

TOTW Shaking Down (or Off) the Acorns

I first heard Adam Hurt playing this epic Hammons family modal tune. Both Edden and cousin Burl Hammonds have recordings.

Our TOTW presenter needed to trade dates, so here's a seasonal tune to coincide with nature right now -- Shaking Down the Acorns. In the California Sierra Foothills the local Blue Oak acorns have started to fall right outside the house. They seem to grow in four year cycles, with every fourth year being the most plentiful.

The tune Shaking Down (or Off) the Acorns has got to be the epitome of the great West Virginia tune. It's modal; its mood is rural, native, and historic; and it's been recorded a multiple of times by accomplished old-time players of West Virginia and elsewhere. The source recordings are of the Hammons Family, with two versions differing in the B part.

The one we hear most is from Edden Hammons. Today, September 7th would have been his 113th birthday. Though he called it Shaking Off the Acorns, it's known as Shaking Down the Acorns. When Edden's nephew, Burl Hammons, recorded Shaking Down the Acorns, he sourced a neighbor, Uncle Nige Cogar, of Pocahontas County, WV. It's slightly different. You can hear Carl Baron playing it below, as well as see his tab for it. I haven't found Burl's version anywhere else, except on Hammons Family recordings.

If you're like me and attach meaning to tune titles, there's a book for anyone truly interested in how Native Americans used and processed acorns called [It Shall Live Forever](#) by Bev Ortiz. I've tried a more modern method to leach and grind them as explained in the book and was grateful it was easier than in the old days. Indian women worked hard to create a daily morning meal from acorns. Storing them in crude huts was essential for winter survival. At our annual Pioneer Day in Smartsville we have an "acorn lady" who sits with kids and shows them how to grind the acorns and provides us with yummy acorn cookies, too.

If you check out this link of a film review, it tells how Pomo Indian boys would climb the oak trees to shake down the acorns and what the woman did with them.

<https://anthrosource.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdf/10.1525/aa.1966.68.2.02a00900>

Hope you enjoy the Tune of the Week and share your own or your favorite version, as there are many out there.

Burl Hammon's version, played by Carl Baron: <https://www.slippery-hill.com/recording/shaking-acorns>

<https://www.slippery-hill.com/recording/shaking-acorns> Edden Hammons playing at a rapid tempo. Called Shaking Off the Acorns

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=746pWbsLK_Q Dwight Diller fiddle, plays on banjo on CD Old-Time from Pocahontas County with Terry Richardson on guitar (Burl's??)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ycBaHbQxw-4> lesson banjo w/fiddle Ryan from playbetterbanjo.com

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uEysjWltumQ> tim rowell

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pCIIYsGPij0> Johnny Rawls

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rmcisVr-iUw> me

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xJcC0e-3Bac> Old Time Tiki Parlour David Bragger? (a bit squeaky)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GWqUg6G7i-Y> Russ Carson & Patrick McAvenue, (brothers)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FLIshCoxESA> pete Sutherland, Allison de Groot

https://www.banjangout.org/myhangout/media-player/audio_player2.asp?musicid=8623&archived= RW Jonesy

https://www.banjangout.org/myhangout/media-player/audio_player2.asp?musicid=16455&archived= Carl Baron MP3

https://www.banjangout.org/myhangout/media-player/audio_player2.asp?musicid=38275&archived= Chris Yohn

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