PAUL VAN ARSDALE

Dulcimer Heritage

Traditional Hammered Dulcimer Music from New York State

FOLK-LEGACY RECORDS, INC. FSA-87

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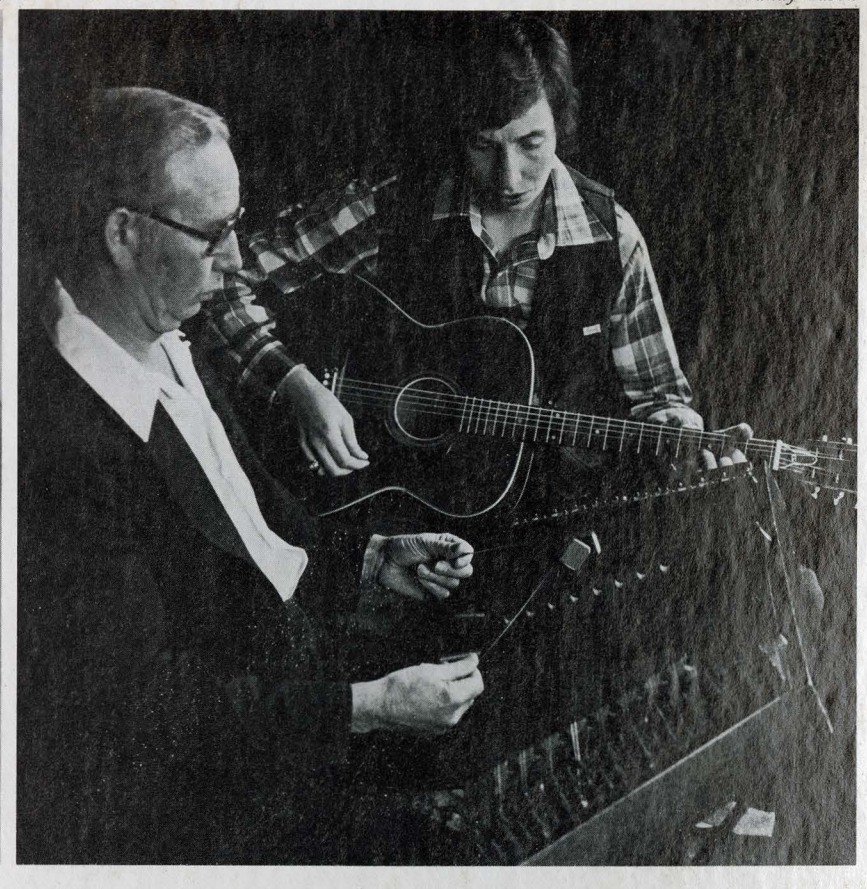
Courtesy Paul Van Arsdale

Sandy Paton



"I remember walking down the road with Grandpa one day towards the end of his life. . . He told me he wanted me to have everything he had."

One morning in early April, 1981, Paul Van Arsdale set up his dulcimer—a battered old instrument made by his grandfather in 1928—in the recording studio at Folk-Legacy and for the next three days, with amplifiers glowing and tape recorders whirring in an adjacent room, normal time ceased to be. It was a magical event, a look backward in time, made possible by two very remarkable men.

Paul Van Arsdale is an extraordinary musician; more than that, he plays an extraordinary music. Paul learned his music from his maternal grandfather, Jesse R. Martin, an ex-cabinet maker/ex-vaudevillian who in 1930, at the age of 76, moved in with Paul's family to spend his final years. The old man brought with him several dulcimers and a tremendous store of lovely quadrille and round dance melodies from late in the last century.

Most of the tunes I play now are tunes that Grandpa learned back in the 1800's. I guess I was just lucky to have somebody like that to sit down with and learn from. Grandpa had two or three dulcimers and he'd put me along beside him. He'd pick out part of a tune and tell me—"Now, play that much. . ."—and then he'd play a little more. That's how I got started on it. I grew up with it, sort of like a right arm.

Paul was indeed lucky to have someone like his grandfather to learn from. In 1868, when Martin began to play, the dulcimer was a fairly common and popular dance instrument in western New York State, with as many as three full-time dulcimer factories in Martin's home county of Chatauqua alone. By 1930, however, the instrument had virtually disappeared. Less than a handful of people still played the dulcimer; even fewer played the old tunes and in the old style. Survival of an entire tradition had quite literally been reduced to one old man playing for his grandchildren at the Van Arsdale home in Akeley, Pennsylvania.

Fortunately, the children listened and learned, and when Martin died eight years later, his music did not pass with him. The Van Arsdales are the only family known to have carried the once-thriving New York dulcimer tradition down to the present day. Through Paul, and through his brothers and sisters, the music of one hundred years ago still rings clear.

*

Paul Van Arsdale has been playing the dulcimer since he was ten years old. As a teenager, he played regularly for barn dances throughout southwestern New York State, first with his grandfather and later with his own band. In the early 1940's, however, as he married and began to raise his own family, Paul stopped playing for dances. In fact, he stopped playing in public at all. It wasn't until 1977, in the midst of the current revival of interest in the hammered dulcimer, that Paul was "discovered" and brought before new audiences.

Paul was an immediate hit (it stood to reason: thirty-five years of practice was bound to pay off!), and since that time he has appeared at folk festivals all around the eastern United States. He has been a guest at the National Folk Festival at Wolf Trap, the Smithsonian Festival of American Folklife (in 1977 and 1981), the Celebration Northeast, and many other events. He has also been honored as an "Old Master" instructor in hammered dulcimer at Davis and Elkins College in West Virgina.

On this record are two dozen of Paul Van Arsdale's finest tunes—many of them rare, all of them beautiful, and all but five learned directly from Jesse Martin. Many of these tunes have been played on the dulcimer, in very much the same fashion, for more than a century. They are strong, warm, and finely crafted; they fit the instrument with a singular grace. They fit Paul, too.

Nicholas Hawes

For more information, tune notes, and transcriptions, see enclosed book.

SIDE A:

1	Wake Up, Susan	*2:42*
2	The Blackberry Blossoms	*2:41*
3	Medley of Martin Jigs	*2:27*
4	Fireman's Dance	*2:48*
5	Clarinet Polka	*2:58*
6	Grandpa's Waltz	*2:43*
7	Raggedy Ann	*2:21*
8	Uncle Jim / Rose of Sharon	*2:46*

SIDE B:

1	Two Horse Race / Kentucky Wild Horse	*2:29*
2	Silver Bells	*1:55*
3	Waltz of Woes	*2:15*
4	The Money Musk / Chorus Jig	*2:35*
5	Rustic Reel / The Crooked S	*2:21*
6	The Lancers	*2:46*
7	Reel in G	*2:04*
8	Baker's March	*2:38*
9	Rippling Waters / Sunny Morning Jig	*2:38*

Personnel:

Dulcimer	Paul Van Arsdale
Guitars	Bill Van Arsdale (A-5; B-4,5,8) John McCutcheon (A-1,2,6,7; B-2,8)
Piano	Ruth Rappaport

Production of this LP is supported by a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts in Washington, D.C., a Federal agency.

Produced by: Nicholas Hawes
Recorded by: Sandy Paton
Cover Photo: Sandy Paton
Jacket Design: Walter A. Schwarz, Silver Lining Productions

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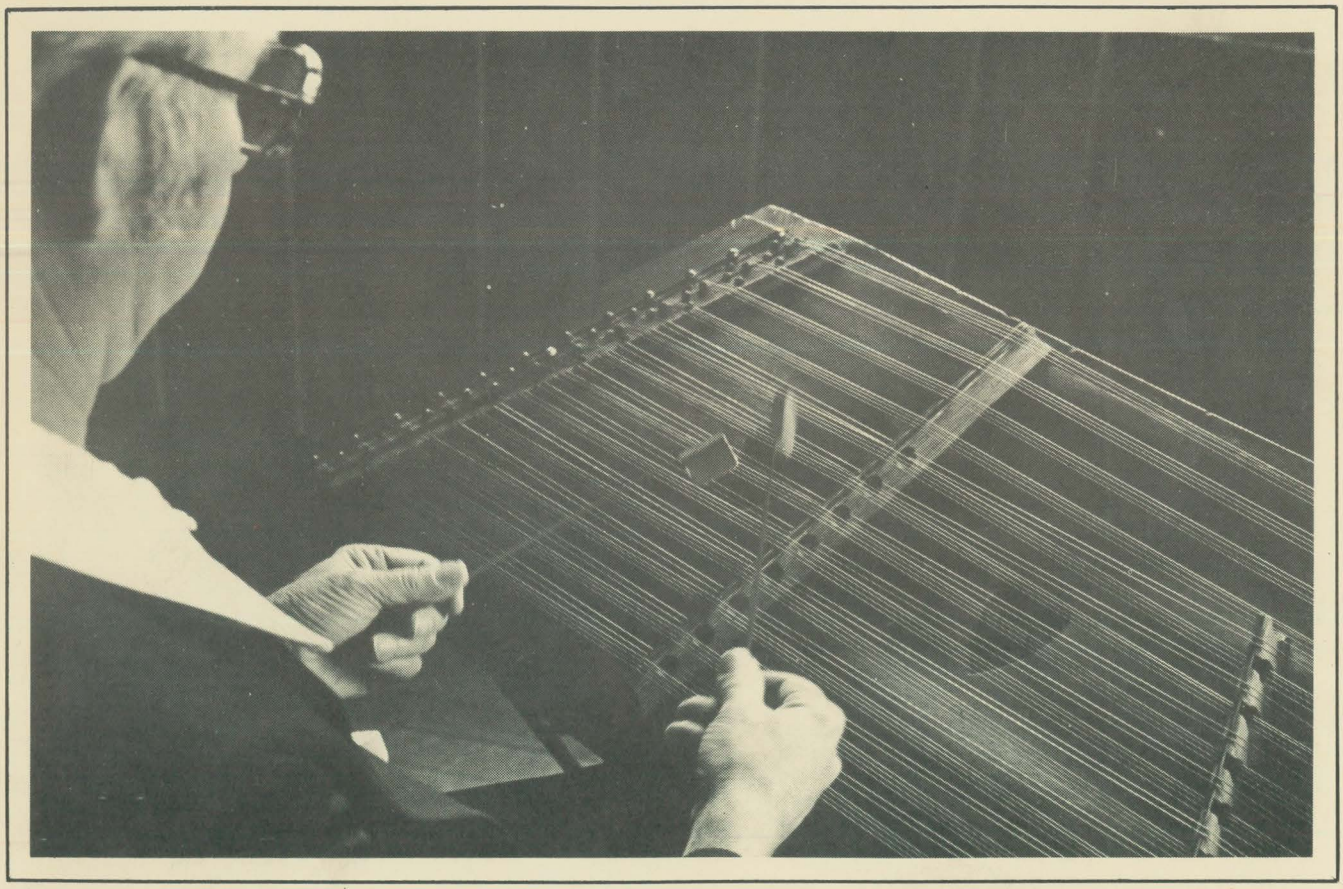

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Contents

FOLK-LEGACY RECORDS, INC. SHARON, CONNECTICUT 06069

IT'S ANNIVERSARY WEEK AT THE

WINTER GARDEN

FREDONIA'S POPULAR THEATRE

HEY!
The World's Greatest Motion Picture is Playing
Today and Tomorrow!

WHAT PRICE GLORY

ALSO
COMEDY
NEWS, TOPICS, FABLES
---Just One Price---
---One Just Price---
35c

CROWDS! CROWDS! CROWDS!
AND WHY NOT?
Everyone is taking advantage of this week.
Absolutely more for 35c than 35c ever bought.

FRIDAY AND SATURDAY

ON THE SCREEN—

Tom Mix
The CIRCUS ACE

ON THE STAGE—

JESSE R. MARTIN
Henry Ford's Famous Dulcimer Artist
Grand Trans-Continental Tour Extraordinary!
Musical Novelty with a Dulcimer
Same Low Prices—35c and 15c.

SUNDAY—MONDAY—TUESDAY
SYD CHAPLIN as "OLE BILL"
—In—
THE BETTER OLE

DULCIMER PLAYER PLEASES AUDIENCE

Jesse Martin, of Frewsburg, N. Y., one of the six most prominent dulcimer players in the United States, appeared at the Winter Garden Theatre self with his dulcimer, Miss Sherwood, old time clog dancer, and Mrs. W. H. Biers of Erie, an accomplished player on the Hawaiian guitar.

Mr. Martin is 73 years of age and has appeared in many of the leading theatres in this country and has play- tabula, Warren and Conneaut, Ohio. They will appear at Keller's Theatre, Northeast, Pa., on November 19th.

Miss Sherwood does old time clog dancing, which took well with the crowd at the Winter Garden. Mr. Martin played many selections from fa-

The list of incoming calls follows:

Mr. and Mrs. Cutler C. Burch Burton Avenue and Mill Road, entertained with an attractive house party in their home Wednesday night in honor of their house guest Mr. Jesse R. Martin of Frewsburg, N. Y. Mr. Martin is a famous dulcimer artist and has played several times for Henry Ford at Dearborn, Michigan.

Dancing and music furnished by Mr. Martin and Mrs. W. H. Biers, were enjoyed during the earlier part of the evening, followed by a dainty luncheon served by the hostess.

Those asked to meet Mr. Martin were: Mr. and Mrs. William H. Biers, Mr. and Mrs. Henry Anderson, Mr. and Mrs. Raymond Williams, Mr. and Mrs. Walter Kidd, Mr. and Mrs. Oscar Peterson, Mr. and Mrs. L. C. Davis, Mr. and Mrs. William Herman, Mr. and Mrs. Zoe Hirt, Mr. and Mrs. Burton Rounds Mr. and Mrs. Joe Pianta, Mrs. Paul Mangold, of Butler, Pa., Miss Helen Pianta, Miss Grace Pianta, Miss Olive Anderson, Miss June Burch, Miss Dorothea Burch, Mr. William Anderson, Mr. Joseph Planta and Mr. Edwin Burch.

The Celoron Fire department will give a fish fry and dance Friday evening, Aug. 24, at the Moose clubhouse. Music by Jess Martin's "Old Time orchestra."

Prof. Jesse R. Martin

(Henry Ford's Dulcimer Entertainer)

and His Orchestra for One Night Only,

Thursday, November 17, 1927

FIREMEN'S HALL, SHERMAN, N. Y.

They will play the Old Time Dance Music and Irish Jigs.

A RARE TREAT FOR OLD AND YOUNG!

Concert from 8 to 9 P. M. Old Time Music and Dances 9 to 12

Prof. Martin is one of only six dulcimer players in the U. S.

FULL OF OLD TIME MUSIC, POPULAR MUSIC and DANCES

Concert 25c Dance 75c

EVERYBODY INVITED

I remember walking down the road with Grandpa one day toward the end of his life.... He told me he wanted me to have everything he had.

In 1930, at the age of 76, Jesse R. Martin—ex-cabinetmaker, ex-vaudevillian—came to spend his last years with the family of his daughter, Della Van Arsdale. When he moved in, the old man brought with him his three dulcimers and a large scrapbook filled with clippings.

"Get your gal Irene, for your feet are going to tickle when Jesse R. Martin gets in action with an ancient dulcimer over WMBW Wednesday night." "Jesse Martin, the famous dulcimer player who won national recognition by playing for Henry Ford, is proving a big attraction at the Rialto theater this week." "Last evening the audience went fairly wild with applause. Jesse Martin is going over big...."

It had been an exciting five years. After a lifetime of playing for parties and local dances, keeping alive the lovely quadrille and round-dance music of the late 19th century for an ever-shrinking audience of "old-timers," Martin had been discovered in 1925 by agents acting for automobile manufacturer Henry Ford. Mr. Ford was a very influential man; suddenly, Jesse Martin was in demand.

It was the middle of the Jazz Age, and Henry Ford did not like jazz. He particularly didn't like the social changes which had come with it. In typical fashion, he set out on a nationwide campaign to re-popularize the dances and music of his youth. He and his wife published a book of dance music and calls, and had themselves photographed dancing the old squares and contras for the newsreels. He held regular dances at his home in Dearborn, Michigan, and he sent couriers around the country to locate "old-time music played by old-timers" and to bring those players to him.

Jesse Martin made the trip in 1925, opening the new Dearborn Country Club with a dance at which, in Martin's words, Henry was "the liveliest chicken in the ring." Upon his return home to Frewsburg, New York, calling himself "Henry Ford's Dulcimer Player," Jesse found himself famous.

Dispatch-Herald--Erie

Broadcasting from the city's own station will be put on the air Friday evening at 10 o'clock, when Ted Green and His Boys stir up melody in the Cameo restaurant from WJPW, operated by the Retail Merchants' Board of the Chamber of Commerce and The Dispatch-Herald.

Merchants' Radio Sta

The new station will be used as the central control point until permanent quarters may be established. The wave length will be 208 3-10 meters, with remote control lines established by the Mutual Telephone company.

A feature of the program this evening will be Jesse Martin and his dulcimer, accompanied by Mrs. W. H. Biers.

tion On Air Tonight

The local station also will go on the air Saturday at 12 o'clock noon, to be followed by broadcasting of the dedication ceremonies of the new Union station.

Programs will be sent out on the air from local churches and the Cameo on Sunday.

JESSE MARTIN PLAYS AT CAMEO

Pleases Patrons of Restaurant With Music of Dulcimer

The musical renditions by Jesse Martin, at the Cameo restaurant on the Dulcimer, have been a great treat to Cameo patrons.

The dulcimer, an instrument which came into use about 600 B. C., is of great interest and the music very pleasing. This instrument is on a similar principle to the piano, although smaller and without a keyboard. It is a very rare instrument and musicians who can play it are very scarce.

Because of its fine technique Mr. Martin was selected by Henry Ford to play in his old-time orchestra. Since Mr. Martin has played all over this part of the country and he and his instrument have untold popularity. He will appear at the

HENRY FORD PROTEGE TO APPEAR AT CAMEO

Jesse Martin, who was made famous as a Dulcimer artist by Henry Ford, has been engaged to appear three times daily at the Cameo restaurant until Sunday night. He will play at 12:30, 7 and 11:30 p. m.

The Dulcimer is an instrument which preceded the piano, first coming into use about 600 B. C. It is one of the few musical instruments which has had a return of popularity from time to time and in Mr. Martin's younger days was as popular as the saxophone is today.

Martin was booked by the Cameo because of his connection with Henry Ford and in consideration of the advent of the new Ford car which will be first displayed Friday in Times Square.

evening, the Lincoln orchestra opened the program, featuring a special treat, highly appreciated, in the violin numbers by Miss Sylvia Galinsky, accompanied by her sister, Gertrude. The orchestra entertained several times throughout the evening, popular numbers of a lively nature predominating and meeting with an enthusiastic response by the audience.

Martin Draws Applause

Jesse Martin, the dulcimer artist, drew heavy applause with his program of old-time numbers, accompanied by Mrs. W. B. Biers, who with Mr. Biers, is entertaining Mr. Martin while here. Mrs. Biers also accompanied Mr. Martin on several other of his recent broadcasting programs in other cities. Many groups from the surrounding towns near Erie came last night especially to hear Mr. Martin play, and his part of the program was so much enjoyed that he was induced to entertain again during the intermission.

Jacob Young Delights

Jacob A. Young, one of Erie's best beloved tenors, with a quality of voice recognized as exceptional, sang from selections which were received with high favor, and which again gave to other cities a taste of the fine talent Erie may well be proud of. Leo Miller accompanied Mr. Young at the piano in equally excellent manner.

Youthful Artist

A very youthful artist, who appeared earlier in the evening, was Miss Marion Stillwell, who, though only eight years old, has appeared before Erie audiences many times, in both singing and dancing. This

Old Fashioned Dance

There will be an old fashioned dance at K. of P. hall in Coalburg, Saturday, Feb. 11. Jesse R. Martin, dulcimer artist, will furnish the music.

Jesse R. Martin will play at the Odd Fellows Hall, Hubbard, Tuesday night.

Jesse R. Martin was a Monday evening guest at the home of Mr. and Mrs. D. L. Buch.

A dance will be held at Coalburg hall on Saturday evening February 11th. Jesse R. Martin Dulcimer Artist will play.

he has attended in larger cities; at none of them has he observed a keener, more discerning interest, of the serious nature productive of real results, on the part of the visitors, than at last evening's exhibit.

Returns To Ashtabula

Jesse R. Martin, dulcimer player, of Jamestown, N. Y., who is well known here, has returned to Ashtabula. He may locate in Ashtabula or Jefferson. Mr. Martin came here from Detroit where he played with the Ford old time orchestra.

Radio Show Is Marked Success

(Continued from Page One.)

prophesies that the Fada corporation will be running behind in orders awaiting them, as a result of the week's business. George J. Lewis, Chicago representative of the Brunswick company, states that all the local Brunswick dealers exhibiting at the show have been busy demonstrating their machines at their stores during the day, to many heretofore uninterested patrons who viewed this Brunswick invention at the show Monday and Tuesday

...Simon, 642 West Tenth street; James Glass, 215 West Twenty-first street; Mrs. Joseph Schroll, 643 West Twenty-sixth street; Mrs. A. Straub, 610 West Eighteenth street; W. J. Straub, 510 Sassafras street; Mrs Joseph

Jesse R. Martin was born on June 9, 1854, to a large farming family in Kiantone, New York, just a few miles from Frewsburg. His grandparents and great-grandparents had been among the first families to settle the rich farmlands between Lake Chautauqua and the Alleghenies and had pioneered the towns of Kiantone and Busti. For our purposes, Jesse Martin could not have been born in a more favorable spot, for Chautauqua County in the mid-1850's was the center of American hammered-dulcimer manufacturing, with three full-time factories in operation.

Just how Martin came to play the dulcimer is uncertain. As far as is known, no one in the family was involved in dulcimer manufacture, but certainly there must have been players in the neighborhood. Jesse's older brother Albert apparently played the dulcimer, but whether he learned before Jesse is hard to say. Albert had a dulcimer built for himself in the late 1860's, but by then Jesse was already an accomplished player.

He sort of picked it up by himself, from what my mother tells me. I guess he got the notion from his brother Albert, who played some, but basically he taught himself. See, Albert kept a diary when he was in the Civil War, and he's got marked in the back of that diary something about stringing the dulcimer. That was written in 1864. At that time, Jesse was only 10 years old. That's what makes me think that Albert got him interested in it.

However he began, Jesse was playing for local dances and socials as early as age 14—apparently not with his father's complete approval: he had to practice in the barn. The loose, adventurous life of an itinerant musician appealed to him greatly, and it is likely that, had there been any money in it, he would have chosen music as his career. Instead, as he grew older, married, and began his own family of seven children, Jesse trained as a cabinetmaker. He went to work in the furniture factories in and around Jamestown, but he never held a job for very long. His was a rambling nature, with a love for travel, fancy dress, and new, admiring faces. One senses in his photographs an awareness of a far greater audience than Jamestown could provide.

Grandpa sure did like to dress up. And he liked to have his picture taken. I don't know how many poses we have of him.... seems like he was always having his picture taken.

Jesse had to wait most of his life for that greater audience, contenting himself in the meanwhile with occasional appearances at dances, picnics, and house parties. In a sense, it was just as well he did, for had he travelled more widely and played for more sophisticated audiences, he probably would have lost much of his traditional style and repertoire. As it was, when Henry Ford set out on his vain attempt to turn America's cultural clock backward some fifty years, he was able to recall through Jesse Martin and others like him the authentic music of his youth.

Dulcimer Artist Entertains Members Of Kiwanis Club

The strains of old-time melodies played by Jesse R. Martin, dulcimer artist, of Frewsburg, featured the noonday luncheon held by the Kiwanis Club in the Olean House dining room today.

Announcement was made that the directors of the Kiwanis Club in their meeting held last night, passed a resolution limiting membership in the club to 100. At the present time the club has 88 members.

Charles P. Luther, chairman of the Nominating Committee, announced at the luncheon today a meeting of the committee which will be held at the Olean Automobile Club rooms at 7 o'clock Monday night. He suggested that slips be sent in bearing the names of possible nominees for office in the club.

The luncheon closed with the playing by Mr. Martin of "Casey Jones." Mrs. June Hemminger, 230 North First Street, accompanied on the piano.

Thursday

WKBN

Y. M. C. A. Morning Altar Service.
7:30—Health exercises under Ed. Brown, boys' physical director.
7:45—Devotional period. Rev. J. J. Wean, pastor of Belmont M. E. Church, "Supreme Moments."
8:20—Weather reports.
8:25—Police reports.
8:30—Biddlestone's Buckeye entertainers of Warren.
7:30—Ohio Hotel trio.
8:30—H. Van Kuran, lecture on "The Cause of Disease."
8:45—Mrs. W. H. Biers, Hawaiian guitarist of Erie, Pa., and Jesse R. Martin, dulcimer of Frewsburg, N. Y.
9:00—T. G. Evans, assistant educational director of Y. M. C. A. schools, talk on the care of the automobile.
9:15—Mrs. W. H. Biers and Jesse R. Martin continued.
9:30—Betty Vannan, Scotch comedian; James Vannan, accompanist.

YOUNGSTOWN WKBN 214.2 1400

6:20 p. m.: Weather reports.
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ERIE FOLK BIG SO

Erie people w crowd which mo Y., to attend a f the firemen of the fry there music of Martin orchestra, comp ing: Jesse R. Ma Daley, piano; bass; Mrs. Biers ner, banjo, with mar as callers.

Among those Mr. and Mrs. W Twenty-fifth s Woodward, 720 and Mrs. Denn Eleventh street Campbell, 616 Mary Ann Bort ner, Ripley, N. arsdale, Akeley John Rhodes, M J. Blackmar, F Mrs. F. E. Knap Mrs. Lillian Lo Mrs. A. A. Busc A. A. Robbins, phy, Jamestown T. Daley, Lake

CE

FIREMEN SE PERSONS AT

CELORON, S on Firemen ass the Ladies' A 400 persons Fr fish fry served club house. D and Northeast, tendance. Alb chairman of tee, the door ence Arnold, Groat. The w mittee was co Johnson, Mrs. Leo Laquay, freshments co

Reckman, Mrs. and Miss Fran Mrs. Ethel Rol Mrs. Irma Hes man, Mrs. Mari Nelson, Mrs. F Edith Batchelo ger, Mrs. Gr Twila Hinman.

After supper to the music Martin, old ti and his orches

Both the fir iary will hold night.

Jesse was 71 when, in December, 1925, he first went to Dearborn as Ford's personal guest. He had been living in retirement at the Van Arsdale home for the past four or five years, but when he found his connection with Ford bringing him offers of vaudeville and radio appearances, he jumped at the chance to go out on the road. Over the next five years he made two tours of the local vaudeville circuits, inaugurated radio stations, played countless old-time dances and fish fries, and, in 1927, repeated his Dearborn triumph with another visit to Ford's home.

It was a heady time. Jesse was a popular feature act in movie theaters and at fiddle contests. He moved easily between the high society of Dearborn and the rough company of the vaudeville backstage. He took on local favorites, head to head, in dulcimer competitions and won. He even endorsed health tonics: "About a year ago I felt my system going down, had no pep.... As my work calls for me to be up and doing I have to be fit so I decided I'd better try Vendol.... Now I can work day and night without tiring."

* * *

Unfortunately, Vendol was no match for the Great Depression, and in 1930, with prospects for work drying up all around him, Jesse Martin returned once more to the Van Arsdale home. There, in retirement and relative obscurity, he accomplished his greatest achievement: the preservation of a unique tradition.

I guess most of us tried it at one time or another. Course, if it didn't come easy to you, why, you'd drop it. Anybody showed any interest, he'd work with you. It seems like nobody else just took the interest in it that I did. Maybe you have to be an introvert to learn it—you sure spend an awful lot of time facing the wall!

We spent a lot of time together, mostly in the evenings, especially in the wintertime. We'd sit around a lot, playing tunes.... He'd show me something, and I'd try and pick it up. The way he played it, you know, that's the way he taught it to me.

Paul Van Arsdale was a middle child in a family that boasted eleven children. They had a reputation locally for being a musical family, playing at dances and in school programs. Paul's mother played the Hawaiian guitar, his father bowed a stand-up bass and called square dances, and the kids fooled around on a variety of instruments. The Van Arsdales operated a family farm, and the children had to work hard all day at school and chores. Come the evening, most of them liked to go out; but Paul, who somehow inherited Martin's musical genius without inheriting his restless nature, generally preferred home life and family. He and his grandfather spent many evenings, their dulcimers side by side, sharing the music.

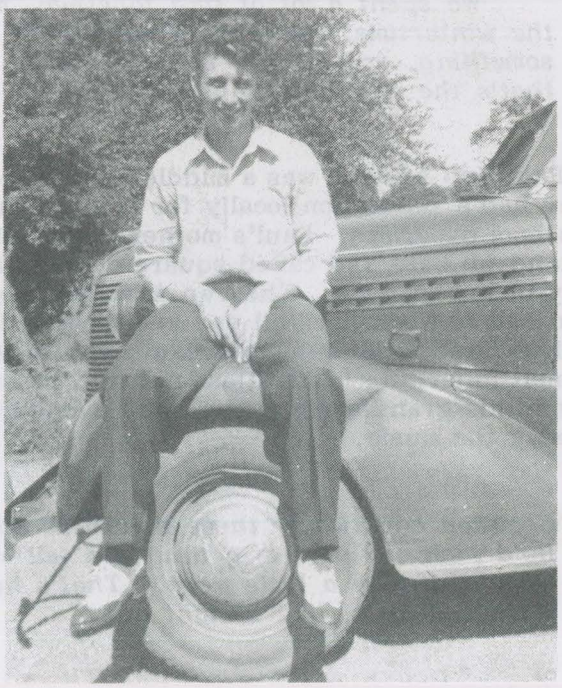
Grandpa had two or three dulcimers and he'd put me along beside him. He'd pick out part of a tune and tell me, "Now, play that much...," and then he'd play a little more. That's how I got started on it. I grew up with it, sort of like a right arm.

He taught me how to play his way, to use the strings he would use. You'd try something different and he'd say, "No, that's not right." He wasn't much for fancy stuff. Anybody was playing with him tried anything too far out ... well, he'd tell 'em about it.

Paul was ten years old when his grandfather moved in; in the eight years that remained before Martin's death at the age of 84, he absorbed a great deal of the old man's music. Much of that music was dance music, and soon Paul was playing the old jigs, reels, waltzes, and schottishes at dances all throughout southwestern New York, first with his grandfather and then later with his own band.

I played in a—well, we called it a square dance band—every Saturday night at a local barn dance up around Fredonia. We had the dulcimer and a fiddle, and generally somebody played accompaniment on a piano. And, believe it or not, in those days we had drums with it, you know. You'd start playing at nine o'clock, and you'd play till one in the morning. We'd make maybe two or three dollars for the night. Course, it seemed like plenty to me at that time.

But it wasn't enough to start a family on, so when Paul graduated from high school he began to train at night as a machinist. Night school cut heavily into his dance playing. His wife Fern, whom he met about that time, recalls: "We used to go to dances all the time, but Paul didn't play or call. He did all that before he met me. The first I heard was when his sister Peggy said to me, 'Oh, you ought to hear Paul play.' Paul, you know, worked hard on the farm, and his father never let me forget that I took his best worker. You know ... that I took Paul off to the Big City."



The big city was Buffalo, New York. Fern had spotted an advertisement from the Bell Aviation company looking for machinists to join their tool-grinding section. Paul sent in an application and, when he was hired, they married and moved north. The dulcimer moved north, too, but there, amidst the excitement and bustle of a young marriage and a new life, it didn't seem quite as important as before. And, of course, one mustn't wake the baby....

Over the next thirty years Paul played only rarely, and then, as a general rule, only when he was alone in the house. He stopped performing in public completely—there were no barn dances in Buffalo, anyway—except for a brief appearance on a local television talent show in 1950. There he played a medley of "Flowers of Edinburgh" and "The Devil's Dream," accompanied by his brother Charles on the guitar, but no one seemed to know quite what to make of such exotic music, and Paul lost out to a quartet who had mouthed the words to a popular recording.

The only place where Paul performed regularly during this period was at family reunions. These annual get-togethers for a day of games, picnicking, and family business had been going on since Paul was a boy. Each year, Paul and two of his brothers, Phil and Sterl, would set up their dulcimers and play through the old tunes. They never played for long, perhaps an hour, but it kept the tunes alive, and, more important, it kept them in the family. It was at one of these reunions in the early 1970's that Paul's son Bill became interested in music. Paul taught Bill how to play back-up on the guitar, and the dulcimer began to be heard more frequently around the Van Arsdale home.

In 1977, Paul's daughter Janet heard John McCutcheon playing dulcimer at a concert at the University of Buffalo. She invited John over to meet her father, and their friendship marks the beginning of Paul's return to public performance. Later that same year, Paul was sought out by dulcimer historian Nancy Groce, who was preparing a gathering of dulcimer players for the Smithsonian's Division of Musical Instruments. The dulcimer convention would be part of the 1977 Festival of American Folklife. Paul was invited on the spot, went to Washington, and was startled by the cheers which greeted his performance. Clearly, thirty-five years of practicing had paid off.

Since that time, Paul has appeared at folk festivals all around the eastern United States. He has been a guest at the National Folk Festival, the Smithsonian Festival of American Folklife (again in 1981), New Hampshire's Celebration Northeast, and many other events. He was honored as an "Old Master" instructor in hammered dulcimer at Davis and Elkins College, West Virginia, and he has appeared frequently with John McCutcheon, both in concert and on John's recent LP recording from Front Hall Records.

* * *

Paul Van Arsdale's story is, above all else, a story of timing: the delicate interweavings of chance events that make the one thing possible and the other thing not. Had Jesse Martin been born at any other time or place; had Henry Ford liked to dance the Charleston; had Paul simply forgotten with the years —we wouldn't have this music today. The thread of Paul's story is that fragile.

But it is also a story of dedication and of love: love for an old man long gone, and love for generations yet unknown. In 1977, at his first public performance in almost 40 years, Paul put it this way:

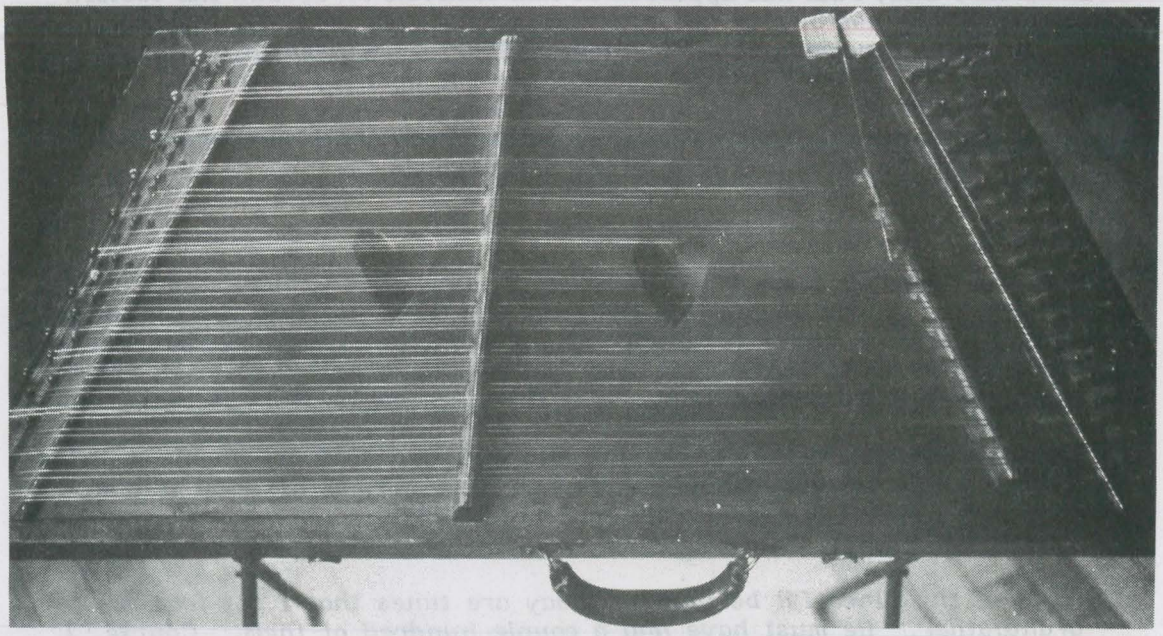
> *A lot of the tunes I'll be playing today are tunes that I got from my grandfather. He must have had a couple hundred of them. Course, I didn't learn them all—heck, I didn't even learn the names of most of them—but I'd sure like to keep them going if I can.*

The Hammered Dulcimer

There are two quite separate and distinct musical instruments in America which share the name "dulcimer." One is the hammered dulcimer of this recording; the other is a slender, fretted instrument with three to five strings, called the "Appalachian" or "plucked" dulcimer. Aside from the name, and the "sweet song" from which the name is derived, the two have little in common. In fact, they are not related at all.

Current research indicates that the Appalachian dulcimer is by far the younger of the two instruments. It appears to have been developed here in America in the mid-to-late 18th century from the German-American zither, one of several European relatives. In contrast, the hammered dulcimer has a well-documented history in America, dating back to colonial times, and a wide dispersal throughout Europe and the Near East. The German *hackbrett*, the Hungarian *cimbalom*, the Greek *santouri*, the Arabic *santir*—all are hammered dulcimers.

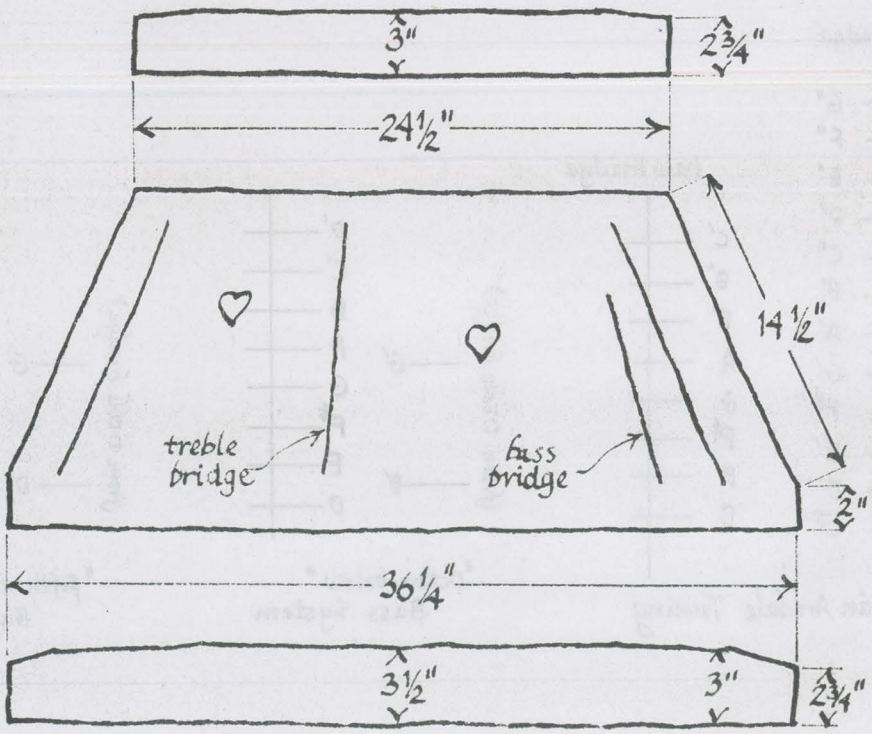
Fortunately for those who have never seen a hammered dulcimer, it is a relatively simple instrument to describe. It consists of metal strings stretched horizontally across a shallow wooden box, which acts as a resonator or amplifier. The strings vary in length and, when plucked or when struck with a mallet held in the player's hand, they produce tones which vary in pitch. The shorter the string, the higher the pitch; the longer the string, the lower the pitch. It is a very basic musical system, and it must have been discovered quite early.



The strings on a dulcimer are suspended above the face of the instrument on two wooden bridges, one at each end, to enable them to vibrate freely without rattling or buzzing against the resonator. In most modern dulcimers, there is an additional bridge placed on the face of the instrument which divides each string into two separate lengths, thus doubling the number of pitches that can be played. In America this "treble" bridge is usually so placed that the string to the left of the bridge is two-thirds the length of the same string to the right of the bridge. The result is that the difference in pitch across the bridge will be three-and-a-half tones, or a perfect fifth. As a further refinement, many dulcimers have a "bass" bridge fitted to the right of the instrument, supporting an independent set of bass strings.

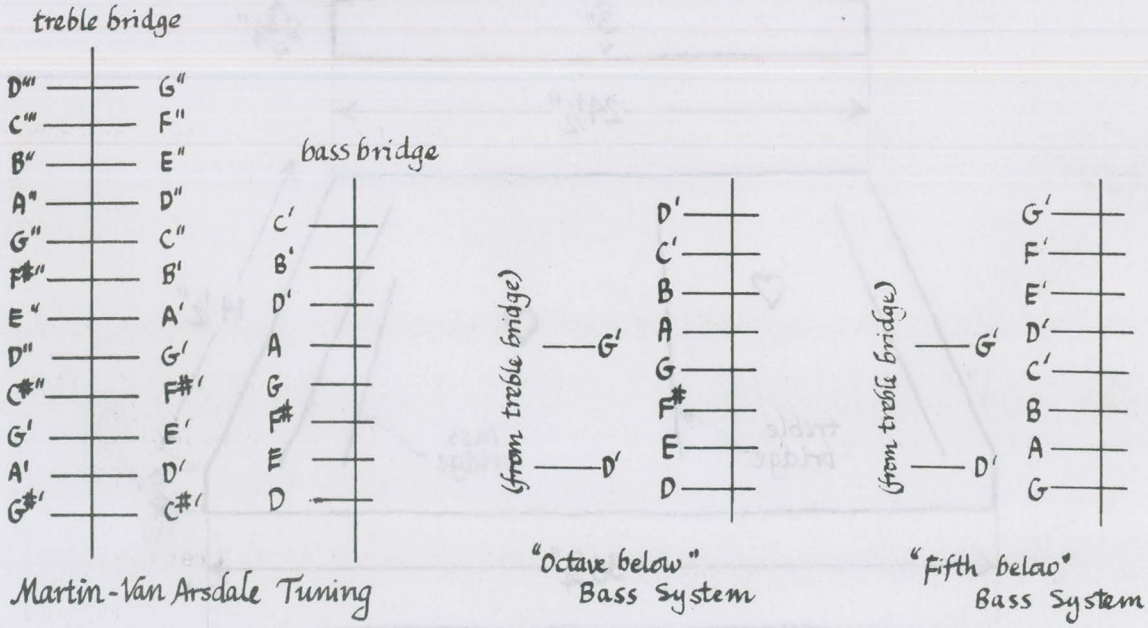
The dulcimer which Paul plays on this recording was made by his grandfather Jesse Martin in 1928. It was constructed in part out of wood salvaged from an old piano. The sides are of cherry, the end blocks are of oak, and the face and back plate (which is fully an inch thick) are of spruce. Although the instrument is old and battered and the top is badly warped, it has an unusually sweet and ringing tone.

You know, I've picked on quite a few of them, but I've never played one yet that rings back like this one here. I made the mistake of taking the strings off it once 'cause, well, they probably were a little rusty or something, and it seems like it took ten years before it began to ring back like it used to. I think it sounds real good now.



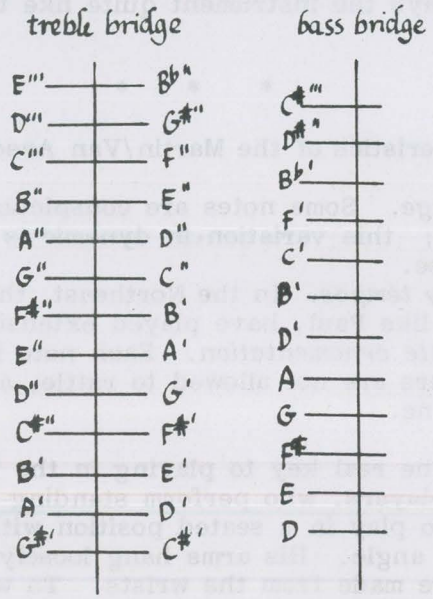
Completely re-stringing a dulcimer can be quite an operation. There are 64 strings on Paul's dulcimer, giving it a range of exactly three octaves. The 48 strings crossing the treble bridge are arranged into twelve groups or "courses," each course consisting of four strings all tuned to the same pitch. The 16 strings of the bass bridge are arranged into eight courses of two strings each. As one might imagine, learning how to tune the dulcimer is a major part of learning to play it.

Paul inherited his tuning system along with the instrument. Called a "sharp-key" tuning system (because it contains no flatted notes), it allows playing in the keys of D, G, A, C, and their relative minors. The tuning of the strings over the treble bridge is quite conventional, but the tuning of the bass strings is unique to the Van Arsdale family. It is a surprisingly handy and flexible combination of the "octave-below" and "fifth-below" bass systems. Whether this tuning was the invention of Jesse Martin, or whether it was common to dulcimer players in the Chautauqua region, is not known.



In 1980, Paul had a new dulcimer built for him by Sam Rizzetta, a well-known dulcimer player and builder now living in West Virginia. Working to Paul's specifications, Sam made use of the "empty" space at the top of the bass bridge to add a handful of extra sharps and flats. With this new arrangement, Paul can play in the "flat keys" of F and B-flat, and he is experimenting with some bewildering chromatic runs and flourishes.

Jesse Martin—who, after all, "wasn't much for fancy stuff"—might well be shocked.



Paul's Rizzetta Dulcimer

Playing Style and Technique

That's the style, you know, that's the way my grandfather played. It's just the way it seems to come most natural to me, I suppose ... like whoever picks them up and starts playing, well, that's their *natural style.*

It is tempting to say that the playing of Paul Van Arsdale preserves an otherwise all-but-forgotten New York State / Pennsylvania / Ohio regional dulcimer style—tempting, because it is probably true. Unfortunately, we just don't know.

It seems clear that Paul's playing is very much like that of his grandfather, Jesse Martin; and it is unlikely, considering the date and place of his birth, that Martin could have learned in isolation from other local dulcimer players. What we don't know, however, is just how much Jesse's style reflected regional values as opposed to a personal taste or genius. Since we have no reliable record of any other dulcimer music from that area, we can make no comparisons.

What we can say is that Paul and his two brothers, Phil and Sterl, have inherited a truly unusual and beautiful dulcimer style. As far as we know, no one else in the country plays the instrument quite like the Van Arsdales.

* * *

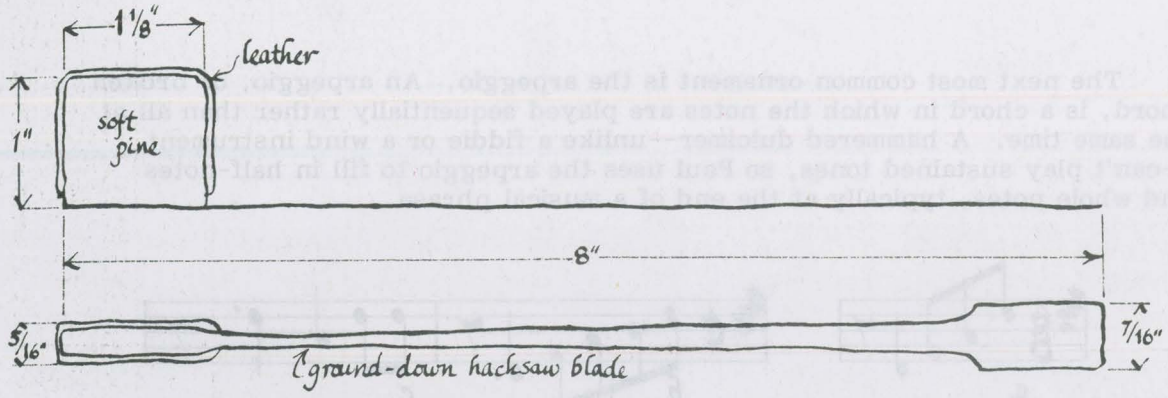
The essential characteristics of the Martin/Van Arsdale dulcimer style are:

—*a wide dynamic range.* Some notes are conspicuously louder or softer than others; this variation in dynamic is used to shape each musical phrase.
—*moderate and steady tempos.* In the Northeast, this is characteristic of musicians who, like Paul, have played extensively for dancing.
—*limited and deliberate ornamentation.* Each note is individually struck—the hammers are not allowed to rattle, as in other styles.
—*a sweet, ringing tone.*

According to Paul, the real key to playing in the Van Arsdale manner lies in relaxation. Unlike many players, who perform standing up over a horizontal instrument, Paul prefers to play in a seated position with his dulcimer tilted toward him at a 35-degree angle. His arms hang loosely from his shoulders, and most playing movements are made from the wrists. To watch Paul perform alongside other dulcimer players makes for an interesting study: the first time I saw him play, he was so relaxed it looked as if he had fallen asleep!

I try to encourage people to play relaxed. So many people, you know, they sit over it and they make such a big job of it that it don't look like it's fun for them. I try to teach them to play relaxed and to hold the hammers loosely. Some of them really fight it.

Another secret to Paul's style is the type of hammer he uses. Paul plays with very springy hammers, which he makes himself out of wooden blocks and ground-down hacksaw blades. (Jesse Martin used to make his hammers out of corset stays, but nowadays, as Paul points out, hacksaw blades are easier—and safer—to come by.) The striking surfaces of the hammers are covered with pieces of thin glove leather. The leather softens the impact just a little and helps to produce a rich, resonant tone.



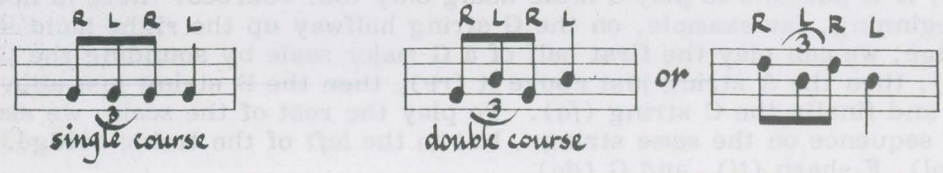
Paul holds his hammers loosely, gripping the flat of each hacksaw blade between his thumb and the second joint of his index finger. Unlike many players, who insist that the hammers be held parallel to each other (thus forcing the wrists to flex sharply backward and requiring the playing motion to come from the forearm), Paul angles his hammers slightly toward one another, forming an inverted vee. This keeps his wrists straight and relaxed, and allows the playing motion to be concentrated in the wrist joints.

The springiness of Paul's hammers, combined with his habit of playing from the wrist rather than from the forearm, produces the wide dynamic range characteristic of the Van Arsdale style. Small changes in wrist motion, or small changes in the tightness with which he grips the hammers, are amplified by the flexible hacksaw blades and can produce startling changes in both volume and tone. The hammers also affect the way in which Paul ornaments a melody. The soft striking surfaces and the supple handles make it difficult for Paul to "rattle" the hammers against the strings, a common feature of many styles, and force him to use ornaments in which each note is separately and deliberately struck.

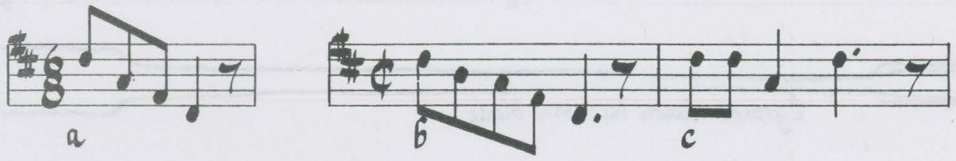
* * *

In fact, Paul uses very few ornaments, but he applies them skillfully and with great taste. The principal ornament in his repertoire is the "triplet"—actually, a series of four notes played in rapid succession. Although occasionally played all on one course, the notes of the triplet usually alternate between two different pitches, creating the effect of a chord. For a particularly flamboyant example of the use of triplets, listen to the way in which Paul varies the third strain of "Baker's March" on this recording.

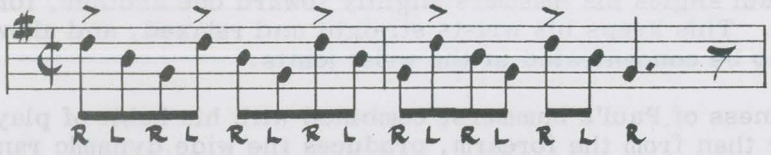
When playing triplets, Paul grips his hammers tightly. This stiffens the spring of the handles and helps to give the hammers more "snap." While for most purposes Paul plays equally well with either hand, he invariably begins a triplet with his right hammer and, beating in alternation, finishes it with his left.



The next most common ornament is the arpeggio. An arpeggio, or broken chord, is a chord in which the notes are played sequentially rather than all at the same time. A hammered dulcimer—unlike a fiddle or a wind instrument —can't play sustained tones, so Paul uses the arpeggio to fill in half-notes and whole notes, typically at the end of a musical phrase.



Recently he has begun to experiment with a syncopated form of the arpeggio, roughly equivalent to the bluegrass fiddler's "triple shuffle" bowing; unfortunately, there are no examples of this on the present recording.



Other ornaments which Paul uses are:

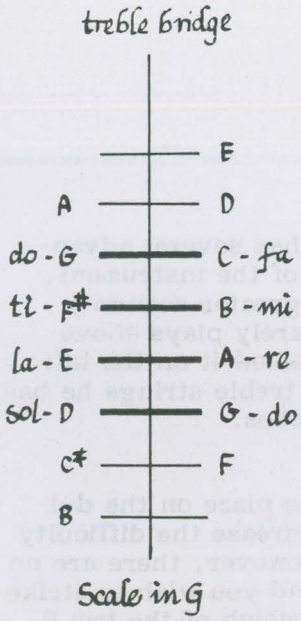
—*harmony*. As in "Waltz of Woes" or the chorus to "Silver Bells."
—*octaves*. Striking the same tone simultaneously in two different registers, as in the penultimate measure of "Wake up, Susan."
—*double strikes*. Sounding the same pitch twice in a row with a single hammer, as in the second strain of "Baker's March."

* * *

Finally, we come to the matter of hammering patterns.

When Paul sits down at the dulcimer, he faces a bewildering array of 64 different strings. Unlike the staggered rows of black and white keys on a piano, or the color-coded strings of a harp, one course of dulcimer strings looks very much like any other. How does he know which one to strike next? How does he decide which hammer to use?

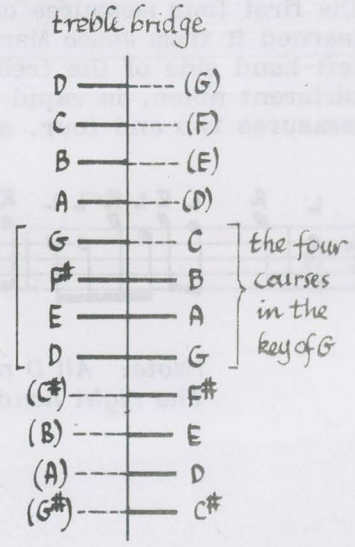
Paul's grandfather taught him a system for simplifying the dulcimer, based on the musical scale. Because the treble bridge is so placed that a string to the left of the bridge will sound a perfect fifth above the same string to the right of the bridge, it is possible to play a scale using only four courses. Here is how it works: beginning, for example, on the G string halfway up the right-hand side of the bridge, we can play the first half of a G-major scale by sounding the G string (*do*), then the A string just above it (*re*), then the B string just above that (*mi*), and finally the C string (*fa*). To play the rest of the scale, we simply repeat the sequence on the same strings, but to the *left* of the treble bridge. We get: D (*sol*), F sharp (*ti*), and G (*do*).



Scale in G

That's your basis for playing, those four strings. See, when I sit at the dulcimer—say I'm going to play in G—that block of four strings there is basically where I'm going to play at. Of course, when I'm playing in D, why, this *block of four* [the second, third, fourth, and fifth courses from the bottom] *would be where I'd play.*

Whenever possible, Paul plays a tune on the four central courses making up the scale of the appropriate key. Notes of the melody which fall above this central scale are played on strings to the upper left of the treble bridge, while notes that fall below it are played on strings to the lower right of the bridge (or on the bass courses).

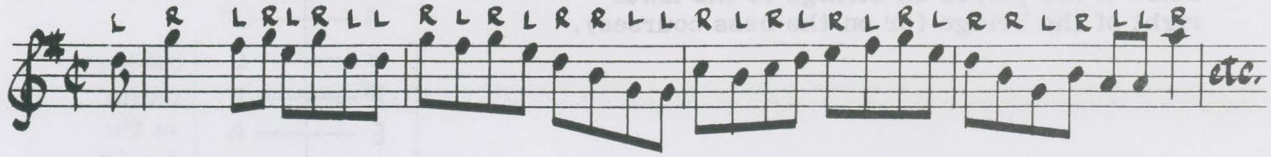


"four string" system (key of G)

This "four-string" system for organizing the dulcimer has several advantages. First, it keeps the hammers together in the center of the instrument, rather than flying off at awkward angles. This results in greater accuracy and a more relaxed playing position. Second, since Paul rarely plays above the central scale on the right-hand side of the bridge, or below it on the left-hand side, in effect it reduces by one third the number of treble strings he has to watch. Third, it eliminates the problem of duplicate pitches.

A duplicate pitch is one which appears in more than one place on the dulcimer. A careless choice between duplicates can greatly increase the difficulty of hammering any given tune. In Jesse Martin's system, however, there are no duplicate pitches. If, for example, you are playing in G and you wish to strike the sixth note of the scale, you don't have to worry about which of the two E courses to use: in the "four-string" system, the sixth note of the scale will *always* be played to the left of the treble bridge on the second of the four central courses. As a result, fewer hammering patterns are available to you, and you need to make fewer decisions.

Unfortunately, that is precisely the problem with the system. By eliminating the duplicate pitches, it frequently forces the use of hammering patterns which, in the hands of anyone less gifted than Paul, would seem awkward and clumsy. Below, I have transcribed the way in which Paul hammers the first four measures of "The Blackberry Quadrille" (Side A, Band 2), as he learned it from Jesse Martin. Notice that all of the D notes are played on the left-hand side of the treble bridge. This often requires that Paul strike two different notes, in rapid succession, with the same hammer—sometimes, as in measures two and four, simultaneously crossing the bridge.



[Note: All D notes are played on the left-hand side of the treble bridge. The right hand crosses the bridge in the second and fourth measures.]

Now, here are the same four measures, this time with the hammering re-worked to take advantage of the duplicate D on the right-hand side of the treble bridge. By using the right-hand D in measures two and four, and the left-hand D in measures one and three, we can smooth out and regularize the hammering.

[Note: D's in the first and third measures are on the left of the bridge; D's in the second and fourth measures are on the right.]

Paul is a very flexible musician, and he doesn't limit himself to his grandfather's system. He experiments freely with different patterns, especially when learning a new melody. When playing tunes that he got from Jesse Martin, however, he still hammers them very much in the old man's style. The old "four-string" patterns are too comfortable now, and too deeply ingrained, to be cast aside. Besides, as he pointed out to me one day:

> *Yeah, I play pretty much the same strings that Grandpa played. In some cases, I've tried to get away from it because it isn't, I guess, as smooth as it could be. But it worked pretty well for him.... Seems it works okay for me, too.*

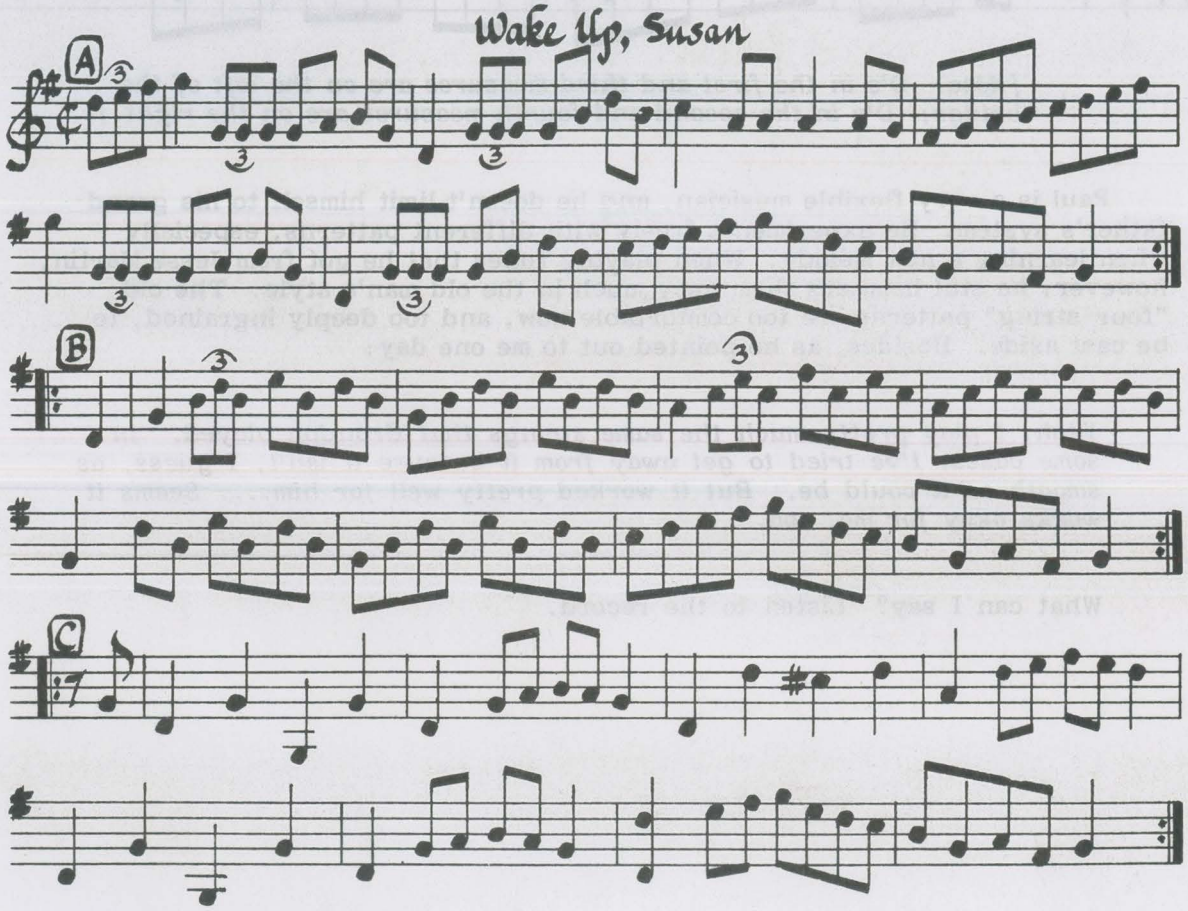
What can I say? Listen to the record.

Side A, Band 1

Wake up, Susan *(Key: G)*

"Wake up, Susan" is a common tune in the repertoire of older traditional musicians in the Northeast, while a related tune, "The Mason's Apron," is more widely known among younger players. Although they share an almost identical first strain, they have existed as separate melodies for at least one hundred years. Both appear in *One Thousand Fiddle Tunes* (M. M. Cole, Chicago, 1940), which was reprinted from *Ryan's Mammoth Collection* (Elias Howe, Boston, 1883).

Paul's version, which he learned from Jesse Martin, actually combines the two tunes by following the shared strain with, first, the second strain of Cole's "Mason's Apron" and then the second strain of Cole's "Wake up, Susan." Although played here in the key of G to accommodate the dulcimer, both tunes are more commonly played in A.

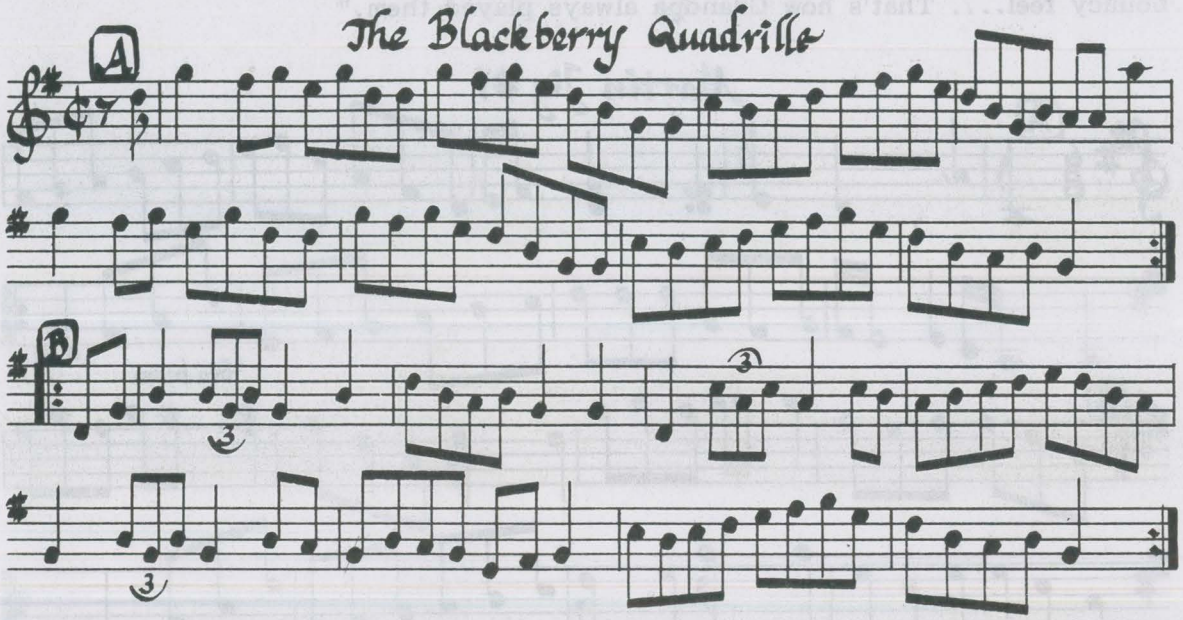


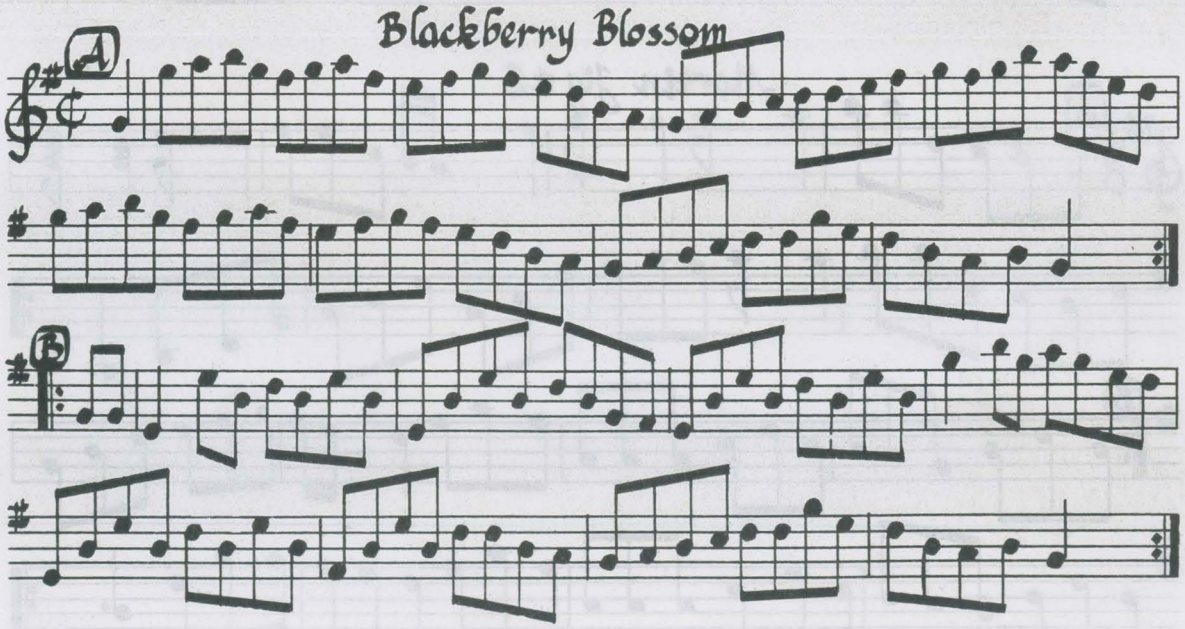
Side A, Band 2

The Blackberry Blossoms *(Key: G)*

This is actually a medley of two unrelated tunes. The first is "The Blackberry Quadrille," a melody Paul got from his grandfather. The second is a reel called "The Blackberry Blossom," which Paul learned from David Holt, a young banjo player from South Carolina. Paul figured that the two would fit together nicely, and, as usual, he was right.

Just to add to the confusion, neither tune seems to be related to the popular Irish reel *also* called "The Blackberry Blossom" (see Cole's *One Thousand Fiddle Tunes* or O'Neill's *Music of Ireland* [Lyon & Healy, Chicago, 1903]). This would seem to be what is known as a "floating title."



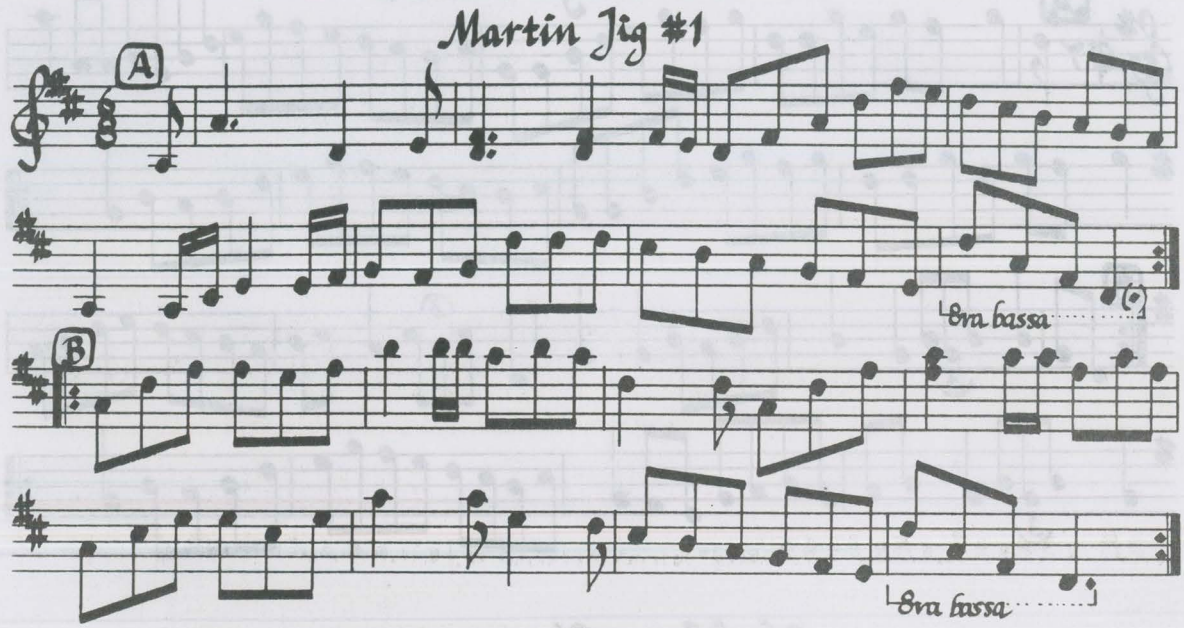


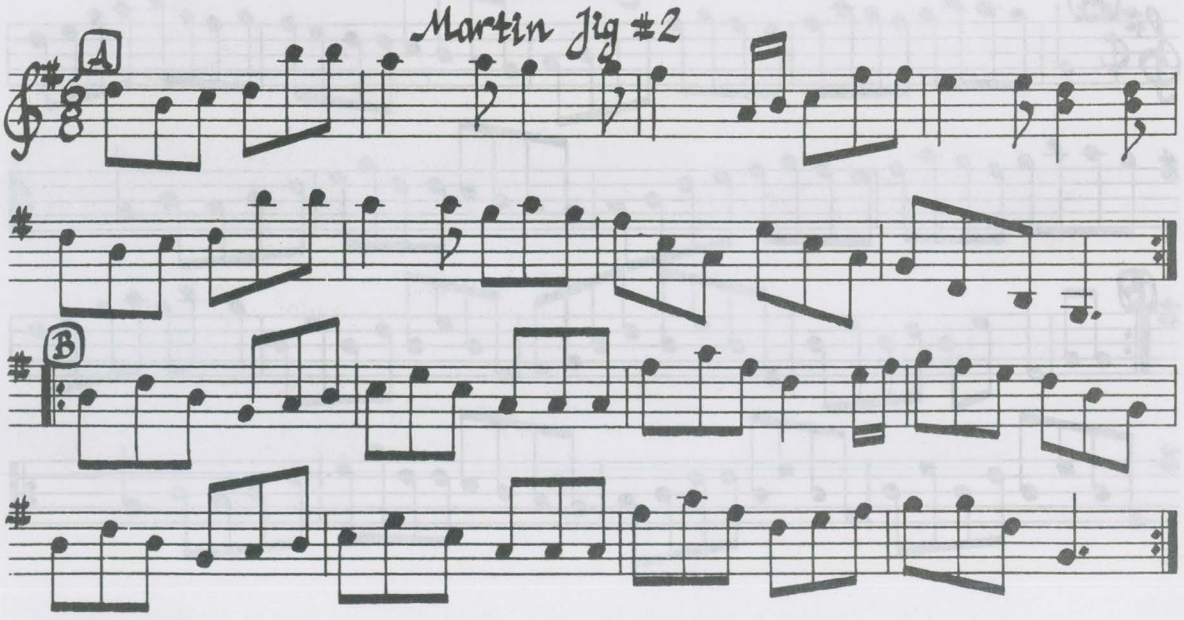
Side A, Band 3

Medley of Martin Jigs *(Keys: D, G)*

These two jigs, sadly without titles, both come from Jesse Martin, who used to play them for dances. Paul learned the tunes separately, and he put them into medley form only recently in preparation for this recording. (According to Paul, his grandfather *did* play tunes in medleys, but it is unlikely that he would have incorporated a change of key.)

The slight hitch, or delay, in the second beat of many of the triplets is characteristic of Paul's jig playing. "You know, it helps to give them a sort of bouncy feel.... That's how Grandpa always played them."



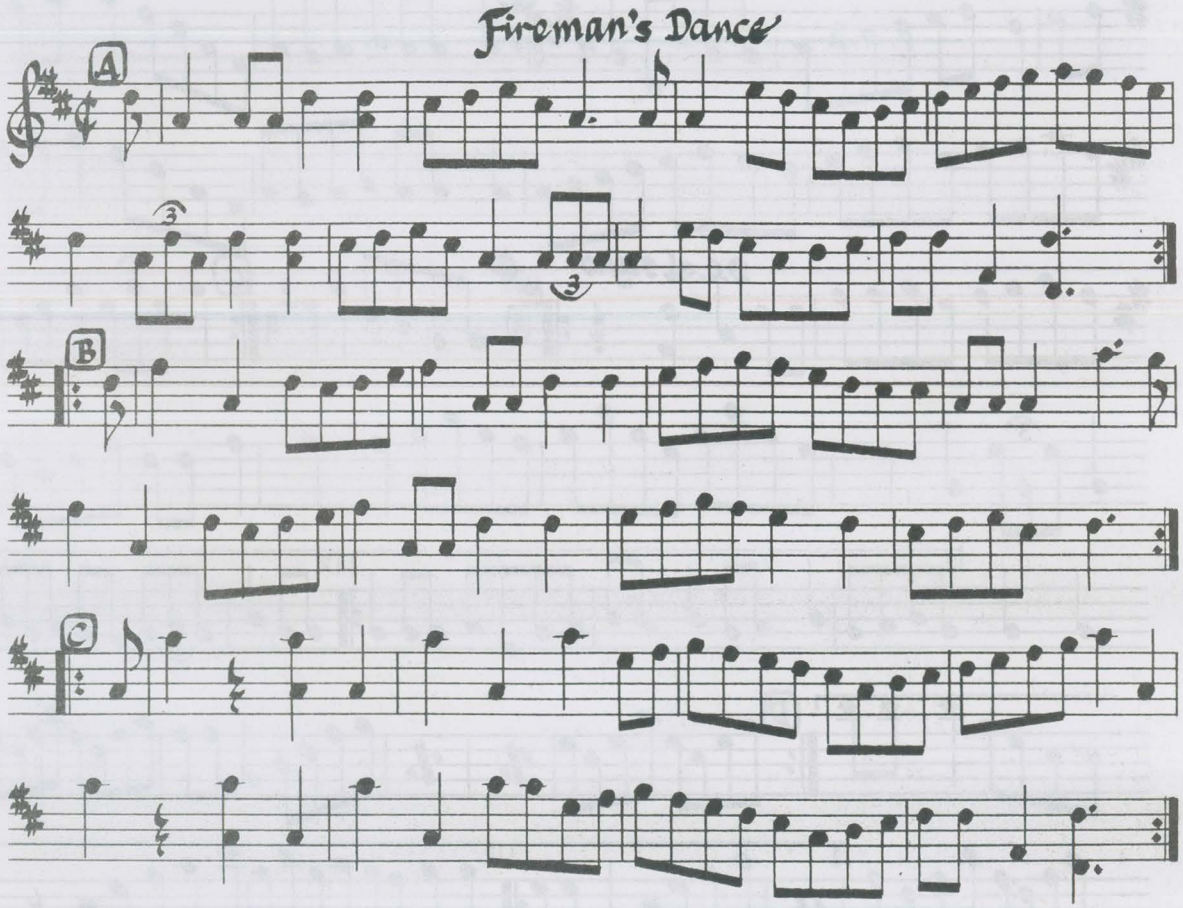


Side A, Band 4

Fireman's Dance *(Key: D)*

A fireman's dance is a type of contra dance, similar to the better known "Portland Fancy." The dancers form up into a series of lines, two couples to each line, facing alternately up and down the hall. During the first two parts of the tune, the dancers go through some simple figures with the line of dancers facing them. During the third part of the tune, commonly played only once through, each group of dancers passes through the opposite line to face a new set of couples.

Paul learned this tune from his grandfather, and he remembers dancing the fireman's dance himself in western New York State in the late 1930's. For a further description of the dance, with calls and a similar melody, see *Dances of Our Pioneers*, by Grace L. Ryan (A. S. Barnes, New York, 1926), or *Good Morning*, by Mr. and Mrs. Henry Ford (Dearborn, Michigan, 1925).

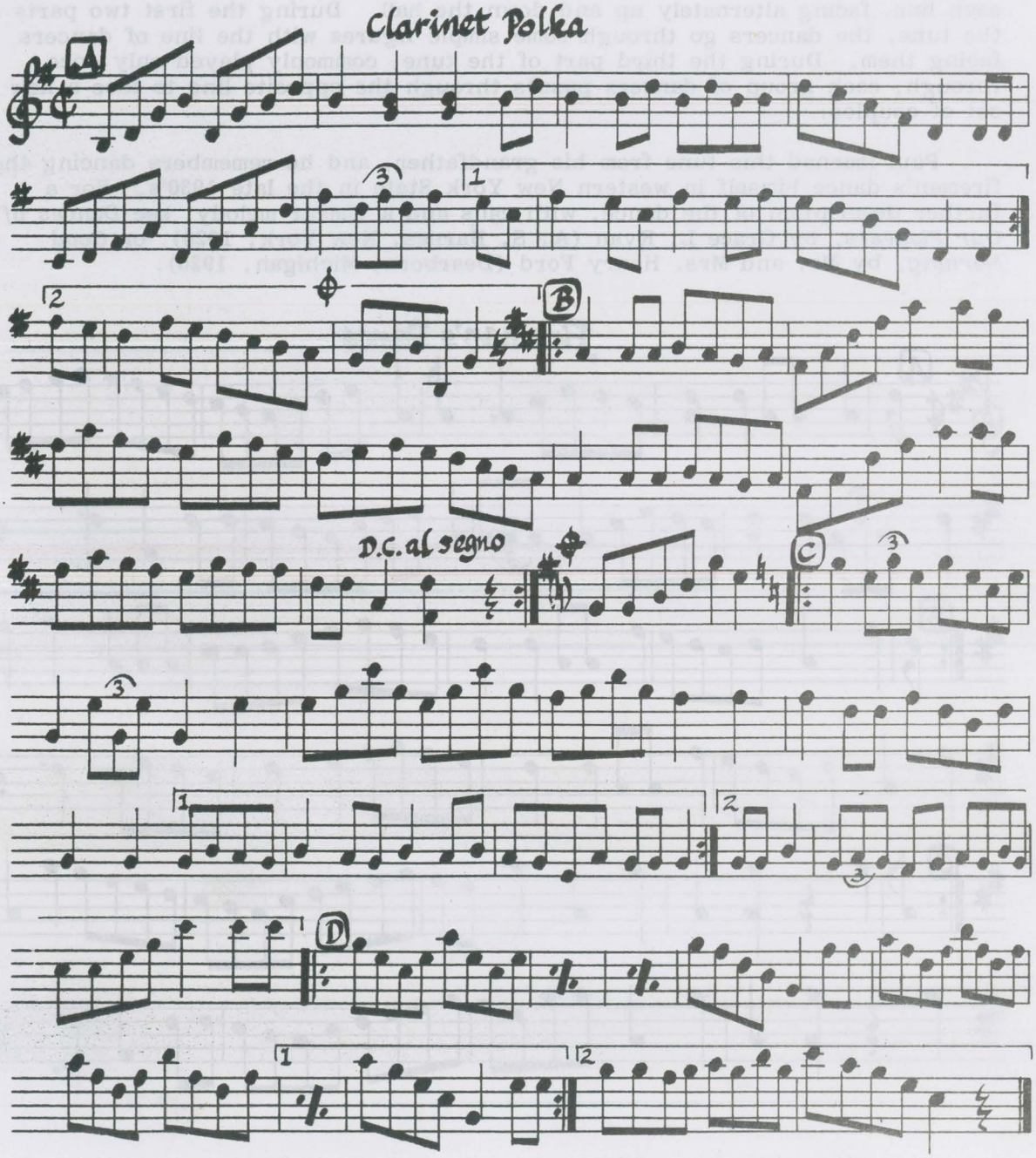


Side A, Band 5

Clarinet Polka *(Key: G/D/C)*

This popular polka was apparently imported into this country from Europe in the early 1900's. Its original Polish title was "Dziadunio," which, I am told, means "Grandpa." It was popularized as "The Clarinet Polka" during the 1930's.

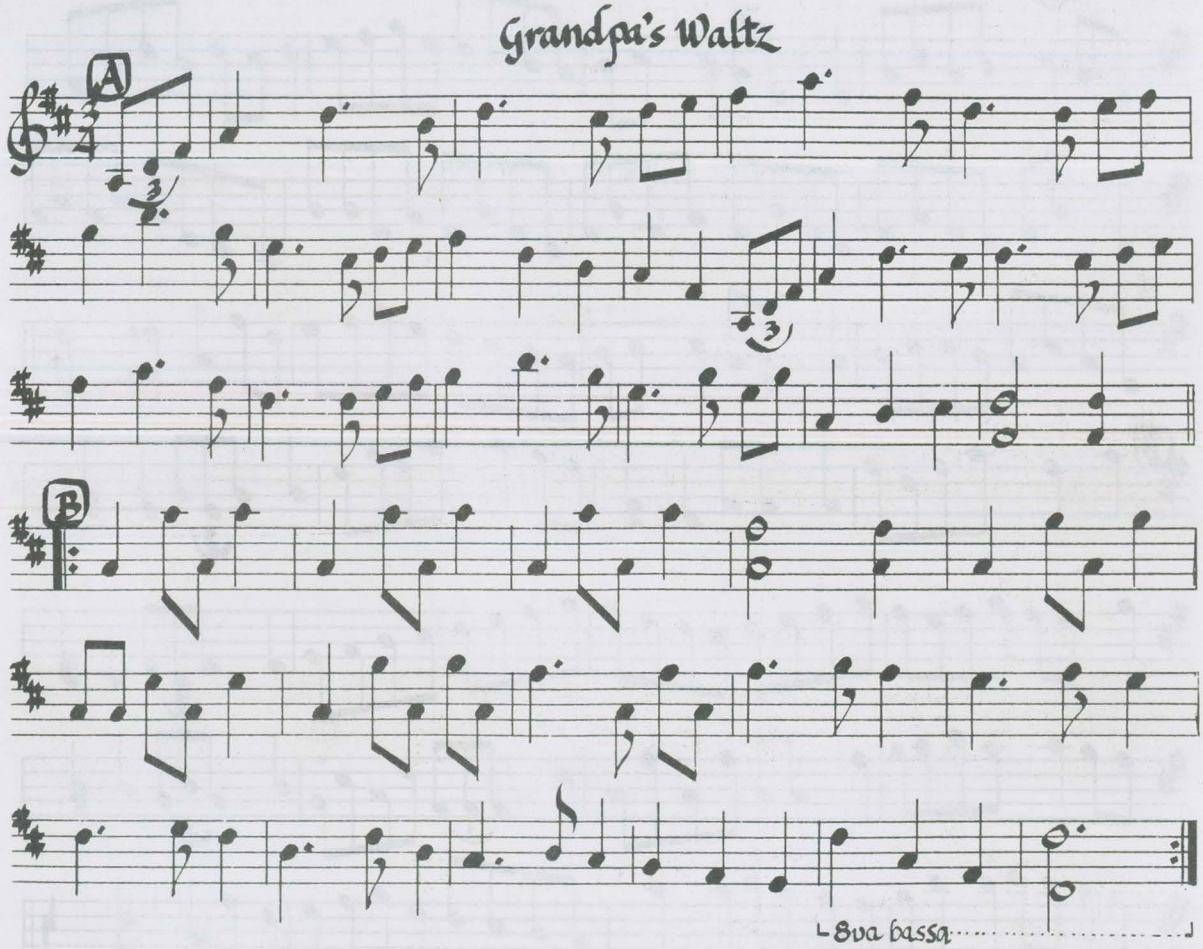
Paul took the tune off the radio in the mid-1950's and, in spite of the difficult melody and the two key changes, adapted it to the dulcimer. As he explains with typical understatement: "I just figured it would work out okay."



Side A, Band 6

Grandpa's Waltz *(Key: D)*

Paul learned this beautiful, spare melody from Jesse Martin, and, for the purpose of this recording, he named it in his honor. I have been unable, thus far, to find this waltz in any printed collection. It is possible that it is an original dulcimer composition—it's hard to imagine it sounding as good on any other instrument.

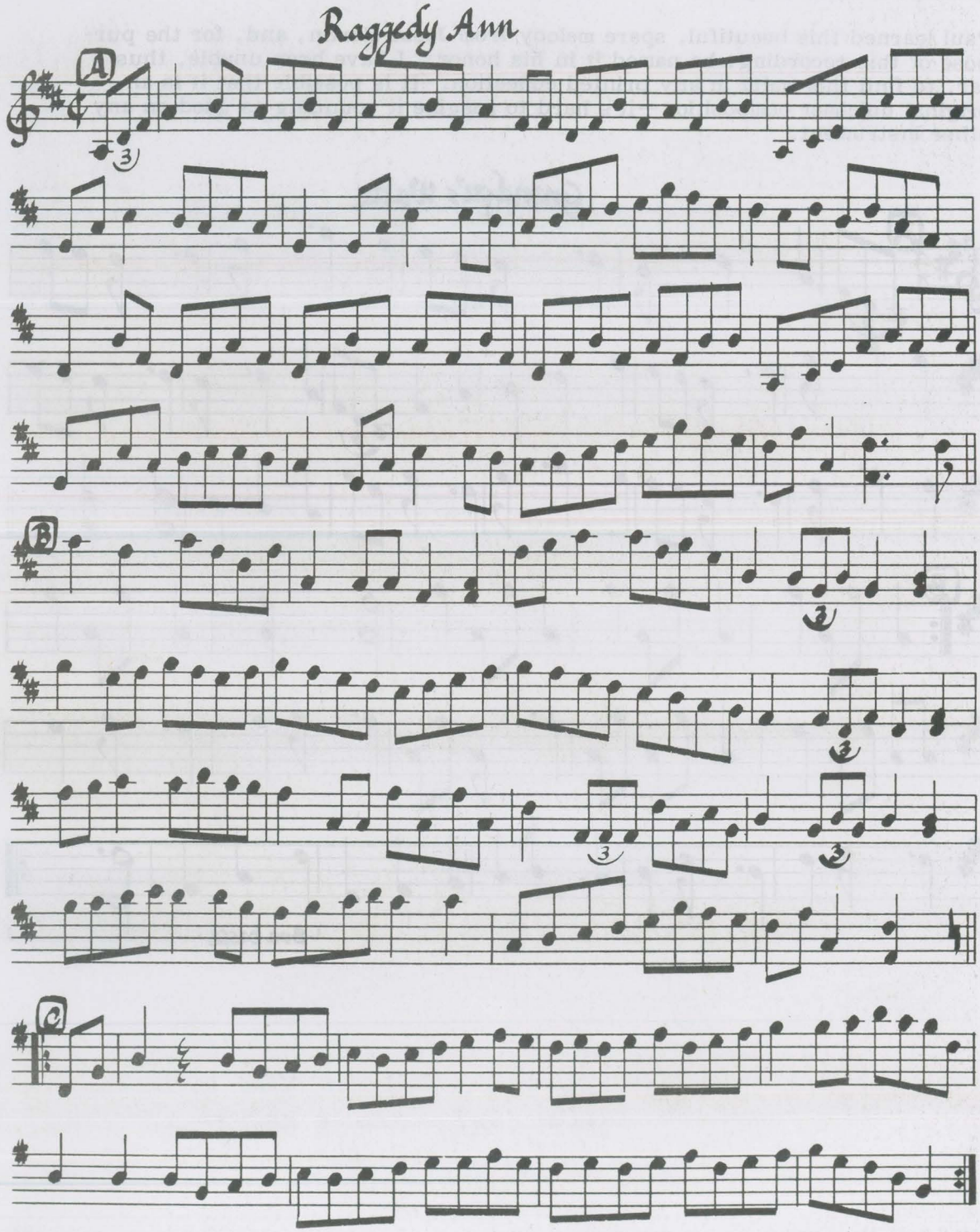


Side A, Band 7

Raggedy Ann *(Key: D/G)*

More widely known under the title "Ragtime Annie," this reel was one of the earliest fiddle tunes ever recorded. Perhaps as a consequence, it is found all throughout the United States and Canada. In most parts of the country, only the first two strains are played; this three-part version seems to be more common to the Northeast. (The third strain did appear, very briefly, on the original 1922 Eck Robertson recording.)

Phil Van Arsdale, Paul's older brother, says that Jesse Martin used to play "Raggedy Ann," but Paul doesn't recall hearing it from his grandfather. Paul got his version from the radio.

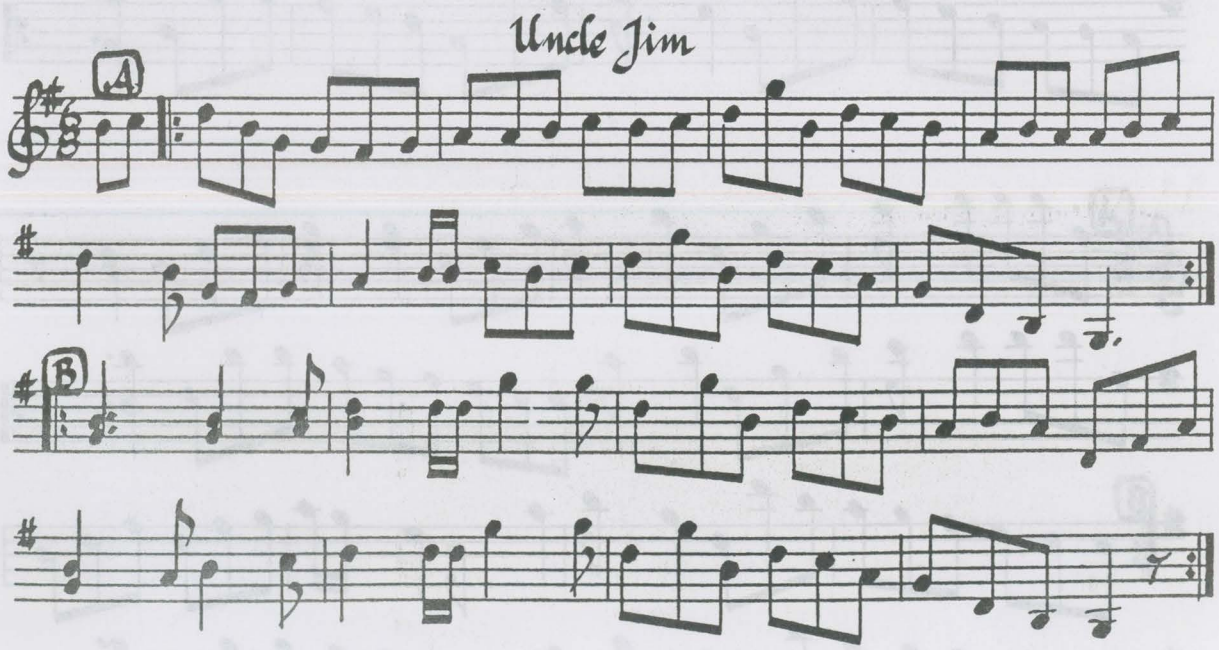


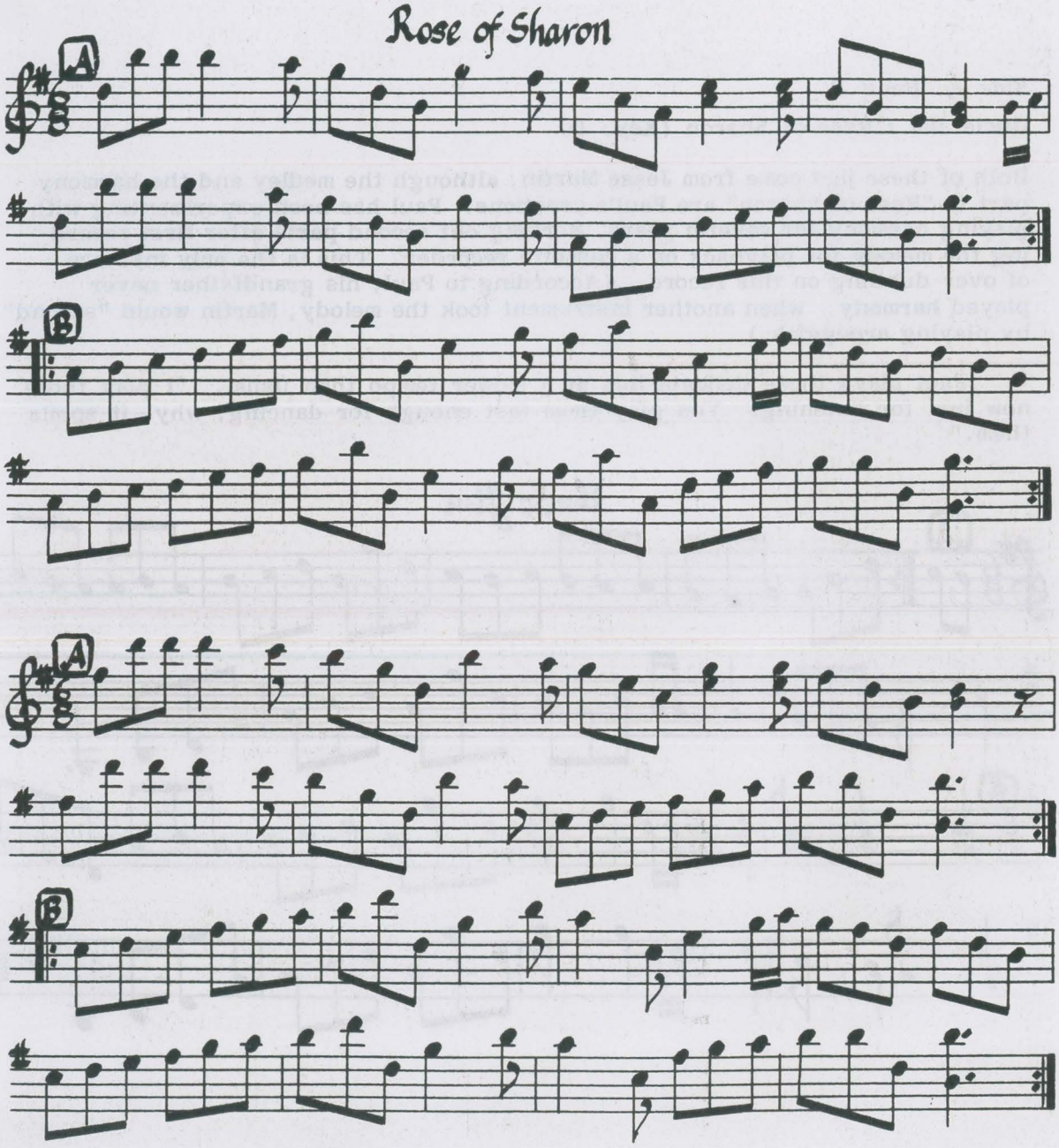
Side A, Band 8

Uncle Jim / Rose of Sharon *(Key: D)*

Both of these jigs come from Jesse Martin, although the medley and the harmony part to "Rose of Sharon" are Paul's creations. Paul has been experimenting with playing harmony for several years, working out second parts after first recording the melody for playback on a cassette recorder. This is the only instance of over-dubbing on this record. (According to Paul, his grandfather never played harmony; when another instrument took the melody, Martin would "second" by playing arpeggios.)

Paul plays these delicate jigs at a slower tempo than usual. "I play those now just for listening. You play them fast enough for dancing, why, it spoils them."

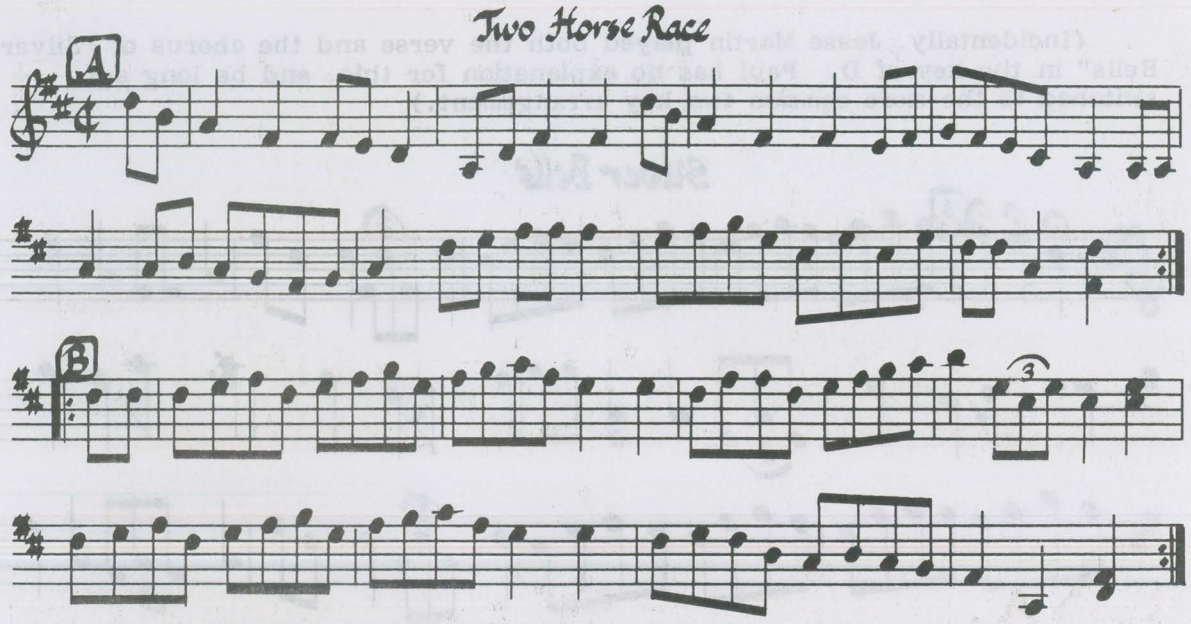


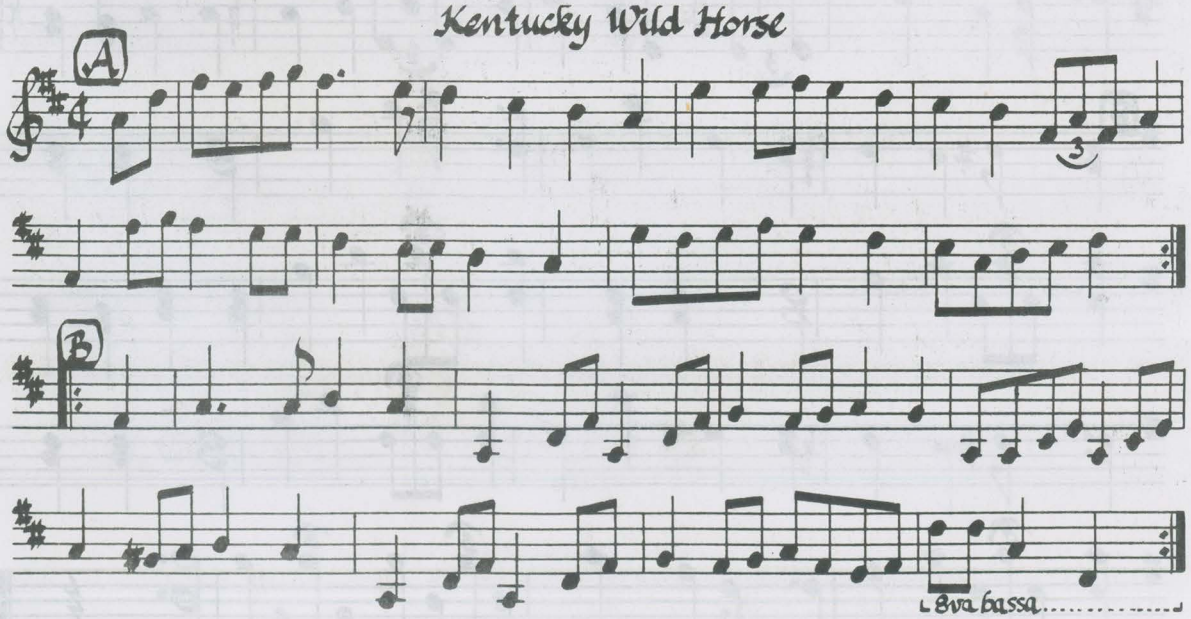

Rose of Sharon
A
B
A
B

Side B, Band 1

Two Horse Race / Kentucky Wild Horse *(Key: D)*

Paul says of these reels: "I always get a picture of two young colts romping around in a pasture, you know. It just seems like it's a real jumpy, bouncy tune. Grandpa played both of those tunes, but I don't recall that he played them together. That's something that I came up with. I never heard either of them except from the family."





Side B, Band 2

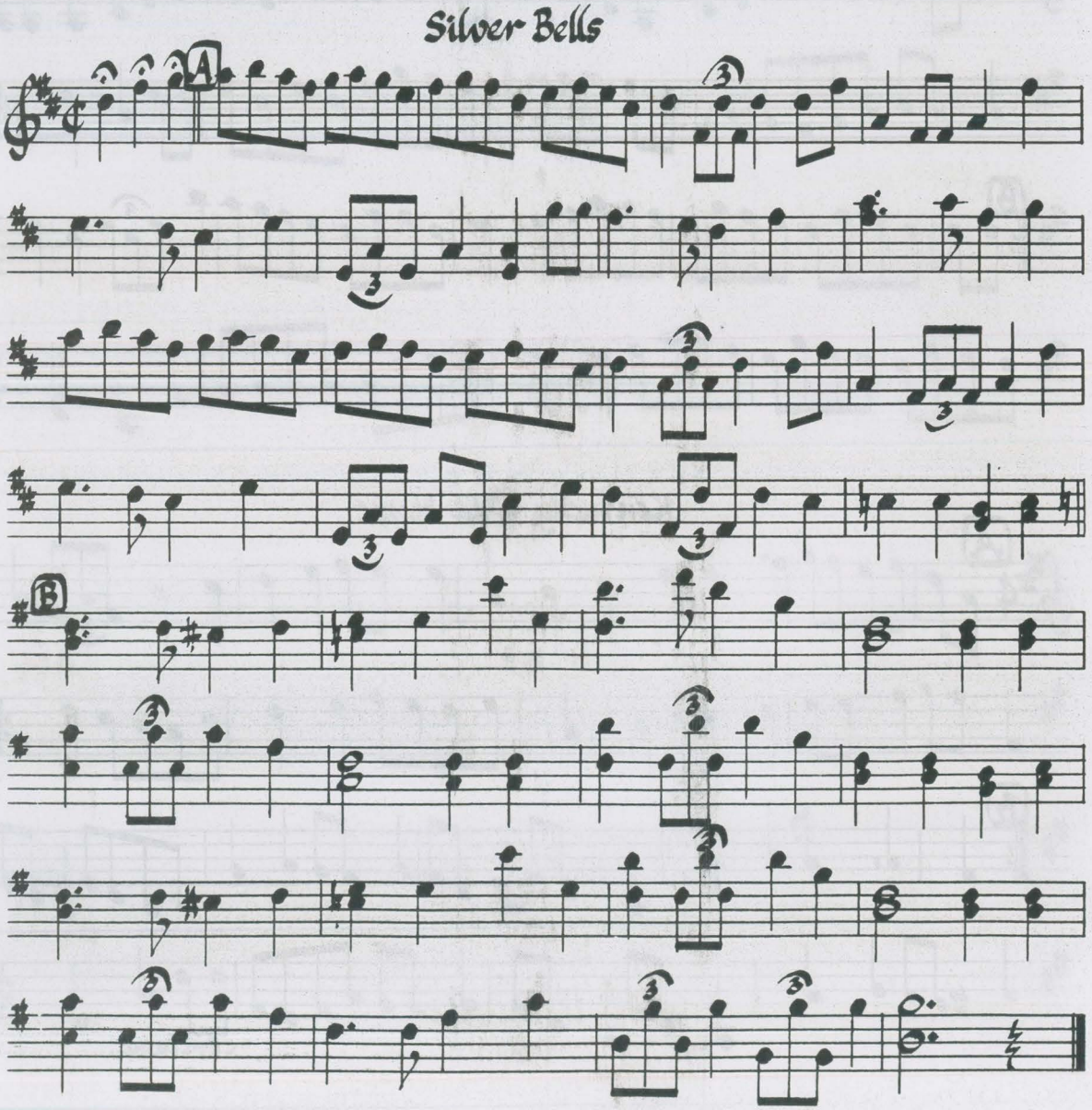
Silver Bells *(Key: D/G)*

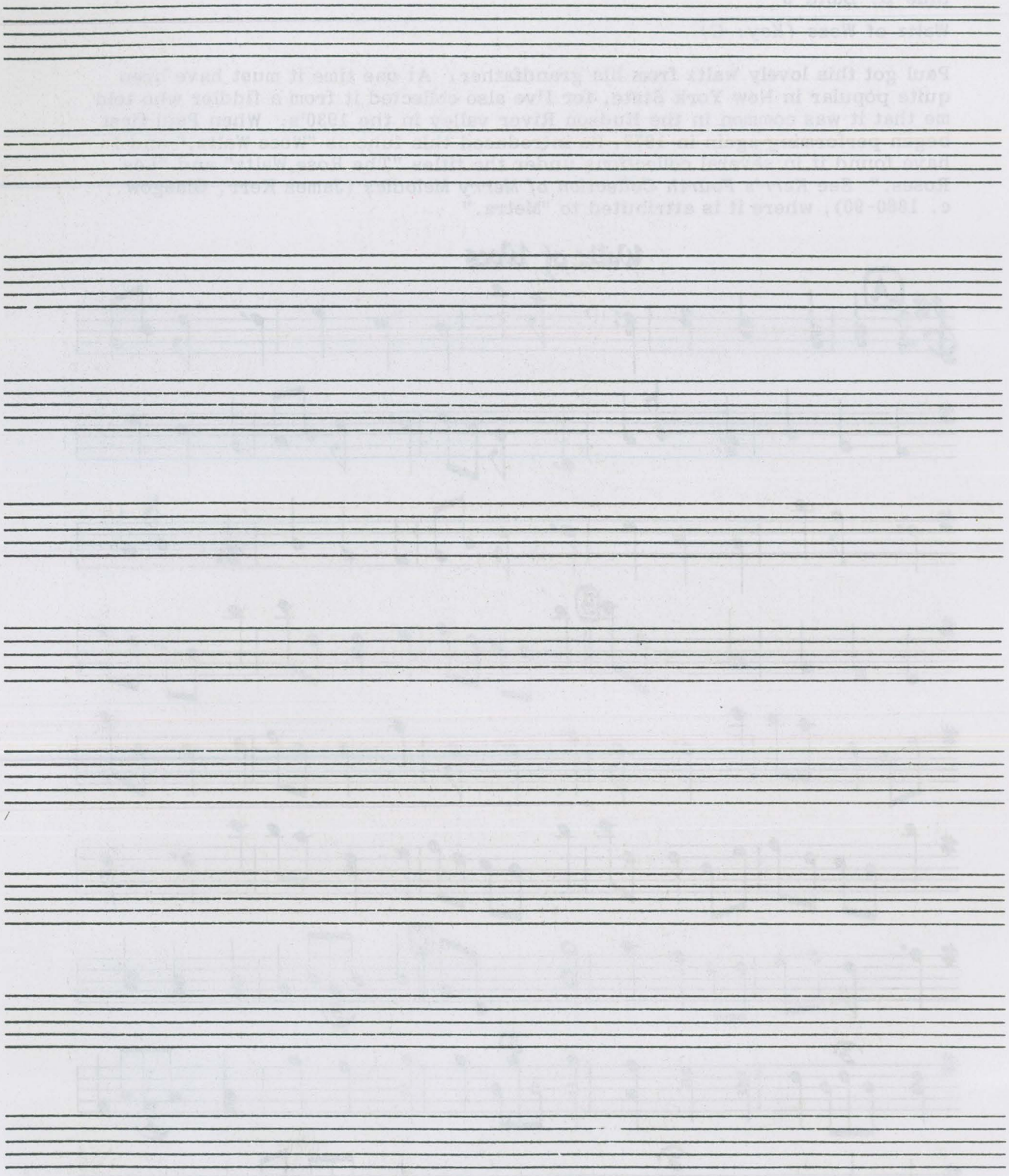
The original title of this tune, written in 1910 by Percy Wenrich, was "Silver Bell"—that being the name of the Indian maiden who inspires "a chieftain longing to woo, gaily paddling his tiny canoe" to sing the following chorus:

> Your voice is ringing, my Silver Bell,
> Under its spell, I've come to tell
> You of the
> Love I am bringing, o'er hill and dell—
> Happy we'll dwell, my Silver Bell.

Paul likes to call this tune "Silver Bells" because of the chime-like tones he gets out of the dulcimer on that same chorus. Considering the truly awful lyrics, I think I prefer Paul's title.

(Incidentally, Jesse Martin played both the verse and the chorus of "Silver Bells" in the key of D. Paul has no explanation for this, and he long ago switched to the more common two-key arrangement.)

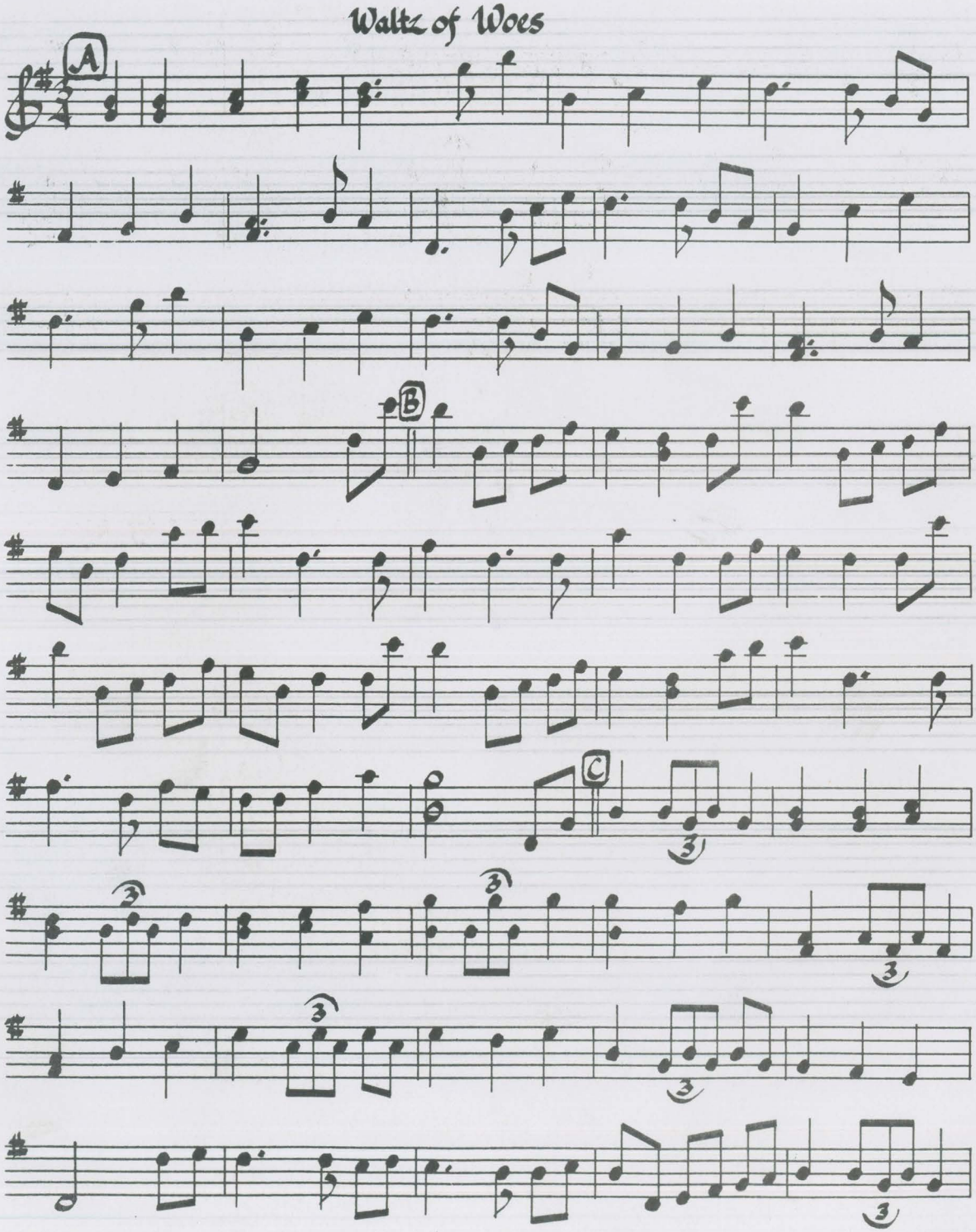


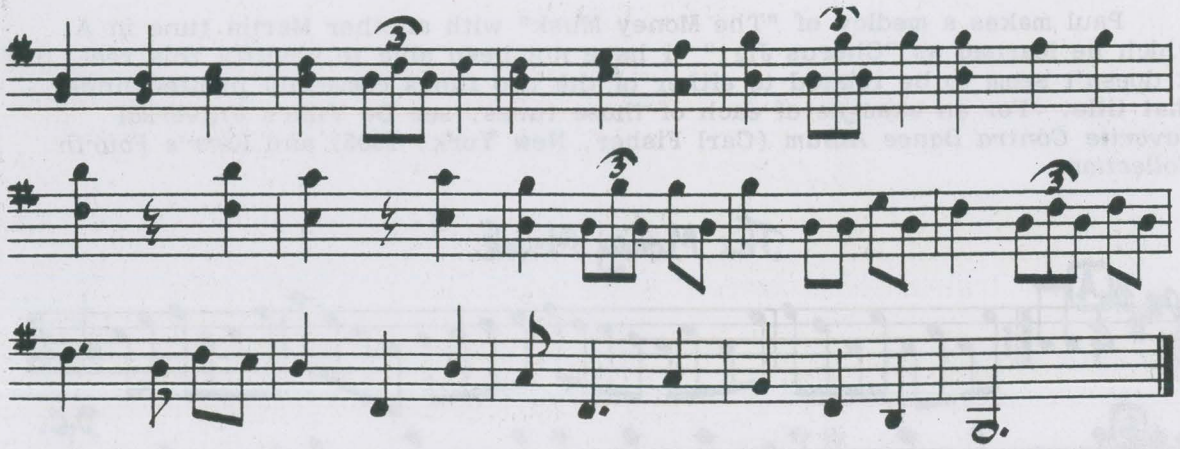


Side B, Band 3

Waltz of Woes *(Key: G)*

Paul got this lovely waltz from his grandfather. At one time it must have been quite popular in New York State, for I've also collected it from a fiddler who told me that it was common in the Hudson River valley in the 1930's. When Paul first began performing again in 1977, he introduced this tune as "Woes Waltz," and I have found it in several collections under the titles "The Rose Waltz" and "Les Roses." See *Kerr's Fourth Collection of Merry Melodies* (James Kerr, Glasgow, c. 1880-90), where it is attributed to "Metra."



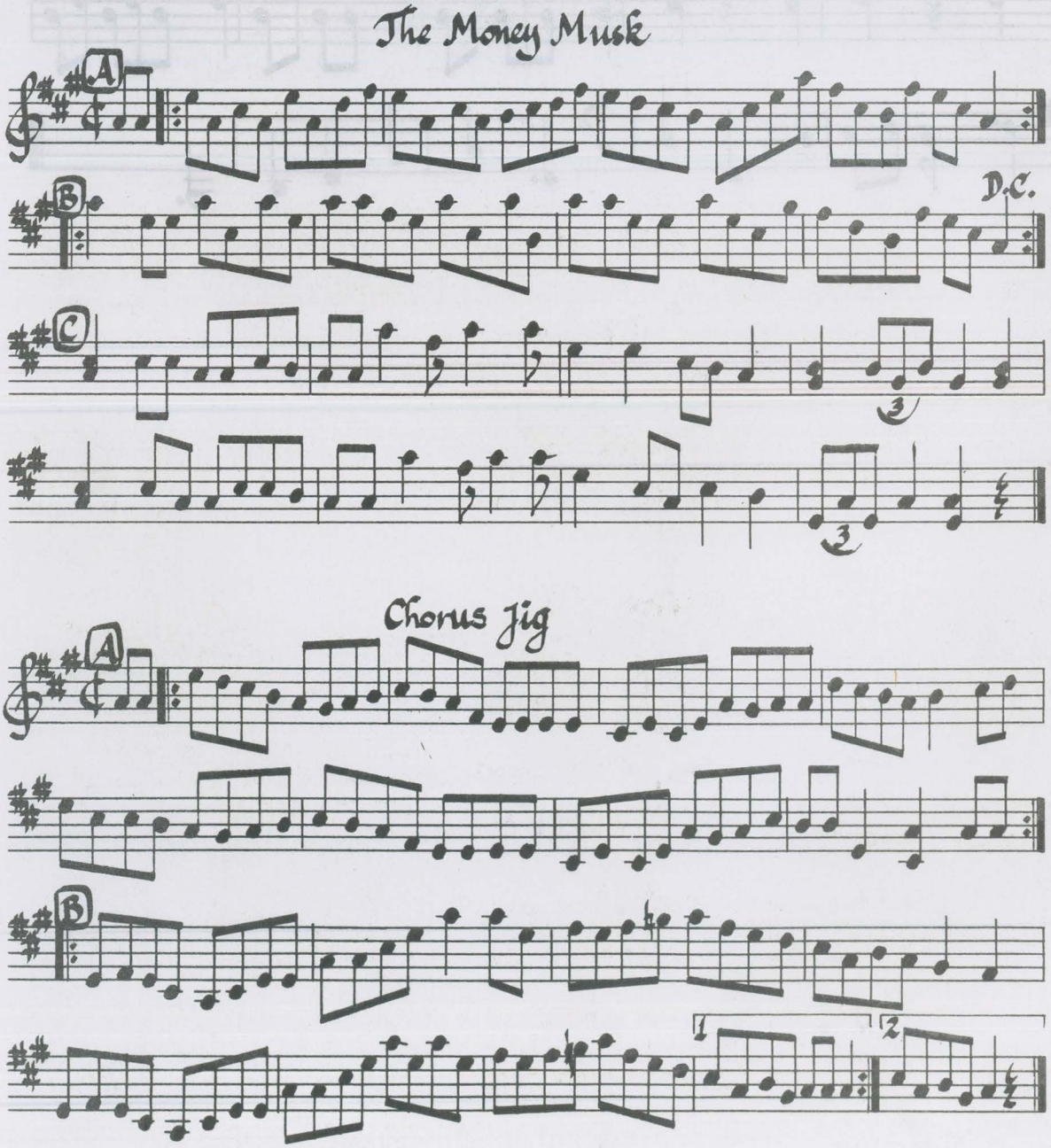


Side B, Band 4

The Money Musk / Chorus Jig *(Key: A)*

"Money Musk" is one of the classic contra dances, and the tune is popular throughout the Northeast. It was written by a Scottish composer, Daniel Dow, and it first appeared in 1776 under the title "Sir Archibald Grant of Monemusk's Reel." Dow's melody had only two strains, but most fiddlers today play "Money Musk" with an additional third strain. According to Paul, Jesse Martin was unable to "fit the third part to the dulcimer," so he substituted the melody from Stephen Foster's "Old Folks at Home."

Paul makes a medley of "The Money Musk" with another Martin tune in A, which he learned as "Chorus Jig." I have not been able to identify this reel, but it doesn't seem to be related to either of the two tunes commonly printed under that title. For an example of each of those tunes, see De Ville's *Universal Favorite Contra Dance Album* (Carl Fisher, New York, 1905) and *Kerr's Fourth Collection*.

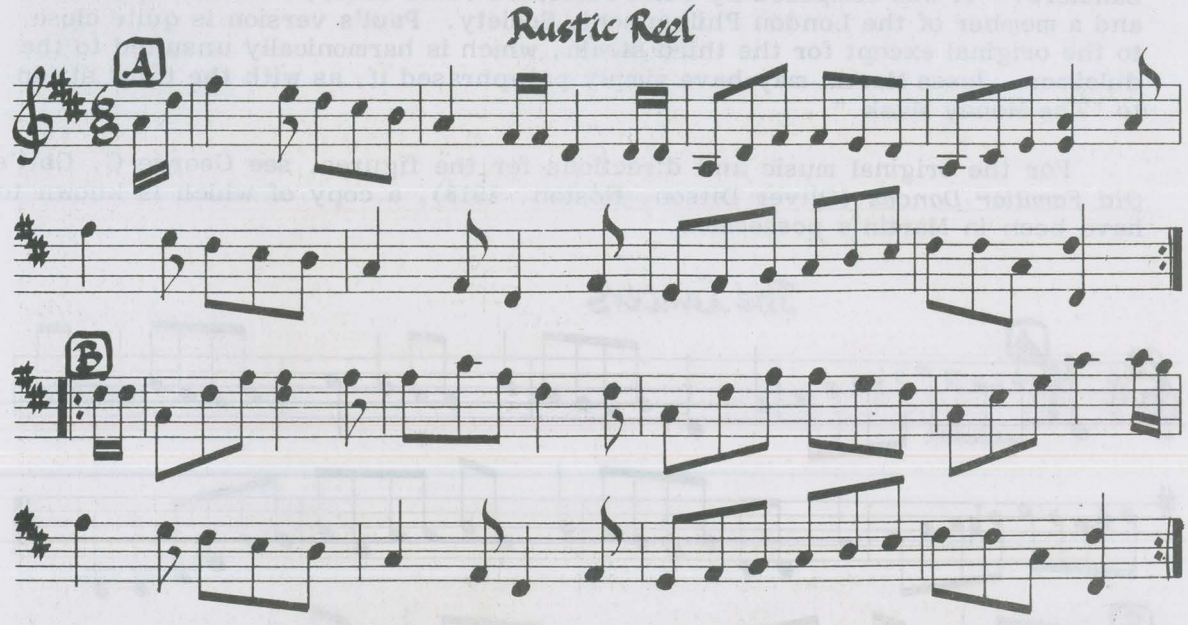


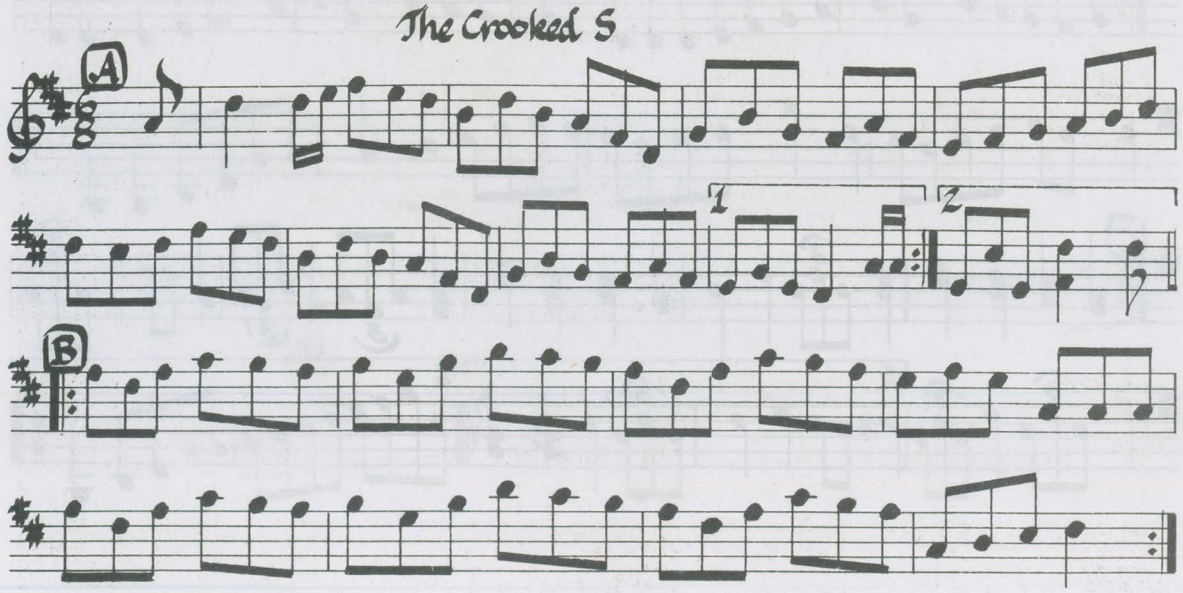
Side B, Band 5

Rustic Reel / The Crooked S *(Key: D)*

Paul's grandfather often taught him tunes in pairs. He didn't necessarily play them as a medley, but he would teach the two melodies at the same time. "He'd say, 'Now, here is the mate to this one,' and he'd teach you the other one. He'd call it the mate to it." Since Martin was unable to read music, this may have been a device he developed to help him remember tunes.

"Rustic Reel" and "The Crooked S" were such a pair. Paul recalls that there was a special dance, rather like the "Fireman's Dance," that was done to "The Crooked S," but I have not been able to locate it. I did, however, find a dance of that type done to "Rustic Reel." For a description of the dance and a similar melody, see Cole's *One Thousand*, page 33.





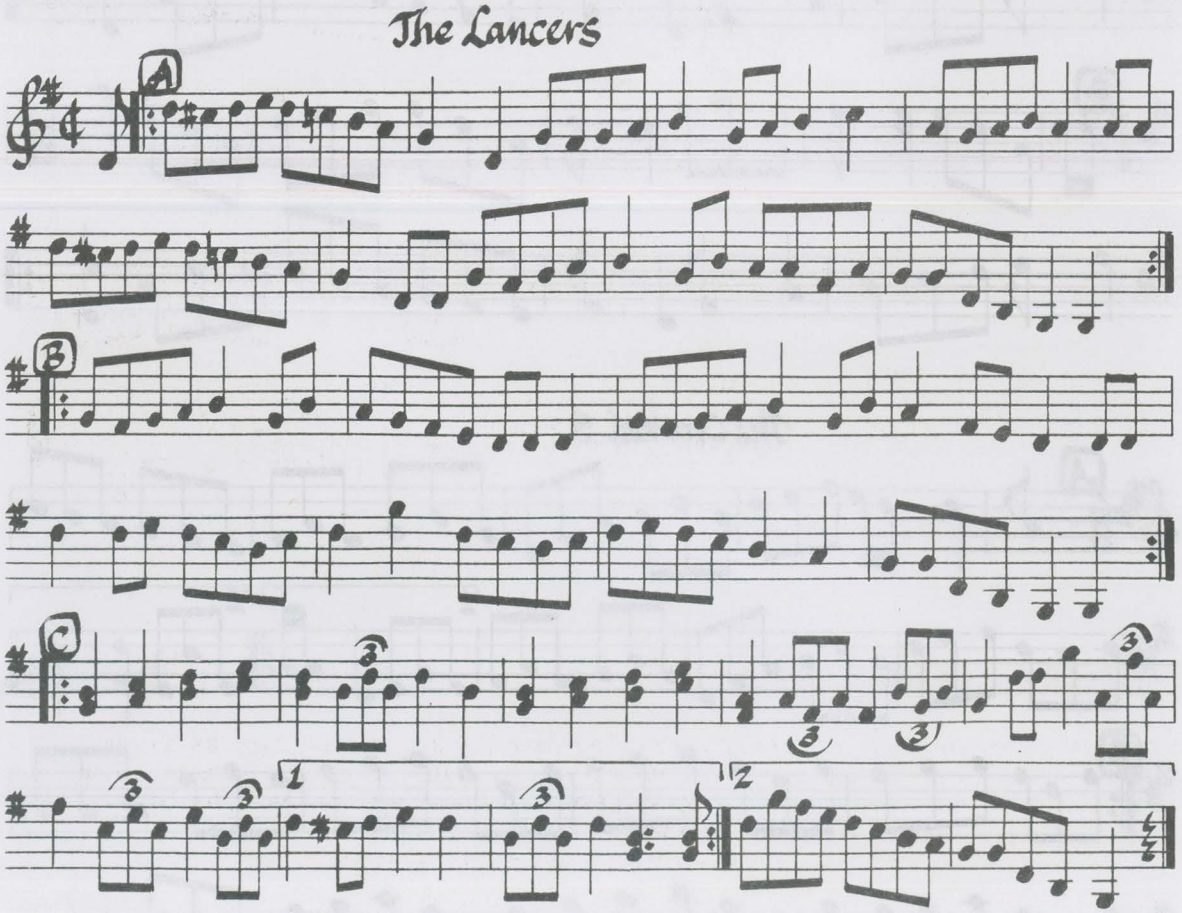
Side B, Band 6

The Lancers *(Key: G)*

The Lancers was a particularly elegant and stylish form of the quadrille (a sequence of short square dances). It was the most fashionable dance of the late 19th century, having been popularized in 1856 by no less than the Empress Eugenie, wife of Napoleon III. It set a style and there were many imitations, but none as successful or as long-lived as the original.

This melody, which Paul learned from Jesse Martin, is from the original Lancers set. There were five parts to the Lancers, with different music for each part, and Paul's tune was used to accompany the fifth and final figure, "Les Lanciers." It was composed by Felix Janiewicz (1762-1848), a Polish violinist and a member of the London Philharmonic Society. Paul's version is quite close to the original except for the third strain, which is harmonically unsuited to the dulcimer. Jesse Martin may have simply paraphrased it, as with the third strain to "The Money Musk."

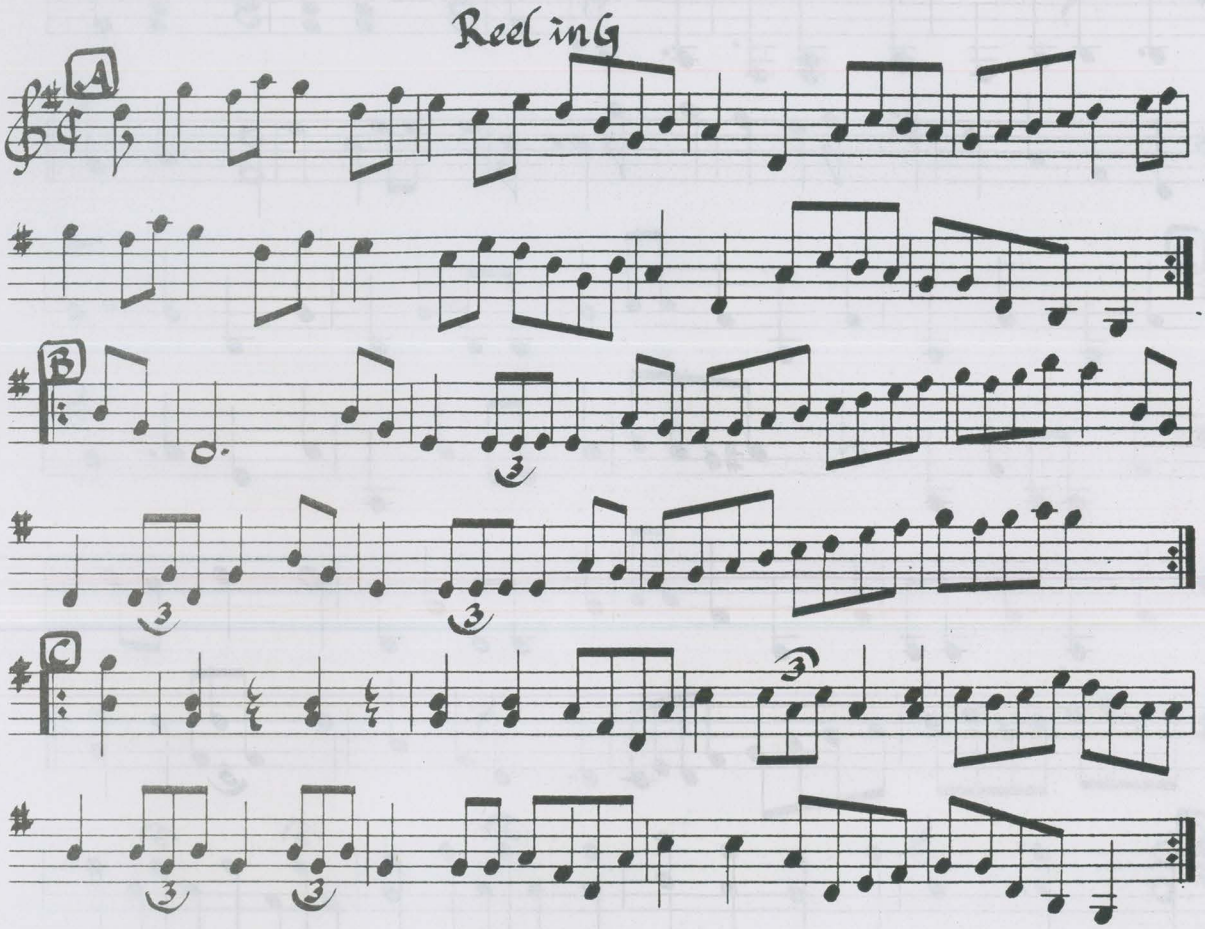
For the original music and directions for the figures, see George C. Gott's *Old Familiar Dances* (Oliver Ditson, Boston, 1918), a copy of which is known to have been in Martin's possession.



Side B, Band 7

Reel in G *(Key: G)*

This is one of the many beautiful tunes without titles that Paul learned from his grandfather. At one time, it must have been a popular reel in western Pennsylvania and New York, for it appears in Samuel P. Bayard's *Hill Country Tunes* (Memoirs of the American Folklore Society, Vol. 39, Philadelphia, 1944), where it is listed as Tune No. 53, "Quadrille." Professor Bayard collected the tune in southwestern Pennsylvania, approximately 150 miles from Martin's home in Chautauqua County, New York.



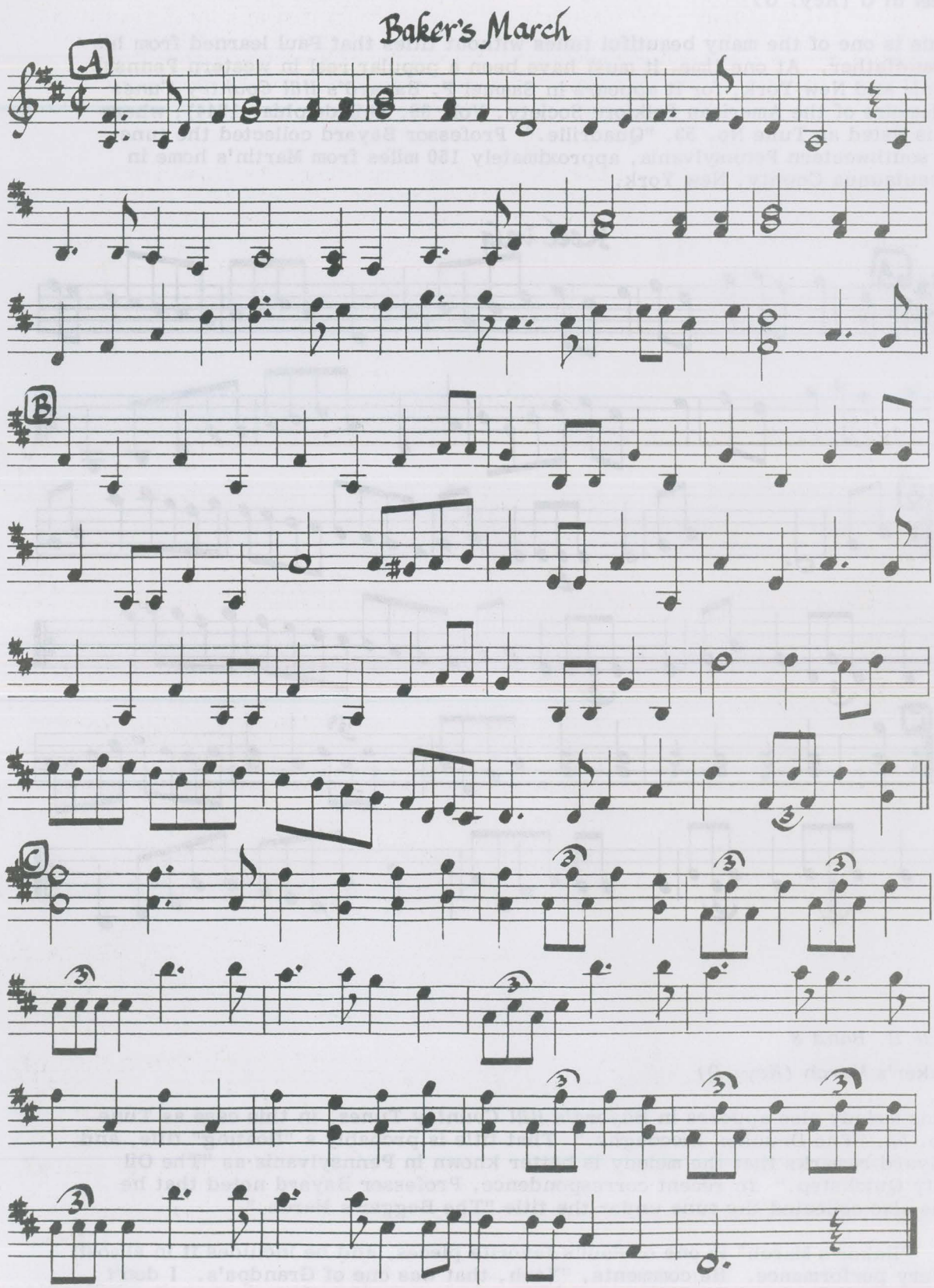
Side B, Band 8

Baker's March *(Key: D)*

This melody also appears in Bayard's *Hill Country Tunes*, in this case as Tune No. 52, "The Drunken Hiccoughs." That title is probably a "floating" title, and Bayard remarks that the melody is better known in Pennsylvania as "The Oil City Quickstep." In recent correspondence, Professor Bayard noted that he has also collected the tune under the title "The Beggar's March."

"Baker's March" is one of Paul's favorite pieces, and he includes it in almost every performance. He comments, "Yeah, that was one of Grandpa's. I don't know where he got it, but as long as I can remember him playing, that was one of the big tunes."

p.t.o.

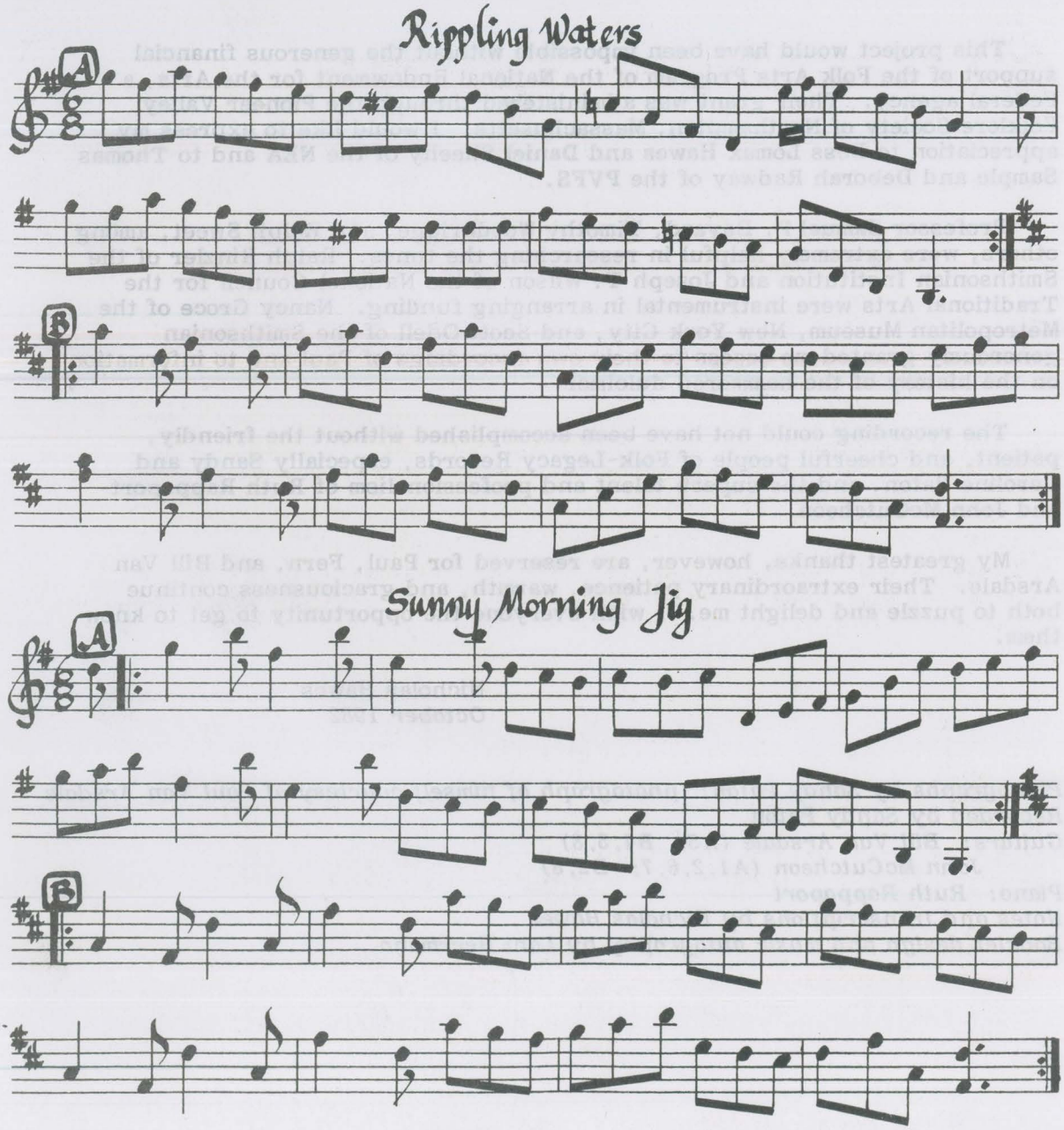

Baker's March
A
B
C

Side B, Band 9

Rippling Waters / Sunny Morning Jig *(Key: G/D)*

Paul lives in North Tonawanda, New York, just across the border from Canada. Fiddling, as a popular entertainment, is much more common in Canada than it is in the United States, and Paul has learned many fine tunes by listening to Canadian radio programs. Don Messer, the dean of Canadian fiddlers, popularized the first jig of this medley on his nationwide radio and television programs under the title, "Rippling Water," and it is likely that Paul learned the tune from Messer's broadcasts.

The second jig is an original Van Arsdale composition. Paul has written several excellent tunes, some while at the dulcimer and others while at work. Paul still works as a foreman tool-grinder at Bell Aviation (now Bell Aero-Space), and he explains: "Where I work, we have a real noisy exhaust system that picks up all the grinding dust. Nobody can hear if you want to whistle or hum to yourself. Lots of times, you'll be working away, and all the sudden you find you're whistling something you never heard before.... First thing you know, you've got the makings of a new tune."



A Note on the Transcriptions

The tune transcriptions have in most cases been taken from the first time through each phrase. In some cases, questionable points have been clarified by consulting later repetitions. Paul tends not to vary his playing significantly over the course of a single recording (although versions taken at different times and places may show radical differences); still, repetition marks should not be interpreted as indicating literal repetition.

No effort was made to transcribe accurately the slight hitch, or delay, in the second beat of many triplets, characteristic of Paul's jig playing. All methods seemed equally inadequate. Those interested are referred to the recordings.

Standard notation was chosen over tablature for two reasons: standard notation allows wider access to the material, and tablature only works if the tuning systems match; Paul's tuning is unique to the Van Arsdales.

Acknowledgments

This project would have been impossible without the generous financial support of the Folk Arts Program of the National Endowment for the Arts, a Federal agency. Their grant was administered through the Pioneer Valley Folklore Society of Northampton, Massachusetts. I would like to express my appreciation to Bess Lomax Hawes and Daniel Sheehy of the NEA and to Thomas Sample and Deborah Radway of the PVFS.

Professor Samuel P. Bayard, Timothy Woodbridge, and Ralph Sweet, among others, were extremely helpful in researching the tunes. Ralph Rinzler of the Smithsonian Institution and Joseph T. Wilson of the National Council for the Traditional Arts were instrumental in arranging funding. Nancy Groce of the Metropolitan Museum, New York City, and Scott Odell of the Smithsonian generously granted me access to their own recordings of Paul and to information on the history of the hammered dulcimer.

The recording could not have been accomplished without the friendly, patient, and cheerful people of Folk-Legacy Records, especially Sandy and Caroline Paton, and the superb talent and professionalism of Ruth Rappaport and John McCutcheon.

My greatest thanks, however, are reserved for Paul, Fern, and Bill Van Arsdale. Their extraordinary patience, warmth, and graciousness continue both to puzzle and delight me. I wish everyone the opportunity to get to know them.

Nicholas Hawes
October 1982

Photographs by Sandy Paton; photograph of himself courtesy of Paul Van Arsdale
Recorded by Sandy Paton
Guitars: Bill Van Arsdale (A5; B4, 5, 8)
John McCutcheon (A1, 2, 6, 7; B2, 8)
Piano: Ruth Rappaport
Notes and transcriptions by Nicholas Hawes
Booklet design and music autography by Lani Herrmann