



News

Nashville Old-Time String Band Association : NOTSBA

october 2009

www.nashvilleoldtime.org

Post Office Box 160038 Nashville, Tennessee 37216

Starting a Listening Library

Mike Baugh

I admit I know nothing about downloading music, but over the past fifteen years I've collected a lot of old-time music on CD. These five anthologies of traditional American music make a cheap and easy place to start a listening library.

[Old-time Music on the Air Volume One](#)

(Rounder CD 0331)

[Old-time Music on the Air Volume Two](#)

(Rounder CD 0391)

[Young Fogies](#)

(Rounder 0319)

[Young Fogies, Volume Two](#)

(Rounder 0369)

[The Merrimac Anthology: Deep in Old-Time Music](#)

(Rounder CD 0364)

These collections were produced by Ray Alden in the mid-1990's. Each contains 25 to 30 tunes divided about equally between instrumentals and vocals. Some of the artists were on Rounder Records, while others were on small (and I mean small) regional or specialty labels. Many of the performances were recorded by Mr. Alden himself.

I won't attempt to list the tunes or the artists to be found here, but many of the names and titles will be familiar to fans of this kind of music.

Of special interest might be the [Merrimac Anthology](#). this label has been in limbo since the death of owner Larry McBride in the mid-1990's. Since most of this music was only issued on cassette, and those cassettes long since out of print, this CD gives you a hint of the great stuff we've been missing.

It's fascinating to me that most of the artists on these 5 CD's are still out there performing and recording. Young Fogies indeed!

I have to add that this is not the place to come to find recorded versions of tunes played by NOTSBA. Instead you will hear songs and tunes in the old-time style which should increase your familiarity with the genre.

What is Old-time Music?

Ed. Note: This column first appeared in the [News](#) in June 1997. It's still pertinent and we're happy to report its author is living in Nashville, working on instruments and still playing old-time music on guitar.

Andrew Smith

There are many criteria by which to decide what old-time music is or is not. The distinctive style of banjo playing is one I heard mentioned recently. The distinctive style of fiddle or mandolin or guitar might also apply. Old-time music covers a wide variety of vocal styles as well, from the acappella ballad singing of the mountains, to 'lined' sacred songs and sacred harp singing, to the Carter Family, to string band vocals of such as Charlie Poole or the Skillet Lickers, or some of the great vocal duets like the Blue Sky Boys.

Why, you could go on for pages and though not everyone might agree, the elements could all hold true. Elements - the key word there.

Three major things stand out in my mind when I try to think of what old-time music is for me.

First, it began as homemade music. Folk music was what folks did before the advent of such mixed blessings as recorded music, radio, TV, the Internet or whatever comes next. It was dance music, too. Regardless of your level of proficiency, old-time music is accessible to everybody. You don't have to be Doc Roberts or Clark Kessinger or Norman Blake to play old-time music.

Second, old-time music is a cumulative commentary on our ancestry and history. Bonaparte's Retreat, White House Blues, Battle-ship of Maine, the childe Ballads all are historically motivated, all recalling historic events. Like history also, old-time music is continually evolving and unfolding. So, it looks back at history and forward to the future, which brings me to the final point.

Old-time music is timeless as it speaks to people today in a germane or a pertinent way. It's accessible music that anyone can play and that speaks to the human condition. Hard times, good times, simpler times - old-time music is right there.

I encourage you to participate!

I also encourage you to listen to the old timers and recordings from the 1920's and '30's.

Scheduled Open Jams:

NOTE: The slow jam is moving to the THIRD Thursday in October. See below for information on it.

The 1ST THURSDAY JAM will be a REGULAR JAM on October 1, 6:30-8:30 pm, Ft. Negley Visitor Center. So bring us a new tune; we'll play it at whatever speed we can. Of course, we'll play standards, too, some with a relaxed pace and some could be peppy!

2ND THURSDAY REGULAR JAM – October 8, 6:30-8:30 pm, Buchanan Log House, 2910 Elm Hill Pike. Come on out and have a tune up-to-speed, bring in a new one for us and play it several times for us to get in its groove a little, or maybe play a few new ones to you. All are welcome and this is the place to hear them, dip into playing them, take home the titles and do your research.

3RD THURSDAY (SLOW)JAM – October 15, 6:30-8:30 pm, Ft. Negley Visitors Center. This is October's slow jam.

Mary Alice Bernal talks about these tunes she'll teach for her last of three slow jams.

South Missouri (D) Listed as one of Mo. fiddler Charlie Walden's "100 Essential Missouri Fiddle Tunes." This is a lively melody that is reminiscent of Liberty (A part) and American Hornpipe (B part). Floyd Engstrom's arrangement is listed in Gene Silverberg's "Tunes I Either Did or Didn't Learn at the Tractor Tavern."

Meriweather (G) W.L. "Jake" Phelps, from a field recording by Bruce Greene. A Kentucky tune, Jeff Todd Titon says "This rare, appealing and well constructed tune is related to the Irish reels known as "Tom Ward's Downfall" and "The Mourne Mountains."

The Calhoun Swing (D) A wonderfully quirky Melvin Wine tune from his 1976 album "Cold Frosty Morning." Erynn Marshall played this at a recent jam here in Nashville.

Campbell's Farewell to Red Gap (A mixolydian) Also known as "Campbell's Farewell to Red Castle," -- the Campbell referred to in the title may be the Captain Robert Campbell of Glenlyon, who led troops in the massacre of Glencoe Pass in 1692. Redcastle is a village on the north side of Beauty Firth approximately 100 miles from Glencoe, whose castle was built in 1179 (it claims to be the oldest inhabited castle in Scotland).

Jake's Got a Bellyache (G) From West Virginia fiddler Edden Hammons. A version called "Kate's Got the Bellyache" has been collected in southeastern Kentucky. Another quirky tune that Erynn Marshall brought to the Fiddle & Pick from her latest CD "Shout Monah" with the Haints.

Keep these tunes in mind taught at previous recent slow jams to request or offer to lead.

D—West Fork Gals, Lady of the Lake, Over the Waterfall, Needle Case, New Five Cent Piece, Shoo! Fly, Martha Campbell, Year of Jubilo, Cherokee Shuffle, Country Waltz, The Cigarette Reel and Star of Bethlehem

A—Booth Shot Lincoln, Hunting the Buffalo, Little Dutch Girl, Red Rocking Chair, June Apple

G—Nail That Catfish to a Tree, Seneca Square Dance (Waiting for the Federals), Shove that Pig's Foot a Little Further in the Fire, Garfield's March, Georgia Railroad, Old Yeller Dog, Cora Dye, Sweet Jenny

C —Tennessee Wagoner, The Darker the Night (& G), Texas Gales

Am—Cold Frosty Morning

GDGD—cross-tunes Jim Hornsby taught May—July; Old Gray Cat, Hunting the Buffalo, Georgia Railroad, Huldy in the Sinkhole, and Sally Coming Through the Rye

4TH SUNDAY JAM - October 25, Fiddle and Pick from 2-6 pm. Gretchen and company nurture musicians in several genres with lessons, jams, concerts and more. Join them and our west Nashville contingent for a relaxed jam complete with food we'll all bring and fellowship. Because this treasure of a venue is still in the throes of getting off the ground in a challenging financial environment, don't forget that any contribution to the tip jar helps them keep the lights on. ~MLD

Directions from Nashville: Go west on I-40, and take Exit 196, "70S/Bellevue/Newsome Station." At the bottom of the exit ramp, turn right onto 70 South. After you go about 1.8 miles, you will come to a wide fork or "T" in the road. (The landmark there is a small, newly built one-room white church with a steeple).

At the "T," take a left onto 70 West. Go about 4.5 miles to the first traffic light you will see (where Hannah Ford Drive crosses Hwy 70), and you are there! The Fiddle and Pick is on the far right corner. The street number is above the front door. The full address is 456 Hwy 70, Pegram, TN

Seeking music? Remember these Old-Time Jams in the Area

Mansker's Station has a Second Monday Jam from 6:30PM to 8:30PM. All stringed acoustic instruments are welcome. Located in Goodlettsville, they meet at the Mansker's Station Frontier Life Center, also known as the visitor's center. If you have questions feel free to call Joy or John at 615-851-1192.

The Fiddle and Pick's old-time jams are held on the first and third Tuesdays of each month from 7 to 9:30. They say: Please join us! The address is 456 Hwy 70, Pegram, TN

The 5 Spot in east Nashville has a regular Wednesday Night Old-Time Jam. All are welcome. It is a bar, has a good selection of brews and is known for jams that go on into the night as well as people playing outside in good weather.

Located just off Main Street in East Nashville, it is at 1006 Forrest Avenue.

Notsba Business

MEMBERS

WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBERS! We'd like to welcome two new members this month:

Cecelia Chilton

Memphis, Tennessee

Anne Paine

Nashville, Tennessee

Thanks for joining us! We look forward to seeing you at a jam or at Breakin' Up Winter and getting to know you better.

THANKS TO OUR RENEWING MEMBERS! Thanks to three old friends who have renewed their memberships:

Bill Eickmeier

Nashville, Tennessee

Buck and Tiffany Buchanan

Nashville, Tennessee

Thanks for your continued support. ~RW

MEETINGS

NOTSBA Board of Directors to meet **Monday, October 19th at 6:30 PM at the Buchanan Log House.** All members are welcome and encouraged to attend the board meetings, and, as always, if you have business for the board and cannot attend, you are welcome to request that a board member bring it to the meeting for you.

Breakin' Up Winter XV Committee meets **Sunday, October 18th 4:00 pm at the Buchanan Log House.**

JAMS

Hosts for 4th Sunday Jams

Each month, on the 4th Sunday, we have a jam. If you would like to host a jam in your home, or at another location (park, place of business, etc.,) please email Darlyne Kent, dkent@davidsonacademy.com, or call me at 868-9951, and specify which month you would like to host. The jams start at 2:00 p.m. and continue until 6:00 p.m. The host is responsible for providing cups, napkins, plates, flatware and an area for snacks (which are brought by all musicians.) Each month your name will be printed in the newsletter and directions to the 4th Sunday jam will be available. These Sunday jams are a great time to play some of the more obscure tunes, and the tunes are always played up to speed. Who knows, you might even learn a new tune!

Jams for 2010-2011 are scheduled for January through November, excluding December. One last note . . . if you are interested in coordinating the 4th Sunday jams, feel free to volunteer by emailing dkent@davidsonacademy.com, or call me at 868-9951. I hope to see you at one of the 4th Sunday jams soon!

Darlyne Kent

The Newsletter

Please send any newsworthy information by the 20th of the month for next month's edition to **Mary Lou** - mldurham1@juno.com. **The opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the writers and not necessarily those of the Nashville Old-Time String Band Association.** NOTSBA is a volunteer organization and the *News* publishes material from members and others who wish to contribute to the body of knowledge about old-time music. While we strive for accuracy, we do not label "official" any content found here. We appreciate the generousness of our contributors!

~MLD

Tune of the Month

Avalon Quickstep

The melody was first recorded in 1929 by W.T. (Willie) Narmour and S.W. Smith, Mississippi musicians, and named for the town of Avalon, Mississippi (Avalon is the mythological isle to which King Arthur was borne after his death). Apparently, the town was so obscure by the latter part of the 20th century that it could only be located with the help of old maps.

An alternate title of "New Charleston No. 1" was an attempt by Narmour and Smith to cash in on the Charleston dance craze of the 1920's.

Harry Bolick comments on the Narmour and Smith Recordings:

It was at the Winona Fiddle contest Doc Bailey organized in 1927 where Narmour and Smith were discovered by Okeh records, Polk Brockman and Mr. Stevenson. Their recording of "Carroll County Blues"/"Charleston #1" was "One of the biggest selling records of 1929" according to a recording industry trade paper, "Talking Machine World." Their recording of "Some One I Love" was nearly as popular.

In addition to or as part of his creative process, Willie Narmour reworked existing local tunes. Comparisons of the following tunes is enlightening:

- "Charleston #1" in relation to "Done Gone"
- "Limberneck Blues" in relation to the turn of the century sheet music composition "A Rustic Dance" and to Ed Haley's "Parkersburg Landing"
- "Texas Breakdown" in relation to "Fisher's Hornpipe"
- "Sweet Milk and Peaches" in relation to "Belle of Lexington" recorded for the library of Congress by Emmet Lundy of Virginia
- "Winona Echoes" in relation to southern standard "Over the Waves"
- "Bouquets of June Waltz" in relation to "Wednesday Night Waltz"
- "Mississippi Wave Waltz" in relation to the Ray Brothers "Honeysuckle Waltz"

Notice that the 'B' part has ten measures instead of the usual eight. Harry Bolick relates: "When I started to think about music in Carroll County, I assumed that people did some sort of square dancing. And then as I learned more of Narmour's tunes, I began to visualize a bizarre kind square dancing accompanying his irregular tunes. Upon asking members of the Smith and Duke families and my own cousin Anne (Bole) Smith, I found that no one knew of any square dancing in the county in that period. Just waltzes and a very simple two step referred to as the "Carroll County Hop". (Willie Narmour's uncle was known to clog.) This explains how Narmour and Smith could be popular for dancing, as a regular beat is necessary but not regular phrases."

Sources for this information are The Fiddler's Companion <www.ibiblio.org/fiddlers> and the Bolick.net page about Carroll County, Mississippi: <www.bolick.net/recordings/carroll/printtext.asp> (this page is very interesting reading) ~Ray Mathes

Avalon Quickstep

- A) DDDD DDAA DDDD GADD (2X)
- B) DDGD DDGA DDDD GDDD GADD (2X)

Old-Time
From NOTSBA Jam
Nt: Ray Mathes

Mandolin Chords (First Position)

Guitar Chords