



**DWIGHT DILLER'S  
BROWN'S CREEK MTN MUSIC RETREAT  
LOCATED ON THE WATERS OF  
KNAVE'S RUN,  
WVa**

# **Yew Pine Mountain**

**DWIGHT DILLER**



**Obscure Underground Clawhammer Banjo  
From Mysterious Central West Virginia  
With CD, pictures, tunes, tablature and stories**

**REVISED, PRODUCED AND PRINTED IN POCAHONTAS CO, WVa  
JULY 2007 BY LEGALLY BONDED MTN FOLKS**

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12. GREASY STRING – BURL [fiddle]
14. GREASY STRING – LEE [fiddle]
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53. WASHINGTON'S MARCH – BURL & MOSE COFFMAN [fiddle]
54. CALLAWAY - MAGGIE, BURL, SHERMAN [banjo]
56. THE DEAD MAN'S PIECE – LEE. [banjo]

As can be seen, I got a large percentage of the tunes in this book from fiddlers and transferred them over to the banjo.

## The Tabs and Tunes

This book of West Virginia tunes is a collaboration between Dwight Diller and three of his students: Andrew Diamond from London, David Dry from Barnard Castle, Co. Durham, UK, and Stewart Seidel from Vancouver, BC .

The tunes on the accompanying CD were recorded in a single take by Dave Dry at the home of Keith Johnson in Gainsborough, UK and edited onto CD by Malcolm Denny from Cheshire, UK.

The tabs in this book were carefully transcribed from the tunes on the accompanying CD. Andrew Diamond then refined the tab for each tune by playing it through slowly for Dwight using the playback facility of the tablature-editing computer program. This was repeated until Dwight agreed that the tab accurately represented what he was playing.

We believe this tab is as close as we could get to an accurate transcription of Dwight's playing. Keep in mind that, in accordance with the tradition of the music of West Virginia, Dwight will hardly ever play a tune through twice in exactly the same way, even during the playing of it once. Always fresh; always new is the result of this approach.

These tabs should provide enough to play along with a fiddler, but they will only come alive if the tune is in your head. Before attempting to learn a tune on the banjo or any other instrument for that matter, Dwight would strongly recommend that you have first listened carefully to the recording of the tune and that you are thoroughly familiar with it.

You can find full length interpretations of many of the tunes on the accompanying CD on the music listed in Dwight's discography. Complete information on Dwight's music on CD and cassette, his instructional videos and DVDs, and the classes he teaches at Brown's Creek in West Virginia can be found at <http://www.dwightdiller.com> .

*Dwight: Listening to the music from the old mountain musicians, will help the student start to get an inkling of the TRADITION; to catch what makes it tick. Always it was about heart rather than analytical brain. It was the pulse that had developed internally from their daily lives.*

*IMPORTANT: PLEASE DO NOT THINK THIS BOOK WILL TEACH YOU 'HOW' TO PLAY THESE TUNES ON THE BANJO. GOOD, STRONG, QUICK, SNAPPY RHYTHM WITHOUT PLAYING FAST IS A MUST. PROPER PULSE TAKES MUCH DEVOTION OVER MANY YEARS. BUT THAT IS THE REAL BEAUTY OF THE CHALLENGE. TUNES ARE FOR DEVELOPING AND PLAYING RHYTHM. WITH THE PULSE, THESE TUNES HELP YOU GET IN CONTACT WITH THE MUSIC OF THE OLD FOLKS AND THEIR TUNES TAUGHT HERE. THEY ARE ABOUT THE CELEBRATION OF LIFE, NOT MELODIES. THE OLD TRADITIONAL MUSIC OF THESE CENTRAL WEST VIRGINIA MOUNTAINS BELONGS TO THE MOUNTAIN PEOPLE; THEY HAVE PERMITTED US TO BARROW IT FOR AWHILE.*

*AGAIN, THIS MUSIC IS JUST ON LOAN TO ALL OF US. SO WE MUST, AS ALL THE OLD MOUNTAIN MUSICIANS DID, AVOID THE TRAP OF MAKING IT INTO MUSEUM PIECES. IT TOOK ME A LONG TIME TO REALIZE THAT THERE IS GREAT FREEDOM WITHIN THE MAINTAINED "TRADITION" OF THIS MUSIC.. IE: WITHIN THE CORRAL.*

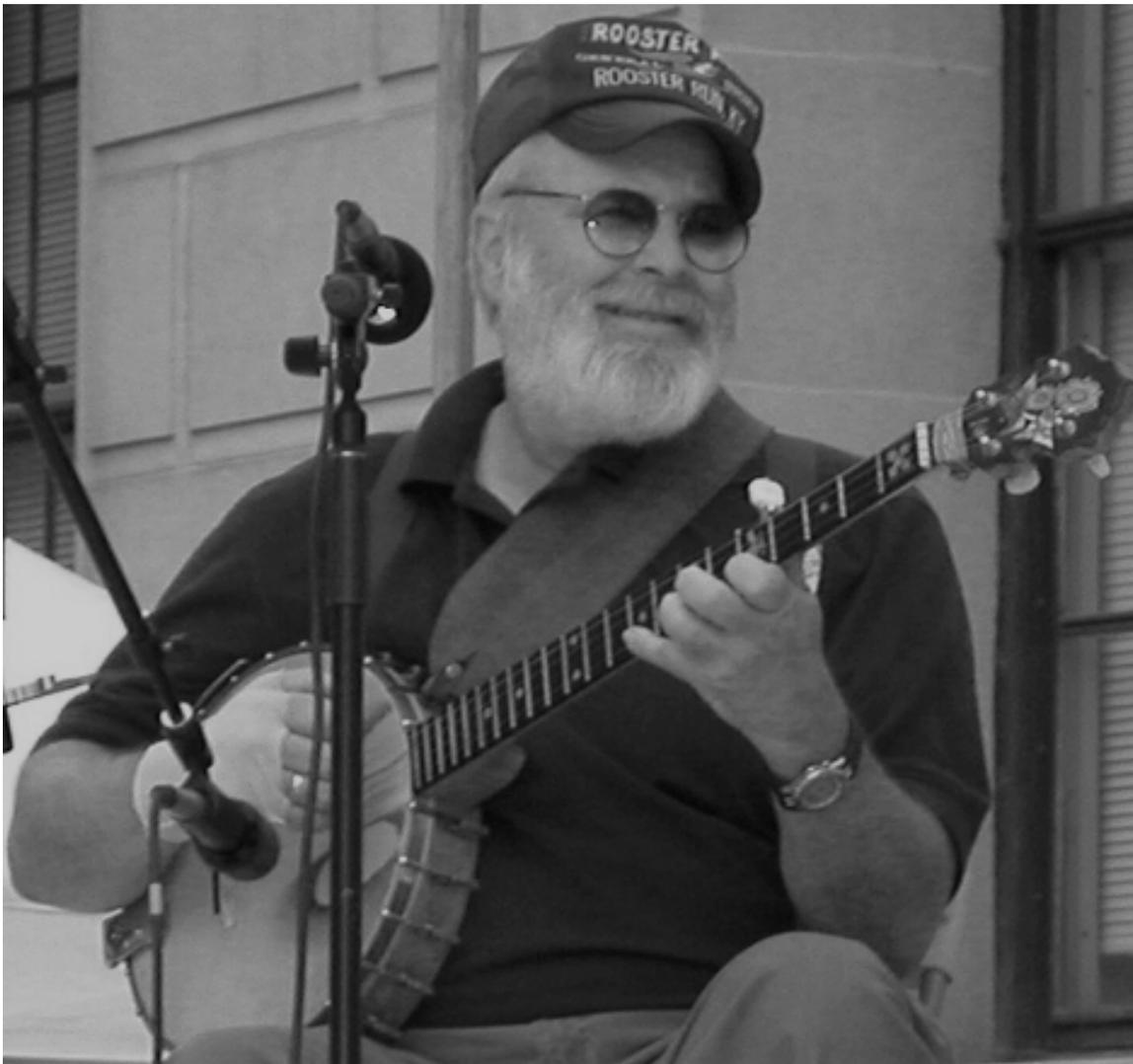
## Dwight Diller's Style

Dwight's banjo playing is driven by an infectious syncopated rhythm which always sets your foot a-tapping. The banjo swings. The listener gets the initial impression that he is being accompanied by a brushed side drum, or cymbal.

*Mike Harding, Radio 2, BBC, November 2004. "He sounds like three people playing."*

Dwight maintains that the key to rhythm on the banjo is the development of an efficient right hand. The motion must be minimal from a relaxed wrist and over a small arc. It must be practiced until it is instinctive and subconscious. Dwight believes that to attempt to consciously control the muscles of the right hand, arm, and shoulder and back will seriously impede progress on the banjo. Using his relaxed body, Dwight snaps his relaxed nearly-clenched fist quickly and powerfully at the strings at an angle of about forty degrees to the head of the banjo. He compares this snap to the snap you would use to shake water from your hand. Dwight often quotes the late fiddler and banjo player Tommy Jarrell who told him "Your right hand has to be like a wet dish rag." Although Tommy was referring to his right-hand technique on the fiddle, Dwight and Tommy would both agree it also applies on the banjo. Excessive movement of the playing arm or hand throws the music out of time and Dwight regards this as a waste of energy plus lack of "relaxed control". [Dwight: Use of the muscles destroys the 'proper PULSE' that must be in the music in order that "each and every note has its own shape which enhances the needed rhythm for each individual tune". 1. Please avoid all the dull playing of melody 2. Please avoid all the fast/frenzied playing of tunes w/ no rhythm. 3. Please plan to really "learn" about 4 "new tunes" each year. Otherwise the depths of each tune cannot be reached. 4. Please be careful and not allow anyone to instruct you to use your wrist/arm muscles in particular. Syncopation cannot be achieved this way? At one time, many years ago, I taught students to use their wrist, arm, back muscles because I did not know any better. I thought I was using muscles when I was not. 5. Stick w/in the music of a 'region'; forget trying to learn music from other regions. Cant do it all.]

Dwight's thumb drives between the head and the fifth string [**\*\*Diller: not on top of the 5<sup>th</sup> string!!!**] so it can go a bit below it on every down-stroke. The different syncopation depends on whether he is playing a single or double-thumbed rhythm. Occasionally he will drive into the brushstroke playing the first and second strings as a chuck and he 'may' strike the head [unintentionally] with his nails for percussive effect. Dwight has described the banjo as a drum with strings, and, since it is a percussion instrument, he feels it is be "percussed" and not "fiddled". Use of the fifth string is prominent in Dwight's playing, giving him the ability to change to different subtle rhythms for each tune. His most common criticism when listening to his students is that he can't hear the fifth string being played OR they are using the muscles in their thumb to 'pick' it which makes the 5<sup>th</sup> string be out of time. [**Dwight: Use the thumb incorrectly by flicking it with your muscles or let it flop around & your music will be out of time! Proper use of the 5<sup>th</sup> string is most important of all**] When learning to play a new tune, Dwight starts by listening, learning and internalizing the rhythm of the tune. He begins slowly, gradually adding melody notes as he begins to feel them, without attempting to play all his melody notes until the tune is thoroughly familiar. His advice: play only the notes that fit you internally. If playing solo, Dwight will play the full melody on the banjo as he senses/hears it. When accompanying the fiddle Dwight feels that the primary role for the banjo is to provide the rhythm, leaving the fiddler to play the melody. The banjo may play some melody notes, but Dwight is adamant that they must not detract from the support rhythm. On most tunes, he 'anticipates' the beat giving the music sparkle and excitement. **Dwight: Dropping a tiny bit behind the fiddler's rhythm adds about five pounds to the fiddler's bow. Even playing on the beat will hamper a 'good fiddler'. Anticipation is the word of the day here.**



VANDELIA GATHERING, WVa STATE CAPITAL  
MEMORIAL DAY WEEKEND, 2002  
JOHN MORRIS ON FIDDLE  
ANDREW DUNLAP ON GUITAR  
RUSS HATTON ON CAMERA  
AND A GOOD TIME WAS HAD BY ALL

## TABLATURE

Tablature has been used for fretted instruments since the Renaissance. It was initially transcribed for the lute, which was the most popular instrument of its time. Different forms developed in Italy, England and Spain, but all used horizontal lines to represent the number of strings. Today, the Spanish system is used, giving us modern guitar tablature. This is particularly useful for instruments that use different tunings. Standard musical notation would require learning the note value of each fret with each different tuning.

Old time music has a long aural tradition and consequently the use of tablature has often been a contentious and emotional issue. Many [NEW] 'old time' players simply prefer to avoid tablature altogether. [Dwight: Don't expect to learn "music" by using tablature/books; they can only furnish a skeleton upon which a strong rhythm/pulse has been already developed. I have a DVD "JUST RHYTHM" that was developed to try to help with this aspect, but 'hands-on' is the best. In close to 40 years of teaching, those who have had generally the most trouble were those who depended on 'tab' to start learning to play the banjo. They are always locked up at some level.]

In preparing this book we had to decide on how detailed to make the tabs. The choice was between providing a basic skeleton of the tune, leaving much for the reader to do; or very comprehensive tabs leaving little to interpretation. We felt the former would be ineffective in demonstrating Dwight's style, and the latter would be complicated to understand, cluttered in appearance and probably end up not being all that accurate anyway. We have tried to steer a course midway between these two alternatives.

Dwight double thumbs almost all the time. This drives the rhythm and makes the music more exciting, but isn't always audible unless you listen carefully. To avoid cluttering the tabs, we have not indicated every fifth string note that Dwight would normally play. To syncopate his playing, Dwight often omits some repeated notes or plays them almost inaudibly. In the tabs we have indicated these options with stems only. [Dwight: please avoid worshipping at the alter of 'drop thumb'. **Only** when **proper double thumb** can be played, can drop thumb **ever** be used. And that double thumbing can take a long time to master.]

In labeling the parts of a tune, we followed the standard convention of A for the first part, B for the second, then C, D, and E. However Dwight has his own views on this: **Dwight:** I have never liked the 'AABB' because that doesn't tell the person[me] which is the low part and which is the high part. THEREFORE I AVOID THIS CONFUSING PRACTICE; THE MUSIC IS EXCEPTIONALLY COMPLEX AS IT IS. The old people around here used the terms "coarse part" and "fine part" for low and high. If a student 'happens to be' informed about which is which at that moment, then that just might work. However, I just know when folks come around me and start talking about A part and B part, they make it confusing because they are not saying which is which. EACH TUNE HAS IT'S PART TO BEGIN WITH AND FOLKS DO NOT KNOW WHICH THAT IS UNLESS THEY HAVE IT ALL MEMORIZED. I have always used the terms 'high' part and 'low' part. If three separate parts? 'I just run what I bring'.

There is no attempt to show syncopation. It could conceivably be done, but we all agreed it would be needlessly complicated, cluttered and difficult to read, involving dotted notes, demi- and semi-quavers and would still be inaccurate. Syncopation is essentially a "feel" thing. Simply broken down, it is a slight prolongation of the first and third beats of a four beat measure. Instead of playing pa-pa-pa-pa, it becomes paa-pa-paa-pa. The rhythm must be danceable.

Where tunes start with an introduction, the time value is taken from the last bar of the part. If the introduction were one couplet, or beat, the last bar would end on the third beat on the keynote. You will be able to hear this. Separate final endings have not been included in the tabs.

Any tab of a tune can 'only' be a snapshot of the way the tune was played on 'that particular occasion'. Tabbing Dwight's playing is made difficult because of the many subtle variations he includes. **[Dwight:** Variations unconsciously come from how I feel/perceive/sense at that second; I do not analyze how I am going to 'vary' the tune to show just how adept I am; what a 'great musician' Diller is. That is false, fakery. 'Music' has to come from the 'heart'/'gut'/'spirit' AND AT THAT INSTANT! NOT A MICRO SECOND EARLIER OR LATER! That is exactly how the old folks played their spirit & NOT their brain] We have used his first play-through as a basis, and added some alternatives, or variations. Dwight does not play them in any particular sequence. The intention is for players to pick and use the alternatives they want. That way, they will approach Dwight's improvised playing rather than just churning out four or eight bar repeats. Something on which we all agree is that it's not possible to learn to play like Dwight Diller from tab alone, but we do hope you can learn a lot from these tabs. In addition to these tabs, learning from Dwight's music requires using your ears, heart, soul and whichever part of your anatomy you care to use for providing dynamic rhythm. **[Dwight:** But do forget to 'avoid using muscles' almost entirely or as much as possible; they lock up and block the pulse/rhythm.]

***Dwight.** My approach to teaching the music is for a student to record a tune and then listen to it day in and day out when convenient for weeks or months. This is the way mountain children learned. They were absorbing it while running around when it was being played. Both 'language dialect' and 'music dialect' were learned the same way. The old West Virginia fiddler, Mose Coffman, said ". . . the person's gotta be able to whistle, hum or sing the tune before he can play it." First get the rhythm & melody going around in the head, body, & heart. Some students will find this comes easy; others, like myself, find it very hard; and the older I get the harder it is to pick up tunes. Only when the whole tune+rhythm is internalized, can the tab be applied, but NOT BEFORE the person's interior being is breathing the tune. If tab is applied BEFORE, most likely the rhythm and 'feel' of the tune will be blocked forever! That cranial baggage is too heavy for 'music' to be played. It is for this reason that I ask my students to restrict themselves to no more than 4 tunes per year for the first few years. Many have gotten quite upset re this request. REMEMBER, melody is not what this old music is about. Tunes are just vehicles. At least 95% of BANJO tunes are about rhythm/pulse- rhythm hand [85%] & noting hand [10%]. This is why melody is so unimportant initially and makes putting emphasis on numbers of tunes a TOTAL waste of time. In fact, it is detrimental. The great fiddler Tommy Jarrell sadly said one time, just after some young folks left his house: "They know a thousand fiddle tunes and can't play one of them." Take note how many tunes the old folks retained and played after decades of natural selection? Not so many, unless they were 'tune-aholics'; usually less than 50? & played just what was inside*

\*\* I want great progress for my students, and the greatest is for them to discipline themselves to learn rhythm. Again, the 'dialect' of a music of a region since no one can play music from all regions as their goal. It has been sad, but many students show up at my classes with many 'tunes' unsuitable for them and they have developed no rhythm. Learning the banjo sure did not come easy for me. If the student will work on the discipline of 'precise, explosive rhythm in a gentle, relaxed way', the goal can be reached over time, w/o stress. But again, there are no shortcuts!

## TUNING

A hundred years ago there were no electronic tuners, and few banjos or fiddles would have been tuned to a standard pitch like A440. Mountain musicians might tune one string to something that sounded reasonable, or came within their vocal range [if they were to sing and play], and the other strings would be tuned relative to that string. More often than not, the strings on their instruments would be some way from tunings like gDGBD, gCGCD pitched at A440, and were therefore only accurate in a relative way.

Relative tunings are shown in the tabs starting with the 4th string and showing the number of frets needed to match the next higher string. So standard open G tuning is 5435.

This means that fCFAC—standard G tuning, tuned down two frets—and eBEG#B—standard G tuned down three frets—share the same relative tuning of 5435, and may be referred to as members of that family of relative tunings. Similarly, double C tuning—gCGCD—shares its relative tuning of 7525 with the familiar aDADE, obtained by using a capo at the second fret, and also with fBbFBbC—double C tuned down two frets—as well as eAEAB, which is tuned down three frets from gCGCD. And so on. The use of relative tuning is in many ways similar to using a capo, but differs in that it was generally used to lower the pitch, whereas of course capos raise the pitch. For various reasons—some of them technical—the old timers did not use a capo. Dwight and Jeff Kramer explain. *Dwight. Tuning the strings down on an instrument this way would have put less stress on the strings, but just as importantly it probably resonated with who the individuals, the culture, the land were at that time and how the music resonated with each person. Not worrying about all that 440A stuff. As for the relative tuning, I figured this out many years ago for myself while dealing with the old folks Lee Hammons tuned his banjo 5th string pitch DOWN to somewhere between F to E-flat and Lee played almost every banjo tune in what we would call double-C tuning (7525). Thus his double C tuning might actually be somewhere around eAEAB—3 half steps down from true 'C' pitch. Plus Lee's bridge on his banjo was often off so the frets didn't always give their proper pitch. This required me to learn to use my ear. [\*\*\*Just read Joel Sweeny, c1840, was tuning down what we call 'G banjo tuning' to an 'E' pitch, which is what I pointed out was the approx pitch Lee preferred. The 19<sup>th</sup> century was, of course, a different time, different people, different world outlook that few, if any of us, can know/perceive about\*\*]*

*This has to do with fiddle tuning, but the principle is the same. Recently, I was recording some of Lee's fiddle tunes for a new release. The combination of Lee's tunes and some fiddles and banjos sound much better tuned down 1 to 1 1/2 steps from 'G'. But some instruments need to be tuned up a step into an 'A'. The student needs to be able to have the "relative tuning" tool at hand. It is part of 'woodshed music theory'. Burl Hammons and other old folks around refer to this fiddle tuning as "high bass and high counter." Tommy Jarrell referred to this "cross tuning" as "sawmill tuning." [I think] Again, a pitch that suited Burl's ear might put the fiddle past 'A' and up into 'A#; whereas down to 'E' resonate with Lee's ear or internal system. So it was much better for me to just figure out 'relative tuning'. It was many years before I saw a tuner; even now, if I am alone, I never bother about the pitch. This is why on most all my recordings over the years, I was never on some sort of standard pitch.*

*PERHAPS THIS MIGHT HELP: 10 July 2007- I am finding at the present time, I need to tune my fiddle down to about the key/pitch of 'cross-E', and forget the pitch where anyone and everyone else is playing since I do my best playing, such as it is, solo*

**Jeff Kramer [luthier and banjo player].**” Folks need to understand that the traditional music does not always conform to an A440 tuning fork. And, there are different moods imparted by different pitches in the same intervals. Also, banjos and fiddles will achieve different voices and sweet spots with different tunings. Some instruments and people like the pitch low and some like it higher. Different wood, tone rings, age, attack, and set-up, are all factors. Scale length too. The traditional mountain “non-famous” players were completely focused on TONE and not what anybody thought about their music as nobody was often around. Even if there were others present, the old traditional West Virginia music was almost always played solo.”

Diller: here is the recipe for much successful freedom, not bondage, WITHIN the ‘tradition’.



Burl and Ruie Hammons [brother and sister] having a noon meal at the Stillwell House. Burl, Maggie, Ruie, Emmie, Sherman Hammons and Lee Hammons [no relation] always made me feel welcome, any hour of the day or night. Whatever they had was always shared; whether it was time, food, unspoken encouragement, the old music and stories, sleeping arrangements though they were really crowded, AND never expecting anything in return! Unconditional acceptance when my life was mostly a mess. Their acceptance had to do with the character of each person and not their ‘work performance’. No matter how “important” or “unimportant” the person was viewed by “society”. They replaced my grandparents who were dead.

**LEARNING SUGGESTIONS:** throughout this book I will often say the same things over and over and over, but it will be the most distilled instruction I can give from a long career of teaching banjo. I want you to learn and grow in depth; to become all you are built to become in playing the banjo. Hopefully you can just pass over and forgive what will come across as ‘preaching’.

*Dwight: Perhaps the best overall advice I can give is to be patient and give yourself a couple years to just absorb the music and hand rhythm. However, it is important to discipline yourself to take your time and plan to work on the hand positions. Literally, the ‘hardest’ thing about clawhammer banjo is to learn improperly and have to THEN unlearn and relearn. I did it several times because I had no teacher to correct me. In my 37 years as a banjo ‘teacher’, I have seen students angry, frustrated, and enraged at me. And generally it has been because they were ‘self-taught’ or had non rhythmic instruction; arriving in class having been told they had more skill than they actually did. A real letdown. What happens with this style of banjo playing is, initially, the student immediately runs into a wall trying to learn the rhythm. Other instruments have different times when walls show up. Pay no attention when told ‘ you will be playing immediately’ Remember:*

1. *The student must make sure he/she understands what needs to be done to make the rhythm ‘come alive’.*
2. *The early stages of this process are often extremely frustrating. Keep remembering that this is ‘normal’. But, this relaxed approach will help the student keep driving on through frustration by putting one foot in front of the other and working on technique*
3. *Approach the banjo with some confidence. Remember many folks have mastered this instrument over the decades, but no one who was timid ever mastered it. “Controlled violence with gentle, snappy sound” is the goal. “Speed kills” “Have confidence”*
4. *All techniques suggested are to be used to build more rhythm, and rhythm on top of rhythm. A great trap is to be worried about melody notes; they will take care of themselves. Students say, "I will learn the melody notes, and then I will learn the rhythm." My experience says this approach is ‘exactly backwards’ if the student wants to play the old Appalachian mountain music. The rhythm **MUST BE FORMED FIRST!** [By the way, it is pronounced “Apple-latch-en”; pronouncing it with a long “a” like in “lay” in the middle is incorrect. Is an Indian word =means”endless mountains”. We never used that word; came to mean poverty, ignorance, shiftless.]*
5. *Both hands must learn to dance on that banjo. The rhythm hand learns first. It learns to strike the string and dance away a very short distance. It is better to dance, strike, dance, strike, dance... than produce some sort of dull, dead, music killer. The relaxed dancing and striking will become more precise while retaining its excitement. Trying to learn precision **FIRST** literally kills everything about this music. After the rhythm is mastered, then the noting hand learns to counter-dance about on the fingerboard with great rhythm to enhance the rhythm hand’s notes and usually add more ‘proper’ rhythmic notes. IE: “Ginger Rogers and Fred Astair” **DANCE ON THE BANJO STRINGS AND FINGERBOARD W/ RIGHT AND LEFT HANDS.***

*Get the pulse correct, then all the notes that are in this book will come alive. It will be the real mountain music, which is full of life. The ‘ultimate goal’ is the passing along of ‘cultural messages’. That is the part that will also trick the student. This is what the old fiddler meant when he said “It takes about 10 years just to **START** to learn to play [this music]” You each have your own ‘cultural messages’ that are valid also. Play your heart*

*I would like to give a thanks to all the mountain people, young and old, alive and gone, of West Virginia who have shared their music and their hearts with me.*

*Over and over thru these years since '68 there have been hundreds of students who have given me great support through encouragement, acceptance of my excentric nature, my different ways of teaching this music.*

*My students and friends have helped bring all my recordings about, all the teaching videos, the feature length film, all the years of traveling to places to teach. These students provided accommodations and set up concerts and teaching classes*

*To make the point, I would not have been any where in a music career if it hadn't been for my student's and well wisher's support. In Oct 2005 when I had the auto accident and was in hospital and home in bed for months, friends gathered up and made sure there was some help with money coming in until I could get started back again.*

*It has been a miracle that I can once again play music.*

*I have tried to give all I had, but have been graciously given far more than I was able to give.*

*The Mennonites have given me support in my music though what my calling is, is different than most of them have been exposed to. Just had to be a level of trust on their part.*

*I would like to acknowledge to my family: too many times I was involved in this music and away from you – physically and/or mentally.*

*“Thank you” to all who have given love, support, encouragement*

*Sincerely, Dwight*

# 1 - Big Scioto [Hammons: 'Big Scioto']

gDGBD/5435 - Key G

From the playing of Dwight Diller

*Named after the Scioto River in Ohio where the Shawnee Indian nation was located in the 1700s. Hammons may have lived there in 1760s. They were the only ones known to play this tune.*

## A

1. 2.

## B

1. 2.

This should not be played too fast. It is syncopated in a different sort of way; not blues. In the first playing of the B-part, Dwight plays 10 measures, repeating bars B4 and B5. Big Scioto has a lot of hammer-ons and pull-offs. If you find this interrupts the rhythmic flow, leave some of them out. [Diller: be very careful w/ leaving out any notes since they all make up the great essence. Set this tune aside for a 'long' time. Far better to leave these hard tunes on the shelf until you get some maturity under your belt.]



**Burl sharing his wisdom.**

## 2 - Greasy String (Burl)

gDGBD/5435 - Key G

From the playing of Dwight Diller

*Burl Hammons' [1905-1992] version. This tune name is used other places as well as in similar melodies, but this tune is specific to Burl.*

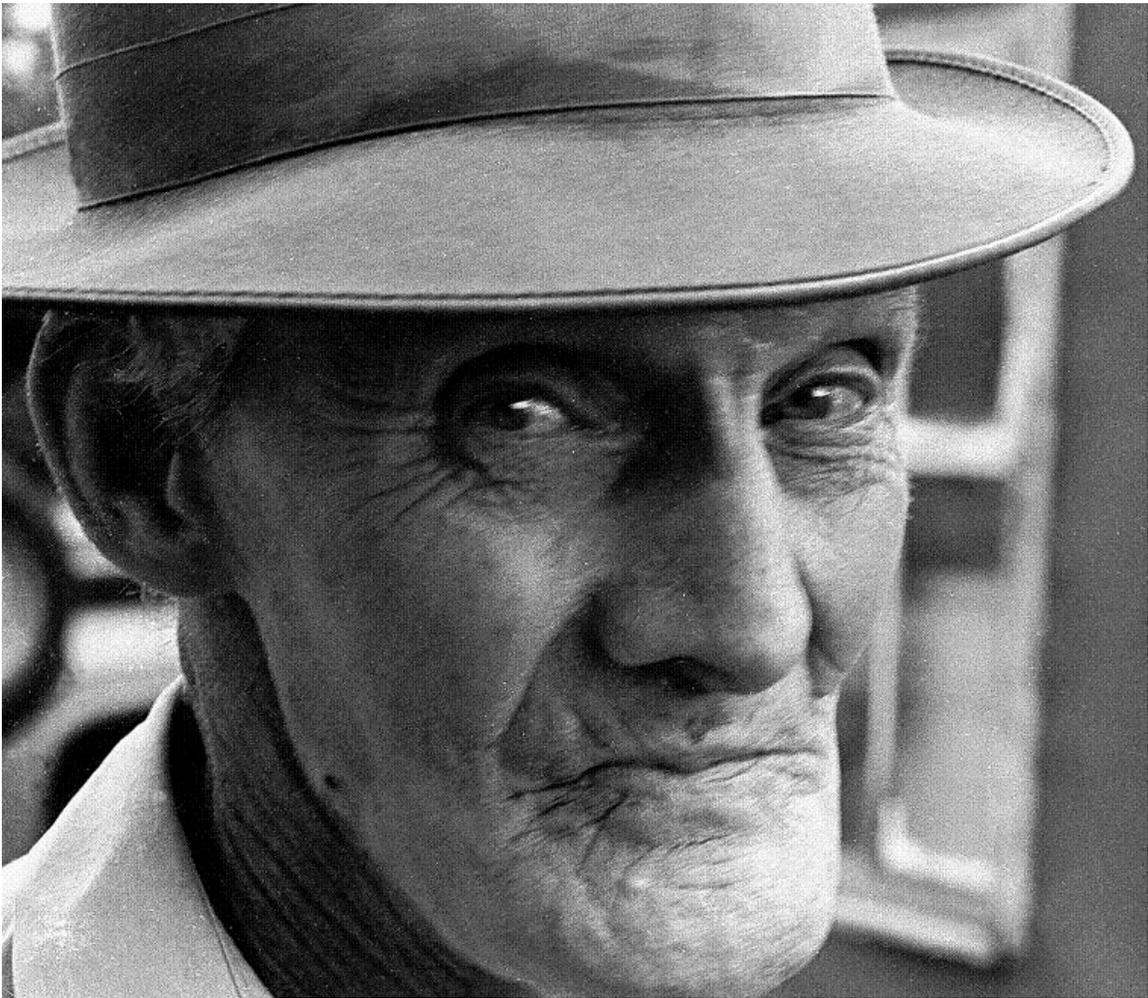
**A**

**B**

One reason we included two Greasy Strings is to show how mountain tunes with the same name can be quite different.

The B part of this is very similar to Burl and Edn Hammons' Shelvin Rock and to their tune called Three Forks of Reedy. This version starts with the high part.

**Diller:** Edn puts in different notes in the low part than I can't get. But I am usually not much good at playing many of the fluttering fiddle 'notes'. The notes needed for good rhythm are the 'bottom line'; for me, forget all that 'melodic banjo' stuff. Again, if the musician wants to play all the fiddle notes, play a fiddle. Unpopular thought: don't try to make a banjo do what it is not built to do. In other words, don't fiddle a banjo; 99.9% of the time, the notes won't have the proper pulse.



Lee Hammons, October 1970, 85 years old. No one was any better on the ‘thumpin banjo’ or the 19<sup>th</sup> century WVa mountain fiddling. His touch was always ‘powerfully delicate’. To me, Lee was very gentle and supportive. In those years, especially the school year ’71-’72 when I dropped out of grad school, I was in such condition that I could not work any kind of a job. So I spent many of my days at his house up Thomastown Hollar. Sometimes we would be in his tiny woodworking shop next door to his house or we would go inside the house. He sometimes would pick up the banjo and play a bit, BUT it was the fiddle that he’d reach for the most. The fiddle was always held in higher esteem by the old people than the banjo. Lee would ‘drive me up the wall’ with his fiddle playing because I was so severely depressed in those days. However, my fiddle playing sounds almost exactly like his ‘through no fault of my own’; I now drive others up walls. Remember: you will become who you listen to, whether mtn musicians or city people.

\*\*\* Lee: “One of the times I was stayin over at my cousin’s, we had ta sleep up in the little cabin loft because there wasnt no stairs. Had to climb up a ladder and crawl in from outside. Well, ever morning his mother’s big old, tough tom would come flyin by just as the first one of us got at the bottom of the ladder and take a swipe with it’s claws. My cousin said, ‘watch this’ and just as ‘Old Choby’ came by, he jumped, grabbed that cat by the back, ran out to the ‘choppin block’ and chopped it’s head off. We skint it out, took the brains and soaped the hair off, then stretched it over an old piece of a banjo and stuck it out in the hot sun. That sun cooked it cracklin hard ‘n we strung it up. That night there was a square dance, ‘n we pulled out that banjo for a few ‘sets’. Well, my aunt was there dancin to the tunes from her ‘Old Choby’ [Toby]! For days afterward, she went about the house, sayin “I wonder what happened to my Olllddddd Choby????”

### 3 - Greasy String (Lee)

gDGBD/5435 - Key G

From the playing of Dwight Diller

*This tune is from Lee Hammons [1884-1980]. Don't think this version has shown up anywhere else. He brought many unknown & lost tunes out of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.\*As did the other Hammons'*

A

B

#### Alternatives

Note the position of the D chord in A3. Lee played it AABAAB—[or low/low/high, low/low/high.]

Lee said, “Now, the bigger, the older, the tougher tom cat makes absolutely the very best banjo heads. Thinner by far than groundhog hides. BUT I’M HERE TO TELL YOU, THE STINK THAT’S RAISED WHEN YOU SKIN ONE OF THEM THINGS OUT!! WHEW!!”



Really dry red oak and a 'King Heater'.  
Hot fire favorites.

# 4 – KITCHEN GIRL

gDGBD/5435 - Key G

From the playing of Dwight Diller

*Have heard this one coming from 2 WV fiddlers. Henry Reed—old fiddler born and raised around Peterstown WV. Henry taught Oscar Wright—old fiddler from around Princeton WV—this tune. Both were from around the WV & VA border, but their music had that WV essence.*

A

5 5 5 5 0 3 0 0 0 2 3 7 3 0 0 0 0

0 6 6 0 1 1 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

5 5 3 5 0 3 0 0 4 5 0 0 3 0 0 0 0 0

0 0 0 0 0 1 1 0 1 1 3 0 0 0 0 0

B

0 3 3 2 0 3 0 0 2 0 3 0 3 0 0 2 3 3 3 0 3

0 0 3 0 0 3 0 3 0 3 0 0 0 2 3 3 0 0 0 0

5 0 3 3 2 0 3 0 0 2 0 3 0 0 3 2 0 2 0 0 0 0 0 0

0 0 3 0 0 3 0 0 0 3 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

Alternatives:

5 5 5 6 6 0 0 0

0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

A1 A4

This tune is usually played using G modal tuning. Note that Dwight's distinctive version uses standard G tuning, but uses 'modal position' fingerings. **Dwight:** Got them from Len Reiss & Bob Thren, now of Lexington, VA in 1970-71. We have done some speculation over the years about just where this name might have come from.

## 5 - Old Christmas Morning [from Lee; not Sherman]

gDGBD/5435 - Key G

From the playing of Dwight Diller

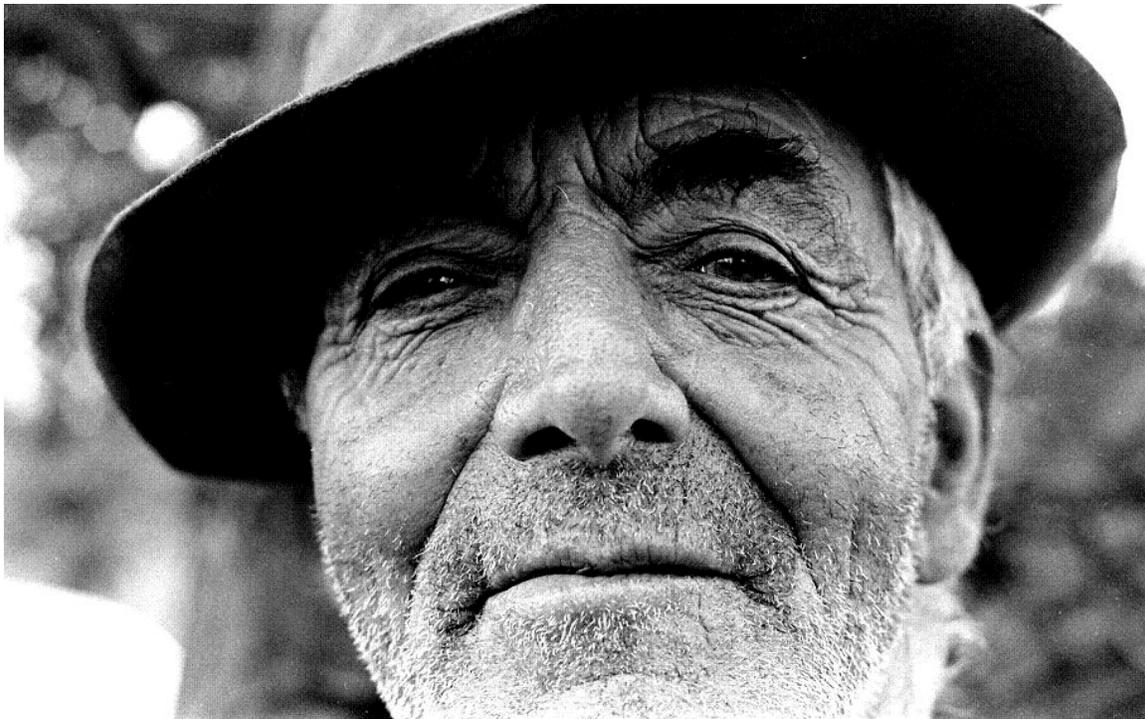
*This was Lee Hammons' fiddle version, but there were a total of 3 different tunes w/ same name in the area—Sherman Hammons' [1903-1988] and French Carpenter's from Clay County, WV.*

A

Musical notation for part A, showing a fiddle line with fingerings (5, 5-7, 5-0, 0, 3, 3-5, 3-0, 5, 5-7, 5-0, 0, 0, 5-3, 0, 0) and bowing techniques (H, Po) and a 1/4 note rest.

B

Musical notation for part B, showing a fiddle line with fingerings (0, 0, 0, 0, 0, 0, 0, 0, 0, 0, 0, 0, 0, 0, 0, 0) and bowing techniques (Sl, Po) and a 3-4 measure rest.



Sherman Hammons was another I spent many hours with . If the weather was warm- I'd sleep in my pickup truck bed; if the weather was cold- in the little room off the room with the 'heatin stove'. Generally about 2am the fiddle music would start thru wall, and one of the tunes would be his favorite: "Christmas Morning". His tune's been 'BLAZIN' in my heart since then. But it has always stayed out of my reach on the fiddle, and is almost impossible to get on the banjo – it's from another world. I have always just pecked around on Sherman's version on my fiddle.





Ruie Hammons with sister Maggie Hammons Parker playing my old “Improved George Washburn” banjo from early 20<sup>th</sup> century. It was nicknamed “Snotty” by several folks trying to “build a case”. They said I played “sledgehammer banjo” and were correct in those days. That heavy handed stuff has long since passed, decades ago. Such playing blocks the required quick, aggressive, expressive, light, explosive snap that is not loud nor used to play the music fast. Maggie could and did handle her notes so that ‘every note’ had it’s own quality. It’s own shape. It’s own story. What a fine banjo player and even greater singer of the old mountain ballads.

Both Maggie and Ruie were born before 1900 – a few years before the coming of the timber boom and the railroads. In the early days after 1900, the several girls in the family grew gardens and sold fresh produce to the logtrain crews which steamed up the William’s River and to the Italians [‘Tallys’] and eastern Europeans [‘Bohunks’] imported to build the railroads for the timber companies. Burl, who was younger, had a flat bottomed boat that he poled across the river [40’ wide] as a ferry, picking up the workers on one side and taking them ashore on the other side, morning and evening at \$.25 trip down at the “dead water” named from the deep dammed up part of the river. The railroad track “powder monkeys” taught Burl, as a young boy, how to ‘shoot dynamite’. Ruie said they asked the ‘dynamite men’, when they were blasting out rock for the railroad ‘grade’ coming almost beside their house, just how much danger there was that rocks would fall on them. The crew quickly assured them that there was no danger. “We could-a shoot so rock-a fall down-a on your house, but no ta worry! They go other way; we sure.” Because of the ferrying money, fresh ‘produce’ sales and sales of fresh meat from game animals, some currency was available for the family where there had been little before. Plus Sherman [b 1903] went into the ‘big timber woods’ when he was approx 12. He said “Now, boys, they called me a ‘punk’. But I loved it in th’ camps. Always somethin a-goin on”

\*\*A couple local boys sold the ‘Tallys’ a ‘hoot owl’ saying it was “same as eatin a chicken”. Upon inquiring, the ‘Tallys’ immediately said: “Want no more ‘big-eyed chick’!! no more ‘big-eyed chick’!!” But no explanation? Old man Parsons ate them for “medicinal purposes”

## 7- Shelvin Rock

gDGBD/5435 - Key G

From the playing of Dwight Diller

*This is from Burl. His brother Sherman played a tune by that name, but was a different tune. Their uncle Edn [1874-1955] played a Shelvin Rock similar to Burl's. These were in the key of G' in standard tuning on the fiddle. There is another tune by that same name but in 'cross tuning' from over in Clay/Braxton/Calhoun Co. Wva – the center of WVa.*

**A**

**B**

The full E minor chord is shown in A3. In B4, Dwight plays a pull-off, then a push-off on the 4th string.

When the old people first came into those impenetrable mountains - into the lands that now make up western Pocahontas, parts of Webster, Nicholas, Pendleton, Randolph, Greenbriar Counties in east central WVa., the land was a pure wilderness with only creeks/streams and animal paths to follow. Forget visions of Daniel Boone and log cabins; they could come much later. Yes, shelter was important, but food for the winter was of extreme importance. For necessity, they initially put up lean-tos, lived in hollow trees if need be, BUT best of all was an outcropping rock so poles AND brush could be piled upright in front of it WITH a small mud & stick fire place going up between the poles for cooking. Years could be spent living and raising families in that 55F moderated, but dim clime. The Parsons' family lived under 'Parsons' rock' for years with children born & raised there. There is where the old man wanted an owl to eat when he was sick



Maggie on the biscuits; Emmie in foreground and Ruie in background finalizing supper on the stovetop

# 8- Sugar in the Coffee [o]

gDGBD/5435 - Key G

From the playing of Dwight Diller

*This version is from Burl/Sherman. "How in the world do the old folks know, I like sugar in my coffee-o? How do you reckon they found out, they found sugar 'round the spout." Lee Hammons played a tune by that name with same words but different tune.*

A

1.

2.

5

B

This is played slowly to make it swing. The last two beats of B1 and B2 are barely audible. Note the bent notes on the 4<sup>th</sup> string 2<sup>nd</sup> fret.



A log home w/ wood shingle roof - c pre-1800; old Dean homeplace. My friends, Forrest Dean and his nephew, Andy Gum, 'bached' in the new 1880s house next door at Rimal. Many folks look at that and think that it was really small, but much better than a lean-to.

## 9 - WAYNESBORO

gDGBD/5435 - Key G

From the playing of Dwight Diller

*From Edn and Burl Hammons. Ran across this tune in UK called 'Over the Moor to Maggie', but never heard it played in the USA. I don't know which 'Waynesboro' this refers to, if any..*

A



**THE HILL COUNTRY NEAR KNAVE'S RUN.**

**PLACES  
WHERE OLD WV<sup>a</sup> MODAL TUNES DWELL,  
LURKING,  
TO SNAG UP  
THE UNWARY...**

**BEWARE YOU PICKERS OF ONLY THE  
'MAJOR'  
MODAL DEATH IS ALWAYS  
CLOSE AT HAND  
IN THIS DARK LAND**

**O TAKE CARE!**

# 10 – Wild Hog In The Red Brush

gDGBD/5435 - Key G

From the playing of Dwight Diller

*Lee Hammons' fiddle tune I picked up on the banjo. His version somewhat similar to Big Scioto but in cross tuning on fiddle whereas Burl's version of Big Scioto is in standard tuning on fiddle and played in 'G'. Red brush might be "red oak brush"; red oak leaves, though dead in autumn, will hang on for months.*

**A**

Musical notation for section A, measures 1-5. The notation is on a five-line staff with strings labeled D, B, G, D, G from top to bottom. It includes fret numbers (0, 2, 4) and playing techniques (H for hammer-on, Po for pull-off).

Musical notation for section A, measures 6-7. It continues the notation from the previous block, showing fret numbers and playing techniques.

**B**

Musical notation for section B, measures 1-5. It includes a first ending bracket labeled "1." and fret numbers (0, 2, 5, 7).

Musical notation for section B, measures 6-7. It includes a second ending bracket labeled "2." and fret numbers (0, 2).

\*\*\*\* Someone emailed today wondering why all these revivalist banjo players stuff rags in the back of their banjo?

Seems part of it is when one lemming runs over a cliff, the rest of the follow. Same with sheep. I have mentioned to many folks who have gotten themselves good banjos and then jammed one of their rolled up socks in the back. My offer: "How about me getting a junker banjo and let's trade out; your good banjo for mine and my junker for your's. Then we can both be happy. You can then have a dull, cheap, dead banjo which is what you have made your good banjo sound like. The sound that will come out is 'THUD' or some such 'nice ring', and I will tickled to have yours whose tone you are killing. It will then ring when I work it over, as a banjo should sound. Again, we can both be happy with our banjo sound. Thump, clunk vs a nice, warm ring." No one will ever take me up on this offer; nor will they stop dumbing down their instrument. Such a shame, and just because of having to follow the crowd over the cliff.

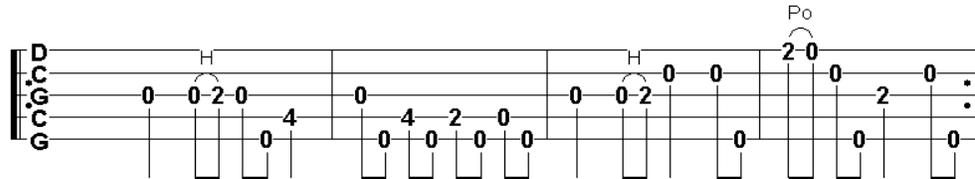
# 11 - Kitty Snyder

gCGCD/7525 - Key C

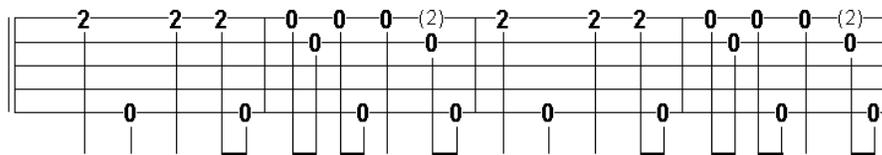
From the playing of Dwight Diller

*Lee Hammons is the only person I ever heard play this. This tune begs for some words, but I know of none.*

**A**



**B**



In B2 and B4 the 1st string is fretted at 2, but not played. Note that the A part is repeated but the B part is not. Play AABAABA and notice that it ends on the A-part.

Note

Lee Hammons, b 1883, told me he stopped playing all music in 1923. From a comment he made to me one time, no one wanted to hear 'it' anymore. I have started to thinking that remark over in later years, and it dawned on me that 1923 was when the 'hillbilly' records were starting to be released by Madison Avenue, New Yorkers, etc, who hadn't a clue about the music and could have cared less. As always, the 'commercial bottom line' is about \$\$\$. So they came in, recorded the 'hillbillies', released the recordings, but the 'hick musicians' had no way of knowing whether they were being paid appropriately or not. Have things changed over all?

Also about the same time, the battery powered radios were coming into the mountains. Thus the mountain people were already being shown what 'good music' was, and, if it didn't sound like the 'newer, slicker' stuff coming from the radio or on their Victrola, then they started placing less and less value on it until finally, as Lee said, "no one wanted to hear it any more".

Now it has been recently published that Lee Hammons stopped with playing his banjos, but he "continued on playing on the fiddle". According to Lee, himself, he told me "I didnt own or play any banjo or fiddle until I went down to Richardson's Hardware and ordered one of each for myself!" The year was about 1969; or possibly in late 1968. His son-in-law was an old friend of mine and knowing how much I was interested in the old music, told me that Lee was starting to play his music. ALMOST A HALF CENTURY LAPSED BEFORE 'HIS' REVIVAL.

And I learned that no one could fool that old man when it came to the 'old 19<sup>th</sup> century mountain music'

He had very strong opinions, but generally kept them to himself. Would tell me if I asked, which I did right often.

# 12 - More Pretty Girls Than One

gCGCD/7525 - Key C

From the playing of Dwight Diller

*Lee Hammons is the only person who played it this way that I personally know of. It is crooked because it leaves out beats at the end of phrases. Crooked like our mountain roads and streams.*

The image shows three systems of banjo tablature for the tune 'More Pretty Girls Than One'. Each system consists of a five-line staff with fret numbers (0-4) and various musical notations. The first system starts with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The second system begins with a measure number '5'. The third system begins with a measure number '10'. The tablature includes slurs, ties, and specific techniques labeled 'Sl', 'H' (hammer-on), and 'Po' (pull-off). The piece concludes with a double bar line.

This tune is similar to the square tune, ‘Tempie’. Lee Hammons never played this tune with “chucks.” Like many West Virginia tunes it is crooked, having 13 measures. This, obviously, is not a good tune to dance to. In the UK they call them “leg breakers”.

**Diller:** Lee said, “My sister hated that tune. Didn’t want anything to do with it.” She also played the banjo. As youngsters, I think they would play the banjo together once in great awhile.

# 13 – Walkin’ In The Parlor

gCGCD/7525 - Key C

From the playing of Dwight Diller

*This is Lee Hammons' version. Sherman Hammons played a version similar to one played over in Clay & Calhoun Counties. Probably something like an old 'playparty song'. It does have words that go along with it. Something like: "Walkin in th' parlor, walkin in th'ring, walkin in th'parlor to hear the banjo ring; ....."*

**A**

Musical notation for section A, showing a five-line staff with fret numbers and techniques like H (hammer-on) and Po (pull-off).

**B**

Musical notation for section B, showing a five-line staff with fret numbers and techniques like H (hammer-on) and Po (pull-off).

## Alternatives

Musical notation for alternative sections A2, A4, B1, and B2, showing a five-line staff with fret numbers and techniques like Po (pull-off).

Musical notation for alternative section A4 OR B4, showing a five-line staff with fret numbers and techniques like Po (pull-off).

This is a ‘deceptively simple’ tune, and possibly Dwight’s favorite banjo tune. He plays it relatively slow, almost at walking pace, to keep the rhythm and caress the melody. But not in some dull way. Dwight says that he has been fooling with the tune for almost 40 years and still is not able to get what is in the tune. “Probably the only way to get ‘it’ is to give up on it” The alternative A4 or B4 ends on the open 4th string. This is a characteristic of Dwight’s playing, but is used sparingly.

**Diller:** Lee, the master, was always [sans forethought] bumping bass strings to keep a quiet drone going. But that never got in the way of his quick-snap unaffected slow, spry, gentle powerful pace. In listening closely to his playing, you will note his ‘pulse & melody’ is making constant subtle changes. Always fresh and new while playing it: never thinking anally about it. No cranial planning as to just how he was going to play it

## Woodhicks: Rough and Tumble and Hard as Nails



Woodhicks living and working in the 'timber woods' of the high Allegheny Mountains of Pocahontas County, WVa. Some of these men would go into the 'logging camps' and never poke their head out for months. If it was a 'company camp' [vs a private 'coonskiner camp'], the meals would be huge to keep these men working 10-12 hour days 6 days a week in heat, rain, sleet, snow. Note there is not much in the way of any excess adipose tissue on them. After often spending up to a year in a 'company camp', their back pay had mounted up to a pile. At the 'company store' they would charge up a pair of "AA Cutter" [shoe company] high top shoes and a whole new set of 'red richies' [Woolrich] work clothes they wore for most of the rest of the year on the mountain, and THEN draw the rest of their pay. An old hick straightened me out one time: "Boots aint got laces; if they lace up, they's high top shoes." Lee Hammons informed me: "The 'Cutters' was the best since they's the only ones could turn 'snow water'." It was imperative all these men had on hightop shoes w/ lots of ½" 'corks' or caulks -IE steel sharp nail-like protrusions screwed into the thick leather sole - thus enabling them to jump from one slick log to another w/o slipping; also, for some, handy to fight with on the occasion of coming into town. Buck Hamrick ran a joint in Cass: "When the hicks got in tha explodin brawls, I'd get down behind the bar with my double shotgun 'n hafta wait sometimes for a good while. Then, after they wrecked my place, they would pay in full for repairs." If that wasnt enough, then there were the whorehouses up Dirty Street with constant poker games w/ sharks and women. An old hick that worked on Cheat Mountain, above Cass, said: "After about 3 days, we'd hit'er fer tha mountain, our paycheck done deezolved, teetotally plumb broke, 'n ready fer 'nother go-round up-thar! At least most generally, we'd have our Cutters 'n our Richies. Some obb'en jess went straight right up Dirty Street from th'pay office with 'air caish 'n not pickin up nothing at tha company store first. They come in on the short end there. Ary bit 'o nothin hardly t'wear til next trip offin t'mountain in a few months. Pert near haf nekked thay'd haf ta work in winter 'n summer."

# 14 – West Fork Girls

gCGCD/7525 - Key C

From the playing of Dwight Diller

*Dwight: This tune is in 'D' on the fiddle and the version is from Lee 'Poppy' Triplett of Triplett Ridge, near the town of Clay in Clay County. There are a few West Fork Rivers in central WVa; may refer to the West Fork River in Weston, WVa area. Wilson Douglas, also of Clay County, played a somewhat similar version of West Fork Girls. I preferred this tune which I picked up from Lee when I was playing banjo for John and Dave Morris of Clay County back in 1972 & 1973 as a fledgling musicianer. As an old timer, it was a powerful compliment for him to invite me to play with him whether at a festival on or off stage or just out and about where he was playing. The brothers were my age while Lee and Wilson were the 'old timers' back in those days. Lee and Wilson died years back, and now the Morris Brothers and I are the same age as the 'old timers' were then. Seems strange. Please play this one quick & snappy. But not real fast.*

A

Part A musical notation for the banjo. The key signature is C major (gCGCD). The notation is written on a five-line staff with a G-clef. The first measure contains a triplet of eighth notes: 0-2-0 on the 5th string, followed by 5-4-5 on the 4th string, and 0-2 on the 3rd string. The second measure has 0-0 on the 5th string and 0 on the 4th string. The third measure has 4 on the 4th string, 0 on the 3rd string, 5 on the 2nd string, 5 on the 1st string, 2 on the 4th string, and 2 on the 3rd string. The fourth measure has 4-0-2 on the 4th string, 2 on the 3rd string, 2 on the 2nd string, and 0 on the 1st string. The fifth measure has 4-0-2 on the 4th string, 2 on the 3rd string, 2 on the 2nd string, and 0 on the 1st string. The sixth measure has 4-0-2 on the 4th string, 2 on the 3rd string, 2 on the 2nd string, and 0 on the 1st string. The seventh measure has 4-0-2 on the 4th string, 2 on the 3rd string, 2 on the 2nd string, and 0 on the 1st string. The eighth measure has 4-0-2 on the 4th string, 2 on the 3rd string, 2 on the 2nd string, and 0 on the 1st string. The ninth measure has 4-0-2 on the 4th string, 2 on the 3rd string, 2 on the 2nd string, and 0 on the 1st string. The tenth measure has 4-0-2 on the 4th string, 2 on the 3rd string, 2 on the 2nd string, and 0 on the 1st string. The eleventh measure has 4-0-2 on the 4th string, 2 on the 3rd string, 2 on the 2nd string, and 0 on the 1st string. The twelfth measure has 4-0-2 on the 4th string, 2 on the 3rd string, 2 on the 2nd string, and 0 on the 1st string. The thirteenth measure has 4-0-2 on the 4th string, 2 on the 3rd string, 2 on the 2nd string, and 0 on the 1st string. The fourteenth measure has 4-0-2 on the 4th string, 2 on the 3rd string, 2 on the 2nd string, and 0 on the 1st string. The fifteenth measure has 4-0-2 on the 4th string, 2 on the 3rd string, 2 on the 2nd string, and 0 on the 1st string. The sixteenth measure has 4-0-2 on the 4th string, 2 on the 3rd string, 2 on the 2nd string, and 0 on the 1st string. The seventeenth measure has 4-0-2 on the 4th string, 2 on the 3rd string, 2 on the 2nd string, and 0 on the 1st string. The eighteenth measure has 4-0-2 on the 4th string, 2 on the 3rd string, 2 on the 2nd string, and 0 on the 1st string. The nineteenth measure has 4-0-2 on the 4th string, 2 on the 3rd string, 2 on the 2nd string, and 0 on the 1st string. The twentieth measure has 4-0-2 on the 4th string, 2 on the 3rd string, 2 on the 2nd string, and 0 on the 1st string. The notation includes a 'Po' (pick-off) mark above the 4th string in the fourth measure. The piece ends with a double bar line and repeat dots.

B

Part B musical notation for the banjo. The key signature is C major (gCGCD). The notation is written on a five-line staff with a G-clef. The first measure has 2 on the 2nd string, 0 on the 1st string, and 0 on the 5th string. The second measure has 0 on the 5th string and 4 on the 4th string. The third measure has 0-2-0 on the 5th string, 2 on the 4th string, and 0 on the 3rd string. The fourth measure has 4 on the 4th string, 0 on the 3rd string, 5 on the 2nd string, 5 on the 1st string, 2 on the 4th string, and 2 on the 3rd string. The fifth measure has 4-0-2 on the 4th string, 2 on the 3rd string, 2 on the 2nd string, and 0 on the 1st string. The sixth measure has 4-0-2 on the 4th string, 2 on the 3rd string, 2 on the 2nd string, and 0 on the 1st string. The seventh measure has 4-0-2 on the 4th string, 2 on the 3rd string, 2 on the 2nd string, and 0 on the 1st string. The eighth measure has 4-0-2 on the 4th string, 2 on the 3rd string, 2 on the 2nd string, and 0 on the 1st string. The ninth measure has 4-0-2 on the 4th string, 2 on the 3rd string, 2 on the 2nd string, and 0 on the 1st string. The tenth measure has 4-0-2 on the 4th string, 2 on the 3rd string, 2 on the 2nd string, and 0 on the 1st string. The eleventh measure has 4-0-2 on the 4th string, 2 on the 3rd string, 2 on the 2nd string, and 0 on the 1st string. The twelfth measure has 4-0-2 on the 4th string, 2 on the 3rd string, 2 on the 2nd string, and 0 on the 1st string. The thirteenth measure has 4-0-2 on the 4th string, 2 on the 3rd string, 2 on the 2nd string, and 0 on the 1st string. The fourteenth measure has 4-0-2 on the 4th string, 2 on the 3rd string, 2 on the 2nd string, and 0 on the 1st string. The fifteenth measure has 4-0-2 on the 4th string, 2 on the 3rd string, 2 on the 2nd string, and 0 on the 1st string. The sixteenth measure has 4-0-2 on the 4th string, 2 on the 3rd string, 2 on the 2nd string, and 0 on the 1st string. The seventeenth measure has 4-0-2 on the 4th string, 2 on the 3rd string, 2 on the 2nd string, and 0 on the 1st string. The eighteenth measure has 4-0-2 on the 4th string, 2 on the 3rd string, 2 on the 2nd string, and 0 on the 1st string. The nineteenth measure has 4-0-2 on the 4th string, 2 on the 3rd string, 2 on the 2nd string, and 0 on the 1st string. The twentieth measure has 4-0-2 on the 4th string, 2 on the 3rd string, 2 on the 2nd string, and 0 on the 1st string. The notation includes a 'R' (roll) mark above the 2nd string in the first measure and a 'Po' (pick-off) mark above the 4th string in the fourth measure. The piece ends with a double bar line and repeat dots.

Note that the B-part starts with a run followed by a melody note on the 5th string, which is a full quarter note. The last brush in A8 and B8 is played with the 1st string held down at the 2nd fret, but is not sounded.

# 15 - Come Back Boys And Let's Feed The Horses

gDGCD/5525 - Key G modal

From the playing of Dwight Diller

Edn's son, James Hammons, scratched out a few notes of this during one of my visits. I happened to have my recorder in the car so I recorded it. Interesting, but Burl quickly got the fiddle out of James' hands and soon had the tune going. There is a recording of an old fiddler from Mingo County, WVa playing a tune almost like this, with the same name, but really fast and frenzied plus singing words. He was recorded many years back.

A

B

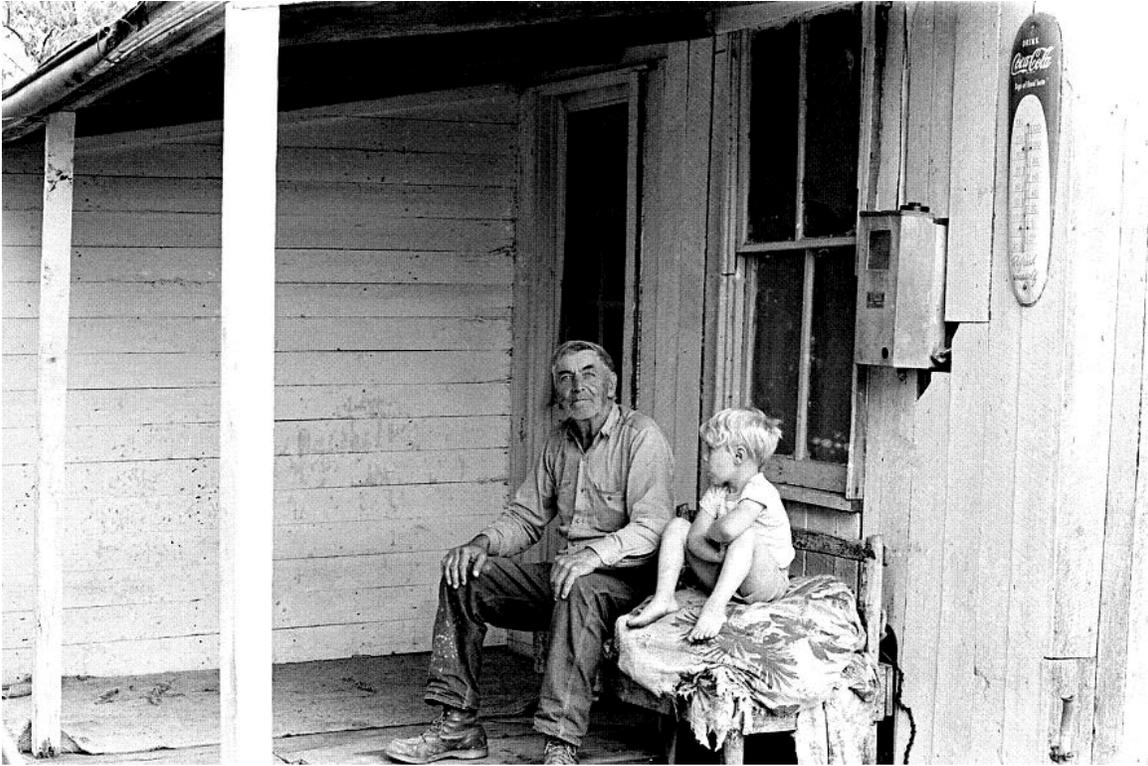
## Alternatives

Alternate measures 7-8 for A part

Alternate measures 7-8 A part

Optional tag At end of A

Dwight plays this square in the recording to keep folks from getting mixed up. However, he has tags all over the place in the low part. He says that it is just where and when the notion hits him. **Diller:** Lee Hammons told me a story about how an old man taught him as a youth the hard lesson of "Don't never spoil a good notion" Ask me about it . Was a good piece of wisdom Lee lived by the rest of his life. Took a notion when up in his late 60s, left his life long home in this region, went to Long Island NY, arrived on Thursday and went to work on Monday on a duck ranch, driving a truck hauling Polish workers. A 'shade tree fixit' genius-Cobble, piece & patch in the land of 'do-without'.



Sherman with his grandson Roy Lee Hammons at his house out on the head of 'Little Laurel' creek of the Williams River. This was Maggie's [his sister] house and over the years, Sherman and Aileen lived back over the mountain, up 'Day Run'. As the winters were getting too hard for Maggie, now widowed, Emmie, widowed, and Ruie, unmarried, to stay out on the mountain without transportation, they moved into the Stillwell house near town where brother Burl 'bached'. Sherman and Aileen then moved down off Day Run to Maggie's house which sat right beside the gravel road. Sherman lived up Day Run, and in order to get there by vehicle, he had to leave the one lane narrow gravel road, drive through the Williams River if the water was down, up along a dirt and/or mud rutted lane about ¼ mile to a fence, and park at a fence. After crossing the fence, walking up through the field about 200 yards, one came to a small house in an isolated deep valley. If the water was up, had to walk across the swingin bridge and up to the house. When I first met Maggie[b1899] and Sherman[b 1903] and his wife Aileen, she had come out for a short visit in August 1969. According to her when I stopped by, along about just before daybreak, Maggie, who always woke early, told me she heard a 'panther holler'. She said, "I just laid there in bed and waited a little while till just at about the crack of dawn. In just shortly, it hollered again, so I got up and went outside to listen. But it never hollered any more."

So I ask, "Could it have been a wildcat?"

"Why, no! It wasn't a wildcat!! Why, wildcats don't sound nary a bit of nothing like a panther!"

Diller: "When was the last time you ever heard a panther?"

"Why, it's been a long, long time, boys, but, now, if you ever hear one, now you'll not never forget that sound. I guarantee you that!"

Those were the days [1968ff] was when I was 'relearning' that our old people I had been around all my life in those mountains did not 'need' tell all those "tall tale" lies like the so called "Jack Tales" of N.C. region. Their lives were too full of "real life" to waste time on telling such stuff to their children, especially. Oral history of the family was of unspoken great importance. Oral history truth helps the children know who they are and where they came from. A much better bedrock foundation to stand on than 'lies' on the same level as 'santa claus and easter bunny'.

# 16 – The Fall of Richmond

gDGCD/5525 - Key G Modal

From the playing of Dwight Diller

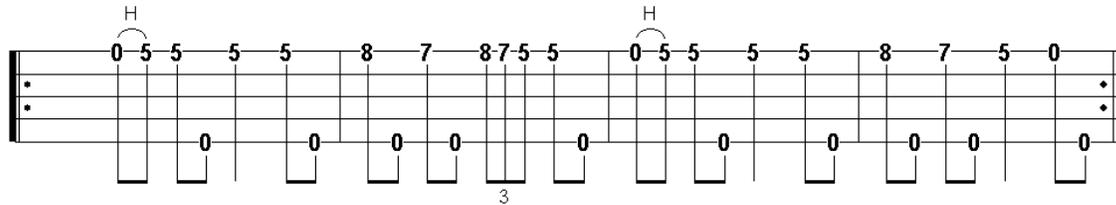
From the Hammons. Burl played it w/ 3 parts when I first heard him play it in summer of '69. He called it 'the Fall of Richmond', but started playing the other part I dislike later. Edn's recordings showed up in late '70s, and he was also playing the other part. It is my contention that Edn included the extra part in the "major" key to win contests which were his only income. Burl later called the tune 'The Falls of Richmond'. The name could be either. To me, the dark sound of it suggests death. Possibly the Civil War. But there is also about 50 miles south from me on the New River, which runs north out of North Carolina into WV, a place called the Sandstone Falls. The old name of it is the 'Richmond Falls', named from a family nearby [Jimmy Costa info}. Look up 'Mary Ingles Draper'. She was the first woman kidnapped from that region by Indians. Was a terrible ordeal when the Shawnees took her over on the Scioto River country, and she escaped to finally walk back. The Mary Ingles Draper Bridge on I-64 crosses the Sandstone [Richmond] Falls. Book: "FOLLOW THE RIVER" tells the events; consider reading it to help w/ learning this old music and what kind of life it was born into, even though the banjo was far in future.

**A**

**B**

**C**

D



The part that Dwight thinks was added by Edn Hammons to include when he played in fiddle contests is shown as part C. Dwight thoroughly dislikes this part and always omits it unless that will start a fight. [Dwight: Since I cant read 'tab', I don't know which part is the one I don't think belongs. In Burl's not playing that part in the tune early on during my first visits, it was much more pleasing I have always thought. To me, this 'showboatin' 'A major' part just draws away from the deep beauty; puts it into the 'major' key, and cheapens the tune. I say, just because Edn Hammons added something to a tune certainly does not make it tasteful. Btw the 'experts' have tried to connect this tune with the 'falls on the James River near Richmond'; forget it.]

The order in which the parts are played is not rigid. On Just Banjo '99 Dwight plays it AABBACDDBAABBCDDDBBAABB....

[Dwight: I see that I put that hateful major key part in when I was recording "JUST BANJO 99". I have no recollection of this. There are regrets, but no excuses can cover this deed.]

The triplet in D2 can be avoided by an 8-5 pull-off. Another trick is to hold the 2nd string down at the 2nd fret, wherever possible. This is a technique that Dwight often uses on modal tunes so they sound more "lonesome." But he does not do it all the time, otherwise the music becomes monotonous.

BTW, if you are interested re photograph, count five woodhicks from the left, and that is my Grandad Wooddell [pronounced Wood-ul; b1884] with the tall crosscut saw. Best I can tell, that was his instrument most all the time.

The way I got this story from his daughter, Alice [b1907 or 09], my aunt, "Dad went out skunk huntin with the dogs, and a skunk pissed and hit his mustashe. He was partial to it but couldn't get the smell out, so he cut it off and never grew another. He got married sometime around 1903 had the mustache then, but it wasn't long after that it got cut off."

Dllr: it was also probably going out of style at that time also.

Alice said, "Before Dad got married, he and a bunch of other guys would gather up on Sunday and get into heavy fistfights all day long."

Dllr: "How come?"

Alice: "For the excitement and to put in the day, but that was no more after he got married. When he was cuttin timber back in on Red Lick Mountain, he would walk home Saturday even-nin. He would go FIRST into the 'worsch house', strip off his work clothes, hand them out to Mom who had their big 'arn [iron] kittle' full of boilin water, and boil the dirt, lice, greybacks, bedbugs, and whatever varmints he had picked up that week from the bunks at the log camp. After a sponge down bath 'n a change into fresh 'worsch board scrubbed' clothes, he could go into the house for a late supper. He would stay until way before day on Monday morn and then hit'er for the camp 'bout 6 miles back up on the mountain. He and mom ended up with about 10 of us kids. It would take one of those big barrels of flour for the family to do for the month. Plus on top of that was all the corn that Tolbert Waugh ground down over the hill at his mill."

[BTW, Tolbert Waugh's working mill was moved down to Babcock St Park – beside "Clifftop"]



When I first started visiting the two unrelated Hammons' families, 'the old music' had basically died 40+ years earlier. The dynamic mountain culture that had nourished it, as I said before, had crumbled by the end of the timber boom. Yes, people still lived in the mountains, but the 'community' and the music were rejected like a 'red-headed step-child' by the local power structure's 'polite society'. Thus the old music basically skipped most all my mother's generation [approx 1905-1940] except for some folks in center of WVa – Clay, Braxton, Calhoun, etc Counties. My WVa peers are a tiny handful of natives from my post WWII generation who have grabbed aholdt, and, against all odds are still playin the music. I have been teaching the music for over 3 ½ decades and have seldom ever had a native student from WVa.

Too much 'shame' beaten into the school children and the general public by the media, the colleges who teach teachers, the policy makers. This is a large part of the source. And the way those from the outside have gathered up the local music, used it for their own gain and excluded the natives has done nothing for the self esteem of the local folks. Treated as '3<sup>rd</sup> World'.

A similar pattern has been seen in the way the 'native Americans' have been treated, but "Indian Jewelry" now has to be made by "Indians". They took control in recent years.

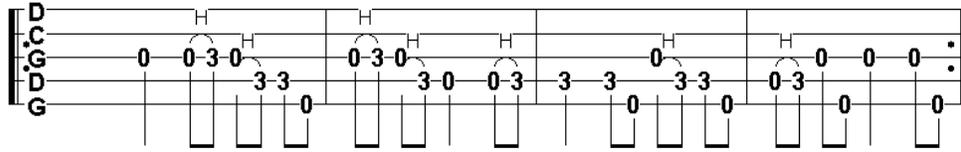
# 17 – Patty on the Turnpike

gDGCD/5525 - Key G Modal

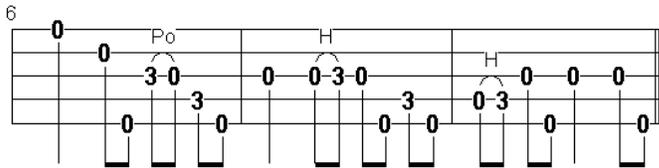
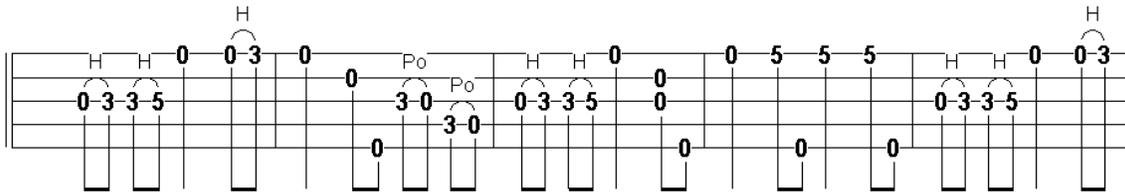
From the playing of Dwight Diller

*Though there are many tunes by this name, this is Lee Hammons' specific Patty on the Turnpike. I prefer it to all others. Modal, it is.*

A



B



There was a “swingin bridge” across the Greenbriar River in the boom town of Cass which opened for logging in about 1900. Amos McCarty who was born in 1867 said,

“When all of us ‘hicks’ come off the mountain ‘n hit Cass, everone hid indoors. If two hicks met on that bridge, one would ‘have ta’ go into the river fo’sure. Everbody blowed off steam backed up from up on the mountain since’s no liquor nor poker allowed ‘n if you even got’n n’argument at the company camp you was fired on the spot! ‘Hit the hollar!’ right then the boss would say. Plenty was a-lookin fer good jobs.”

Another old musician I started visiting in 1968, Hamp Carpenter, from down on ‘Poker Flats’, had made liquor back in those mountains to sell to the woodhicks. He spent many hours telling me about those days. Hamp also worked as a bunkhouse ‘lobbyhog’: keep fires going, clean up. Hamp & Rob Scott, from Caesar’s Mountain, were the ONLY ones who were still publically playing banjo and fiddle for decades. \$6/night for 4 hours play for square dances @ beer joints Fri/Sat nights. Not what would be considered ‘union scale’. The old music was pushed far back in a corner in it’s home here in the mountains after WWII. Marginalized.



This is music from individuals, independent folk, which is the reason it works best 'solo' or max of single banjo and fiddle working closely. Thoughtlessly kick out the important silences between the notes, and it becomes 'festival' or 'session' music. To play it, one must be willing to become vulnerable, take the risk and put it out front 'alone' which is opposite of the 'session'.

This music demands a lot, is costly, does not give itself up easily. Phoney's need not apply. There are tens of thousands of tunes that lend themselves to sessions and 'aerobic dancing' [present day 'square dancing']. 'Square dancing' in Lee Hammons early years was like a 'quiet conversation' [Meaning the depth, the feeling, the 'spirit' was there in full.]

I said: "Mr Hammons, what was the square dancing like in the old days? [1900 and before?]

He said "Well, we'd just move the little bit of furniture out of the little front room, either outside or in the kitchen, and dance all night." Since he played light, quick, snappy, strong, but not crashy loud nor fast, I asked him if that was close to what was the way it was played?

His answer was "Yep! I'd work all day, walk way back through the mountains at Cold Knob and into Nicholas County, dance all night, and walk back way before daybreak so as to go to work at daylight"

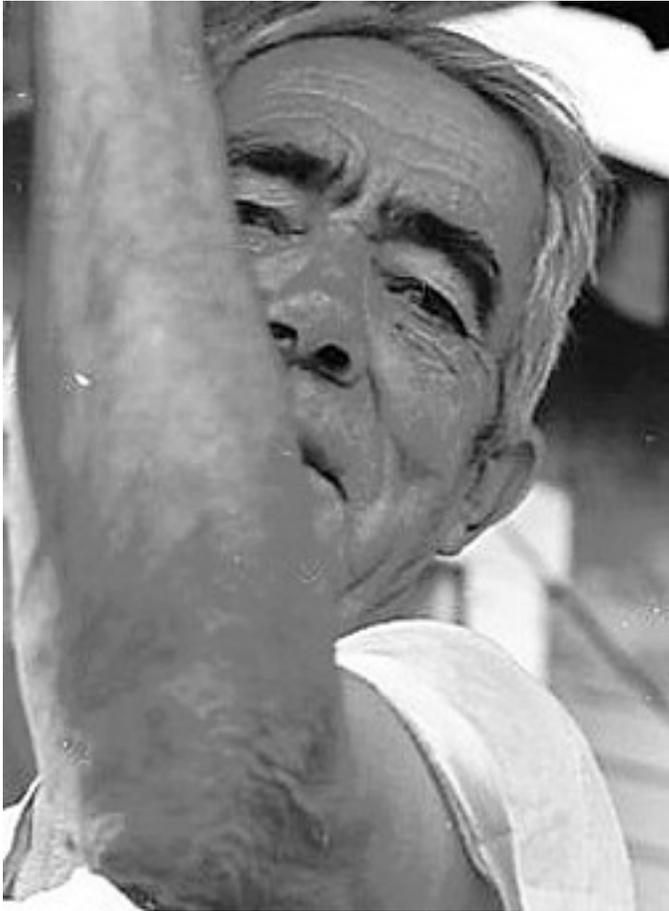
I asked if any thing changed?

He said, "Later, folks got to drinkin 'n stompin 'n playin fast and the quiet dance and the good times were gone. Ruined. That's when it was over for me. That bunch didn't have the brains of a downhill sledtrack."

To really get this central WVa music, one must pay the price of isolation. Or the playing, as I said, solo or with another person. This is not popular. In fact, as I am writing this [August '07] the Clifftop festival is underway. It may be called an old time music festival, but it has to do with the revivalist new way of playing the 'old tunes'. The old ways are not welcome there. This present day music is what it is, nothing more.

Allowing the WVa mountain music to be what it was and is, is where it's strength and beauty came from and still comes from. But it is expensive, that old music. If you have dwelling deep inside THE certain 'WAY', you wont mind paying the needed price to really play our music which was 'developed' in isolation by individuals playing individual music.

Separate your music out, please, if playing this.  
Thanks for your consideration, Dwight



James Hammons, son of Edn Hammons and first cousin of Maggie, Burl and Sherman. James was a talented musician who played banjo, fiddle, guitar. He was born in 1905; cousins Sherman in 1903, cousin Burl about 1905 or 1908, Maggie in 1899.

Best I can tell, Sherman never ever payed a bit of attention to the commercial 'newer' so called 'old time music'. Burl on the other hand, who also grew up with the old music, but later on, started learning tunes from the fiddlers on the 'Grand Old Oprey' through the years. I have seen Burl literally hear a fiddle tune exactly one time and play it as if he had played it as his own for a long time. Internalized like the big fish 'gulping' a little fish; the little fish is not a fish any more. Maggie learned a **few** of the later songs from recordings but never ever lost that 'old quality' in her voice. James had the gift of the "old", but made the switch over to the music which was in vogue in the commercial music era of the beginning era of so called 'old time music'. IE- down stroke 'thumpin' to 2 and 3 finger up pickin on banjo, playing guitar with thumb and finger stroke, fiddling which had a 'newer sound'. Like his dad, Edn, did with a lot of his fiddle tunes in order to win contests.

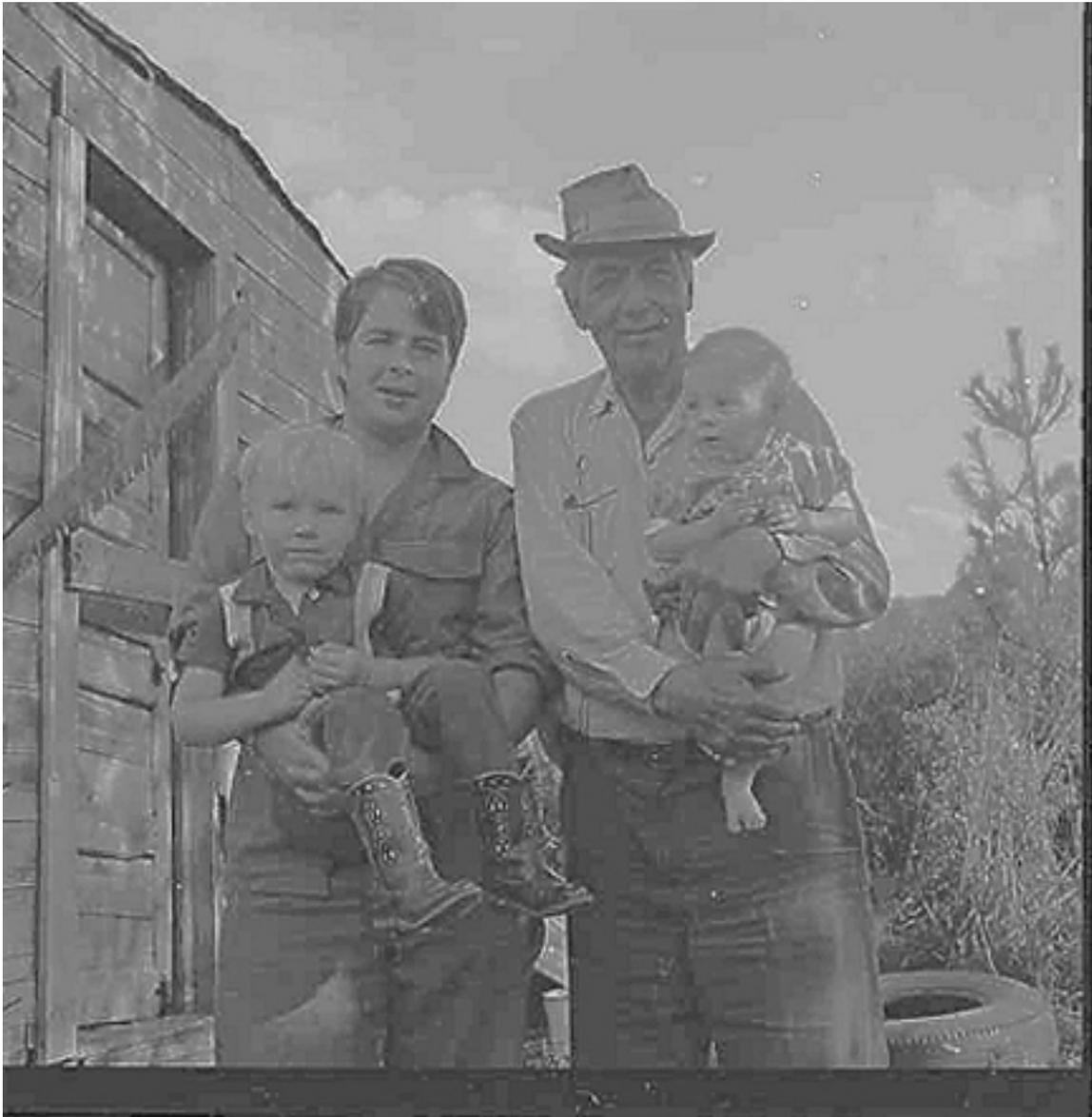
As I said, once we make the choice to move away from the 'REAL' old time music, we can never go back. May be right good, but it aint the 'old'.

“Today’s doctors just don’t care a tinker’s toot to know that gravy, made after bushytailed rats are skillit fried up, is pon my honor, larpin ‘n good for varyin ‘n sundry ailments: ‘moles, colds, sores, fits, farts, freckles...!’” Stann Lautermilik



Such is the medical community of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. They pay no attention to *PROVEN* home remedies such as this. Healing would spread like wildfire across this nation of ours using such mountain remedies. No need of socialized medicine??

As I pointed out, Old Man Parsons begged Uncle Pete Hammons to kill him a ‘hoot owl’ so he could have it fried up for medicinal purposes - to treat his sickness. Uncle Pete was a socialized and accommodating kind of fellar and brought him one. When Dr Pete checked in some time later, old man Parsons was up and about as always. Please note: this was not a ‘spotted owl’.



Who is that baby-faced man? What did he want? What did he say? Where was he from? Did he know where he was going? Did he have a clue? What was he seeking?.....

**A Possible Possibility:  
Ultimately to be in a Self-Appointed Political Position of Power  
Like**

**Mayor o' th' Runnin Waters o' Knave's Run, WVa?**

# 19 – The Old Drake

gDGCD/5525 - Key G modal

From the playing of Dwight Diller

This is from Burl and Edn Hammons. I do the best I can with it considering the implications.

A

Musical notation for section A, first system. It shows a guitar fretboard with strings D, G, B, G, C, D. The notation includes fingerings (0, 2, 3, 0, 2, 0, 3, 0, 0, 3, 0, 0, 2, 2, 2, 0, 3, 0, 0, 3, 0, 0, 0, 0, 0, 0) and techniques (H, Po) above the notes. There are two 'A' chord markings above the staff.

Musical notation for section A, second system. It shows a guitar fretboard with strings D, G, B, G, C, D. The notation includes fingerings (0, 3, 0, 2, 2, 2, 0, 3, 0, 3, 0, 0, 0, 3, 0, 0, 2, 2, 2, 0, 3, 0, 0, 0, 0, 0) and techniques (H, Po) above the notes. A '6' is written above the first measure.

B

Musical notation for section B, first system. It shows a guitar fretboard with strings D, G, B, G, C, D. The notation includes fingerings (0, 3, 3, 0, 0, 0, 0, 0, 3, 3, 0, 3, 0, 0, 0, 3, 3, 3, 0, 3, 0, 0, 3, 0, 0, 0, 0, 0, 0) and techniques (H, Po) above the notes.

Musical notation for section B, second system. It shows a guitar fretboard with strings D, G, B, G, C, D. The notation includes fingerings (0, 3, 3, 0, 0, 0, 0, 3, 0, 0, 3, 0, 0, 0, 3, 3, 3, 0, 3, 0, 0, 3, 3, 0, 0, 2, 0, 0, 3, 0, 0, 2, 0) and techniques (H, Po) above the notes. A '6' is written above the first measure.



## 20 – Abe’s Retreat

gDGCD/5525 - Key G Modal

From the playing of Dwight Diller

This is ‘sort of’ Emory Bailey's version. He was from over about Calhoun Co. in central WVa. [1897-1960]. First battle of Bull Run in US Civil War is the reference. Harvey Sampson of Calhoun County also plays an ‘Abe’s’ in a major key. This one tickled my innards

**A**

**B**

*Both sides in the conflict ‘were absolutely sure’ that any fighting would only last for three months or so. Four years [1861-65] and hundreds of thousands of casualties as well as many areas in the ‘South’ were completely devastated. Note: parts of that ‘conflict’ are still being ‘fought’ in some folks minds.*

*Once again, history tells us there is no such thing as a ‘short war or a good war’. It is particularly tough when fought between next door neighbors, kinfolk near and far and, worst of all, between close ‘blood kin’ in a household –father and son or brothers.*

*. Like Cain and Able. That murder had some repercussions that are seldom mentioned because folks don’t know how to deal with all the events in the story.*

# 21 – Abe’s Retreat (Low G)

gGDGD/7575

From the playing of Dwight Diller

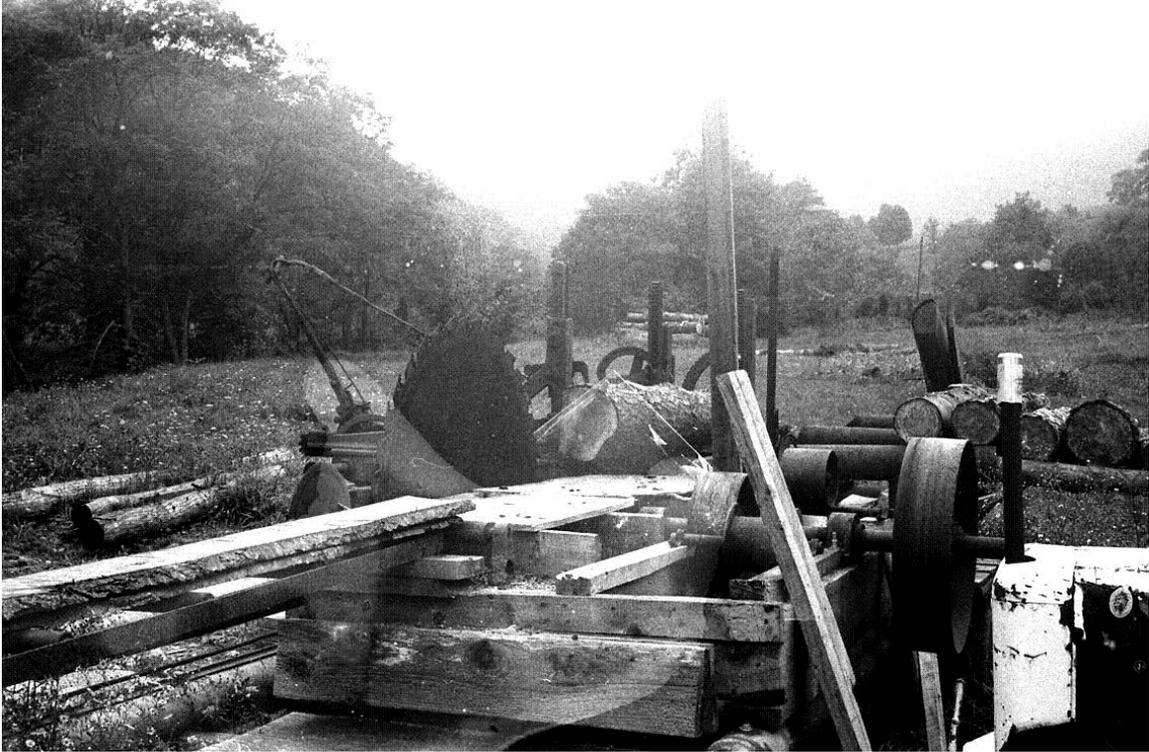
Same tune in Low G tuning. I like this tuning to play this ‘Abe’s’ better.

## A

Measures 1-10 of section A. The notation is written on a three-line staff representing strings D, G, and G. Measure 1 starts with a double bar line and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The notes are: 0, 3, 0, 3, 0, 3, 5, 0, 3, 0, 5, 0, 0, 0, 0, 2, 0, 0, 3, 0, 3, 0, 0, 3. Techniques include hammer-ons (H) on measures 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and pull-offs (Po) on measures 17, 18, 19, 20. A triplet of 3 is indicated on measure 8. Measure 10 ends with a double bar line and repeat dots.

## B

Measures 11-20 of section B. The notation is written on a three-line staff representing strings D, G, and G. Measure 11 starts with a double bar line and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The notes are: 5, 5, 5, 0, 0, 3, 2, 0, 0, 0, 5, 5, 7, 7, 3, 0, 3, 0, 0, 0, 0. Techniques include pull-offs (Po) on measures 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, hammer-ons (H) on measures 13, 14, 15, and a slur (S) on measure 12. Measure 20 ends with a double bar line and repeat dots.



Small 'coonskinner sawmill' on 'Stompin Crick' at the base of the Yew Pine Mountains.



Stillwell house, one quarter mile from Marlinton, where Burl, Maggie, Ruie, Emmie lived during the years I was visiting [1969-1976]. I attended my school years ['52-64] in Marlinton.

## 22 – Yew Piney Mountain

gGDGD/7575 - Key G

From the playing of Dwight Diller

*These are the mountains that I grew up in and around and presently live near: Droop, Caesar, Viney, Kennison, Cranberry, and Black Mountains make up the Yew Pines. Several years ago, I found out that ‘Caesar’ and ‘Viney’ had been slaves who later owned each of those two mountains. On Google it shows that “Yew Pine Mountain Music” is my trademark; I do not dispute that statement*

*. The “yew pine” for the old mountain people around here was the ‘red spruce’ which grows at approximately 4000’ and above. The Wright Bros used ‘yew pine’ red spruce boards in their ‘airship’ while building it down at Kitty Hawk back in about 1903. Those spruce tree boards came from the top of Cheat Mountain, just to the north of where I live. There was a great ‘band mill’ at the boom town of Cass, WVa [where I spent some of the greatest times of my life when I was young] which sawed 250,000 board feet of lumber EACH day SIX days a week for about 30+ years and to a lesser degree for many years longer. It started up in 1903. These great wide red spruce boards for the Wright’s were sawed out of logs so big that there was not a spot of a tiny knot in them anywhere; completely ‘clear’.*

A

B

I have been talking about the old “woodhicks” who worked in the virgin “timber woods”. Sherman and Lee and my Grandad Wooddell were among those hicks.



Looking across from the top of Black Mountain within the Yew Pine Mountains toward the east. The valley below is the headwaters of the Williams' River ultimately flowing toward the west. The old Hammons along with maybe a couple other families settled this absolute wilderness in the very early 1860s. At that time the land was teeming with elk, bison, panthers, wildcats, white tailed deer, as well as the smaller animals.['Day Run' hollow, far down the valley, can be seen.] In this photo, you will see two prominent 'yew pine' red spruce trees standing tall. There are lots of these small spruce trees scattered that are now, 37 yrs from photo, standing much taller. At this point in the photo, Oct 1970, it had been literally 40 years since these mountains were burned right down to the rock. These very small trees, evergreen and hardwood, have been trying very slowly to come back. There had been very little inorganic soil underneath the virgin timber. Hundreds of thousands of years of organic build up by mosses, pine needles, dead trees, dead tree frogs, etc were supporting this extremely dense shallow rooted growth. However, once the lumber boom began bringing the 'log trains with cinders flying over on the dead treetops', these mountains exploded into flame. The burning tapers were carried into the far distance that you can see in '29 & '30. My mother's family lived just over the next ridge on the right. The lumber companies brought money into this barter economy. Ultimately, the land was raped and plundered, and, as the timber companies pulled out, the culture that had changed with the great influx was left also raped, plundered and in shambles along with the cremated mountains. There was no place left for the few native residents; there was no place left for the native speckled trout with their gills full of silt and ashes; the quick \$\$ cash, with it's promises, was gone forever. Therefore all of the culture, including the music and its role in it 'literally DIED'. These old folks, my boyhood neighbors, were the very last of that frontier generation beginning in the 1700s. Their minds were still clear, the old stories and the music though slumbering, awoke for its last final breaths before death. These were their tunes, but here empty of their original life. Each tune calls out for students who will sacrifice enough to breathe 'proper life' back in.

# 23 – Piney Woods

gGDGB/3548 - Key G

From the playing of Dwight Diller

*This is a tune that Burl and Sherman played in this tuning on the fiddle, which I just transferred over to the banjo. I just left my banjo 5th string at 'G' pitch. This tune rates high among my very favorite fiddle tunes. In real life, this tune is "crooked 'n ah corkscrew". This one takes lots of "discipline" to handle firmly but gently; stay close up against it, or you will lose "IT"*

*\*\*\*Again, this is probably the absolute hardest tune I try to play on the banjo.*

A

Musical notation for part A of 'Piney Woods'. It consists of two systems of five-line staves. The first system has a treble clef and a G-clef on the fifth line. The second system has a bass clef and a G-clef on the second line. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 0-5. Striking techniques are labeled as 'H' (hammer-on) and 'Po' (pull-off). The notation includes various rhythmic patterns and a double bar line with first and second endings.

B

Musical notation for part B of 'Piney Woods'. It consists of two systems of five-line staves. The first system has a treble clef and a G-clef on the fifth line. The second system has a bass clef and a G-clef on the second line. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 0-5. Striking techniques are labeled as 'H' (hammer-on) and 'Po' (pull-off). The notation includes various rhythmic patterns and a double bar line.

Alternative:

Alternative musical notation for 'Piney Woods'. It shows a single system of five-line staves with a treble clef and a G-clef on the fifth line. The notation includes a triplet of eighth notes (3-3-0-3) and a hammer-on (H) over the final note.

A1 at start

The strums throughout the tune can be played with two or three notes. The important thing is that Dwight emphasizes the bass or 4<sup>th</sup> string which gives a lovely tone shift, a trick he uses often.

**Diller:** to get this fiddle tune 'correct' you CANNOT pat your foot to keep time through the low part. Catch the pulse; never ever let it get squared up or the beauty is gone. This is one that is too hard! to attempt for quite a few years, until you get as 'sense' of how the Hammons' music goes.



**Necessities.**

## 24 – Low D Blues

f#ADAD/5754 - Key D

From the playing of Dwight Diller

*Since this is a really good tune, but the whole name is offensive, I have decided to call it 'Low D Blues'. The tune comes from Oscar Wright from Princeton, WV. I just took it, generally slowed it down a bit, changed a few notes and added a bunch of syncopation.*

**A**

Section A musical notation showing two staves of guitar tablature. The first staff starts with a chord diagram for DADAD# and contains seven measures of music with fret numbers and 'Po' (pull-off) markings. The second staff starts at fret 5 and contains six measures of music with fret numbers and 'Po' markings.

**B**

Section B musical notation showing two staves of guitar tablature. The first staff contains seven measures of music with fret numbers, 'Sl' (slide), and 'H' (hammer-on) markings. The second staff starts at fret 5 and contains six measures of music with fret numbers, 'Sl', and 'Po' markings.

*This 'banjo tune', I feel sure, came from the 'black tradition'. This is in no way a fiddle tune. A fiddle just will not work in order to get proper sound or get the notes to mesh properly. Keep it 'slow-medium' in order to get the proper strong syncopation in it. Work with that downbeat closely. Do it this way and it wont let you down.*



**Daily water from the 'artesian well' [spring] up the road about 1/8<sup>th</sup> mile since there was no water supply closer during much of the year. Milk jugs were involved in part of the recycling process. No water wasted here. After the dishes are washed up, the water left over was mixed with feed to slop the hogs with.**

## 25 – Washington’s March

f#ADAD/5754 - Key D

From the playing of Dwight Diller

*From the Hammons. I would say that this refers to General Washington. I was told by one of my students who comes from Vermont that this was a drum and fife tune. His marching corp play it, he said. I don’t know. Keep as close to march pace as possible.. This one is a real beauty.*

**A**

**B**

**Alternatives:**

A2 & A6

Tommy Jarrell’s people played a tune and called it “General Washington’s March” but best of my recollection, that one was actually “Bonaparte’s Retreat”

## 26 - Calloway

eCGCD/7522 - Key D

From the playing of Dwight Diller

*Burl, Maggie and Sherman's. Spelling can either be Calloway/Callaway. This tune is easier than Lee's version. Interesting how much it changes the music when the 5<sup>th</sup> stg goes down to the 2<sup>nd</sup> fret. Also, listen to the tune Half Shaved, that Wade Ward played on the banjo. It is virtually the same tune. He said he learned it from his brother who had "learned it up in WWa". I think Wade played his 'Half Shaved' with the 5<sup>th</sup> string tuned down to the 2<sup>nd</sup> fret/first string also.*

*Callaway was supposed to have asked for his fiddle on the gallows. He played this tune and said if anyone can play it, to step forward and do so. And if they can, they can have the fiddle. No one stepped forward so he broke it over his knee. And you know the rest of the story.*

The tablature consists of four systems of five lines each, representing the five strings of the banjo. The strings are labeled D, C, G, C, D from top to bottom, and E, G, C, D from left to right. The first system starts with a treble clef and a D chord. The second system starts with a 5. The third system starts with a 10. The fourth system starts with a 15. The tablature includes fret numbers (0-7), hammer-ons (H), pull-offs (Po), and slurs. The strings are labeled D, C, G, C, D from top to bottom, and E, G, C, D from left to right.

First bars: Sherman insists that you don't fret the fourth fret on the second string until needed. That extra 'hammer-on' of his really pushes the rhythm in a quiet sort of way.

**Diller:** please be careful with this tune. Done in a stately, regal sort of way, it is a real beauty. Can't push it, but needs a good down beat.



**After supper wash up on the cook stove.**

## 27 – The Dead Man’s Piece

fCFCD/5723 - Key F

From the playing of Dwight Diller

*Similar to another tune but specific to Lee Hammons. He said that an old man liked the tune so well that he wanted it played all night at his wake. So banjo players sat up and traded the banjo around and accommodated him. Lee couldn't remember the dead man's name. This is why he called it 'the Dead Man's Piece'. This tune is one of the several tunes Lee played on the banjo. His music will 'fool' you. It comes out so delicate that years back seldom did the 'important' folklorists pay attention to his fiddle or banjo playing. Too bad; it sneaks up on the listener if there is any developed sensitivity at all. His music was, as I said, strong. A decade of 'in depth intuitive study' in the Hammons' music is needed before one can start to grasp the extreme complexity. ONCE AGAIN, I will mention what Wilson Douglas said about the old music: "It takes about ten years just to Start to learn the fiddle [old music]"*

Again, take your time with Lee Hammons' tunes; it's all about the silences in his music. As in silences between the actual notes is where true music exists. And when dealing with Lee Hammons' music, particular care must be taken or everything important will be lost. He was a master at controlling those spaces. At least as good with the banjo as any I ever heard, and, most generally, far better.

Maggie was also excellent in dealing with the silences between her notes on the banjo. This is an important goal to work toward. As I pointed out, to use their music for 'sessions' or 'dance', the silences will gone, thus killing any potential 'music'. Most every tune in this tutorial publication of WVa tunes is hard to play. Not because of the notes, but to get the proper phrasing. The pulse. The rhythm.

To learn this will take years, and, right often, unless you are very careful, you will never catch on. Always pay attention to what the old folks were playing; those from the culture. Do otherwise and you will not learn. Learn by listening to the old folks, and you will learn well in time.

## Technical Stuff

The tabs were prepared using TableEdit 2.62. (This great tab editing program is available from <http://www.tabledit.com>). Separate tabs were created for each part and the alternatives and transferred into Microsoft Paint using the "Export as Bitmap" feature of Print Preview at a scale of 150%. From Microsoft Paint these were cut to size, saved as monochrome bitmaps and copied into a Microsoft Word document.

## Photo Credits

All photos copyright Dwight Diller except photo of the Montana barn by Stewart Seidel and the old woodhick photo is public domain.



**FAREWELL**

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Also note: without the years of investment in time and effort by Dave, Stewart, and Andrew this 'book' would never have come to the light of day. Left up to me, realistically speaking, I would have never accomplished anything.

To print this reissue has been made possible by a grant from "YPCT" or "YewPine Cultural Traditions", a 501[c][3] non-profit corporation which was set up to provide means for passing along the old WVa mountain heritage. The most recent grant, 2007, has provided new equipment: a new computer, good quality copy/scan/print/fax machine, digital camera, hard drive camcorder, heavy duty binding machine. The grant money source is from a few private individuals. The 'large endowment' folks have not been approached yet.

Also in the near future a 'Book plus DVDs' based on the extensive hours of recordings made by me and by Wayne Howard starting in the mid-60's plus the hundreds of photographs I took in October 1970 is planned for release. Though that "Book" has been in my head/heart for almost 40 years, this is the first time that it has been technically possible for someone like me to bring it to the surface. Over the years, there has never been the money, the technology NOR the "life experiences" to really have a grasp of this vision.

MY PRESENT VISION IS THIS; BUT CHANGES MUST ALWAYS BE MADE BECAUSE A MONSTER "WORK" LIKE THIS TAKES ON "A LIFE OF IT'S OWN". I presently have 98% of what is needed to start assembling & printing text PLUS putting the stories and music, my old and new photos and the camcorder footage onto DVDs which will be included in this project package. I do need some help with labor.

The reason for putting the stories in text as well as spoken on a DVD is it allows the reader/listener the very best opportunity to catch as much of the whole as possible. Plus some photos as a chapter break will run between stories and examples of the music will run with the photos. Basically it is to be a 'visit'. And first and foremost, it has been for the people of WVa, especially our 'mountain youth' who very often have no 'vision' at all.

Lastly, in regards to all the many projects, I want to thank Gail Hatton. She grew up in Kentucky and moved to Delaware long years ago. However, as with many who are a reluctant part of the exodus out of the Appalachian Mtns, her heart is still back in the hills. Listen to her sing the old mountain songs; the 'mountain quality' has never left her though the city has taken a great toll. It is part of her inner system. Without her assistance and verbal support, I could not be using this computer or other complex, for me, machinery at all.

### **Important Note**

As we share this work with you we ask that you respect the effort that has gone into it and avoid indiscriminate reproduction that would violate copyright. The music and the stories that this book presents are free for those who care about them to perform or retell, but the physical book that communicates them is a specific work for which Dwight deserves both praise and compensation.

### **Yogi Berra Explains Jazz**

**Interviewer:** What do you expect is in store for the future of jazz?

**Yogi:** I'm thinkin' there'll be a group of guys who've never met talkin' about it all the time.

**Interviewer:** Can you explain jazz?

**Yogi:** I can't but I will. Ninety percent of all jazz is half improvisation. The other half is the part people play while others are playing something they never played with anyone who played that part. So if you play the wrong part it's right. If you play the right part it might be right if you play it wrong enough. But if you play it too right it's wrong

**Interviewer:** I don't understand

**Yogi:** Anyone who understands jazz knows that you can't understand it. It's too complicated. That's what's so simple about it.

**Interviewer:** Do you understand it?

**Yogi:** No. That's why I can explain it. If I understood it I wouldn't know anything about it.

**Interviewer:** Are there any great jazz players alive today?

**Yogi:** No. All the great jazz players alive today are dead. Except for the ones that are still alive. But so many of them are dead, that the ones that are still alive are dyin' to be like the ones that are dead. Some would kill for it.

**Interviewer:** What is syncopation?

**Yogi:** That's when the note that you should hear now happens either before or after you hear it. In jazz, you don't hear notes when they happen because that would be some other type of music. Other types of music can be jazz, but only if they're the same as something different from those other kinds

**Interviewer:** Now I really don't understand.

**Yogi:** I haven't taught you enough for you to not understand jazz that well.

And so it is in the town too tough to die:

### **The Waters of Knave's Run, WV**



**Red Lodge, Montana Banjo class for a week way up in  
the Bear Tooth Mountains**

Moose – 2, maybe 3; Banjo Plonkers – 00

AND ONCE AGAIN, A GOOD TIME WAS HAD BY ALL!

PHOTO BY STEWART SEIDEL

**“TICKETY-BOO!”** from the wisdom of K JNSN

## CD Tune List

- |  |             |
|--|-------------|
| 1. Big Scioty                                | gDGBD/5435  |
| 2. Greasy String (Burl's)                    | gDGBD/5435  |
| 3. Greasy String (Lee's)                     | gDGBD/5435  |
| 4. Kitchen Girl                              | gDGBD/5435  |
| 5. Old Christmas Morning                     | gDGBD/5435  |
| 6. Sandy Boys                                | gDGBD/5435  |
| 7. Shelvin Rock                              | gDGBD/5435  |
| 8. Sugar In My Coffee                        | gDGBD/5435  |
| 9. Waynesboro                                | gDGBD/5435  |
| 10. Wild Hog In The Red Brush                | gDGBD/5435  |
| 11. Kitty Snyder                             | gCGCD/7525  |
| 12. More Pretty Girls Than One               | gCGCD/7525  |
| 13. Walkin' In The Parlor                    | gCGCD/7525  |
| 14. West Fork Girls                          | gCGCD/7525  |
| 15. Come Back Boys And Let's Feed The Horses | gDGCD/5525  |
| 16. Fall of Richmond                         | gDGCD/5525  |
| 17. Patty On The Turnpike                    | gDGCD/5525  |
| 18. Santa Anna's Retreat                     | gDGCD/5525  |
| 19. The Old Drake                            | gDGCD/5525  |
| 20. Abe's Retreat                            | gDGCD/5525  |
| 21. Abe's Retreat                            | gGDGD/7575  |
| 22. Yew Piney Mountain                       | gGDGD/7575  |
| 23. Piney Woods                              | gGDGB/3548  |
| 24. Low D Blues                              | f#ADAD/5754 |
| 25. Washington's March                       | f#ADAD/5754 |
| 26. Calloway (Burl, Maggie and Sherman's)    | eCGCD/7522  |
| 27. Dead Man's Piece                         | fCFCD/5723  |



One of my student passed this along”

There was a piano teacher from Ohio who finally realized that her students with ‘talent’ progressed along well, but those with little talent did not make progress. She finally decided to shut down the teaching and travel to NY to see what the professional piano players – whether classical, jazz or whatever – were doing when they played.

What she discovered was that all the excellent ones were doing exactly the same thing: playing from their center, their torso. Playing from their **INSIDE OUTWARD**, from the bottom center and flowing out to the fingertips.

The completely relaxed torso was dancing, causing the relaxed arms to be dancing and causing the relaxed fingers to be dancing around on the keys. They were **NOT** playing with the fingers! That is playing from the **OUTSIDE IN** which makes playing with rhythm and pulse **IMPOSSIBLE**. Again, in order to develop maximum rhythm, everything absolutely must move from inside out rather than other way round. Practicing scales was initially a hinderance; they are for much, much later!! She had been taught and had always been taught to start with that discipline first. There were many other standard teaching practices that had to be pitched out the window. Nothing could be retained which would block good rhythm.

\*\*\*\*It is important for any who use this book to always remember that rhythm must be developed first. No other way will work in any way, shape or form. Forget the stuff for the left hand until the right hand is developed. PERIOD.

Her statement was that it was like the movements used to swing a sledgehammer. I was recently discussing with my nephew, his movements when he is using a ‘splitting maul’ [like a heavy sledgehammer except one face is sharpened.] He was not bragging, but said he can split the wood blocks better, quicker, easier than his friends that are much larger with more muscle strength than he has. The secret is not muscle power. Just passively get the head of the maul high up in the air quickly in an arc, and the momentum plus the weight drives the sharp edge right on thru the wood block. Consider these who use karate to break boards, bricks, etc. Great strength is not the point. It is the relaxed, explosive, snap movement with great ‘passive’ concentration. No left brain. A relaxed ‘right hand’ w/ relaxed right arm and whole body is the secret.

In a book “The Piano on the Left Bank”, a man was a piano player who ended up in Paris. While there, he was on site when an “important” piano teacher came one day. It was a show and tell time for the students. Another time another “important” piano teacher came over from England. The bottom line was the students were being shown how to “rest-throw-rest-...”their relaxed arms/hands at the keyboard until they got the feel of floating in their arms and hands. When “throwing”, the point is not to hit the “exact key”, but to learn to dance lightly wherever the fingers “hit”. The old rules, once again, of “proper instruction” just locked up the student so that s/he cannot have a quick light touch with dynamics.

USING MUSCLES LOCKS UP ALL MUSIC! THE BODY CANNOT ‘SWING & SWAY’. As I have been pushing this whole book, giving up the great human desire for muscular control results in allowing the human art form to come alive: ‘complete looseness’.