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The History on Missouri Fiddlin'

Interesting old newspaper clippings come to our attention from time to time which contain not only historic accounts of fiddling championships and other events, but are also valuable by virtue of the insight they give us into what fiddlers in the past have thought about the music. Such is the case with the article which appears below. Mr. Richardson felt the same about "cuttin' up" in a fiddler's contest in 1905 as many of us do today.

Also, note the use of the phrase "old fiddlers" to describe the contest. When was fiddling (which had to be new music at some point in time) first referred to as "old" or "old-time" music?

"BLIND GEORGE WINS". Scott County Kicker. June 3, 1905.

George Richardson, better known as "Blind George", of Morley, is the proudest man on earth. He was awarded the first prize of \$25 at the old fiddlers contest at the drummer's meeting at Cape Girardeau.

Seen by a Kicker reporter, the other day George said: "Yes, by gonny, I laid 'em all out. If I'd a knowed they allowed hollerin' and singin' I'd a got first and second prizes, but I figured a feller had to be sort of nice about it and I just give 'em straight music. I didn't know they would allow singin' and cuttin' up."

"Did they allow cuttin' up?", asked the reporter.

"Yes sir", answered George, "There was one feller there that just tuck on awful. But he only got 4th prize and that was a bottle of "Old Lynch Rye" and I wouldn't a had that no how".

Many thanks to Diane Everman of Columbia for passing this item along to us. If you have an old news clipping or other memorabilia to share with our readers please send it to us.

1984-85 Contest Calendar

Work has already begun on this year's fiddle contest calendar. You can help us by looking through your copy of the 1983 Calendar and sending us any information you may have concerning contests which were not listed. Although it is unlikely that we can list every contest in the state, we still want as many as possible to participate. Also, encourage the organizers of any contests in your locality to participate.

The fee for listing a contest has been increased this year from three dollars to five dollars. As shown in the Quarterly last Summer, MSOTFA lost fifty dollars on the venture in 1983. All fiddlers, accompanists and members of MSOTFA will still receive a complimentary copy. Most likely, it will be mailed out in mid-April just in time for the Summer contest season.

Many people have enjoyed the article which appeared in the last Calendar describing the 1925 fiddling championship at Jefferson City. For 1984, a biographical article describing the life and legacy of George Morris is being prepared. George, who passed away in May of 1983, gained considerable notoriety in the Thirties and Forties as the "Fiddlin' Sheriff" at KFRU Radio in Columbia. We are very grateful for the assistance which George's fiddling nephew, George McCrary, has provided in the preparation of the manuscript.

MISSOURI FIELD RECORDINGS AT THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

The American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress has recently issued a list of field recordings of Missouri musicians, including fiddlers, in the holdings of their Archive of Folk Culture. These recordings were made by various collectors working in Missouri

from 1920 to 1974. MSOTFA will contact the Archive of Folk Culture in the near future with the intention of obtaining copies of these important materials for deposit in the Association's collection at the Western Historical Manuscripts Collection in Columbia.

In the meantime, a copy of the list may be obtained by writing to: The Archive of Folk Culture, Library of Congress, Washington, D. C. 20540.

MSOTFA ARCHIVE

Work continues on our own collection of fiddle recordings and related materials which is housed at the Western Historical Manuscripts Collection on the lower level of Ellis Library on the University of Missouri campus in Columbia. Indexing of the initial deposits has been completed. We are especially grateful that the Collection archivist, Laura Bullion, has taken such a keen personal interest in our small but promising collection.

Anyone with fiddle records, tape recordings, photos, newspaper clippings, or other materials which they feel should be preserved in the Association's collection should contact MSOTFA. Often the materials need not be donated outright. They can be copied and the originals returned. Material donated is tax-deductible as well.

As things now stand, we hope to publish a list of the collection's holdings in the Summer of 1984.

JAKE HOCKEMEYER TO PERFORM AT KOPN

1982 State Fiddle Champ Jake Hockemyer of Mokane will perform selections from his vast and varied repertory in a live broadcast over KOPN Radio in Columbia, Missouri on Saturday, January 28, 1984 from 9 a. m. to 12 noon. KOPN-FM is at 89.5 MHz on your radio dial and can be received throughout mid-Missouri.

ARKANSAS FIDDLERS CONVENTION SET FOR MARCH

Dennis Taylor, president of the Arkansas Fiddlers Association, writes to inform us that they intend to hold their first fiddlers convention on March 16, 17 and 18, 1984, on the campus of North Arkansas Community College which is located in Harrison, Arkansas. All Missouri fiddlers are invited to attend and join in having "lots of fun and fellowship". Call 501-741-9060 for more information.

LAND OF MARK TWAIN FIDDLE CHAMPIONSHIPS HELD

The Tri-State Bluegrass Association held their second annual Land of Mark Twain Fiddle Championships at the luxurious Hannibal Holidome/Holiday Inn on November 25, 26, and 27, 1984. Kirk Brandenberger, who hails from Keokuk, Iowa, awed the capacity crowd with his dazzling renditions of "Comin' Down From Denver", "The Festival Waltz", and "Limerock" in the final round of competition to capture the Open Division title. Pete McMahan of Harrisburg, Missouri, fiddled his way to victory in the Senior Division. Michelle Kolbreck of White Bear Lake, Minnesota, won the Junior Division. Besides Pete McMahan, who we are proud to have as an active and supporting member of the Association, Taylor McBaine, Junior Merriot, Allison Kraus, Jake Hockemeyer, and Dwight Grover also won prizes.

RECORDS

Jimmy Mattingly. "Sally Goodin and other Fiddle Favorites." BM78000 LP \$6.00

This album presents twelve of today's contemporary fiddle contest standards as played by 15 year old Jimmy Mattingly of Leitchfield, Kentucky. The album notes list Jimmy's main influences as Mark O'Connor, Dick Barrett, Herman Johnson, and Texas Shorty.

The tunes are Sally Goodin, Yellow Rose Waltz, Durang's Hornpipe, Beaumont Rag, I Don't Love Nobody, Sally Johnson, Tom and Jerry, Dreamy Georgiana Moon, Cotton Patch Rag, Grey Eagle, Martin's Waltz, and Dusty Miller. The best of these are Beaumont Rag, which reminded me of an early fifties Red Williams recording,

and the "Dusty Miller". Of the stock "progressive" contest tunes presented, this is the one on which Jimmy really plays out.

The fiddling is ably accompanied by Charlie Butler and Charlie Holt on guitars, and J. P. James on bass. Order from: Butler's Music, Rt. 5 Box 449, Elizabethtown, Kentucky 42701.

Wally Bryson. "Champion Fiddler Wally Bryson, Plays Your Favorites." BM78001 cassette \$6.00

Solid old-time fiddling by Kentuckian, Wally Bryson. Order from Butler's Music. Tunes included on this high fidelity cassette are Hell Among the Yearlings, Red Apple Rag, Wednesday Night Waltz, Jesse Polka, Florida Blues, Huckleberry Hornpipe, Homebrew Rag, Goodnight Waltz, St. Anne's Reel, Clarinet Polka, Ook Pik Waltz, Dill Pickle Rag, and Cuckoo's Nest.

FIDDLER'S CONVENTION HELD AT MONTGOMERY CITY

MSOTFA, in cooperation with the Missouri Cultural Heritage Center, held its first fiddler's convention on October 15, 1983. The convention opened in the early afternoon with many of the musicians present taking turns entertaining each other. In addition, Nellie Skiles, of Tusculum, demonstrated the "Ozark jig." Refreshments were provided throughout the day by the Lion's Club of Montgomery City. About fifty people attended the afternoon session.

The highlight of the event was the dance that evening. Numerous ensembles, consisting variously of fiddle, piano, guitar, banjo, bass fiddle, and tenor guitar, performed for the capacity crowd which packed the dance floor in the spacious building. 233 people from 36 out-state Missouri communities plus one couple from Nebo, Illinois signed the register at the door. Virgil Smith, who is caretaker for the building, estimated the crowd at no less than 400 persons. According to many, it was the largest dance ever held in the area.

There was great variety in both the dances and the music. Two-steps, schottisches, waltzes, and polkas were observed. Furthermore, there were numerous people seen "jig" dancing on the sidelines throughout the evening. Square dances occurred four times, with as many as six sets on the floor for each dance. There was a caller in set, as is the custom in Missouri. Each set did a different figure to the same tune.

Among the musicians who performed were Virgil Smith, Joe Stevens, Floyd Kemp, Dwight Grover, Polly Burre, Guy Craighead, Jane Bergey, Jim Skiles, John White, Bob Hagan, R. P. Christeson, Jake Hockemeyer, Bertha Sanford, Mr. and Mrs. Nolan Boone, Mike, Lynn, and David Wells, Musial Wolfe, Carl Richardson, J. G. Stewart, Vesta Johnson, Bill Shull, and Charlie Walden.

TINA FIDDLERS STILL GOING STRONG

Under the guidance of Glenn Keller of Braymer, the Missouri National Fiddlers Association continues to have a very successful dance every Saturday night. The event begins at 7:00 p. m. each week at the community building in the Carroll County town of Tina. The music is always outstanding as is Glenn's coffee.

MISSOURI FIDDLERS AND COUNTRY MUSIC ASSOCIATION

In addition to the Missouri State Oldtime Fiddlers Association (MSOTFA) and the Missouri National Fiddlers Association (MNFA), there is also the Missouri Fiddlers and Country Music Association (MFCMA). The organization is based in St. Louis but sponsors events in eastern Missouri towns such as Cuba, Houston, Montgomery City, New Florence, and Valley Park. For more information on this very active group write to Steve Johnson, 209 Wilson Avenue, Kirkwood, Missouri 63122.

THE MISSOURI-IRISH CONNECTION?

The following tune in 6/8 time was played by Hollis Shumaker from the Macon County community of La Plata on June 22, 1983. Hollis comes from a long line of fiddlers which goes back to his great grandfather who moved to northeast Missouri from Ohio around 1850.

Hollis learned this tune from his father, Thomas Hayes Shumaker. Hollis plays this tune in quick and lively manner, alternating his bow direction constantly to generate the 6/8 rhythm.

Unlike other 6/8 music heard in Missouri, this tune has a distinctly Irish sound. Captain Francis O'Neill, the famous collector of Irish folk music, taught school for a time in Knox County at Edina, Missouri around 1869. He provided the following description of music in the area:

Mr. Broderick, the school director with whom I boarded at Edina, was a native of Galway and a fine performer on the flute. Not a week passed during the winter months without a dance or two being held among the farmers. Such a motley crowd--fiddlers galore, and each with his instrument. Irish, Germans, French--types of their respective races--and the gigantic Kentuckians, whose heads were endangered by the low ceilings, crowded in and never a misunderstanding or display of ill-nature marred those gatherings. Seated behind the fiddler, intent on picking up the tunes, was my accustomed post, but how much was memorized on those occasions cannot now be definitely stated. Three tunes, however, distinctly obtrude on my memory, viz.: a reel played by Ike Forrester, the "village blacksmith," which was named after him; "My Love is Fair and Handsome," Mr. Broderick's favorite reel; and a quickstep, which I named "Nolan, the Soldier." Nolan had been a fifer in the Confederate army during the Civil War. His son was an excellent drummer, and both gave free exhibitions of their skill on the public square at Edina to enliven the evenings while the weather was fine (O'Neill, F. Irish Folk Music. Lyon and Healy: Chicago. 1910. pp. 15-16).

Given the proximity of where the Shumaker's settled to the community of Edina, it is interesting to speculate that Hollis' 6/8 tune was possibly derived from the Irish tradition in Edina. Hollis could not recall a title for this piece.

