The Christmas Lullaby*".



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