

Geese Honking, also known as *Wild Goose Chase*, was passed on to one of my favorite fiddlers, Clyde Davenport (1921 – 2020) by Dick Burnett (1883 – 1975), both from Kentucky, who learned it from “Fiddling” Bob Taylor (1850 – 1912), governor of Tennessee and a U.S. Senator. I’m going to stay with the title *Geese Honking* because other recordings entitled *Wild Goose Chase* are quite different.

I first heard Nick Hornbuckle play *Geese Honking* in his [incredible 2-finger style](#) on his CD “12x2(+/- 1)” and so went looking for the older source. Clyde Davenport was as close as I could get, as neither Dick Burnett nor Bob Taylor left us with a recording (there’s only one compilation I know of, with Dick’s partner, Leonard Rutherford). Burnett’s life was interesting, as I read in the liner notes of the Burnett and Rutherford compilation CD. He had been an oil driller, but was blinded when shot in a hold-up attempt. Five church music schools had given him a keen musical background and he played fiddle, banjo and “a new instrument just making its way across the rural South, the guitar.”

Reading about the life of Robert Love “Bob” Taylor is also quite interesting. When he ran for governor against his brother, whose political party differed, it was remarkable in that there wasn’t animosity during the campaign. After Bob served two terms, his brother was elected governor. Bob went on to serve in the federal government. He brought his fiddle and used it while campaigning – imagine a good fiddle tune to liven up a rally! Read more [here](#).

In this hour-long interview of Clyde Davenport called “Shades of Clyde”, go to [27.34](#) to hear *Wild Goose Chase*, learned from blind fiddler Dick Burnett. When Clyde says he learned the tune from blind Dick Burnett, this may have been in person. (The hour + long DVD includes his banjo playing as well as fiddle.) This same rapid version is also found on [Slippery Hill](#) and is the one I’ve arranged for clawhammer, but play it slowly. [Musical annotation](#) of *Wild Goose Chase* as played by Clyde is found on the Traditional Tune Archive site.

Another favorite fiddler, James Bryan of Alabama, performed *Geese Honking* with Bob Carlin on the seminal CD *Banging and Sawing* and here it is on [Slippery Hill](#). James cited Clyde as his learning source.

Tuning in open G is a fun way to clawhammer *Wild Geese Honking* using almost exclusively the second fret. There’s one hammer-on to the 4th fret to get a note in the B part, but other than that you can do it all on the second fret and practice techniques like hammer-ons, pull-offs, alternate string pull-offs, skipped notes, and drop thumbing. Because Clyde stated the key and recorded it in Bb, so have I used it. My Doc’s Banjo is a short scale and allows me to tune up from open G to open Bb. The very bottom note the fiddle gets is out of range, so some note compensation was needed. The honking geese may be heard more in the B than the A part.