

Oh, Listen Today

The roots of American Old-Timey fiddle music

MTCD517



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|----|--|------|
| 1 | Flop-Eared Mule - The Highlanders. | 3:00 |
| 2 | Humphrey's Jig - Ed Haley. | 2:58 |
| 3 | Jenny Baker - Jimmy Johnson's String Band. | 3:00 |
| 4 | Waynesburgh - Fiddlin' Doc Roberts. | 2:40 |
| 5 | Charleston No.3 - Narmour & Smith. | 3:14 |
| 6 | Too Young to Marry - The North Carolina Ramblers. | 3:07 |
| 7 | Devil's Dream - Jasper Bisbee. | 3:39 |
| 8 | Buck Creek Gal - Fiddlin' Doc Roberts. | 2:32 |
| 9 | Grey Eagle - Ed Haley. | 2:51 |
| 10 | Billy in the Low Ground - Cuje Bertram. | 1:31 |
| 11 | Fisher's Hornpipe - Emmett Lundy. | 2:00 |
| 12 | Booth - Marcus Martin. | 1:18 |
| 13 | Fire in the Mountain - The Red-Headed Fiddlers. | 2:43 |
| 14 | Sally Brown Jig - Allen Sisson. | 3:42 |
| 15 | Black-Eyed Susie - Nester & Edmonds. | 3:00 |
| 16 | Wilson's Jig - Ed Haley. | 2:50 |
| 17 | Salt River - Kessinger Brothers. | 3:05 |
| 18 | Natchez Under the Hill - Emmett Lundy | 2:19 |
| 19 | Grandad's Favorite - Ernie Carpenter. | 1:44 |
| 20 | Queen of the Earth and Child of the Skies - Edden Hammons. | 4:08 |
| 21 | Polka Four - Kessinger Brothers. | 3:03 |
| 22 | Wake Up Susan - Ed Haley. | 3:04 |
| 23 | Jenny on the Railroad - Carter Brothers & Son. | 2:53 |
| 24 | Seneca Square Dance - Fiddlin' Sam Long. | 2:54 |
| 25 | Indian Ate the Woodchuck - Ed Haley. | 2:50 |
| 26 | Lady Hamilton - Manco Sneed. | 1:06 |
| 27 | Scolding Wife - Marion Reece. | 1:03 |
| 28 | Old Flannigan - The Blue Ridge Mountaineers. | 3:03 |
| 29 | Cumberland Gap - Manco Sneed. | 0:48 |
| 30 | The Old Clay Pipe - The North Carolina Ramblers. | 3:02 |

Total: 78:09

Introduction

*Oh listen today to a story I'll tell ...
The Cyclone of Rye Cove.
The Carter Family. 1929.*

In 2018 I compiled a set of early Old-Timey recordings which were issued under the title *A Distant Land to Roam* on the Musical Traditions label. As I explained in the booklet notes, I had selected these pieces to compliment a previously issued 3 CD set - *My Bonnie Lies Over the Ocean: British songs in the USA* (Nehi NEH3XI) - and among the tracks that I chose I added a small number of fiddle tunes to add variety to the album. These tunes, which included versions of *Soldier's Joy*, *Haste to the Wedding* (here called *Mountain Rangers*) and *Miss McLeod's Reel* (here called *Hop Light Ladies*), had also been played originally in the Old World and, like the songs, had been taken to America by early settlers.

A few weeks after *A Distant Land to Roam* was issued I suddenly remembered another Old Timey recording, *Jenny Baker*, which had been recorded in 1931 by the Jimmy Johnson String Band from Kentucky. *Jenny Baker* was actually a version of the tune *The Boys of Bluehill* and I realized that I should have included this track on the CD. As I thought about this omission, I began to remember other American recordings of fiddle players who had recorded not only tunes from Britain and Ireland, but also tunes from other parts of Europe. And so, the idea behind *Oh, Listen Today...* was born.

I should stress at once that although I love this kind of music and have been listening to it for some sixty years, I am not a trained musician and I have sometimes had to rely on the expertise of others when deciding which tunes to include on this CD. In most cases I can hear the similarities between these American tunes and their Irish and Scottish counterparts. In one or two cases, though, I have chosen to base the selection of recordings on the opinions of people whose musical knowledge is far greater than my own.

I suppose that when the very early European settlers arrived on the east coast of America, they would have taken with them the tunes that they had been playing prior to setting sail. And these tunes would have been used for dances in what was a very New World. During the period 1937 - 1946 a handful of folklorists travelled across the American Upper Midwest, recording songs and instrumental music. Many of these recordings have now been made available in a package, titled 'Folksongs of Another America', which comprises a hard-back book, five CDs of field recordings and a DVD, all packaged into one unit. The set is edited by James P. Leary and was published in 2015 by the University of Wisconsin, in Madison, Wisconsin, and Dust-to-Digital in Atlanta, Georgia.

Unlike Cecil Sharp, who was only looking for 'English' folksongs when he visited the Appalachian Mountains from 1916 to 1918, the Upper Midwest folklorists recorded songs and tunes from numerous groups of people who had colonized the area; not only Native American people, but also people who had arrived from all over Europe. There were Austrians and Serbs, Finns and Luxembourgers, people who still spoke Scots Gaelic, or Italian or even Icelandic. Yes, there were a few Anglo-Americans, Irish-Americans, as well as some African-Americans, but there were also people from Lithuania, Switzerland, the Netherlands, Czechoslovakia, Sweden, Norway and Denmark. In other words, this group of collectors were noting songs and instrumental music from all over Europe and parts of Africa, and not just from Britain or Ireland. So it should come as no surprise to realize that, over time, much of this music began to move from one ethnic group to another. Gradually, as the settlers moved further into what was, to them, an unknown land, the tunes would have spread. And, of course, new tunes would also have been composed and played alongside the older ones.

Three of the recordings heard on this CD come originally from Europe, rather than Britain and Ireland, while the remainder can all be traced to English, Scottish or Irish sources. Many of the performers playing these tunes came from the Appalachian region of America, the place where Cecil Sharp visited to find his 'English' folksongs. It has long been said that this area had been settled by the so called Scots-Irish and this could explain why these tunes were being played there in the early part of the 20th century. One book which looks into this explanation is Fiona Ritchie & Doug Orr's *Wayfaring Stranger. The Musical Voyage from Scotland and Ulster to Appalachia* (The University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, NC. 2014). The book offers a very persuasive argument, though it should be remembered that only a small percentage of tunes being played, and recorded, in the 1920s and '30s could by then be traced directly back to Scots-Irish music. At one point Ritchie and Orr print the following letter written by the singer and banjo player Bascom Lamar Lunsford, whom they say, 'held a romanticized reverence for the ancestry of the music and those who came before him':

'Yes sir,' he would say, after a fiddle tune had been finished. 'Your great-great-great-grand pappy might have played the same tune in the court of Queen Elizabeth.' Then he would tell them how the songs and square dances came straight from the jigs, reels, and hornpipes of Scotland, Ireland and England, trying to show that though the words had changed from country to country and generation to generation, even from valley to valley in the same range of hills, the essence of the music changed not

at all. It formed a link, unbroken, back through time, tying them to the past.

(Original letter by Lunsford to the *Asheville Citizen*, May 22nd, 1948.)

Gradually, as the settlers colonized new regions of America, regional styles of fiddle-playing began to appear. Cajuns, expelled from the Atlantic coastal regions of eastern Canada ended up in Louisiana, where their music and songs, usually sung in French, became a distinct part of Louisiana culture. In other parts of the deep south, Mississippi and Alabama for example, some black slaves began to play the fiddle. Much of what they played began to be influenced by the development of the blues and this music passed into the repertoires of local white musicians. Ironically, at times some black fiddle-players (Cuje Bertram, for example, who can be heard on this CD) sounded very much like their neighbouring white fiddle-players - possibly because despite racial segregation in the south they would actually play music together. Mind you, this was not always the case, as a 3CD set of field recordings of white fiddle-players in Mississippi recorded for the Library of Congress in 1939 shows. The one hundred and fifty tracks on these CDs were recorded by Herbert Halpert from a number of fiddlers whose repertoires were very similar to those of players in north Georgia and parts of the Appalachians.⁽¹⁾

We are lucky today because, thanks to Thomas Edison, we are able to listen to fiddle music performed by people who were born in the mid to late 19th century. Some of these performers only left us one or two recordings, but others left much more and if we look at their respective repertoires, we are able to gain a wider understanding of what was actually being played in parts of rural America during this period.

Fiddler Emmett W Lundy, who came a musically rich area around the town of Galax in Grayson County, Virginia, was born in 1864. He believed that his ancestors arrived in America from England in the 17th century. Arriving in Grayson County sometime around the year 1790. Many of Lundy's tunes came to him from an earlier fiddle-player called Greenberry ('Green') Leonard. I do not have a date of birth for Leonard, though we do know that he was married in 1833, and many of his tunes are connected to tunes known in the Old World. *Belle of Lexington* is a version of the Irish tune *Kitty's Wedding*, *Chapel Hill March* is a version of *The New Rigged Ship* and *Jackson's March* a version of the well-known British tune *Haste to the Wedding*. Lundy also played *Soldier's Joy*, *The Irish Washerwoman* and *Highlander's Farewell* which may have a Scottish origin, as well as tunes, such as *Billy in the Low Ground*, *Flop-Eared Mule* and *Black-Eyed Susie*, versions of which can be heard played by other people on this CD.

Another fiddler, Ed Haley (1883 - 1951), recorded a number of his fiddle tunes on a home disc-cutting machine. In 1997 Rounder Records reissued sixty-five of these recordings on two double CD sets - *Ed Haley: Forked Deer*, CD1132 - 33, and *Ed Haley: Grey Eagle*, CD1134 - 35 - and I would estimate that over a quarter of these tunes (30% actually) can be traced back to old-world sources. Five of these tunes, *Humphrey's Jig*, *Grey Eagle*, *Wilson's Jig*, *Wake Up Susan* and *Indian Ate the Woodchuck* can be heard on this CD and all of them have some connection to the Old World. Other similar tunes that Ed Haley played include: *Forked Deer* parts of which are similar to the Scots-Irish tune called *Rachel Rae*, which is believed to have been composed in 1815 by a Scottish composer called Joseph Lowe. O'Neill called it *The Moving Bogs*. *Love Somebody* is the same tune that Charlie Poole and the North Carolina Ramblers titled *Too Young to Marry* (track 6 on this CD), while *Bonaparte's Retreat* is also thought to be based on an older British or Irish tune. The tune *Money Musk* was originally titled *Sir Archibald Grant of Monie Muske's Reel* and was possibly composed by Daniel Gow in 1776. It was sometimes used in Ireland to accompany the *Highland Fling*. Haley's version of *Cumberland Gap* resembles a tune called *Skye Airs* which was published by Gow, while *Parkersburg Landing* is a version of the well-known Schottische *The Rustic Dance*. It would also appear to be related to a tune that Michael Coleman recorded as *Mrs Kenny's Barndance*. Ed Haley had two distinct tunes with identical titles, *The Cuckoo's Nest*. The first is similar to *All Aboard Reel*, which can be found in Ryan's *Mammoth Collection*, while the second is known in Ireland under a number of different titles, such as *Peacock Feathers*, *Forty Pounds of Feathers*, *In a Hornet's Nest*, *Jacky Tar* or *Jolly Jack Tar with your Trousers On*. *Pumpkin Ridge* is a version of *Marmaduke's Hornpipe* while, finally, *Mississippi Sawyer* is probably based on the tune *The Downfall of Paris*.

Both Emmett Lundy and Ed Haley were from the Appalachian Mountains. Two other contemporary fiddle-players, Fiddlin' John Carson (1868 - 1949) and Gid Tanner (1885 - 1960) were from Georgia, just to the south of the Appalachian Mountain chain. Both players recorded large numbers of fiddle tunes, many of which would today be classified as 'traditional'. Tanner played with a group called 'The Skillet Lickers' and much of their repertoire was similar to that played by Fiddlin' John Carson.⁽²⁾ In 1927 fiddle-player Lowe Stokes (1898 - 1983) made his first recordings with the Skillet Lickers. Stokes was younger than Carson or Tanner and, while he could play older tunes such as *Katy Did*, *Sally Johnson*, *Billy in the Low Ground*, *Four Cents Cotton* and *Citaco*, during the period 1927 - 1930 he also recorded a number of far more modern tunes. Using the name *Lowe Stokes and his North Georgians* he recorded pieces such as *Take Me to*

the Land of Jazz, Sailin' Down the Chesapeake Bay, Everybody's Doing It and *Sailing on the Robert E Lee*.⁽³⁾ According to Stokes: 'We get around playing for older people, we'd play them breakdowns and stuff; we knew they'd like them. Then we put on a record or play on the radio somewhere, a big schoolhouse or auditorium somewhere, we liked to play these later numbers.' In other words, as the ages of their audiences changed, so too did the music that was played.

In August, 1979, I drove up a steep hillside above Boones Mill in Franklin County, VA, to meet fiddle-player Sherman Wimmer. One tune that Sherman liked to play was titled *Twin Sisters* and was a version of a hornpipe that I knew as *The Boys of Bluehill*. I had first picked the tune up from a recording of Irish musicians and was delighted to hear Sherman's version. I had always assumed that it was an Irish tune (Ryan's *Mammoth Collection* calls it *The Boys of Oak Hill*), although there are some 19th century Scottish printings of the tune. The earliest (?) American version, titled *The Two Sisters*, can be found in Knauff's *Virginia Reels* of 1839. A few days after meeting and hearing Sherman Wimmer I met up with another fiddler, Taylor Kimble of Laurel Forks in Carroll County, VA. Taylor was quite ill when I met him, although he insisted on playing me a few tunes, one being his version of *The Boys of Bluehill*, which he called *The Old Ark's a-Moving* (Taylor also played me the old British tune *The New Rigged Ship* to accompany a set of words which began: 'O the first come in was a bumblebee/The first comes in was a bumblebee/And he danced a jig on the old man's knee'). And there were other titles for *The Boys of Bluehill*. The Jimmy Johnson String Band, from Kentucky, called it *Jenny Baker* (track 3 on this CD), while other performers called it *Pussy and the Baby, Hell on the Wabash or Beau of Oak Hill*. Kentucky fiddler William B Houchens included the tune in a 1922 medley of tunes titled *Turkey in the Straw*.

In fact, so many versions of this tune have turned up across America that some authorities have begun to wonder whether or not it is really an Irish tune, or, is it, perhaps, actually an American tune; one which, somehow or other, later found its way to Ireland. And perhaps this is not such a wild idea; after all, today we are inundated with American music in Britain and I suppose that I should not have been surprised awhile back to hear a guitar and set of quills belting out the tune from Henry Thomas's 1920s *Fishing Blues* being used to advertise something or other on the television.⁽⁴⁾ Once, when America really was the New World, music only flowed one way; namely from Europe to America (and from Africa to America when slaves were being transported across the Atlantic) whereas, today, it is a river that flows in both direc-

tions. Now, with music moving both ways, I suppose that we can say that the circle has been completed.

Footnotes:

1. 'Mississippi Fiddle Tunes and Songs from the 1930's' - Document DOCD-8071.
2. All of Fiddlin' John Carson's recordings are available on a seven CD set issued by Document Records (DOCD-8014-20) and most of the Skillet Lickers recordings have been issued by Document Records on a six CD set (DOCD-8056-8061).
3. These recordings are available on the Document CD 'Lowe Stokes. In Chronological Order. Volume 1. 1927 - 1930.' (DOCD-8045).
4. You can hear the original recording of *Fishing Blues* on a stunning CD 'Henry Thomas - Texas Worried Blues. 1927 - 1929' on Yazoo CD 1080/1.

The Performers:

Bennie Esterd "Cuje" Bertram (August 24, 1894 - April 2, 1993) was an African-American from Kentucky, who played fiddle in a style which has been assumed, incorrectly, to have been the sole preserve of white musicians. Born into a musical family in Fentress County, Tennessee, in the 1920s and '30s he played with other musicians on the Cumberland Plateau, including the white fiddler Leonard Rutherford, who occasionally stayed at Bertram's home. Bertram would sometimes accompany the banjo-player Dock Burnett and the pair would play outside the courthouse in Monticello. Unlike Burnett and Rutherford, who were recorded by record companies during the 1920s, Bertram was never recorded at this time. He did, however, make a large number of home recordings in the 1960s and these include such tunes as *Cumberland Gap, Big Eared Mule, Eighth of January, Big Cat, Little Cat* and *Red River Valley*, tunes which are more usually associated with white musicians. It now seems that some rural old-timey musicians were, at one time, more racially integrated than had previously been suspected. Further recordings by Cuje Bertram can be heard on the CD *Black Fiddlers* (Document DOCD-5631), while other African-American fiddle players who had similar repertoires to Cuje Bertram can be heard on the Rounder CD *Altamont: Black Stringband Music from the Library of Congress* (Rounder CD 0238).

Jasper Bisbee (July 29, 1843 - August 10, 1935) was born in Ossian, New York, before moving to Ionia County, Michigan in 1858. The family worked in farming and it is believed that Jasper's older brother, Jep, made him a fiddle from the limb of an apple tree and horsehair. Jasper's first tunes were picked up from his mother's whistling. On 28 November 1928 Thomas Edison, founder of Edison Records, invited Jasper, his son, Earl and his daughter Beulah into the

Edison studio, where on the first day with Earl (bass) and Beulah (piano) they recorded a few tunes, but they were not published. On the second day Bisbee was accompanied only by his daughter. Together they played *Opera Reel*, *The Devil's Dream*, *Money Musk with Variations*, *The Girl I Left Behind Me*, *McDonald's Reel* and *College Hornpipe*.

The Blue Ridge Mountaineers, from Kentucky, were Frank Miller (fd), Clarence McCormick (har), Alice McCormick (pno) and Homer Castleman (bjo). Clarence McCormick and his wife Alice performed on radio station WLW as 'Pa and Ma McCormick'. They would sometimes be joined by Frank Miler, who was born in Grant County, KY, in 1895, and 'Big Foot' Homer Castleman on the McCormick's *Top of the Morning Show*. They paid one trip to the Gennett recording studio on Wednesday, April 3rd, 1929, where they recorded two sides - *Old Flannigan* and *Old Voile* which were issued on a Gennett 78 (Ge 6870). *Old Voile* was named after a Grant County mail carrier called Voile Franks, who played the tune. Details about the tune *Old Flannigan* are given in the tune notes below.

Ernest O 'Ernie' Carpenter (1907 - 1997) came from Sutton, West Virginia, and learnt to play the fiddle from listening to his father and grandfather. In 1988 he was awarded the Vandalia Award, West Virginia's highest folklife honour. Further recordings, made at the 1987 Brandywine Festival, can be heard on the Field Recorders' Collective CD FRC204, while in 2001 Augusta Heritage Records issued a double CD set of Ernie Carpenter as *Old-Time Fiddle Tunes from the Elk River Country* (AHR-023).

Carter Brothers and Son were two fiddle-playing brothers, George Carter, who was aged about 60 years in 1928, and Andrew Carter; who, together with George's guitar-playing son Jimmy, recorded ten hard-driving tunes which have hardly been beaten in almost a hundred years. The trio were from Monroe County, Mississippi, and often competed in fiddle contests held at the Aberdeen Opera House.

Ed Haley (1883 - 1951) was perhaps the most influential Old Time fiddle player never to have been recorded commercially. Haley was born in West Virginia and, following an attack of measles as a baby, lost his sight. He moved to Kentucky and married, his wife who was also blind played the mandolin, and the pair would travel around, often accompanied by one or more of their children, playing music to earn a living. It seems that Haley acted as a catalyst, inspiring many other younger fiddle-players such as Clark Kessinger, who called Haley, 'a great fiddler ... he was the best'. Haley's large repertoire included many tunes of Old World origin, as well as more up to date numbers. I mentioned that he was not recorded commercially, but he did make home

recordings on 78 rpm discs which he sold via adverts in local newspapers. About one hundred of these sides have been traced, but it is thought that there could have been many more. Rounder records re-issued two double CDs from some of these recordings - Rounder CD 1131/1132 and CD 1133/1134.

Edden Hammons (1875 - 1955) was a member of a large and important family of musicians and singers who moved from Kentucky to West Virginia at the time of the American Civil War. Edden spent much of his life playing the fiddle and was recorded in 1947 by Louis Watson Chappell. A total of fifty-two tunes were collected from him, of which forty-eight were issued on three CDs (two CDs being on the second album), by the West Virginia University Press (WVU Press SA-1 and SA-2). Further details about Edden Hammons may be found in John A Cuthbert's Musical Traditions on-line article (MT article # 70) *Edden Hammons: Portrait of a West Virginia Fiddler*.

The Highlanders

See under The North Carolina Ramblers.

Jimmy Johnson's String Band was named after the band's leader and manager, Jimmy Johnson, who played guitar on some of the band's recordings. On the track heard here, *Jenny Baker*, the lead is taken by fiddler Andy Palmer, who was born c.1881 in Anderson County, Kentucky. The band performed mainly around Carrollton in Carroll County, Kentucky, and could sometimes be heard playing on WHAS (in Louisville) and WCKY (in Covington).

Kessinger Brothers. Although they recorded as the Kessinger Brothers, the fiddler Clark Kessinger (1896 - 1975) was actually the uncle of Luches 'Luke' Kessinger (1906-1944) who accompanied his uncle on the guitar. Clark Kessinger was from West Virginia and grew up hearing members of his family play the fiddle, but it was Ed Haley who was the greatest influence. In 1927 Clark and Luches began playing on the radio station WOBW in Charleston, West Virginia. The following year they travelled to Ashland, Kentucky, where they auditioned for the Brunswick-Balke-Collender recording company. They were accepted and recorded twelve sides on the same day as the audition. During the period 1928 - 30 the pair recorded no fewer than eighty-two sides of which seventy were issued. During this period Clark also worked as a caretaker and, later, as a house painter. Clark Kessinger more or less stopped playing in 1944, following the death of Luches Kessinger, but he was rediscovered in 1963 by folk promoter Ken Davidson, who arranged for Clark to record a number of LPs and to again appear in public. In April, 1971, Clark won the World's Champion Fiddle Prize at the 47th Old-Time Fiddler's Convention in Union Grove, North Carolina. All of the

Kessinger Brother's issued 78's have been reissued on three Document CDs - DOCD-8010/12.

Fiddlin' Sam Long (1876 - 1931), whose full name was Samuel William Long, was the first Ozark musician to be recorded. Long was born in Kansas, and at various times lived in Oklahoma and Missouri. It seems that a talent scout noticed him at a Missouri fiddle contest and directed him to Richmond, Indiana, where he recorded six sides, four of which were issued. These were: *Seneca Square Dance*, *Echoes of the Ozarks*, *Listen to the Mockingbird* and *Sandy Land*. The unissued sides were: 'The Rights of Man' and 'Stoney Point and Mule Skinner's Delight'. These tunes were recorded acoustically, rather than electrically, and the quality can, at times, be rather poor.

Emmett Lundy (1864 - 1963) came from Grayson County, Virginia. He ancestors arrived in America from England in the 17th century, settling first in Pennsylvania, before moving to Grayson County sometime around 1790. They acquired land near Dalhart, about five miles to the south of Galax, where they worked as farmers. Emmett Lundy's chief musical influence was the fiddler Green (actually Greenberry) Leonard, who lived in Old Town. Leonard's date of birth is unknown to me, though he was married in 1833, and he was aged about '65 to 80' when Lundy knew him, possibly in the 1880s and '90s and it is possible that some of the tunes heard here came, originally, from Leonard. In May, 1925, Emmett Lundy accompanied fellow Galax musician Ernest Stoneman to New York where they recorded a single 78rpm record together. This was *Piney Woods Gal* and *The Long Eared Mule*, two harmonica-fiddle duets (Okeh 40405). Further recordings by Emmett Lundy can be heard on the Musical Traditions double CD set *When Cecil Left the Mountains* (MTCD514/5).

Marcus Martin (1881 - 1974) was born in Macon County in North Carolina. He played fiddle, banjo, harmonica and dulcimer and was reputed to also have been a fine ballad singer. Much of his fiddle style came from his father's playing. During his life he held down a variety of jobs, including being a postmaster, an assistant to loggers, a laundry worker in a mill in Gastonia and a watchman at a mill in Swannanoa. Martin played at many of Bascom Lamar Lunsford's Mountain Dance and Folk Festivals, held in Asheville. There are two CDs available of Marcus Martin: *When I Get my New House Done: Western North Carolina Fiddle Tunes and Songs* (Southern Folklife Collection SFC CD-1000) and *Marcus Martin: Recordings from the Collection of Peter Hoover* (Field Recorder's Collective FRC502).

Narmour and Smith. William Thomas Narmour (1889 - 1961) and Shellie Walton Smith (1895 - 1968) were a Mississippi duet, Narmour playing the fiddle and Smith the guitar. They were discovered by an

Okeh Records producer in the late 1920s and they recorded thirty-one sides for this label, before moving to another label, Bluebird. It seems that for most of their lives the couple stayed close to home in Mississippi, only travelling away when visiting recording studios in Memphis, Atlanta, New York and San Antonio. You can hear their entire output on two document CDs (Document DOCD-8065/6). The pair are also known for the fact that they persuaded Okeh records to audition and then record their neighbour, the great country blues man Mississippi John Hurt.

James Preston 'Press' Nester (1876 - 1967) and **Norman Edmonds** (1889 - 1976) were from the musically rich Hillsville, Fancy Gap, Galax region of Virginia. Edmonds was the fiddle player, while Nester played the banjo and provided vocals. On August 1st, 1927 the couple recorded four tracks for Ralph Peer of Victor, although only two tracks 'Train on the Island' and 'Black-Eyed Susie' were issued, at the famous 'Bristol Sessions' held in Bristol, Tennessee. Peer was impressed with the couple and invited them to travel to New York to make further recordings, but Nester refused, saying that he did not wish to travel that far from his home in the mountains. Edmonds, however, was recorded in the late 1950's by Alan Lomax and other local collectors. There are two CDs worth of recordings on 'Norman Edmonds and the Old Timers' (Field Recorder's Collective - FRC301 & 302), plus two further tracks on 'Galax Gems' (Field Recorder's Collective - FOC309). (In 1979 when I first visited Hillsville I made enquiries about J. P. Nestor. Most people who had known him referred to him as 'James', though some insisted that his real first name was 'John'.)

The North Carolina Ramblers were led by banjo-player and singer Charlie Poole (1892 - 1931), who came from the mill town of Franklinville, NC. In 1918 he moved to Spray, now a part of Eden. It is said that as a young man he damaged his right hand playing baseball and, as a result, when he learnt to play the banjo he was unable to play in a conventional style, but rather developed his own characteristic style. He became a semi-professional musician but continued to work in the textile mills for most of his short life. Poole formed the North Carolina Ramblers with his brother-in-law, the fiddler Posey Rorer, and guitarist Norman Woodlief. They recorded for the Columbia label and it is said that their first record *Don't Let Your Deal Go Down*, which they recorded in 1925, sold over 106,000 copies and this was at a time when there were only thought to be some 6,000 phonographs in the southern United States. In 1929 Charlie Poole teamed up with a larger group, The Highlanders, comprising Lonnie Austin (fd), Oden Smith (fd), Lucy Terry (p), Roy Harvey (gtr) and himself on guitar and vocals. They had a series of New York session for Paramount records (shortly after recording for Columbia a day or two before) but the larger group

did not prove as popular as the original North Carolina Ramblers and in the following year Poole and the Ramblers - this time comprising Poole, Odell Smith (fd) and Roy Harvey (gtr) - returned to Columbia records for their final three recording sessions. Charlie Poole died in May, 1931, following a heart attack.

The Red Headed Fiddlers were A L 'Red' Steeley (fd) and F J Warner 'Red' Graham (bjö). Steeley was originally from Alabama, but he had moved to the Dallas region prior to making records there in 1928, 1929 and 1930. Their repertoire included such tunes as: *Sweet Alone Waltz*, *Texas Quickstep*, *Texas Waltz*, *Rag Time Annie*, *St Jobe's Waltz*, *Fatal Wedding*, *Cheat 'Em*, *Far in the Mountain*, *Paddy on the Handcart*, *Wagoner's Hornpip*, *The Steeley Rag* and *Johnson Grass Rag*.

Marion Reece was an elderly blacksmith who played both the fiddle and fife. He came from a very beautiful part of the Appalachians, Zionsville, in Watauga County, NC. He was recorded privately in 1936 and the recordings were deposited in the Library of Congress in Washington. Reece played a fife which had been given to him by either his father or grand-father who had played the instrument during the American Civil War. Reece recorded the following tunes on the fiddle: *Cumberland Gap*, *Ground Hog*, *Liza Jane*, *The Lost Girl*, *The Scolding Wife* and *Down the Road*, and both *The Lost Girl* and *Ground Hog* on the fife. The latter tune was included on a long out-of-print LP titled *That's My Rabbit, My Dog Caught It* (New World 226).

Dock Philipine (Fiddlin' Doc) Roberts (April 26, 1897 - August 4, 1978) came from Kentucky. Doc and his brother, Liebert, learnt to play the fiddle from an African-American fiddler called Owen Walker. His recording debut came about when a talent scout, Dennis Taylor, spotted him and sent him off to the Gennett recording studio. Doc recorded almost seventy issued tracks during his recording career. He retired from making records in 1934, saying that he preferred to be on his farm. All of his known recordings can be heard on a three CD set issued by Document Records (Document DOCD-8042/8044).

Robert Allen Sisson (1873 - 1951) hailed from the mountain region of north Georgia. An uncle, Ira Arnold Sisson, taught Allen how to play the fiddle. It is said that by the time he was twelve years old Allen Sisson was the best fiddle player in north Georgia. In 1921 Sisson became the Tennessee State Fiddle Champion. Four years later, in 1925, Sisson travelled to New Jersey to record for the Edison Company. He recorded ten tunes over a two-day period. These were: *Walking Water Reel*, *Kentucky Wagoners*, *The Rock Road to Dublin* (not the well-known Irish tune of that name), *Grey Eagle*, *Katy Hill Reel*, *Cumberland Gap*, *Farewell Ducktown*, *Kaiser's Defeat Jig*, *Sally Brown* and *Rymer's Favorite*. In an advertising poster

Edison Records said, 'How Allen Sisson can tear off these reels with such rapidity without setting his fiddle on fire is beyond us. He sure can make his bow behave.' And so say all of us!

Manco Sneed (1885 - 1975), from the North Carolina mountains, was the son of fiddler John Sneed, who was half Cherokee. Much of Manco's repertoire came from the fiddler J Dedrick Harris from Flag Pond in Tennessee. Manco's family moved onto Cherokee tribal lands when Manco was a teenager and it is thought that he was musically isolated from other fiddlers, a fact which may account for his own intricate style of fiddling. Although his family said that Manco could play all day without repeating a tune, we are only left with recordings of less than thirty tunes, twelve of which can be heard on the Field Recorder's Collective CD *Byard Ray, Manco Sneed and Mike Rogers* - FRC505.

The Music

1 Flop-Eared Mule

The Highlanders - Odell Smith (fd), Lonnie Austin (fd), Lucy Terry (pno), Charlie Poole (bjö), Roy Harvey (gtr). 8th, 9th or 10th May, 1929. New York, NY.

It seems only right to open this CD with a tune that is known throughout mainland Europe. In Estonia it goes under the title *Kaera-Jaan* and is used to accompany a dance of the same name, while in the Ukraine it is known as *Dowbush Kozak*. The 'Dowbush', or 'Dovbush', was a sort of 18th century Carpathian hero (a bit like Robin Hood) who supported the poor by stealing from the rich. In Scandinavia it is known as *Visslarepolska fran Ydre Harad* ('Whistler's Polska from Ydre County') and in Britain it was played as the *Bluebell Polka* by Jimmy Shand and many other dance bands. The tune has also turned up in Ireland as either *The Curlew Hills* or else as the *Little Pet Polka*.

Other recordings: Ukrainiska Selska Orchestra. *Dowbush Kozak* on *Ukrainian Village Music: Historic recordings 1928 - 1933*. Arhoolie CD 7030. As *Flop-Eared Mule*: Ernest V Stoneman (VA) - 5String Production 5SPH001. The Skillet Lickers (GA) - Document DOCD-8061. As *Bluebell Polka*: Percy Brown (Norfolk) - VT150CD & VTDC11CD. Tom Smith (Suffolk) - VTDC8CD. Clyde Davenport (KY) - Field Recorders Collective FRC103. Norman Edmonds (VA) - Field Recorders Collective FRC302. Corbett Stamper (VA) - Field Recorders Collective FRC306.

2 Humphrey's Jig

Ed Haley (fd) & Ralph Haley (gtr). Kentucky, 1946 or 1947.

A version of the Scots tune 'Bob of Fettercairn', which can be found in the 18th century 'Scots Musical Museum' and in Nathaniel Gow's 'Beauties of Niel Gow'(1850). Collectors Mark Wilson and Guthrie Meade have suggested that Haley's version of this tune, 'resembles not the mainland Scottish versions but rather a Shetland version of the melody called 'Knockit Corn'.'

Other recordings: George Lee Hawkins (KY) - Rounder CD 0376.

3 Jenny Baker

Jimmy Johnson's String Band - Andy Palmer (fd), Bill Mulligan (bjo) & Basil Martin (gtr). 22nd August, 1932.

This is a version of the Irish hornpipe *The Boys of Blue Hill*. It is tune number 1700 in Francis & James O'Neill's *O'Neill's Music of Ireland*, published in 1850, and, over the years, has turned up both in Ireland and in North America under various titles, such as *The Boys of Blue Hill*, *The Boys of Beaux Oak*, *Buachailli an Chnoic Ghorm* and *The Beaux of Oak Hill*. (But please also see the final paragraph in the introduction.)

Other recording: Pat Roche's Harp & Shamrock Orchestra - Topic TSCD602 (1934 recording). Myles O'Mally and His Orchestra. Topic TSCD604 (1937 recording). Michael Gorman. Topic TSCD525D (1961 recording).

4 Waynesburgh

Fiddlin' Doc Roberts (fd) & John Booker (gtr). 26th August, 1927.

I always thought that this tune was the epitome of Old Timey music, that is until I realized that it was in fact a version of the Irish reel *Over the Moors to Maggie*, which is number 786 in Francis O'Neill and James O'Neill's *The Dance Music of Ireland* (1907). Like many traditional tunes, it can be found under a whole range of titles. These include: *Green Meadows*, *Little Christmas*, *The Rakes of Abeyfale*, *Rowenell*, *Trasna an Réisc go Mairéidín*, *Kitty's Wedding*, *Peggy's Wedding*, *The Hag's*, *The Mayo Lasses*, *The Old Maids of Galway*, *The Humours of Fairymount*, *The Rakes of Killevan*, *The Smoky House* and *Swallow's Tail*. The American title, *Waynesburgh*, may possibly be named after the Pennsylvanian home of Major General Anthony Wayne (1745 - 1796), who fought with Washington and Lafayette, and who led the Pennsylvania line in the battles of Brandywine and Germantown during the American Revolutionary War. Wayne, a hero of the War, also fought at Valley Forge and Stony Point.

Other recordings: Beverley P Baker (KY) - MTDC514-5.

5 Charleston No. 3

W T Narmour (fd) and S W Smith (gtr). June 6th, 1930. San Antonio, Texas.

A version of the well-known *Sailor's Hornpipe*, which can sometimes be found under the names *College Hornpipe*, *Duke William's Hornpipe*, *Jack's the Lad* and *Lancashire Hornpipe*. It seems that *College Hornpipe* was probably its original title, though this was changed to *Sailor's Hornpipe* when actors on stage began dancing the hornpipe while dressed in sailor's attire. For example, in May, 1740, an actor called Yates performed a 'hornpipe in the character of Jacky Tar' at Drury Lane. According the 'Fiddler's Companion' website:

'As the "College Hornpipe" the tune was in print in 1797 or 1798 by J. Dale of London, and although the melody predates Dale's publication, the English antiquarian Chappell's editor dates it no earlier than the second half of the 18th century. Emerson suggests the comic ballet 'The Wapping Landlady' (1767) was the source of the Sailor Hornpipe that was famously danced by the American dancer Durang for some twenty years at the end of the 18th century. The ballet featured the trials of Jack Tar ashore and was choreographed by Arnold Fisher (of "Fisher's Hornpipe" fame).'

Presumably the actor Durang could have been the source for the tune *Durang's Hornpipe*.

Other recordings: The Peacock Band (Suffolk), George Woolnough (Suffolk) and Albert Smith (Suffolk) - MTCD339-0. Harry Lee (Kent) - MTCD373. Fred Whiting (Suffolk) - MTCD350 (as 'College Hornpipe'). Dolly Curtis (Suffolk) - VT130CD. Billy Cooper, Walter Bulwer, Daisy Bulwer & Edna Wortley (Norfolk) and George Green (Cambridgeshire) - VT150CD. Billy Bennington (Norfolk) - VT152CD. Billy Bennington (Norfolk), Walter Jeary (Norfolk) & Oswald Sparkes (Essex) - VTDC12CD. Charlie Buller Norfolk) & John Woodrow (Norfolk) - VTDC11CD. Reg Reeder (Suffolk) & Hubert Smith (Suffolk) - VTDC8CD.

6 Too Young to Marry

North Carolina Ramblers: Led by Posey Rorer. Posey Rorer (fd), Charlie Poole (bjo), Roy Harvey (gtr). September 18th, 1926.

A Scottish tune, best known as an accompaniment to the song *My Love She's but a Lassie Yet*, which Robert Burns apparently wrote having heard a fragment sung by somebody else. Burns' text is as follows:

Oh my love she's but a lassie yet,
Oh my love she's but a lassie yet,

We'll let her stand a year or twa,
She'll no be half sae saucy yet.

I rue the day I sought her, O!
I rue the day I sought her, O!
Wha gets her need na say she's woo'd,
But he may say he's bought her, O!

Come draw a drap o' the best o't yet,
Come draw a drap o' the best o't yet,
Gae seek for pleasure where you will,
But here I never missed it yet.

We're a' dry wi' drinkin' o't
We're a' dry wi' drinkin' o't
The minister kiss'd the fiddler's wife -
He could na preach for thinking o't!

It would seem that the earliest known Scottish printing is that found in Bremner's *Scots Reels* (1757) where it appears as *Miss Farquharson's Reel*. Other writers have suggested that the original title was actually *Lady Bodinscoth's Reel*. In Ireland the tune became a polka, a version of which was recorded on a 78rpm record - as *Tripping on the Mountain* - by John McKenna (flute) and James Morrison (fd).

7 Devil's Dream

Jasper E. 'Jep' Bisbee (fd), unknown piano. New York, NY. November, 1923.

Known in both Scotland and Ireland as *The Deil Among the Tailors* ('The Devil Among the Tailors'), the *Devil's Dream*, as it seems to be known in America, has turned up repeatedly among American fiddle-players.

Other recordings: Reg Reeder (Suffolk) - VTDC12CD. Hobert Smith (VA) - Rounder CD 1799.

8 Buck Creek Gal

Fiddlin' Doc Roberts (fd) & John Booker (gtr). Richmond, Indiana. August 26th, 1927.

Known in America under a number of titles, including *Wild Horse*, *Stoney Point* and *Pigtown Fling*. In Ireland it turns up as *Kelton's Reel* in the 19th century Ryan's *Mammoth Collection* and as *Pigtown* in County Donegal. It may be that it's original name was the *County Kerry Polka*.

Other recordings; Charlie Poole and the North Carolina Ramblers - JSP7734A.

9 Grey Eagle

Ed Haley (fd) & Ralph Haley (gtr). Kentucky, 1946 or 1947.

In 1838 two racehorses, *Grey Eagle* and *Wagner*, took part in a well-publicized race held in Louisville, KY. *Grey Eagle* won and, in 1840, William C Peters published his *Grey Eagle Cotillions* to celebrate the event. Peters used a Scottish strathspey, *The Miller of Drone*, for his music, a tune believed to have been composed by Nathaniel Gow (1763 - 1831).

Other recordings: Smith's Garage Fiddle Band (TX) - Document DOCD-8038. Taylor's Kentucky Boys (KY) - Yazoo CD 2206 (CD6). John Johnson (WVA) - West Virginia University Press SA-3. Smokey Valley Boys (NC) - Field Recorders Collective FRC102. Clyde Davenport (KY) - Field Recorders Collective FRD104. Ward Jarvis (OH) - Field Recorders Collective FRC402. John Hannah (WVA) - Field Recorders Collective FRD405. Arnold Sharp (Ohio) - Field Recorders Collective FRC406. Jess Silvey (Ozarks) - Rounder CD 0437.

10 Billy in the Low Ground

Cuje Bertram (fd) with unknown spoons player. Indianapolis, c.1970.

Billy in the Low Ground has been traced to at least two possible Old-World origins. Firstly to an Irish tune called *The Kerryman's Daughter* and, secondly, to the Scottish tune *The Braes of Auchentyre*. Others have suggested that the B part of the tune is similar to the B part of another Irish tune, this time *The Sailor's Bonnet*. According to the Fiddler's Companion' website:

Samuel Bayard (*Dance to the Fiddle*. 1981) agrees with Stenhouse Johnson in concluding that the tune originated in Britain as a slow 3/4 time song tune from c.1710 or earlier, called *O Dear Mother (Minnie) What Shall I Do?* He sees the development of the tune as having then split into two branches, and that during the 1740s a 6/8 'giga' or jig form was composed called variously *All the Blue Bonnets Are Over the Border*, *Blue Bonnets Over the Border*, *Over the Border* or *Blue Bonnets*. Later in the century the second branch was fashioned from the original 3/4 tune into a fast-duple time (4/4) dancing air which went by several titles including *The Braes of Auchertyre/Auchentyre* (the oldest and most common title), *The Belles of Tipperary* and *The Beaus of Albany*. These latter tunes are the immediate ancestor of the *Billy in the Low-ground* group of tunes in America.

Other recordings: Eck Robertson (TX) - County CO-CD-5515. Fiddlin' John Carson (GA) - Document DOCD-8014. Burnett & Rutherford (KY) - Document DOCD-8025. Fiddlin' Doc Roberts (KY) - Document DOCD-8042. Lowe Stokes (GA) - Document DOCD-8045. Buddy Thomas (KY) - Field Recorders Collec-

tive FRC303. Arnold Sharp (Ohio) - Corbett Stamper (VA) - Field Recorders Collective FRC306. Field Recorders Collective FRC406. Santford Kelly (KY) - Field Recorders Collective FRC503. Byard Ray (NC) - Field Recorders Collective FRC505.

11 Fisher's Hornpipe

Emmett Lundy (fd) & Kelly Lundy (gtr). August, 1941.

Fisher's Hornpipe dates from the 18th century and various attempts have been made to identify just who Fisher was. One suggestion is that he was Johann Christian Fischer (1733 - 1800), a friend of Mozart, and the 'J Fishar' who was given as the composer when the tune was published in England in 1780. Another, more likely, suggestion was James A Fishar, a dancing master who worked in Covent Garden during the 1770s. The tune, as Hornpipe #1 is included in J Fishar's (presumably James A Fishar's) *Sixteen Cotillions, Sixteen Minuets, Twelve Allemands and Twelve Hornpipes* published by John Rutherford in London in 1778. One other possible contender could be an English 18th century fiddle player called J W Fisher. Over the years the tune has been printed under a number of different titles and in McGlashan's Collection of Scots Measures (c.1780) we are told that it was 'Danc'd by Aldridge'. Robert Aldridge was a well-known and popular performer in London during the 1760s and 1770s.

Other recordings: Doc Watson (NC) - Sugar Hill CD-3829; Benton Flippen (NC) - Rounder CD 0326; The Hill Billies (VA) - DOCD-8039; Art Galbraith (MI) - Rounder 0436; Esker Hutchins (NC) - Field Recorders Collective FRC 107; Gaither Carlton (NC) - Field Recorders Collective FRC 118; Ira Mullins (WVA) - Field Recorders Collective FRC 202; Simon St; Pierre (MAINE) - Field Recorders Collective FRC 205; Ward Jarvis (OHIO) - Field Recorders Collective FRC 402; John Hannah (WVA) - Field Recorders Collective FRC 405; Marcus Martin (NC) - Field Recorders Collective FRC 502; Heywood Blevins (VA) - Field Recorders Collective FRC 508; Fred 'Pip' Whiting (Suffolk) - MTCD350. L G 'Pug' Allen (VA) - MTCD513.

12 Booth

Marcus Martin (fd) & unknown (Peter Hoover? gtr). Swannanoa, NC, c.1960.

Booth, or *Booth Shot Lincoln Dead* as it is sometimes called, commemorates the 1865 assassination of President Abraham Lincoln by the actor John Wilkes Booth. At least two North Carolina musicians knew the tune, these were Osey Helton and Marcus Martin, and Tommy Magness (1911 - 1972) a fiddler from north Georgia also played it. The North Carolina banjo-player Bascom Lamar Lunsford learnt the tune

from Marcus Martin and added the following words, which he said came from his father, when performing the piece:

There's treason, boys, in Washington.
John Wilkes Booth has fled.
Abe Lincoln's lyin' cold and dead
With a bullet in his head.
Bring the traitors in, boys,
Bring the traitors in.
Bring the traitors in, boys,
Bring the traitors in.

Martin's tune would seem to be a breakdown version of an Irish jig called *The Market Town (An Baile-Margad or Baile an Margaid)*, which can be found in three of O'Neill's books, *Music of Ireland: 1850 Melodies* (1903), *Dance Music of Ireland: 1001 Gems* (1907) and *O'Neill's Irish Music* (1915).

13 Fire in the Mountain

The Red Headed Fiddlers - A L 'Red' Steeley (fd) & F J Warner 'Red' Graham (bjo). Dallas, TX., October, 1929.

A version of 'Fire in the Mountain' which is characterized by its modulating keys. It is another tune which may have originated from Eastern Europe - compare it with the tune *Flop-Eared Mule*, track 1 on this CD, for example. It is certainly related to a Norse 'halling' tune which was set to music by Edvard Greig, who published an arrangement in Copenhagen in 1875 (see *Southern Folklore Quarterly* vol. vi, 1, March, 1942). The tune may also be related to the Old World *Bell of Claremont Hornpipe*.

Other recordings: Fiddlin John Carson (GA) - Document DOCD-8017. The Camp Creek Boys (VA) - County CD 2719. Pug Allan (VA) - MTCD-501/2. Sam Connor & Dent Wimmer (VA) - Rounder CD 1166-11599-2. Cyde Davenport (KY) - Field Recorders Collective FRC103. Kimble Family (VA) - Field Recorders Collective FRC106. John Hannah (WVA) - Field Recorders Collective FRC405. The Sugarloaf Sheltons - MTCD514-5.

14 Sally Brown Jig

Allen Sisson (fd) & James P. Burckhardt (pno). East Orange, NJ., February, 1925.

When I first heard this recording many years ago I was convinced that it 'sounded' like an Irish tune (or tunes), though, over the years, I have been unable to trace it to any specific tune. I sought help from Ken Ricketts and this is what Ken had to say:

'Always up for a challenge, I had a listen to the 78, but can't say that anything sprang to mind immedi-

ately as a jig, but the basic shape of the first part reminded me of a barn dance or mazurka called *If there Weren't any Women in the World*. James Morrison recorded it in the late '20s and it was included on Mairead Mooney and Frankie Kennedy's first LP as a German. I would think given the shape of the barn dance it would be possible to compress some of the notes into 6/8 time. The second part has less of a link to the Irish tune and may well be more tenuous. Hope this helps, it's not always easy to see how tunes change as they cross cultures. It's hard enough when tunes have regional variants within the idiom.'

15 Black-Eyed Susie

James Preston Nester (bjo & vcl) & Norman Edmonds (fd). 1st August, 1927. Bristol, Tenn.

You may get drunk and you may get boozy
Who came home? Little black-eyed Susie

Walk around with black-eyed Susie

Old lady get drunk, old lady gets boozy
Come home with the black-eyed Susie

May be one, it may be two
But I'm goin' home, little black-eyed Susie

It may be one, it may be two
But I'm goin home with black-eyed Susie

May get drunk, may get boozy
You best stay away from little black-eyed Susie

You better get drunk you better get boozy
But I'm goin' home (with) little black-eyed Susie

Walk around with black-eyed Susie

It seems hard to imagine any tune which epitomizes American Old-Timey music as much as the tune *Black-Eyed Susie*. And yet, according to Samuel Bayard, the earliest known version of this melody appears in the *Fitzwilliam Virginal Book* of c.1560 - 1600, under the title of *Rosasolis*. In 1588 another version appears as *Morris Off* in Jehan Tabourot's book *Orchesographie*. And it seems that an early Welsh tune, *Alawon Fy Ngwlad* ('The Lays of My Land') is also a related melody. Over the years the tune survived well in the 17th and 18th centuries as the English and Scottish melody *Three Jolly Sheep Skins* and in Ireland it gained the name *Aillilliu mo Mhallin* ('Alas my Little Bag'), which tells the story of a stolen bag of trinkets. It should be noted that J P Nester's set of words are purely American and bear no relationship to any of the early tunes found in the UK or Ireland.

Other recordings: Fiddlin' Doc Roberts (KY) - Document DOCD-8042. The Roan Mountain Hilltoppers (TEN) - Field Recorders Collective FRC201. Norman Edmonds (VA) - Field Recorders Collective FRC301. Corbett Stamper (VA) - Field Recorders Collective FRC306. Santford Kelly (KY) - Field Recorders Collective FRC503.

16 Wilson's Jig

Ed Haley (fd) & Ralph Haley (gtr). Kentucky, 1946 or 1947.

A well-known British and Irish hornpipe, *The Cliff/Cliffe Hornpipe*, which was thought, by some, to have been composed by the Newcastle fiddler James Hill (c.1811/c.1815 - c.1853/c.1860). Over the years the tune has acquired a number of other names, such as *The Ruby Hornpipe*, *Brown's Hornpipe*, *Castle Rag Hornpipe*, *Cincinnati Hornpipe*, *Cork Hornpipe*, *Dundee Hornpipe*, *Kildare Fancy*, *The Standard Hornpipe*, *Zig-Zag Hornpipe*, *Granny Will Your Dog Bite* - though other tunes can also be found under this title! - and *Snyder's Jig*. A few bars in the second part of the tune are almost identical to a small part of *Harvest Home*, though the rest of the tune is dissimilar. It would seem that, in America, the title *Wilson's Jig* comes from Fred Wilson, a blackface minstrel dancer who may have picked up the tune while performing in England.

Other recordings: Billy Cooper, Walter & Daisy Bulwer (Norfolk) - Topic TSCD607. Bob Cann (Devon) - Topic TSCD657 (as *Uncle George's Hornpipe*) & Veteran VT138CD (a different recording). The Rice Family (Devon) - Veteran VT144CD. Oscar Woods (Suffolk) - Veteran VTVS05/6.

17 Salt River - Kessinger Brothers.

Clark Kessinger (fd) & Luches Kessinger (gtr). June 25th, 1929. New York.

Numerous suggestions have been made regarding the origin of this tune. It seems to be related to the Irish tune *Carron's Reel* which, according to Francis O'Neill, became attached to the Scots poem *The Ewe wi the Crooked Horn*. Guthrie Meade thought that it was reminiscent of an old tune called *Horny-knick-a-brino*, but that it was 'probably derivative of some Irish air'. Meade, who was obviously taken by the tune, later suggested a 'distant relationship' to P W Joyce's tune *Molly McGuire* found in his *Old Irish Folk Music and Songs* (1909), and several people have seen a similarity between *Salt River* and the tune *Red Haired Boy* (*Gilderoy*) which has turned up repeatedly among Kentucky and North Carolina fiddlers. Clark Kessinger's recording was undoubtedly responsible for the tune's current popularity.

Other recordings: Snake Chapman (KY) - Rounder CD 0418. Norman Edmonds (VA) - Field Recorders Collective FRC301.

18 Natchez Under the Hill

Emmett Lundy (fd) & Kelly Lundy (gtr). August, 1941.

Known variously as *Turkey in the Straw*, *The Old Bog Hole* and *Old Zip Coon* in America, this tune is known to have been played in the New World since at least the year 1800. Alan Jabbour traces the piece to the English tune *The Rose Tree*, which dates from the end of the 18th century, while others see a connection between the piece and the English Morris Dance tune *Old Mother Oxford*. According to Jabbour, 'The only conspicuous difference in the melodic contours is that 'The Rose Tree' drops to tonic in the third phrase of the second strain, while the American tunes thrust up to the octave for rendering much of the same melodic material.'

While Jabbour seems to believe that *The Rose Tree* and *Old Mother Oxford* are English tunes, it must be pointed out that *The Rose Tree* is also known in both Scotland and Ireland - Scottish singer Belle Stewart, for example, used the tune for her version of the old ballad *The False Knight on the Road*.

Other recordings: Lon Jordan (ARK) - Rounder CD 1108.

19 Grandad's Favorite

Ernie Carpenter (fd) & unknown gtr. West Virginia, Date unknown.

Ernie Carpenter's tune, *Grandad's Favorite* belongs to the same family of tunes as *Natchez under the Hill* and *Turkey in the Straw* - see track 18 above - though at times it seems to be moving in the direction of the tune *Sugar in the Gourd* and may suggest how one tune can evolve into another.

20 Queen of the Earth and Child of the Skies

(Roud 2375 - song only)

Edden Hammons (fd). West Virginia, 1947.

This is a version of an Irish ballad air, *The Blackbird* (or *An Lon Dubh*), which was composed to commemorate the Jacobite Old Pretender, James Francis Stewart, leader of the short lived 1719 Rising. Stewart is the blackbird of the song and the text, not heard in this recording, is as follows:

Once on a morning of sweet recreation,
I heard a fair lady a-making her moan,
With sighing and sobbing and sad lamentation,
Aye singing, "My Blackbird forever is flown!"

He's all my heart's treasure, my joy and my pleasure,
So justly my love my heart follows thee;
And I am resolved, in foul or fair weather,
To seek out my Blackbird, wherever he be.

"I will go. a stranger, to peril and danger,
My heart is so loyal in every degree;
For he's constant and kind,

and courageous in mind.

Good luck to my Blackbird, wherever he be!
In Scotland he's loved and deeply approved,
In England a stranger he seemeth to be;
But his name I'll advance in Britain or France.
Good luck to my Blackbird, wherever he be!

"The birds of the forest are all met together,
The turtle is chosen to dwell with the dove,
And I am resolved, in foul or fair weather,
Once in the spring-time to seek out my love.

But since fickle Fortune, which
still proves uncertain,

Hath caused this parting between him and me,
His right I'll proclaim, and who dares me blame?
Good luck to my Blackbird, wherever he be!"

There are claims that the song dates to 1709, although the earliest printing seems to be that in Alan Ramsey's *Tea Table Miscellany* of 1724 (where Ramsey claims to have taken it down from an Irishman who participated in the Rising.) Other printings include ones in Cooke's *Selection of Favourite Original Irish Airs arranged for Pianoforte, Violin or Flute* (Dublin, 1793) and O'Neill's *A Pocket Volume of Airs, Songs, Marches, etc.*, vol.1, published by Paul Alday at Dublin about 1800-1803. Nobody could disagree with Edden Hammons' final comment, "Ain't that nice", heard at the end of this splendid recording.

Other recordings: Kevin & Ellen Mitchell (Ireland) - MTCD315-6. Seamus Ennis (Ireland) - Topic70 (Disc 3). Leo Rowsome (Ireland) - na Piobairi Uilleann NPUCD021.

21 Polka Four

Clark Kessinger (fd) & Luches Kessinger (gtr). June 26th, 1929. New York.

Johanna Maria 'Jenny' Lind (6th October 1820 - 2nd November 1887) was a Swedish opera singer who was often referred to as the 'Swedish Nightingale'. She was the inspiration for the tune *Jenny Lind Polka*, which is commonly known as the *Heel and Toe* polka. The first known publication of the tune, as 'Jenny Lind's Lieblings-Polka' was in a collection of popular tunes for cornet orchestras, published in 1846, though no composers name is given. It is now thought that the tune was actually composed by the German composer and violinist Anton Wallerstein (1813-1892). The tune was probably first played in

America by a New York dancing master called Alan Dodsworth who introduced the polka into America in the 1840s.

22 Wake Up Susan

Ed Haley (fd) & Ralph Haley (gtr). Kentucky, 1946 or 1947.

While Samuel Bayard, who was pretty good at tracing tune origins, could only suggest that this tune showed some traces of British/Irish origin, he failed to see that it is clearly related to the well-known Irish reel *The Mason's Apron* and, possibly, to another Irish reel, *The Night We Made the Match (An Oidce Do Rinneamar An Reite Cleamnas)*, which can be found in O'Neill's *Dance Music of Ireland: 1001 Gems* (1907).

Other recordings: Sean Maguire (Dublin) - Rounder CD 1123. Jess Silvey (Ozarks) - Rounder CD 0437.

23 Jenny on the Railroad

George Carter (fd), Andrew Carter (fd) & Jimmy Carter (gtr). November, 1928. Camden, NJ.

There are a number of American tunes with titles such as *Paddy on the Railroad*, *Paddy on the Turnpike* or *Paddy on the Hand Car*. The Carter Brothers' tune is a version of *Paddy on the Turnpike*, which has been linked to the Irish tune *Katie Jones' Reel* (known in Scottish Gaelic as *Brochan Lom*). Other titles include *The Orange and the Blue* (in Scotland) and *Kitty Jones* (in Ireland). A 1925 version of *Katie Jones* sung by Frank Quinn, which has been reissued on TopicTSCD606, contains the following set of words:

Oh she kicked me and she battered me.
She nearly broke my bones.
So that's the way she tattered me
My darling Katie Jones

Oh there was a little girl
And she lived in Mullingar,
And she lifted up her petticoat
A-la-la-la-la-la

American folklorist Samuel Bayard felt that *Jenny on the Railroad* was also related to the Scottish song air *The Waulkin o the Fauld*.

Other recordings: Wilson Douglas (WVA) - Field Recorders Collective FRC202. Buddy Thomas (KY) - Field Recorders Collective FRC303. Arnold Sharp (Ohio) - Field Recorders Collective FRC406. Uncle Charlie Higgins, Wade Ward & Dale Poe (VA) - Field Recorders Collective 501. Santford Kelly (KY) - Field Recorders Collective FRC503. Manco Sneed (NC) -

Field Recorders Collective FRC505. J P Fraley (KY) - Rounder CD 0037. The Red Headed Fiddlers (TX) - Document DOCD-8038.

24 Seneca Square Dance

Fiddling Sam Long (fd) & Roy Kastner (gtr). c. January/February, 1926. Richmond, Indiana.

If one tune could be said to characterize Ozark Mountain fiddle music then it must be Fiddlin' Sam Long's superb tune *Seneca Square Dance*, which is related to the Irish *John Hoban's Polka* and, possibly to the tune *What Shall We Do with the Drunken Sailor?* The American title may refer to the Native American Seneca people, or to the town of that name in Missouri (which could have been named after the Native Americans). The tune probably predates the American Civil War, although one alternative title, *Shelby's Mules*, suggests a connection to the Confederate General Joseph Shelby. Another version of the tune was recorded in 1928 by Fiddlin' Bob Larkin, who was also from the Ozark region, and his version was titled *The Higher Up the Monkey Climbs* (Reissued on County CD-3507). Some listeners may recognize the tune, as it was used by Ry Cooder as part of the soundtrack to the 1980 film *The Long Riders*.

25 Indian Ate the Woodchuck

Ed Haley (fd) & Ralph Haley (gtr). Kentucky, 1946 or 1947.

Indian Ate the Woodchuck presents us with one of those chicken and egg problems, which not surprisingly turn up in music studies. In this case it comes with the second part of the tune, which is a variant of the song/tune *Such a Getting Upstairs*, which began life on the American Minstrel Stage. Composed by Joe Blackburn in the early 1830s, it was soon popular in England, thanks to Minstrel Troupes crossing the pond to perform in London and elsewhere in Britain. At least three Minstrel tunes were picked up by English Morris Dances sides. *Bobbing Around* from Bampton was written in 1856 by American composer William Jermyn Florence, *Buffalo Girls* was originally picked up by Joe Trafford, Headington Morris side's squire, who had heard the tune being played by a military band, while *Getting Upstairs*, using the tune *Such a Getting Upstairs* was also incorporated into the Headington side's tradition. It may be that Headington picked the tune up from the version popularized by Sam Cowell (best-known for his version of *Vilikins and Dinah*).

However, back to the 'chick and egg' question. *Such a Getting Upstairs* is also known in Scotland as *The Fife Hunt*, a fiddle tune which was composed by Neil Gow's eldest son, William (1775 - 1791), leader of the Edinburgh Assembly Orchestra. So, if William Gow

died in 1791, how could Joe Blackburn claim the tune as his own? It could be that Blackburn, already knowing the tune, used it to accompany his set of words, or perhaps it was a case that both *The Fife Hunt* and *Such a Getting Upstairs* just happened to have been composed by two people, the second, Blackburn, not being aware of Gow's earlier tune.

Other recordings: William Kimber (Headington, Oxford) - EFDSS CD 03. Clyde Davenport (KY) - Field Recorders Collective FRC104. The Skillet Lickers (GA) - Document DOCD-8058.

26 Lady Hamilton

Manco Sneed (fd). Cherokee, NC. Believed 1936.

Although given a grandiose Scottish title, this tune does not appear to have Scottish roots. It may, however, be related to the Irish reel *Eileen Curran* (also known as *Maura Connolly's*, *Sailor Set on Shore* and *Sailors on Shore*) which was recorded in Dublin by the Ballinakill Céilí Band, from East Galway, in 1938. In February, 1923, American fiddle-player William B Houchens recorded the tune, as *Hel'n Georgia* for the Gennett Record Company. The tune *Lady Hamilton* was in the repertoire of a number of mid-20th century North Carolina fiddlers, including Osey Helton, Manco Sneed - who considered it to be his 'signature piece' - and Marcus Martin. See the article 'Instrumental Music of the Southern Appalachians: Traditional Fiddle Tunes', *North Carolina Folklore Journal*, vol. 12, No. 2., Dec. 1964, pp.1-8, for a transcript of Marcus Martin's version of this tune.

Other recordings: Marcus Martin (NC) - Field Recorder's Collective FRC502.

27 Scolding Wife

Marion Reece (fd). Zionsville, NC. 1936.

There are any number of songs/tunes bearing the title *The Scolding Wife*. One Irish reel - *An Bean Cainse-orect* - is similar to *The Clare Reel* and *The Last Word*. This can be found in a number of collections, including *Levey Dance Music of Ireland, 2nd Collection*, 1873; No. 4, p. 2. O'Neill *MUSIC OF IRELAND: 1850 Melodies*, 1903/1979; No. 1430, p. 265. O'Neill *Dance Music of Ireland: 1001 Gems*, 1907/1986; No. 667, p.119 and Stanford/ Petrie *Complete Collection*, 1905; No. 476, p. 120. A second tune, this time an air, can be found in Joyce *Old Irish Folk Music and Songs*, 1909; No. 138, p. 71 (Roud 2381). Joyce's song, which he learnt as a child in the 1840's, begins:

Soon after I was married
a happy man to be,
My wife turned out a saucy jade,
we never could agree;

I dare not call the house my own,
or anything that's in't;
For if I only speak a word she's
just like fire from flint.

In America, at least three tunes claim this title. One version comes from the *mss* collection of Long Island painter and fiddler William Sydney Mount (1807 - 1868), who probably picked the tune up in the 1840s or '50s, while a second tune was recorded in Dallas, Texas, by Benny and Jim Thomasson (fd & gtr) in 1929 for the OKeh record label. Sadly, this record was unissued. Marion Reece's tune may be related to either of these other two tunes. We may equally say that Reece's tune could have been used for at least two other songs (Roud 2132 & 6584), versions of which have turned up in the Appalachians and in the Ozark Mountains.

28 Old Flannigan

The Blue Ridge Mountaineers. Frank Miller (fd), Clarence McCormick (har), Alice McCormick (pno) & Homer Castleman (bjo). Richmond, IN. 1929.

According to fiddler Frank Miller, this tune came from his uncle John Hall who had learnt it from one Brack Flannigan, who was originally from Texas, but who later moved to Kentucky. As they had no title, the Blue Ridge Mountaineers simply named the tune after Flannigan. However, this story sounds slightly odd, as the tune is clearly related to the tune *Old Mother Flanagan*, which also goes under a number of other titles, such as *Greenfields of America (Garranta Glasa Mheiricea, Na Paircib Glais America or Pairci Glasa America)*, *Miss Wedderburn's Reel*, *Pretty/Charming Molly*, *Miss Brallaghan/Brannigan* and *Sooka Flanaga*. *Greenfields of America* probably began life as an emigration song (Roud 2290), the tune later being played on its own. An Irish version of the tune - titled *Cossey's Jig* - was published in the 1774 collection *Jackson's Celebrated Tunes*, while O'Neil titled it *Maid of the Meadow* or *Jimmy O'Brien's Jig*.

Other recordings: Clarence Skirvin (KY) - Rounder CD 0377.

29 Cumberland Gap (Roud 3413)

Manco Sneed (fd). Cherokee, NC. Believed 1936.

Cumberland Gap is one of the best-known and widely distributed American fiddle tunes. The late Alan Jabbour felt that this tune was 'possibly' based on an unidentified Irish reel, while North Carolina singer and instrumentalist Bascom Lamar Lunsford felt that it was a speeded-up version of the tune used for the ballad *Bonny James Campbell* (Child 210, Roud 338).

I might add that the tune carries a faint suggestion of Niel Gow's *Skye Air*.

Other recordings: Rutherford & Burnett (KY) - DOCD-8025. The Hill Billies (VA) - DOCD-8040. Frank Hutchison (WVA) & Williamson Brothers and Curry (WVA) both recordings on - DOCD-8004. Fiddlin' Doc Roberts (KY) - DOCD-8044. The Skillet-Lickers (GA) - DOCD-8057. The Sugarloaf Sheltons - MTC514-5.

30 The Old Clay Pipe

The North Carolina Ramblers - Posey Rorer (fd), Bob Hoke (bjo-mandolin, vcl) & Roy Harvey (gtr & vcl). New York. September, 1927.

Oh who's gonna smoke the old clay pipe?
Who's gonna smoke the old clay pipe?
Who's gonna smoke the old clay pipe?
When I am far away

Oh who's gonna glove her little hand?
Oh who's gonna shoe her little foot?
Oh who's gonna kiss her little white cheeks?
Oh who's gonna be your little man
 'til I come back again?

In the old ballad *The Lass of Roch Royal* (Roud 49, Child 76) - which is also known under the title *Lord Gregory* by some traditional singers - we find the following four stanzas:

'O who will shoe my bony foot?
Or who will glove my hand?
Or who will bind my midle jimp
With the broad lilly band?

'Or who will comb my bony head
With the red river comb?
Or who will be my bairn's father
Ere Gregory he come home?'

'O I's gar shoe thy bony foot,
And I's gar glove thy hand,
And I's gar bind thy midle jimp
With the broad lilly band.

'And I's gar comb thy bony head
With the red river comb;
But there is none to be thy bairn's father
Till Love Gregory he come home.

These stanzas form part of a long ballad, though in America they have often become detached from the ballad and are found in the form:

O who will shoe your pretty little feet?
Who will glove your hand?
And who will kiss your sweet ruby lips
When I'm in a foreign land?

Father will shoe my pretty little feet?
Mother will glove my hand?
And you may kiss my sweet ruby lips
When you return again.

And these two stanzas turn up over and over again in American songs. This version of the song has reduced this text even further, so much so that we now have what can only be described as a new and distinct song. The narrative of the original ballad has disappeared and, like the fiddle tunes heard on this CD, we may say that it has become, to all intent and purpose, truly American.

Other recordings: Elizabeth Cronin (Co Cork) - Rounder CD 1775. Neil Morris (ARK) - Rounder CD 1701.

Acknowledgements:

It should go without saying that I could not have researched the background to this CD without referring to the website *The Fiddlers Companion* at: <https://tunearch.org/wiki/TTA> This amazing site, compiled over a number of years by Andrew Kuntz, contains background information on thousands of fiddle tunes from all over Britain, Ireland and North America and is an essential reference tool. I should also like to thank Frank Weston, Ken Ricketts, Phil Heath-Coleman and Jim Younger for their great help in identifying some of these tunes.

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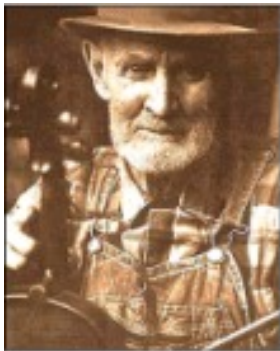
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Top left: Ed Haley *Right: Andy Palmer*
Bottom left: Fiddlin' Dock Roberts
Right: Cuje Bertam



Top: George & Jimmy Carter.
Centre left: Allen Sisson.
Right: Fiddlin' Sam Long.
Bottom: Edden Hammons & son James.



Top: Marcus Martin
Centre left: Clark Kessinger. Right: Jasper Bisbee
Bottom: Charlie Poole & N Carolina Ramblers

Top left: Norman Edmonds
Right: Manco Sneed

Center: Blue Ridge Mountaineers

Bottom right: Emmett Lundy

