

TUNE OF THE WEEK – 6/23/17

MAYSVILLE

Maysville. This is simply a sweet tune, sometimes called Road to Maysville. I didn't realize Road to Maysville had been covered on July 8, 2011 when I was asked to do an emergency back-up TOTW this past Wednesday. If it's not okay I'll whip out another one this weekend. More information added to the original discussion thread should be interesting.

Maysville is a location in Kentucky with a story, first told by Kentucky fiddler J.P. Fraley (1923 – 2010) and later popularized by John Hartford. Maysville is the county seat of Mason County in Northeastern Kentucky and is on the Ohio River, a site for trade in the tobacco industry of the time.

It's amusing to hear Hartford as he fiddles the tune first quickly and then slowly. He tells the story of J.P. Fraley's father, Richard Fraley, driving the tobacco wagon with his son on board as they happily hauled a load for delivery and sale in Maysville on a wintery day. *Slowly* describes the wagon ride home, as the "normally teetotalling Richard Fraley produced a pint of whiskey: 'Take a nip of this, son, it'll keep you warm.' Just before they came into Hitchins, he flung the bottle away. 'It's good for the cold, but don't tell your mother'" (as told in the liner notes in the CD called **Maysville**).

J.P. (Jesse Presley) Fraley lived to be 87 years old, retiring as a mining engineer, with his musically talented wife Annadeene. They had eloped to Maysville, coincidentally, after J.P. returned from the army in 1946. Together they hosted musical gatherings for nearly three decades. Learn more information about his life [here](#).

I'm reminded by this tune's story of the prominence of tobacco in our history and economy. When on vacation "back east" I was surprised at how many people smoke. Coming from California, I've had a different experience. We have entire sections of cities designated as "smoke-free." Restaurants in the majority of states are now smoke-free, led by California in 1998. I looked up tobacco in Kentucky and see that it's still a piece of the overall economy.

So it's interesting to note that Richard Fraley was a farmer and that tobacco was an important cash crop for him. Perhaps J.P. found the tobacco work to be drudgery, because he turned to other jobs when he grew up. "We'd be out farming in the hot sun and I'd say, Daddy, if I could just work on that fiddle I believe I could play 'Sally Goodin.' And he'd reply, 'Well, son, why don't you go up to the house and try it?' So I'd get out of a lot of hard work that way!"

All of their recordings, some including their daughter Danielle, appeal to me and they're a never-ending source for "mining" to learn a good fiddle tune. Many good anecdotes are described in the liner notes for the two CDs J.P. and Annadeene recorded, **Maysville** and **Wild Rose of the Mountains**. A funny one in the Maysville CD tells in J.P.'s words about a fishing experience he had. Though I won't repeat it here, suffice it to say that the tale involves smoking cigarettes while witnessing the clever capers of a muskie fish and its squirrel victims.

Hope you enjoy these versions of Maysville and give it a try in honor of TOTW.