

TOTW Tucker's Barn

It's been a while since I tried playing Tucker's Barn. Recently Hillary Burhans posted it for the Tune of the Month **Challenging Tunes** theme last month for the Facebook group called Clawhammer Rules. She said it's "tricky and crookeder than a dog's hind leg", and that it modulates and is jam busting. I decided to give it another go as a challenging tune for the month and to do some sleuthing for TOTW.

Tucker's Barn was recorded by Doc Watson, which was my introduction. He learned it from his father-in-law, Gaither Carlton who learned it from his uncle, [Mitchell Wallin](#) (1854-1932). The tune is older.

The town of [Lenoir, North Carolina](#) in Caldwell County was first known as Tucker's Barn, named for the Tucker family who settled there in the 1770's and whose home was "a gathering place for many occasions. It was a voting precinct, a muster ground, a store and a place for 'frolic' and celebrations...The barn was near the present junction of West Harper Avenue and Beall Street and...the Tucker School was nearby....At least one large Fourth of July celebration included a drum corps, a march of Revolutionary War veterans and speeches by General William Lenoir, Edmund Jones, Parson Miller, the McDowells and a barbeque. The place was so popular that a piece of music suitable for violins was composed by a musician and entitled 'Tucker's Barn.'" To this day, the site holds musical events, such as this one in [2018](#).

Another recording was done by the famous folklorist and musician, [Bascom Lamar Lunsford](#), in 1949. Records show that it was actually collected as early as [1934](#). Both he, Wallin and Carlton were from the same region, Madison County in North Carolina in the northwestern part of the state. Lunsford's recording, unfortunately, isn't available. (I contacted the site to try.)

The tune traveled far from Caldwell County and was given alternate names. The amazing Kentucky fiddler Buddy Thomas recorded it under another name, Kitty Puss – also the title of his one and only album. Liner notes say "it's surely one of the oldest Southern fiddle tunes on record. Buddy himself said, 'That tune's got some of the quickest silliest changes in it of any one tune I ever heard.' He'd like to tell about the time he met a guitarist in Ohio, who boasted that he could easily follow any fiddle tune. 'I've got one. I'll bet you can't follow,' said Buddy, and completely befuddled his opponent with this tune. Buddy learned this Jimmy Richmond piece from his mother's whistling and Perry Riley also played it. It wasn't until many years after the Kitty Puss record was released that Gus Meade suddenly realized, after hearing Clyde Davenport play an interpolating version (see [Puncheon Camps](#) on Davenport's Appalachian Center tape) that Buddy's tune actually belongs to the widely disseminated Tucker's Old Barn tune group." Other [names](#) you may see are Old Time Mockingbird, Homemade Sugar, Kick Mr. Possum and He Won't Come Down, and Old Coon Bunch.

Tucker's Barn is a frolicking, crooked tune. Care to try it?

[Gaither Carlton](#)

[Doc Watson](#)

[Doc Watson and Family](#)

[Buddy Thomas](#)

[Walt Koken and Claire Milliner](#)

[Hilarie Burhans](#)

[David Bragger](#)

[Mitchell Wallin notation \(by Andrew Kuntz\)](#)

[Gaither Carlton notation \(by Andrew Kuntz\)](#)

[Tater Joe's notation](#)