*Horses (or Hosses) in the Canebrake* is another great fiddle tune from Bob Carlin’s Banging and Sawing CD of 1996. James Bryan recorded it first on his album “First of May” in 1986. The source recording is western Kentucky fiddler Jake Phelps, 1885 – 1977, who recorded it as both *Horses in the Canebrake* and as *Wild Horses in the Canebrake* in 1965. He was said to have played “unusual tunes,” which to me means pretty tunes that don’t follow a normal, simple dance tune melody line. There’s a special emotional quality to the tunes he played which my favorite fiddler James Bryan easily picks up on.

Bruce Greene, who met and recorded William Lee “Jake” Phelps, has also kept alive several of Jake’s tunes with his own skillful fiddling. Jake’s influences were fiddler Will Stegall and a black fiddler named George Holland. Jake lived on a place called Pea Ridge and was well-respected for his knowledge of old-time music.

The TOTW only resembles Cattle in the Cane with their reference to cane. I’ve been told that a canebrake is like a natural fencing that can keep livestock within.

There are some lovely or lively versions of the tune on YouTube and on BHO:

The version that caught my attention: [Hosses in the Canebrake with James Bryan and Bob Carlin](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OMaZsPkMlAM)

Steve Arkin [with Rafe Stefanini](http://www.banjohangout.org/myhangout/media-player/audio_player2.asp?musicid=16544&archived)

Su Mo plays a [nice, calm banjo with guitar](http://www.banjohangout.org/myhangout/media-player/audio_player2.asp?musicid=37632&archived)

An improvised piano version: [Roger Netherton on piano](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vK9q-WP8Gp8).

The original source recordings sound rough to me and I credit the genius of James Bryan to have brought it to my attention with Bob Carlin. See if you agree: This is the [1965 recording of Jake Phelps](https://www.slippery-hill.com/recording/horses-canebreak) in Jeff Titon’s Kentucky fiddle tunes book. And here’s one more from Jake Phelps: [Horses in the Canebrake](http://dla.acaweb.org/cdm/singleitem/collection/berea/id/686/rec/11).

I’ve found two tunings that work for Horses in the Canebrake. The easiest one is Cumberland Gap, or SRB – gEADE. The alternate one I liked is called old Cumberland Gap tuning –f#BEAD. I tried it in open G, but the up-the-neck fingering was tricky. If anyone can get a good version in another tuning please share.