

Note: the following comments were written to accompany a CD used in week 5 and 6 of the 2012 fiddle tunes clinic. This CD is not online, but almost all the tunes, and hundreds more besides, can be found on one of these websites:

<http://slippery-hill.com>

<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/collections/reed/>

<http://www.stringband.mossyroof.com/>

29 Roots Fiddle Tunes (CD)

This is a set of tunes to illustrate some aspects of American traditional fiddling. They are not virtuoso showcase tunes - in most cases they are field recordings or very old commercial recordings done on primitive equipment more than 75 years ago. I have intentionally not included recordings from artists recently touring and selling their CDs. To hear some classic Bluegrass commercial recording, I recommend these artists: Robert "Chubby" Wise – the most important fiddler in early Bluegrass, Chubby pretty much singlehandedly destroys the idea that BG fiddle has to be ultra fast and aggressive. His sweet fiddling was calm and sensitive (check You Tube for some nice examples –e.g. Stone's Rag at 85 bpm). Kenny Baker is listed below. Byron Berline, Laurie Lewis (with a strong Tucson connection), the brilliant blind Kentucky fiddler Michael Cleveland of Flamekeeper, Darol Anger – probably the prime example of cross-over fiddling, he teaches jazz and swing fiddling at Berklee College of Music.

1. *Morpeth Rant* – A British tune still played in New England (Morpeth is a town in England, a 'rant' is British slang for 'hornpipe'), this version by Alan Block is probably a good example of what most fiddle playing sounded like when the early colonists came to America before Jazz and the African beat infused the old music. Alan was a Midwesterner whose Greenwich Village sandal shop was the center of old time music in New York at the start of the Folk revival. A gathering place for any and all, frequented by Doc Watson, Clarence Ashley, John Hurt, etc
2. *Feed my Horse on Corn and Hay* - Buddy Thomas was a neighbor of Henry Reed in Virginia. He issued one excellent CD of tunes before his early death in 1974 at age 39. A pretty typical Appalachian fiddle tune by a fine fiddler.
3. *Yellow Barber* – Another Buddy Thomas recording. This is very close to the version played and possibly composed by the great Ed Haley. Haley was a dominant contest fiddler in the early 1900s. He was recorded but the surviving recordings are very poor quality. This is a close approximation of his playing.
4. *Cornstalk Fiddle and a Shoestring Bow* - Clyde Davenport's smooth fiddling was recorded by young folklorists such as Jeff Todd Titon who went on to write the definitive book on Kentucky fiddling and a career as a professor of music at Brown University where he continues to teach Clyde's tunes in his 28th year of undergraduate fiddle workshops.
5. *Green Willis - (the Raw Recruit)* – this tune was one of about 30 tunes recorded on two albums by the Fuzzy Mountain String Band in 1971-1972. The band was made up of young musicians from the Duke/UNC neighborhood, heavily involved with the university folklorists who were actively researching Appalachian fiddle tunes. These albums became the inspiration for thousands of fiddlers and banjoists around the world. I was recently told that over 100,000 copies have been sold – far beyond what anyone could possibly have imagined when they made the recordings in the back room of the Duke student radio station. I heard this tune played at a jam in Tucson two nights ago, and also, the following two tunes, and Frosty Morning, and others from these albums...
6. *West Fork Gals* - another tune from the Fuzzy Mountain band. This has become a favorite tune for fiddlers all over the world.
7. *Loch Lavan Castle* - Franklin George (b1928) of WV learned fiddle tunes from his elderly neighbors and became a kind of ambassador for fiddling in the 1970s and 80s. This tune (also on the Fuzzy Mt albums) and Frank's comment about Mary, Queen of Scots, reflects the strong connection still felt by many in Appalachia to their Celtic roots.
8. *Bound to Have a Little Fun* – by fiddler Gusty Wallace. Just a fun tune that is played at a lot of jams.
9. *The Route* - Henry Reed (1884-1968) was recorded by Duke University folklorist Alan Jabbour in 1966-7 when Henry was over 80 – nearly 200 recordings included many tunes not known from any other source that have since become standards around the fiddling world. Jabbour's original transcriptions and a lot of biographical and musicological information are available on the Library of Congress website (search for 'Fiddle Tunes of the Old Frontier'.)

10. *Frosty Morning* (often called '*Cold Frosty Morning*') - Henry Reed. You can hear this tune at almost any jam in the country as soon as someone calls for a 'modal' tune.

11. *Over the Waterfall* – Henry Reed . This tune was essentially extinct in the USA except in the brain of Henry Reed when Alan Jabbour recorded this version. Since the 1970 recording by Jabbour's Hollow Rock String Band, today it is one of the most widespread and popular tunes at jams around the world.

12. *Magpie* – This is another Henry Reed tune, but this is a recording of Alan Jabbour and his friends at an informal jam in the early 1970s.

13. *Valley Forge* - Jane Rothfield is a well known fiddler who plays with the group Red Hens. This is a pretty good example of how Jane and other current fiddlers are pushing the envelope on the traditional fiddle tunes.

14. *June Apple* - - Tommy Jarrell and his friend Fred Cockerham were local musicians in North Carolina when the Folk craze erupted in the 1960s. They became favorites of the new urban string band fans and appeared as revered Senior Citizens at the Newport Folk Festival and many other urban venues. This is one of their classic tunes.

15. *Indian ate the Woodchuck* – John Salyer (1882-1952) of Kentucky was a well known fiddler in the 1930s when he turned down a record contract. Fortunately, in 1941 his son got a home recording device and recorded 150 of his tunes. These home-made records in the collection of Berea College are a rich source of tunes for revival bands. This tune was taught by Greg Canote whose website includes excellent fiddle audio of more than 100 of these and similar tunes, done for his students.

16. *Wild Rose of the Mountain* - it is rare to hear an air (as opposed to a dance tune) played at a jam session, but there were many airs composed in the mountains, and this is a good example. J.P. Fraley was a mining engineer whose skillful and sensitive fiddling was highly respected. There is a video on You Tube of Fraley playing this tune with the great Shetland fiddler, Aly Bain.

17. *Denver Belle* - Kenny Baker is one of the great Bluegrass fiddlers. Bill Monroe's fiddler for many years, he helped shape the sound of Bluegrass. There is a fine video on You Tube showing Kenny fiddling this tune from the repertoire of his family.

18. *Been to the East* - The Leake County Revelers of Mississippi formed in 1926 and were hugely popular -- they sold 100,000s of records in the early 1930s. String bands such as this were the roots from which Bill Monroe created Bluegrass 15 years later.

19. *Growling Old Man and Cackling Old Woman* - One of the standard French Canadian tunes played all over Canada and the Eastern US, this version is from Louie Beaudoin (1921-1980) of Vermont, one of the best known fiddlers in New England. A solid fiddler, beloved for his energy and enthusiasm, he is revered by the younger generation as the true vine of the old music.

20. *St Anne's Reel* - Louie Beaudoin - Probably the widest spread and most played of all the Quebecois fiddle tunes. Now a standard in Bluegrass, Irish and probably most other genres of fiddle music.

21. *Sail Away Ladies* – there are several different tunes that carry this name, but this is the most common, played at sessions everywhere. This version on a recording from Max Collins.

22. *Tarbolton, Longford Collector, Sailor's Bonnet* – this recording from the early 1900s master Michael Coleman is a brilliant example of one of the main roots that created American fiddle. It illustrates the subtle ornaments of Irish fiddling.

23. *Eighth of January* - the early 1800s tune commemorates Andrew Jackson's victory at the Battle of New Orleans, Jan 8, 1815. This version from Pete McMahan. Lyrics were added in the 1950s.

24. *Duck River* (not to be confused with Ducks on the Pond, Ducks on the Millpond, and other completely separate Duck tunes) – Around the country, excellent fiddle lesson videos are being produced by top fiddlers e.g., Arizona fiddler Mike Rolland has a fine set of lessons on line. This tune was recorded several years ago by Rhode Island fiddler Sandol Astrausky for her students.

25. *Fly Around my Pretty Little Miss* - one of the most common jam tunes, this version is from the Skillet Lickers, the hugely influential North Georgia string band of the 1920s and 1930s.

26. *Midnight on the Water* – from probably the best living interpreter of cowboy music, Skip Gorman (b1949) this version is close to the way it was played by the master Texas fiddler, Benny Thomasson (1909-1984) whose father probably composed the tune. Often played with the fiddle in DDAD tuning.

27 *Pig Ankle Rag* - a fine version of one of the most frequently heard ragtime tunes (along with *Dill Pickles (Dill Pickle Rag)*, *Stone's Rag*, *Ragtime Annie*, *12th St Rag*, *L and N Rag*) ... from Uncle Dick Hutchison of Oklahoma – a famous contest fiddler.
28 *Little Beggarman – (Redhaired Boy)* – from Kenny Hall. Like Louie Beaudoin in Vermont and Tommy Jarrell in North Carolina, Kenny was the center of gravity for a large group of enthusiastic young Californian musicians in the 1960s notably, the Sweets Mill band.

29. *Old Joe Clark* – Cowan “Fiddlin” Powers (1874-1953) and Family – of SW Virginia, the first recorded family band, and first recorded string band and very early radio performers in the 1920s.

mmcconeghy@cox.net Fiddle Clinic Workshop, March 2012