

TOTW Sally Ann

[https://www.ibiblio.org/fiddlers/SALLY\\_SALV.htm](https://www.ibiblio.org/fiddlers/SALLY_SALV.htm)

<https://www.youtube.com/atch?v=pfl11YmfqNI> The Hill Billies

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i94R0mzIx7M> Frank Blevins & Tarheelers, 1927

<http://www.oldhatrecords.com/cd1001.html> advertisement for Frank Blevins (above) w/ photos

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ISIF9s17yW8> Whitetop Mountain Band, 2010

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MGgsb4RdPpE> J.P. Fraley

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VhWVbXI4oKc> Pete Seeger

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DcAIYES2HC4> Mary Z.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l31MSpojWTA> Steve Martin

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l940ZYKIHDU> wade ward

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YdUPyz6p2l8> dwight diller

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HuzOGxrWfsk> tommy jarrell

Courtesy Old Hat Records

<https://lyricsplayground.com/alpha/songs/w/whosgonnadancewithsallyann.html>

WHO'S GONNA DANCE WITH SALLY ANN

unknown

Robert Mizzell

Love in his heart and flowers in hand,  
Johnny proposed to Sally Anne,  
Sally shivered as she said,  
I'll love you till the day I'm dead.

Johnny got married in his one good suit,  
But the ride from church he bore strange fruit,  
Down by the road you can hear the cry,  
As he hung from a tree she watched him die.

Who's gonna dance with Sally Anne  
Who's gonna touch her trembling hand  
When the fiddler takes the stand,  
Who's gonna dance with Sally Anne.

Sally attends every wedding `round here,  
Looking for her Johnny dear,  
You can feel them in the room,  
If the fiddler plays that tune.

<https://www.loc.gov/item/afcreed000192/> Henry Reed, 1967

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-JdtZy2PObA> tommy jarrell, 1983, Ray Chatfield banjo shaky video

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IA\\_vqAm76\\_E](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IA_vqAm76_E) brainjo Josh Turknett, calls it one of the oldest melodies in Round Peak tradition

<https://www.mustrad.org.uk/articles/jarrell.htm> Tommy and Fred bio & anecdotes  
Fred played Sally Ann for his mother after sneaking his brother's fiddle to learn

My older brother Pate fiddled, but not too well. Just about every time he'd set down to play he'd get disgusted before long and throw the fiddle on the bed and walk out. Well, I thought to myself, 'I'm going to learn to play that,' but he was high tempered and didn't want me messin' with it. So I'd sneak his fiddle over into the hog range and go over the bank into the hollow and saw the hell out of it. I didn't worry cause I knew he couldn't catch me when I was barefoot like I was when I was caring for the hogs. Back then I could outrun a haint. Before very long I got so I could play a few tunes pretty well and I just couldn't keep it to myself any longer. So I asked my mother if she'd like to hear a tune and played *Sally Ann* for her. Now that tickled her the best of anything you ever saw and that evening when Pate threw the fiddle down as usual, she said to him, 'Sit down and let your brother play a tune.' He never touched the fiddle again and I just kept right on playing it.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TRtyPGxgPV8&list=PLTBQh7ySQCotA93ofN4F3\\_FMb7II3UKXK&index=10&t=0s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TRtyPGxgPV8&list=PLTBQh7ySQCotA93ofN4F3_FMb7II3UKXK&index=10&t=0s) Tommy, unnamed banjo

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=osAVTm5TvZ8> Tommy w/ Brad Leftwich, then solo fretless banjo

**Cecil Sharp** noted the following set of words from Mrs. Dellie Hughes of Crane River, Burnsville, North Carolina, in 1918:

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*O where are you going Sally Anne (x3)*

*I'm going to the wedding, Sally Anne.*

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*O shake that little foot, Sally Anne (x3)*

*You're a pretty good dancer, Sally Anne.*

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These are from another traditional source (from Mudcat):

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*Ever see a muskrat, Sally Ann,*

*Draggin' his thick tail through the sand,*

*Pickin' a banjo, kickin' up sand?*

*I'm gonna marry you, Sally Ann.*

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Chorus:

*I'm gonna marry you, Sal gal,*

*I'm gonna marry you, Sally Ann.  
I'm gonna marry you, Sal gal,  
I'm gonna marry you, Sally Ann.  
\*\*\**

*Make my livin' in sandy land,  
Make my livin' in sandy land,  
Make my livin' in sandy land,  
Raise them taters, Sally Ann.  
\*\*\**

*So, y'ever see a muskrat, Sally Ann,  
Draggin' his thick tail through the sand,  
Pickin' a banjo, kickin' up sand?  
I'm gonna marry you, Sally Ann.*

Surprisingly we haven't covered Sally Ann as a TOTW and Valentine's Day seems just the time to celebrate it. It's one of those older songs whose roots are hard to discover. With its many variations (Fiddlers Companion lists four), you hear similarities to Sail Away Ladies, Great Big Taters in Sandy Land and Liza Jane.

Cecil Sharp collected lyrics from North Carolina as early as 1918:

*Oh, where are you going Sally Ann (X3)  
I'm going to the wedding, Sally Ann*

*Oh shake that little foot, Sally Ann (X3)  
You're a pretty good dancer, Sally Ann*

Traditional lyrics are often heard with these lines:

*Have you ever seen a muskrat, Sally Ann  
Draggin' his thick tail through the sand  
Pickin' a banjo, kickin' up sand  
I'm gonna marry you, Sally Ann*

*Make my livin' in sandy land (X3)  
Raise them taters, Sally Ann*

The earliest recordings is Charlie Bowman with The Hill Billies in 1925, singing lyrics similar to those collected by Cecil Sharp. It's said that Charlie Bowman won many fiddle contests with the tune. Sixteen-year-old Frank Blevins & His Tar Hell Rattlers recorded on the spot in 1927, making up the band name and sipping corn liquor.

Tommy Jarrell and Frank Cockerham played in Surry County, North Carolina where Sally Ann was jokingly said to be the "national anthem." Fred was said to have snuck his brother's fiddle outside to learn as a boy and Sally Ann was the first tune he showed his mother. According to Fred, his brother Pete gave up the fiddle soon after because Fred turned out to be so good. We usually know Fred more for his banjo playing. Tommy at age 14 brought home a third part he learned in Virginia, heard in the video link below.

Earl Scruggs gave Sally Ann his signature bluegrass treatment and it's one all budding players work on. I did so, too, and it taught me his up-the-neck techniques often utilized, including chordal shapes and string bending. But that was a while back, and I prefer clawing the tune in an easy-going manner these days.

My favorite is J. P. Fraley's. His has a sadder tone, which for me matches the set of lyrics telling of Sally Ann marrying Johnny who was hung right after the wedding. Though there is no singing in J. P.'s version, here are the sad lyrics:

*Love in his heart and flowers in hand,  
Johnny proposed to Sally Anne,  
Sally shivered as she said,  
I'll love you till the day I'm dead*

*Johnny got married in his one good suit,  
But the ride from church he bore strange fruit,  
Down by the road you can hear the cry,  
As he hung from a tree, she watched him die*

*Who's gonna dance with Sally Ann  
Who's gonna touch her trembling hand  
When the fiddler takes the stand,  
Who's gonna dance with Sally Ann?*

*Sally attends every wedding 'round here,  
Looking for her Johnny dear,  
You can feel them in the room  
If the fiddler plays that tune*

At the same time that Sally Ann is TOTW here, it's Tune of the Month on the Facebook page Clawhammer Rules. If you use the hashtag [#ClawhammerRulesTOTM](#) you can find several good versions with players like you and me. Look for Jimmy Rush, Steve Allerton, John Holbrook and myself, among many others. It's a fun tune to explore and hope to see some of your own versions posted here. Happy Valentine's Day!

