WASHINGTON

BY Nancy Byrd Turner

He played by the river when he was young.  
He raced with rabbits along the hills,  
He fished for minnows, and climbed and swung,  
And hooted back at the whippoorwills.  
Strong and slender and tall he grew -  
And then, one morning, the bugles blew.  
  
Over the hills the summons came,  
Over the river's shining rim.  
He said that the bugles called his name,  
He knew that his country needed him,  
And he answered, "Coming!" and marched away  
For many a night and many a day.  
  
Perhaps when the marches were hot and long  
He'd think of the river flowing by  
Or, camping under the winter sky,  
Would hear the whippoorwill's far-off song.  
Boy or soldier, in peace or strife,  
He loved America all his life!

Nancy Byrd Turner (1880 - 1971) was born in Virginia. A descendant of both Thomas Jefferson and Pocohantas, Nancy began writing poetry as a child. She studied to become a teacher, and did teach for a few years, but eventually she became a magazine editor. During the course of her career, she published 15 books, several songs, and her work appeared regularly in the leading magazines of her day. Late in her life, Nancy became a freelance writer and a popular lecturer.