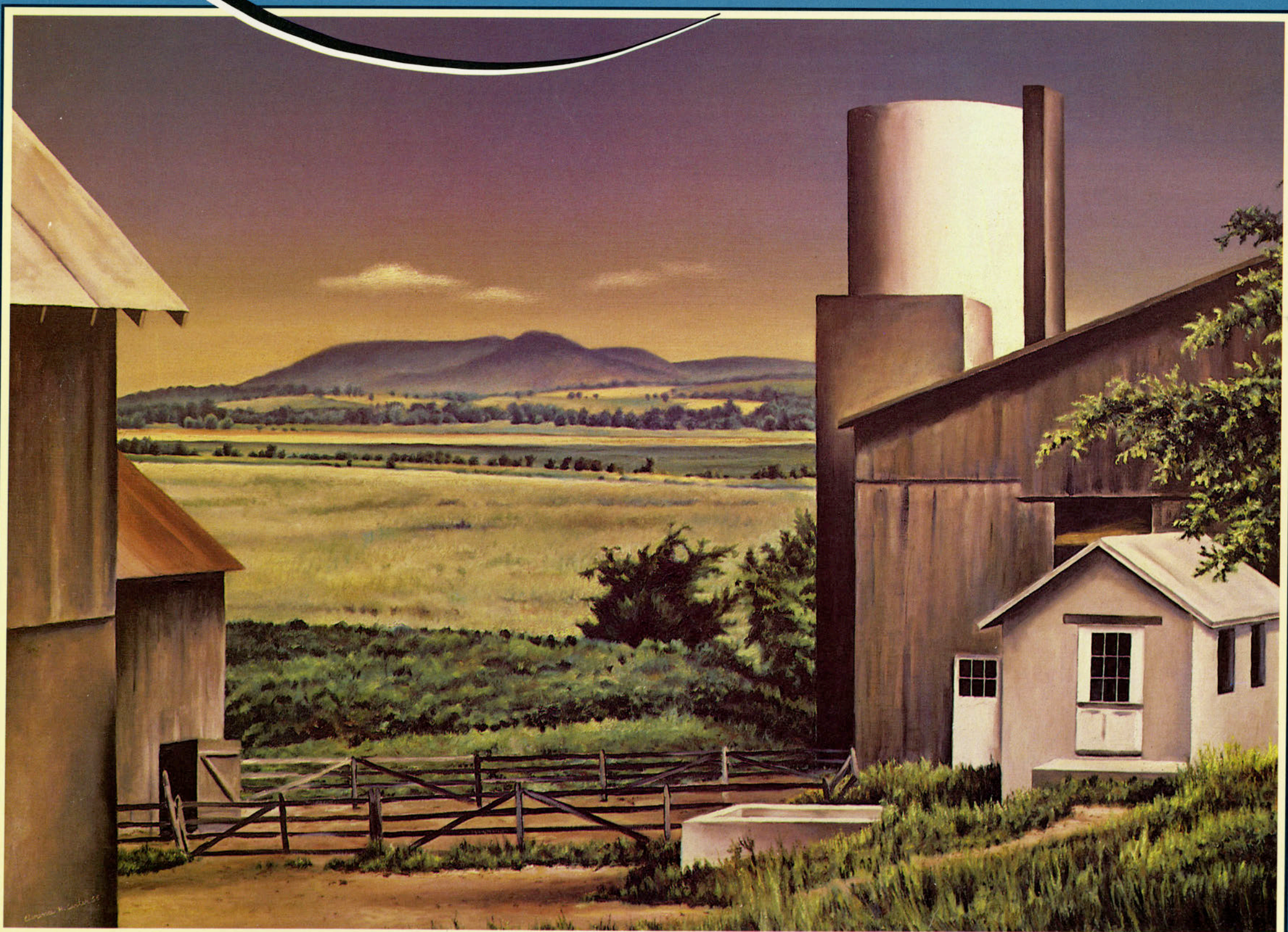


Seems Like Romance to Me

Traditional Fiddle Tunes
from Ohio



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GFS 901

TRADITIONAL FIDDLING HAS BEEN HEARD in Ohio from the time of the area's first frontier settlement, some 15 years before Ohio achieved statehood in 1803. In these early times the frontier town was a source of survival and an outpost of civilization in a hostile environment. Community members came together often to accomplish tasks from house raisings to harvests and to join together in mutual celebration at weddings and other family occasions. Rare was the community event that did not conclude with a dance to the lively music of the country fiddler.

In the years since Ohio's frontier settlement, many new influences have crossed Ohio's borders, touching the fiddling of this region. Railroads, the recording industry, radio, and geographic migration have introduced new fiddle styles and repertoires and have stimulated renewed interest in Ohio's fiddling traditions. The result today is a wonderful variety of fiddling throughout Ohio, as rich and vital as that of any state.

The fiddlers included in this album reflect this richness and variety. All are known in their communities as musicians of exceptional talent. They play at local dances, family homecomings, regional fiddle contests, and town celebrations, continuing traditions that reach back two centuries. The recordings on this album were made in the homes of these fiddlers to document and share this music.

An illustrated, descriptive booklet is enclosed which includes a history of traditional fiddling in Ohio, biographies of and comments by the fiddlers, and notes on all of the tunes.

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Now what I liked most about these square dances — they had them in barns, outside, or wherever they could run one set and have a figure caller — and I thought that with the boys and the girls this seems like romance to me. But anyhow, in a small child's mind a lot of things can happen. I can just vision, see them going around and around, doing everything to the music. And the music sounded so good, although it was only just one fiddle — no guitar, no background — and the blending of his voice, the figure caller's voice, in with the fiddle music and the dancing and watching them dance. I thought that was beautiful. The other kids would be out playing tag and so on; no, I'd be right in there. Oh, I suppose I was seven or eight years old.

Cecil Plum, Massillon, Ohio



Mineral (Athens County), Ohio, early 1900s

SIDE A

Jimmy Wheeler Portsmouth

1. Pumpkin Vine
2. Yellow Barber

Arnold Sharp Oak Hill

3. Hound Chase
4. Fine Times at Our House (Kitty's Got a Baby'o)

Cecil Plum Massillon

5. Trumpey's Hoedown
6. Laurel Mountain Breakdown

Lonnie Seymour Chillicothe

7. Sugar Barrel
8. Chillicothe Two-Step

SIDE B

John Hannah Columbus

1. Coon in a Treetop
2. Cumberland Blues

Cliff and Telford Hardesty

West Lafayette

3. Turkey in the Straw
4. Heel and Toe Polka
5. Soldier's Joy

Rollie Hommon Newark

6. Baltzell's Tune
7. Snowshoes

Kenny Sidle Hanover

8. Durang's Hornpipe
9. Brushy Fork
10. Cottage Hill

Project direction Jeff Goehring and Howard Sacks

Descriptive notes Howard Sacks, Jeff Goehring, Susan Colpetzer

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Traditional Fiddling in Ohio History

Fiddle Music on the Frontier

Country fiddling in the Ohio Valley has a history older than that of the state itself, extending back to the earliest permanent settlements northwest of the Ohio River, nearly two decades before Ohio's statehood in 1803. Blocked initially by British restrictions against civilian settlement beyond the Appalachians and by the hostility of Indians, residents of the colonies were denied access to a region which the French had already discovered to be rich trapping grounds, abundant in natural resources. In the years following the conclusion of the Revolutionary War in 1781, increasing numbers of people looked westward to an uncharted territory which they hoped would provide opportunities for a better life. By 1787 the Congress of the newly formed United States of America had enacted legislation governing the surveying and sale of the lands in the Northwest Territory, which would become the states of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan and Wisconsin.

Although many people commonly associate the settlement of the frontier with the lone pioneer, in actuality settlement was from the first in towns. Towns afforded early settlers protection from Indians, with whom hostilities did not cease until the Treaty of Greenville in 1795 relocated the native population to the swamplands of what is now northwest Ohio. Towns also served as the seat of government in an otherwise lawless region and as a source for the funneling of supplies from the East. Just as importantly, towns represented a wellspring of culture in the midst of a wilderness that colonial Americans viewed as devoid of civilization.

The earliest towns grew up along the Ohio River, the primary navigable route from the East. The towns of Marietta (first settled in 1788), Columbia (settled in 1788 at the junction of the Ohio and Little Miami Rivers), and Losantiville (settled in 1789, later renamed Cincinnati) were established by landholding companies which purchased large tracts of land from the government and then surveyed, subdivided, and sold it in individual lots. As the population in these river communities increased and hostilities with the Indians declined, settlers moved into the interior along tributaries of the Ohio River and overland.

The towns these frontier settlers built reflected their culture from the colonies and their European origins. Although architecture and other visible examples of aesthetics provide valuable insight into the culture of Ohio's settlers, other elements of culture are less tangible and therefore more difficult to reconstruct; one such element is music.

Early accounts of travelers through the Ohio wilderness note the presence of fiddling — by both blacks and whites — in these frontier settlements. Fortescue Cuming, while making his way through the territory near Chillicothe in the first decade of the nineteenth

century, took refuge at the Bradleys, "a house of private entertainment":

Bradley and his wife are about sixteen years from Stewartstown, county Tyrone in Ireland, and have a daughter lately married to a young shoemaker named Irons at the next cabin, where I stopped to get my shoes mended. I here found a dozen of stout young fellows who had been at work repairing the road, and were now sheltering themselves from the increasing storm, and listening to some indifferent musick made by their host on a tolerably good violin. I proposed taking the violin while he repaired my shoes. He consented and sat down to work, and in a few minutes I had all the lads jigging it on the floor merrily; Irons himself, as soon as he had repaired the shoes, jumping up and joining them.¹

In 1798, while traveling in the Muskingum Valley on the Zane Trace, Louis Phillipe (who later became king of France) stopped at the log tavern of the McIntires in Zanesville. There Phillipe spent several days, and "he listened to the strains of the sweet music from the violin of the negro as it floated out over the waters and the wooded hills."²

Ample evidence suggests that fiddling was commonplace and was tied to the activities of everyday community life. In his *Historical Collections of Ohio*, historian Henry Howe described life in central Ohio's Mount Vernon in the early years of the nineteenth century:

The early settlers in the town all felt as one family. If one got a piece of fresh meat, he shared it with his neighbors, and if a person was sick, all sympathized. At night, they met in each other's cabins, to talk, dance, and take a social glass. There was no distinction of party, for it was a social democracy. At their weddings, a puncheon table, formed like a bench, without a cloth, was covered with refreshments. These were plain and simple: wild turkeys, that had been gobbling about in the woods, were stewed and eaten with a relish; corn, that had grown on the river flats, made into "pone" served as a wedding cake; while metheglin and whiskey, the only articles probably not indigenous, were the beverages that washed them down. Their plates were either of wood or pewter, perhaps both, and no two alike; their knives frequently butcher knives, and their forks often of wood. A dance was the finale of their festivities. They made merry on the puncheon floor to the music of the fiddle. Cotillions were unknown, while jigs, four-handed reels, the double shuffle and break down "were all the rage."³

The preponderance of the fiddle is underscored by the many references to it, however brief, in local histories and other narratives of the last century. N. N. Hill, in his 1881 *History of Licking County, Ohio*, described the pioneer kicking frolic:

"Kicking frolics" were in vogue in those early times. This was after wool was more plenty, and it was carded, spun, and wove into cloth. Half a dozen young men and an equal number of young women (for the "fun of the thing" it was always necessary to preserve a balance of this kind) were invited to the kicking frolic. The cabin floor was cleared for action and half a dozen chairs, or stools, placed in a circle in the center and connected by a cord to prevent recoil. On these the six young men seated themselves with boots and stockings off, and pants rolled up above the knee. Just think of making love in that shape. The cloth was placed in the center, wet with soap-suds and then the kicking commenced by measured steps driving the bundle of cloth round and round, the elderly lady with gourd in hand pouring on more soap-suds, and every now and then, with spectacles on nose and yard-stick in hand, measuring the goods until they were shrunk to the desired width, and then calling the lads to a dead halt. Then while the lads put on hose and boots the lasses, with sleeves rolled up above the elbow, rung out the cloth and put it out on the garden fence to dry. When this was done the cabin floor was again cleared and the supper spread, after which, with their numbers increased somewhat, perhaps, they danced the happy hours of the night away until midnight, to the music of the violin and the commands of some amateur cotillion caller, and were ready to attend another such frolic the following night.⁴

The importance of fiddle music no doubt gave distinction to the early country fiddler. Marvin Welker recounted the role of the fiddler in central Ohio's farm communities in the early nineteenth century:

The dance was a favorite amusement and was indulged in by young and old. The fiddler of the occasion was the center attraction of the evening. He regulated and called the dances and was commander in chief. The "French Four," "Money Musk," "Virginia reel," "the Jig" and the "hoe down" were the principal figures danced. The French four usually presented the opportunity to "cut the pigeon wing" which required great activity and practice to accomplish. The dancing of the time required much more muscle to be successful than the present graceful glide or even the waltz. "Devil's Dream" and "Fisher's Hornpipe" were the favorite tunes on the fiddle.⁵

The fiddler's prestige may well have been enhanced by his scarcity. Lonzo Green, recounting his own Ohio experiences nearly a century later, notes:

It must have been difficult to find a fiddler within the five-mile radius . . . in those days preceding 1885, and one can see the reason why, for population was relatively sparse and fiddlers, like green-backs did not "grown on trees." In fact, when I think of the community I knew so well about 1900, there were not too many available within a five-mile limit, and importing from outside that circle was next to impossible considering the transportation problem.⁶

However much the fiddle was valued in some circles, many of the conservative religious orders that settled in Ohio rejected it as the devil's work. The association of fiddle music with dance, merriment, and alcohol was antithetical to the strict rules governing such diversions. Often, a smuggled fiddle would be produced at a gathering after the stricter elders and children had left for home. Then:

A few magic passes of the bow across the strings of the devil's own, nerves began to tingle and feet to respond, and soon some brazen hussie would step out onto the floor with her partner. The appeal of the elemental rhythm of the "mountaineer music" was not to be denied, and as "Monnie Musk," "Zip Coon," "The Devil's Dream," "Old Soomer Licked the Ladle," and all the rest were punctuated with the cries of the fiddler, even some of the more sedate among the grown-ups warmed to the occasion, fell into the figures of the Virginia reel . . . and executed many a "double-and-twisted-lord-massey" for the edification of the young folks . . . For such derelictions, people sometimes got "fiddled out of church" or "churched," unless, of course, they could prove that they had not crossed their feet while walking to and fro with the music.⁷

To such abandonment of the spirit the churches would respond with impunity. In a "Sermon on Dancing" delivered at the Mount Zion Church in Green County, Ohio on December 15, 1867, the Reverend J. F. Shaffer raised his voice "by the help of God, to show that the teachings of the Scriptures are directly to the contrary, in regard to this *amusement* of our day."⁸

For some, this attitude toward the fiddle and dancing posed practical as well as moral difficulties. William Cooper Howells, in his *Recollections of Life in Ohio from 1813 to 1840*, recounts that his father, a devout Quaker, regarded fiddle music and dance as sinful. Nonetheless, the elder Howells required the assistance of his neighbors, who expected a dance and some refreshments when the required labors were completed. Ultimately, Howells's need of the community outweighed his personal piety, and he relented at barn raisings and other occasions requiring collective efforts.

The centrality of the fiddler in pioneer life, coupled with the association of his talents with morally questionable pastimes, contributed to an image of the fiddler as someone larger than life. Seely Simpkins, an early fiddler in Knox County, was described in 1862 by county historian A. Banning Norton:

He was a great favorite with the squaws and papooses, by reason of his uncommon musical talent. He could mimic any sound of varmint or human, surpassed the lute of Orpheus, and out-whistled all creation. He furnished the music for early musters, and when it took four counties to make a regiment he gave a challenge to out-whistle any man within them . . . He frequented race tracks, and drew crowds and supplied hoe-downs on demand.⁹

In "The Fiddler's Green," written in 1898 by John Brown Jewett, Columbia area fiddler Noah Badgely is described as capable of shattering a glass with his fiddle — and even of conjuring up the spirit of an Indian ancestor:

He played at every wedding, every corn-husking, every house-raising, every public celebration, at every tavern for miles around. The charm of his music seems to have been in its miraculous execution although as much of it was the creation of his own inspiration. His genius as a composer was no doubt equally great. The redbirds, the turtle doves, the blackbirds, piping in the gales of spring, would sometimes be drawn down from the waving green boughs of the woods, as if to investigate the secret of the dry little figure whose music far out-rivaled theirs; he could so exquisitely imitate the gobble of a turkey, the croak of a crow, the bark of a wolf or fox, that sometimes of a summer evening, playing in his cabin door by the forest, as Orpheus in the wilds of Thrace drew the raptured beasts in crowds around him, so Noah would decoy divers birds and animals close to where he sat, and the green and the ravines would echo to the gobbling and snarling and barking of the answering creatures, each member of the menagerie being astonished, no doubt, that every other one heard a different call from the same spot whence he proceeded.¹⁰

The prowess of early country fiddlers like Badgely and Simpkins notwithstanding, certainly no pioneer fiddler achieved greater renown than Daniel Decatur Emmett. Born in 1815 in the frontier community of Mount Vernon, Emmett took up the fiddle at an early age. When a traveling show in Mount Vernon found itself without a fiddler in 1830, Emmett was called upon to fill the gap, sparking young Emmett's interest in a musical career. That interest soon took him to the army in 1832, where he served as a fife instructor until he was discharged the following year for being under age. Emmett soon joined the circus, performing in blackface on fiddle and banjo. In January 1843 Emmett teamed up in New York City with fellow minstrels Billy Whitlock, Frank Brower, and Dick Pelham to give an evening's entertainment of music, humor, and dance — all in blackface. The enormous popularity of this first minstrel show sparked a revolution in American popular entertainment, the effects of which are still in evidence today.

Emmett's importance is clearly reflected in the songs attributed to him, including "Old Dan Tucker," "Turkey

in the Straw," "Dance Boatman Dance," and "Dixie." Emmett, a popular entertainer who wrote songs for the stage, drew on his roots as a country fiddler. The songs he composed have been reabsorbed into the traditional culture from which he came and are played today by country fiddlers in Ohio and throughout the nation.



Retired minstrel Daniel Decatur Emmett, with one of the chairs he built for the Virginia Minstrels, at his home in Mount Vernon, ca. 1890

Ohio Historical Society

Modernization has added new dimensions to fiddling in Ohio, yet much of the character of frontier fiddling persists to the present day. Technology has made barn raisings and kicking frolics all but obsolete, but the country fiddler is still found regularly at community dances held at grange halls, schools, and community centers in many towns throughout the state. Fiddlers are still well known in their communities and are often called upon to play, continuing a tradition two centuries after pioneers first ventured across the mountains.

Fiddling in Modern Times

By the latter part of the nineteenth century, life in Ohio and the rest of the nation was changing dramatically. Increasingly the character of the age was defined in the cities, whose industry and commerce touched every aspect of life in even the smallest towns and farms across the state.

For most of the nineteenth century, Cincinnati had been Ohio's premier city. Located on the Ohio River, it was a commercial center for the grains and hogs that left Ohio for sale in New Orleans when the lack of overland routes precluded more lucrative trade with urban centers on the Eastern seaboard. But by the end of the century, Cleveland had overtaken Cincinnati as a trade center — in large part because of the growth of the railroad, which opened up new markets and sources of raw materials critical to industrial growth.

The expansion of the railroad in Ohio was dramatic. In 1847, only 270 miles of track were in use throughout the state; by the outbreak of the Civil War, the 3,000 miles of railroad lines statewide had largely replaced the canal system as the primary means of transportation. The railroad industry experienced its greatest boom in the years following the war, and by the 1880s railroad lines connected nearly every small town in the state. Those towns bypassed by the railroad were, in many cases, doomed to extinction.

Industrialization, made possible by the railroads, transformed not only the major urban centers but also the small towns whose character had been shaped in the pioneer period. As the railroad expanded throughout the nation, Ohio farmers had to compete with farmers further west for the lucrative Eastern markets. Although many family farmers survived these economic pressures, others — particularly the young — left farming in search of greater opportunities in the city. By the close of the 1880s, 57% of all Ohio townships had declined in population from the beginning of the decade, despite a 15% overall increase in state population. This trend has continued to the present day; while 80% of Ohio's population was involved in farming in the 1850s, only 4% farm today.

Modernization touched every aspect of rural culture. The trains which transported farm goods and raw materials to market returned with an array of items from the nation's urban centers. The Sears and Roebuck catalogue made any and all items available to the citizens of the smallest country town. With the railroad, too, came increased contact with people from outside the immediate region; among the railroad workers were musicians who shared their talents with local residents.

More than the railroad, however, two technological innovations which tied the nation closer together had a profound effect on country fiddling. Phonograph recording and radio brought the music of a diverse nation to the attention of Ohio's fiddlers and in many cases expanded the audience for local fiddlers well beyond the confines of community festivities.

When Thomas Alva Edison invented the phonograph in 1878, he thought its contribution would be primarily in documenting for posterity the words of important figures of history. By the turn of the century, however, "talking machines" had gained great popularity, partly because they could be used as recording machines: blank cylinders could be purchased for home recording, and even the grooves of prerecorded materials could be shaved off and reused. But the many new catalogues of prerecorded cylinders and discs were the chief attraction. In the early decades of the twentieth century a wide variety of recorded materials was made available to the public at local stores, through record company catalogues, and through the Sears and Roebuck catalogue. Very likely this great musical variety was available because the new recording industry could not fully anticipate customers' preferences. Record buyers could pick up symphonies and operas, marches and minstrel routines, Irish jigs and cantorial songs, and a vast array of popular music of the day. In some cases, musical forms were given a distinctive series number and publicized in special cata-



Railroad workers in Athens County, Ohio, 1920s-1930s

© 1985 Blausen Historical Collection

logues. The Victor Talking Machine Company, for example, had its "Red Seal" label, which included the singing of Enrico Caruso, various selections of grand opera, symphonic music, and the stirring marches of John Phillip Sousa.

After a period of steady growth in its first two decades, by the early 1920s the recording industry expe-

rienced its first decline, largely due to the emergence of a new form of entertainment: radio. The growth of radio was even more dramatic than that of the recording industry. Only two years after Pittsburgh's radio station KDKA broadcast the results of the Harding-Cox presidential election in 1920 to an estimated audience of 2,000, the nation spent \$60,000,000 on radios. In 1929, nearly \$850,000,000 was spent on radios, and it is estimated that one out of every three homes in America had a radio by the end of the decade.

It is easy to understand the popularity of this new medium. Largely unregulated by government agencies during the early years, live radio broadcasts could be heard from many miles away. When WPAB in Fort Worth, Texas, broadcast the first live barn dance program in 1924, it was heard as far away as Hawaii, Haiti, New York, and Canada. Unlike records, which had to be changed every three minutes, radio broadcasts could be enjoyed uninterrupted. Until electronic recording greatly improved record fidelity in 1926, the quality of radio broadcasts was superior to that of early cylinders and discs. And in contrast to the phonograph, once a radio was purchased, there was no additional cost of buying new records.

In an effort to boost the sagging recording industry, new markets were sought. When advertising and repertoire man Ralph Peer went on the first field recording expedition in 1923 to find new talent for the Okeh recording company, he recorded a local fiddler named John Carson at the insistence of Atlanta Okeh distributor Polk Brockman. The popularity of Fiddlin' John Carson's recordings in the Atlanta area convinced Peer that there was a market for country music — or "hillbilly" music, as it came to be known — which would reach nationwide. Peer then began recording and promoting



Courtesy Dr. Perry E. Trinkner

By the turn of the century, records were available in small towns throughout Ohio. The floor above Mardis Music Store, photographed in 1903 on Mount Vernon's Public Square, was the scene of regular square dances.

**FIDDLIN' DICK
& HIS MUSICAL MOUNTAINEERS**
Radio - Stage Attraction
A Professional Unit - Featuring the Last Word
in Entertainment
WAIU KCKA WKBN WWVA WJAS WLBW WCAE WJAC
WRITE, PHONE OR WIRE WAIU THE VOICE OF OHIO



Postcards such as this were used for publicity by local bands performing regularly on regional radio stations. They were often sent to listeners who wrote the station with requests. The reverse side of this card is postmarked 1932, by which time stringbands were dressing in hillbilly costumes to increase their commercial appeal.

Ohio Historical Society

hillbilly records, and other recording companies soon followed Okeh's lead. The result was a "golden age" of fiddling and stringband music recordings in the 1920s; local artists from throughout the country found themselves on records distributed nationally. Among those distributing recordings of country fiddling was the Gennett company, located just across the Ohio border in Richmond, Indiana. The close proximity of this company ensured that Gennett recordings would be available throughout Ohio.

The popularity of old-time fiddling was not lost on the early entrepreneurs of radio. By the mid-1920s, country fiddling was heard on radio stations throughout the country. In 1924, Sears and Roebuck's station WLS began its "National Barn Dance" program from Chicago, featuring a variety of popular entertainment including fiddling. George Hay, who hosted that show, was soon lured to Nashville's WSM, where he began the now-famous "Grand Ole Opry," largely in response to the immense popularity of a 1923 broadcast featuring 77-year-old fiddler Uncle Jimmy Thompson. By the late 1920s the Opry had expanded to a weekly four-hour program, and beginning in 1933 it was heard nationwide on the NBC network.

The recordings and radio broadcasts of the 1920s and 1930s reached Ohio and its fiddlers as well as the rest of the nation. Regional programs such as the "Midwestern Hayride," broadcast on WLW in Cincinnati; the "Renfro Valley Barn Dance" on WRUK in Renfro Valley, Kentucky; and the "WWVA Jamboree" from Wheeling, West Virginia, broadcast live fiddle bands and other forms of early country music weekly. These influences often were enhanced by personal appearances of artists who toured across America to promote their records. Of the fiddlers who toured, perhaps none was more significant than Arthur Smith. By the 1930s Arthur Smith was generally considered the outstanding fiddler in America — a designation itself reflecting how extensively fiddling had reached beyond the boundaries of the community. Smith first appeared on the Grand Ole Opry in 1927;

when the Opry developed a touring agency to promote its regular entertainers in 1933, Smith began touring regularly. After initial tours with Uncle Dave Macon, Smith himself became a headliner with the McGee Brothers and later the Delmore Brothers. Smith's complex and hard-driving style, coupled with the bluesy character of many of his tunes, had a lasting effect on many of the fiddlers who heard him on the Opry and saw him at performances in their home towns.

While the commercialization of fiddling introduced significant influences from outside Ohio, it also stimulated a renaissance of traditional fiddling within the state. Local radio stations began to broadcast fiddlers along with other entertainments. WEAO, from the Ohio State University in Columbus, was among the earliest radio stations broadcasting in the country. Its first broadcasting schedule, published November 1, 1926, includes regular programs of "old-time music." Unfortunately, the names of the fiddlers who performed on these programs are for the most part unknown. WEAO did, however, feature a weekly radio broadcast by fiddler John Baltzell.

The career of Ohio fiddler John Baltzell in many ways epitomizes the effects of modernization and the transformation of Ohio fiddling in this century. Born in 1860 in a log cabin in central Ohio's Knox County, John Baltzell took up the fiddle as a young boy, procuring his first real instrument from some farm children he observed dragging a fiddle case around in the dirt. A laborer in the small community of Danville, Baltzell moved to the county seat of Mount Vernon in the late 1880s, where he found work in the roundhouse for the Pennsylvania Railroad. He became well known as a dance fiddler and often played at his home with retired minstrel Dan Emmett, who had returned to his place of birth following his stage career.

By the time Baltzell retired from the railroad, he had launched upon a new career as a professional musician. In the fall of 1923, only a few months after the recordings of Fiddlin' John Carson had created the market for hillbilly music, Baltzell found himself in the New York

studios of the Edison Recording Company. Baltzell traveled to New York on four occasions over the next six years, recording thirty-two sides which were released on the Edison, Okeh, Plaza, and other labels. These recordings, documenting one fiddler from the generation of fiddlers whose style and repertoire extended back to pioneer times, were distributed nationwide.

Baltzell's popularity as a recording artist brought him to radio. In addition to his regular Friday afternoon broadcasts on WEAO, Baltzell performed on stations WTAM, WHK, and WJAY in Cleveland and on WLW in Cincinnati. His reputation extended throughout the state: William A. Duff, in his 1931 *History of North Central Ohio*, called Baltzell the "most famous of Ohio's old-time fiddlers."¹¹

Indeed, Baltzell's reputation, like that of other fiddlers, had extended nationwide. In a February 1926 issue of *Radio Digest* — a national "TV Guide" of radio in its early years — a headline proclaimed, "Old Style Dances Win Favor: Grandad Fiddlers All the Rage as Colleges Join Movement to Displace Jazz. 'Everybody's Doing It.'" The article begins with a discussion of who holds the title of the national champion fiddler. Two contenders are discussed: Uncle Jimmy Thompson of WSM fame and 77-year-old fiddler Mellie Dunham of Norway, Maine, who received national publicity when invited to the home of country fiddling enthusiast Henry Ford. But although these fiddlers had received well-deserved acclaim, they were certainly not the only fine fiddlers in America, as the article's author observed:

When the honors have been decided between Mellie and Uncle Jimmy the winner will doubtless be confronted by a score of new challengers. For instance there will be Mr. John Baltzell who is the "champion old-time fiddler of Ohio, Indiana, and Kentucky"; also Edison and Okeh artist and very well known as a radio entertainer.¹²



Henry Ford Museum, The Edison Institute

Ohio's champion fiddler John Baltzell. This photograph was sent to the Edison Recording Company for publicity purposes in 1923.

Baltzell probably came to the attention of the Edison Company as a result of his active participation in another phenomenon that affected fiddling significantly in Ohio and throughout the nation, the fiddle contest. Much of the impetus for fiddle contests came from Henry Ford, automotive tycoon and industrial innovator. Ford, like many other captains of industry in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, believed that his place among the corporate elite obliged him to contribute to the betterment of the culture generally. Curiously, his interest in culture included country fiddling. Fearing that the growing popularity of jazz and modern forms of music and dance were undermining the Anglo traditions which he felt were the strength of the nation, Ford launched a campaign to revive old-time fiddle music and dance. In a 1926 publication, entitled "Good Morning: After a Sleep of Twenty-Five Years, Old-Fashioned Dancing is Being Revived, Ford asserts:

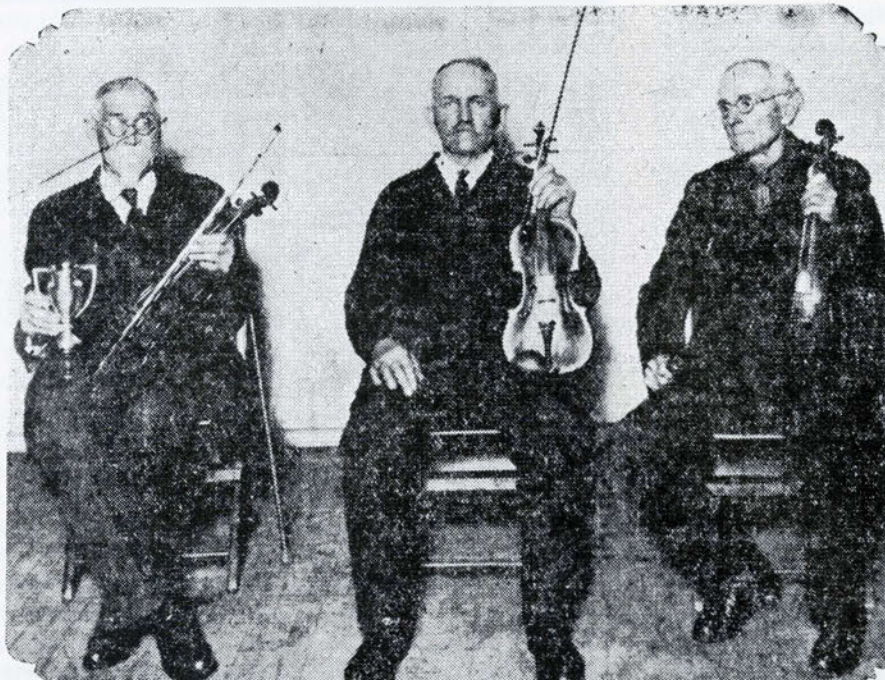
The square dances are rapidly returning to their original popularity. Their eclipse by the round dances has proved to be temporary. The modern dances with their lesser demand for skill and spirit, their tuneless music, their tendency to jazz, their essential unsociability, are losing vogue everywhere. Unless a dance be sociable it cannot live long, unless it promote the spirit of play it will soon weary its devotees, and it is just here that dances requiring eight or twelve or sixteen persons as a unit for their performance make their appeal. More persons are thrown together, the spirit of grown-up play is irresistible, and besides there is a wider scope and a stronger demand for skill and style. The bane of the modern dance was its almost utter lack of grace, style, and skill.¹³

The booklet includes directions for square dances, quadrilles, contradances, as well as round dances. With these directions is music to such tunes as "Money Musk," "Fisher's Hornpipe," "Durang's Hornpipe," "Old Dan Tucker," "Soldier's Joy," "Heel and Toe Polka," and "Pop Goes the Weasel."

Ford dealerships throughout America sponsored local contests, with winners going on to compete in regional and, finally, national competitions. It is ironic that the music and dance which conservative Henry Ford saw as symbolic of the best Anglo-Saxon traditions of America were the same forms of popular "amusement" which conservative ministers a century before had seen as the devil's work, threatening the very fabric of the moral community.

By 1926, the year Ford's contests flourished, fiddling competitions were being held regularly throughout Ohio. A January 16th contest in Cleveland drew 15,000 spectators into Public Hall, at which blind Painesville fiddler A. J. West won \$100 in a competition boasting forty-six entrants. In a week-long, statewide competition in Cleveland, twenty-five fiddlers from throughout Ohio competed in a series of preliminary competitions; the winners won the right to represent Ohio in Henry Ford's nationwide contest in Detroit. In Toledo, a February 12th preliminary tryout for its March 8th fiddle contest drew an audience of 800. In March of 1926 the *Columbus*

PRIZE WINERS IN FIDDLERS' CONTEST



Prize winners in the old fiddlers' contest conducted under the auspices of The Springfield Daily News Thursday at Memorial hall are shown here. Left to right, they are: Henry M. Anderson, I. O. O. F. home, winner of the championship of central Ohio and first prize; C. V. Harden, Millersport, second; and William Lyons, Lancaster, third.

—photo by The News.

This photo appeared in the Springfield Daily News on February 26, 1926. The accompanying article which described the contest proclaimed that "so popular was the event that the hall was not big enough to accommodate all who attempted to gain admittance."

Ohio Historical Society

Dispatch sponsored a fiddle contest; in addition to the attraction of prize money totaling \$425, New York booking agent J. Warren Todd was to assess the fiddlers for future engagements in other cities. Contestants scheduled to perform had their hotel expenses paid and were invited to a special supper at the Neil House.

These early contests were quite different from the contests of today. A February 23, 1926 *Springfield Daily News* headline announced: "popular applause to decide winners in . . . old fiddlers contest." The importance of audience appeal encouraged some fiddlers to use a variety of tricks. Reports of the results of the Springfield contest noted that: "the most difficulty was experienced in selecting the 3rd place winner. Mr. Harden, last entrant to play, played his fiddle in a dozen different positions shifting it about without perceptible pause in the tune he was playing."¹⁴ C. V. Harden, 61, who took second place in the same contest, "played a medley of tunes, chief among them 'Pop Goes the Weasel' with novelty acrobatics."¹⁵

Modern fiddle contests place greater emphasis on technical and stylistic mastery of the instrument than on the ability to please a crowd. Often rules prohibit the use of "trick fiddling"; contestants are required to play a variety of tunes (such as a hoedown and a waltz) and are judged by a panel of experts who are sequestered from the contestants. With these changes in the nature of the fiddle contest has come a corresponding shift in playing style. Over the years, contest fiddlers have come to emphasize slicker, more complex tunes played in a long-bow style characteristic of fiddling in the Southwestern

United States. Whether of the old style or contemporary variety, fiddle contests have greatly influenced both the popularity and style of fiddle playing in Ohio. The title of Ohio State Champion fiddler is still a coveted one, and fiddlers travel throughout the state to large and small contests, competing for prize money, sharing tunes with other fiddlers, and comparing instruments.

In the 1930s another phenomenon associated with modernization — population migration — significantly shaped traditional fiddling in Ohio. Among those areas of the nation hardest hit by the Great Depression were the mountain regions of Appalachia. The depression of the coal industry forced thousands to leave their homes in Kentucky and West Virginia and move northward in the hopes of finding work in the urban centers of Ohio, Michigan, and Illinois. Thus, the middle decades of this century were witness to a large influx of people from the states on Ohio's southern border, who settled in communities throughout the state. The importance of this migration is aptly symbolized by Bill Monroe's bluegrass instrumental, "Road to Columbus," and in the hillbilly joke that, for many citizens of Kentucky, the "three r's" are reading, writing, and Route 23.

Although fiddlers on either side of the Ohio River had been in contact throughout the state's history, now large populations from neighbor states were to bring their distinctive musical traditions more deeply within Ohio. The result today is a complex mosaic of fiddling featuring a diversity of styles and repertoires, some of relatively recent origin, others with indigenous roots extending back to the very beginning of Ohio history.

1. Fortescue Cuming, *Sketches of a Tour to the Western Country . . . 1807-1809* (Pittsburgh, 1810). Reprinted in *An Ohio Reader: 1750 to the Civil War*, ed. Thomas H. Smith (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), p. 106.
2. Rhea Mansfield Knittle, "Early Ohio Taverns," *The Ohio Frontier Series*, No. 1 (Ashland, Ohio: Privately printed, 1976), p. 18.
3. Henry Howe, *Historical Collections of Ohio*, Vol. 2 (Columbus: Henry Howe and Son, 1891), p. 271.
4. N. N. Hill, Jr., *History of Licking County, Ohio* (Newark: A. A. Graham and Company, 1881), p. 230.
5. Martin Welker, *Farm Life in Central Ohio Sixty Years Ago* (Wooster: Clapper's Print, 1892), pp. 88-89.
6. Lonzo S. Green, *Tales of the Buckeye Hills* (Mount Vernon: Printing Arts Press, 1963), pp. 48-49.
7. R. Carlyle Buley, *The Old Northwest, Pioneer Period 1815-1840*, Volume 1 (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1950), p. 327.
8. Rev. J. F. Shaffer, *Sermon on Dancing* (Springfield: Republic Printing Company, 1867), p. 1.
9. A. Banning Norton, *A History of Knox County, Ohio* (Columbus: Richard Nevins, Printer, 1862), p. 422.
10. John Brown Jewett, *Tales of the Miami Country* (Cincinnati: The Editor Publishing Company, 1898), pp. 16-17.
11. William A. Duff, *History of North Central Ohio*, Volume 1 (Topeka-Indianapolis: Historical Publishing Company, 1931), p. 381.
12. "Old Style Dances Win Favor," *Radio Digest*, 16 (February 13, 1926), pp. 5, 24, 26, 28.
13. Mr. and Mrs. Henry Ford, "Good Morning:" *After a Sleep of Twenty-Five Years, Old-Fashioned Dance is Being Revived* (Dearborn: The Dearborn Publishing Company, 1926), p. 30.
14. "Local Man Wins Fiddle Contest," *Springfield Daily News* (February 26, 1926), pp. 1, 14.
15. *Ibid.*, pp. 1, 14.

The Fiddlers and Their Music

The fiddlers on this album reflect some of the great diversity of styles and repertoires found in Ohio. Three forces can be identified as having influenced the development of all of these fiddlers and their styles. The first is *family*. All of these fiddlers have learned in part from other fiddlers in their own families. Because these fiddlers play by ear rather than by reading music, having regularly heard a fiddler in the family contributed greatly to their learning of tunes. The enormous significance of fiddling in their lives stems not only from their love of playing music but also from a sense of carrying on family traditions. In rural areas and small towns where wider contact with other musicians is more limited, the influence of family fiddling traditions is particularly strong. Many of the tunes played today can be traced back generations within Ohio families, in some cases to the original settlers who came to the region.

The second influence is *community*. Particularly in the days before railroads, automobiles, radio, and other forms of mass communications, most people lived their entire lifetimes in the immediate region in which they were born. Beyond family, the most important relationships in Ohio's small towns and rural communities are with neighbors, relationships developed across generations. All of these fiddlers played at community dances at an early age. Because a given community might originally have been settled by people of one particular cultural background (such as Irish or German), the music of one community might vary greatly from that of another nearby; over the course of generations a distinctive style and repertoire might be preserved. Alternatively, a distinctive approach to fiddling might develop among local musicians, following the lead of a master fiddler in the immediate area. At the same time, unique contacts with several outsiders, or perhaps just a single fiddler—who might come down the river or along the railroad—can influence and distinguish the music of a locality.

Thus, many styles can be found within a given region. Whether a distinctive, unified style characterizes a place depends on the proximity of fiddlers to one another. A fiddler's repertoire and style are most often transmitted by careful watching and close communication. However, relationships among fiddlers do not necessarily follow state or township lines or the river's path. Most fiddlers know who the masters are in their area, and they will often seek them out in order to learn their tunes. A local fiddler can often hear the distinctive style of a fiddler and attribute its source. In contrast, the casual listener hearing tunes from an aesthetic and social distance may judge a wide variety of tunes as sounding similar, suggesting a regional style of music.

The third factor influencing the development of this music is the *era* in which these fiddlers live and play. The advent of radio, the touring of a nationally known musician, the growing popularity of the fiddle contest—like the minstrel and medicine shows in earlier times—touch fiddlers in different ways depending upon their age.

Older fiddlers recall a time when dances were slower and included schottisches and waltzes as well as the peppier reels, and their repertoires and styles reflect such memories. Other fiddlers, raised in the era of the modern fiddle contests, may play in a style informed by that phenomenon.

But while fiddlers live in a specific time as well as a specific place, a few in every generation choose to hold on to older forms. This can happen when a young fiddler learns from an aged master and carries the older fiddler's style and repertoire forward into another generation. Some older masters choose the best young player they know to receive their tunes. Styles also are conserved by family members who decide that the family repertoire and style are preferable to newer trends; such fiddlers are rare but tend to be especially interesting because the music they play is far from commonplace.

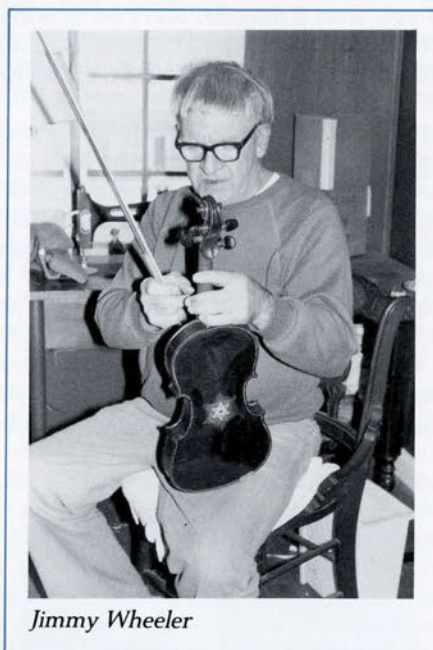
It is tempting to make generalizations about Ohio fiddling. Much of the fiddling throughout the state displays a noteyness reminiscent of French Canadian fiddle music. Certainly the guitar has become the primary instrument accompanying the fiddle, although the styles of backup guitar vary greatly according to the styles of fiddle playing. But the influences of family, community, and era are represented differently in the lives of each fiddler. In the course of a lifetime a fiddler makes each tune his own, and any attempt to make statements of regional style does a disservice to the unique qualities of these fiddlers.

The diversity of styles on this record also serves as a reminder that the development of fiddle traditions does not easily fit into simple models. Here as elsewhere in America it seems clear that the earliest fiddling was unaccompanied. Hoedown tunes, for contemporary square dances, have to some degree replaced the more varied forms which were typical of the last century. But nineteenth-century schottisches coexist today with the fanciest of swing fiddling in the repertoire of a single individual; solo tunes whose roots lie in the earliest settlement of the region coexist with new tunes written for the contest circuit. To designate some as relics of an age past misrepresents current conditions; all of these tunes are part of a living and vital fiddling tradition in Ohio.

Perhaps what ultimately distinguishes this music as Ohio fiddling are the ongoing relationships among the fiddlers themselves and their families. These fiddlers know and admire one another; they meet at dances, contests, flea markets, and community events. The pleasure they find in their music and company is matched only by that of the people throughout the state who continue to enjoy this music.

JIMMY WHEELER

Jimmy Wheeler, 68-year-old fiddler and stringed instrument repairman, was born and raised in Portsmouth, a very old Ohio River town. His family was from nearby Wheelersburg and his father, Jim Wheeler, was a fiddler who worked in a foundry for the Ohio Stove Company. Jimmy lives with his three widowed sisters, Merle, Pearl, and Dot across the street from the house in which he was born and reared. Jimmy has a national reputation for his repairing and instrument finishing skills; in fact, he is probably better known as a repairman than as a musician, though he is extremely talented as both. He is distinctive among Ohio fiddlers in that he has always made his livelihood playing music and repairing instruments.



Jimmy Wheeler

Jimmy's musical history is similar to that of most other Ohio fiddlers in that it blends the traditional process with the influences of popular music. As well as playing for square dances on fiddle and guitar, Jimmy played guitar and bass with popular bands from the mid-1930s through the 1950s. He mentions a club in Portsmouth called The Gay Nineties where he performed regularly. He has in his collection of instruments some of the beautiful old jumbo guitars he played in those years.

Jimmy's earliest exposure to fiddle music was at home and in the community or "neighborhood," as he refers to it. His father played with many of the area musicians at Sunday get-togethers and at square dances. Jimmy naturally started attending these gatherings early in life. He is from the same generation of fiddlers as Ohio fiddler Arnold Sharp and J. P. Fraley of Rush, Kentucky; the older players he mentions as being influential are his father, Jess Large, Asa Neil, Morris Allen, Freddy Edwards, and Forrest Pick.

This community has a strong history of traditional fiddling, and Jimmy's playing and repertoire are represen-

tative of the style and tunes typical of the region. He plays a very articulate, melodic style, regularly incorporating trills and other ornamentation. Characteristic of many of the older tunes he plays are key modulations and an even, driving pace. The flavor of these tunes is reminiscent of traditional French Canadian dance pieces; this may reflect a long-term influence of an early French settlement in a large "French Grant" situated in the southeastern part of Scioto County, granted by Congress in 1795.

Jimmy's musical individuality is one of the most outstanding features of his playing. His sense of phrasing is very deliberate and unique and he incorporates melodic variation almost instinctively, yet without overloading the tunes with excesses. His sophistication and complexity are evident to all who appreciate fine fiddling.

SIDE A Band 1 "Pumpkin Vine" (Key: G)
Jimmy Wheeler, fiddle;
Jeff Goehring, guitar

"Pumpkin Vine" is played by a number of fiddlers in the northeastern Kentucky-southern Ohio area, including Forrest Pick of Portsmouth and Lonnie Seymour of Chillicothe. Unlike Forrest and Lonnie, who both play the tune in a relatively straightforward, unadorned fashion, Jimmy has added a number of graceful ascending variations to the tune which are characteristic of his style. "Pumpkin Vine" is also included in the repertoires of Asa Neil, Buddy Thomas, Morris Allen, Henry York of Bath County, and Alfred Bailey of Fleming County, Kentucky.

Forrest Pick, *Visits* (Heritage 33, 1975).

SIDE A Band 2 "Yellow Barber" (Key: D)
Jimmy Wheeler, fiddle;
Jeff Goehring, guitar

The region including Portsmouth and northern Kentucky has for years been the scene of musical exchange among local fiddlers. The fine fiddler Buddy Thomas, of Emerson, Kentucky, told of his many visits to Ohio — to find work, but more often to play music. Among Buddy's earliest mentors was Morris Allen, who lived on the Kentucky side of the Portsmouth bridge. On the advice of Allen, Buddy searched out Jimmy Wheeler. Thomas played a version of "Yellow Barber" which is attributed to Morris Allen and Asa Neil, originally from Lewis County, Kentucky.

In Kentucky, this tune was also played by George Hawkins of Bath County, who called it "Arthur Berry." "Yellow Barber" also is played in Indiana by John Summers. Both Summers and Hawkins learned "Arthur Berry" from Tom Riley, who was originally from Bath County, Kentucky, and moved to Indiana in the 1920s.

Jimmy's version, which he learned from Asa Neil, is similar to the Indiana and Kentucky versions of the tune. Like George Hawkins, Jimmy adds a beautiful variation on the melody toward the end of the tune.

"Yellow Barber," Buddy Thomas, *Kitty Puss: Old Time Fiddle Music from Kentucky* (Rounder 0032).

"Arthur Berry," John Summers, *John W. Summers: Indiana Fiddler* (Rounder 0194).

ARNOLD SHARP

Arnold Sharp was born in 1914 in Gallia, Lawrence County, and now lives in Oak Hill, Jackson County, both located in southeastern Ohio. The Sharp family is an excellent example of the passing of musical tradition from one generation to the next, beginning in Ohio in the early nineteenth century.



Lowell Ray and Arnold Sharp

Arnold's grandfather, Andy Sharp, emigrated from England to Lawrence County in the early 1800s and settled a homestead which Arnold refers to as a "hill farm." His main occupation was orcharding, raising apples, peaches, cherries, plums, and pears. Andy served for four years in the Union Army during the Civil War, playing the fife. At home, he was considered the best fiddler in the area and was in great demand for dances, to which he often walked several miles, regardless of the weather. To make the time pass more quickly, he liked to play the fiddle as he walked. Arnold describes an interesting device that Andy made so that he could fiddle even while walking in the rain: a waterproof, rigid hood made of shellacked and painted burlap which extended from his head out beyond his fiddle.

Arnold's father, George Sharp, carried on the tradition of being the central dance fiddler in the community. He also learned to play the fife from Andy, and Arnold remembers him making his own fifes from pawpaw twigs, which he would whittle out and play while walking along in the fields. George also had three brothers who played the fiddle. He and his brothers played in a "buckskin band," for which they dressed in fringed buckskin, hung fringes from their instruments, and played a variety of music from fife and drum music to old-time dance music.

Arnold is the third generation to continue the family's fiddling tradition in Ohio. He grew up hearing the music of his family as well as community fiddlers such as Jess Large, Asa Neil, Forrest Pick, and Jimmy Wheeler. It is interesting that while Arnold and Jimmy

Wheeler were involved in the same musical community, and often even played at the same dances (at places such as Pine Grove and Dutch Ridge), their styles are distinctly different. Jimmy's playing is probably more representative of a regional Portsmouth style, very melodic and ornamented; Arnold's playing is more related to his family's style, noted for its danceable, rhythmic qualities. Arnold has also continued in his forefathers' footsteps as the community's preferred dance fiddler. There are even stories of people refusing to participate in or even attend a dance unless Arnold is fiddling. Apparently, dancing was and still is a very popular tradition in this area.

The close-knit family musical tradition established by earlier generations is carried on today in the musical relationship between Arnold and his son, Lowell Ray. Though Lowell Ray is not a fiddler, he grew up hearing the fiddlers of his father's generation and learned to play guitar along with their fiddling. He has developed a particular sensitivity to his father's playing; he follows Arnold's fiddling closely, accentuating pauses in the tunes with simultaneous pauses or runs on the guitar, making for some very exciting ensemble playing. Lowell Ray now plays guitar in Columbus in a country band, but he also gets together often with Arnold to play music. They still play a lot of lively dance tunes including some old family pieces, such as "Cold Frosty Morning" and "Fine Times at Our House (Kitty's Got a Baby'o)."

I started playing at about eight years old. I had to learn about two or three times. Well, I started playing and when I was just a kid, see, and Dad and them always played in what they called, in the high keys. Well it was just in A, about every tune's in A. Well, I got out a kid and started playing around square dances; why they didn't want to play in that one key all the time. Well, there's an old man run a store there in Oak Hill, old Mason Seals. And I started going to old Mason's and he showed me the different keys, D and G, and then I had to learn tunes all over again in different keys. But I finally got it worked out, I reckon. I could play one now and maybe I might know where I was at and then I go into keys I wouldn't even know I was there. Maybe hit a little E here and there or an A and I wouldn't know.

Arnold Sharp, Oak Hill

SIDE A Band 3 "Hound Chase" (AEAC#, coarse to fine)
Arnold Sharp, fiddle

"Hound Chase" has passed through three generations of the Sharp family: from Arnold's grandfather Andy Sharp to his father, George Sharp, and finally to Arnold. Although this tune is apparently unique to the Sharp family, it is similar in theme and concept to many tunes which try to imitate the sounds of a fox chase. Examples can be found in the music of the British Isles, in blues harmonica playing, as well as in banjo and fiddle tunes common in the Southern mountains. Kentucky fiddler Ted Gossett, for example, recorded a "Fox Chase" with his band in the 1920s. Although Gossett's tune bears



Fiddling Andy Sharp and family, ca. 1890

Courtesy Arnold Sharp

some resemblance to "Hound Chase" in the second part, the remainder of his version is characterized more by sound effects than by a true melody. Arnold's "Hound Chase" is distinctive in this regard; he evokes the sounds of high- and low-pitched dogs within the context of the melody without resorting to sound effects.

"Fox Chase," Ted Gossett's Stringband, *Wish I Had My Time Again: Old-Time Fiddle Band Music from Kentucky* (Morning Star 45004).

SIDE A Band 4 "Fine Times at Our House (Kitty's Got a Baby'o)" (Key: A)
Arnold Sharp, fiddle;
Lowell Ray Sharp, guitar

Arnold learned this tune from his father, who sang the words in the title as he played the tune. The tune is also played by Burl Hammons of Pocahontas County, West Virginia. Hammons's version is played in open tuning (EADA). The tune was also played by John Summers of Howard County, Indiana. The Summers version, which is played in standard tuning, is quite melodic and elaborate. By contrast, Arnold's version of the tune, while also played in standard tuning, has a modal sound more often associated with archaic fiddling.

Arnold regularly plays the tune either solo or with guitar accompaniment. When playing solo, Arnold plays the tune in a more irregular fashion, adding a beat at the beginning of the coarse (low) part of the melody. With the guitar accompaniment, Arnold drops this rhythmic irregularity, giving the tune a steady meter.

"Fine Times at Our House," Burl Hammons, *The Hammons Family: A Study of a West Virginia Family's Traditions* (Library of Congress AFS L65-L66).

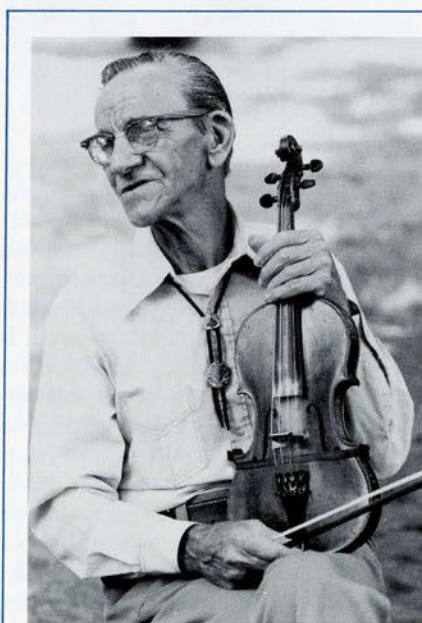
"Fine Times at Our House," John Summers, *Fine Times at Our House: Indiana Ballads, Fiddle Tunes, Songs* (Folkways FS 3809).

CECIL PLUM

Cecil Plum was born in 1913 in Tunnelton, West Virginia. He moved to Ohio in 1954 and is now living in Massillon. Cecil learned to play music from his parents, his uncle, and the numerous musicians in his community; Cecil recalls that it seemed as though there was "a fiddle in every house." His mother was a fiddler and his father was a shape-note singing master who traveled to area schools to teach singing.

When Cecil was about five or six, his older brother got a violin. While his brother was away at work, Cecil would sometimes sneak his fiddle out and play it. One time his brother caught him playing and Cecil immediately started putting the fiddle back in its case, fearing a "thrashing" from his brother. Instead, his brother said, "Oh, now you wait a minute, don't be in such a hurry about putting the fiddle away. I've been listening to you; you're getting stuff there that I've been trying to get for a long time!"

His brother finally gave him the fiddle and soon he began playing at square dances in the area with Frank Edmond, a black guitar and banjo player. Beginning in the late 1930s, Cecil played fiddle and dobro with a guitar player named Ted Ball. The team called themselves the Arthur Brothers and played on a number of radio stations including WTBO in Cumberland, Maryland; WMMN in Fairmont, West Virginia; and WAJR in Morgantown, West Virginia. The Arthur Brothers eventually became the backup band for Salt and Peanuts, a husband-and-wife team who played at the Grand Ole Opry.



Cecil Plum

After he moved to Ohio, Cecil "didn't bother much with that kind of stuff" until the early 1970s, when he went to a fiddle contest in Coshocton, Ohio. He was impressed by the number of outstanding fiddlers he heard there and decided that he had "better get to work."

One of the fiddlers most inspiring to him was Kenny Sidle, who also appears on this record. It is fortunate that Cecil took up the fiddle again, because he has a unique style and a delightful approach to music. He plays with very precise intonation, clear tone, and a lot of notes, but maintains the flavor of old-time fiddling. A unique aspect of Cecil's music is that he composes his own fiddle tunes, such as "Trumpey's Hoedown," "Laurel Mountain Breakdown," and "Trouble in the Henhouse." Cecil's lyrical and fluid fiddling seems to be an extension of his personality — he is very thoughtful and articulate and likes to express his thoughts and feelings both verbally and musically.

Cecil still enjoys participating in fiddle contests and spending time with other fiddlers. His sophisticated style and expressive spirit have won him both a houseful of trophies and ribbons and a reputation as an outstanding fiddler and a fine gentleman.

I started playing dances when I was about — now not for money, just for home dances — when I was about nine years old. Now we had a colored fellow [Frank Edmond] and he's the only one around and he had an old guitar. And I'll never forget they were having a party at my brother's house one night and he was there with his guitar. And I played the fiddle and I thought I had never heard anything sounded so good as the fiddle with a guitar. He showed me how the fiddle's tuned with the guitar, you know, and he tuned — one of us tuned with the other somehow. But anyway, we played for that party and that little dance and we played a lot after that. He must have been in his 50s somewhere. Every chance I got to play with Frank I'd be there, yes indeed. He didn't use any pick. He used his thumb and his fingers and he'd pick staccato on the strings when he could. Now, of course, on those fiddle tunes you can't do that all the time. But he would make those runs on the bass side of the guitar and I thought that sounded so good. He was perfect in time; I just wish now that I could have done more with him, you know.

Cecil Plum, Massillon

SIDE A Band 5 "Trumpey's Hoedown" (Key: G)

Cecil Plum, fiddle; Ralph Budrow, guitar

Cecil composed this tune to perform with the Arthur Brothers, naming it after his stage name of Trumpey Arthur. This notey and beautiful melody retains the spirit and flavor of old-time fiddle music. It is reminiscent of "Walking in My Sleep."

SIDE A Band 6 "Laurel Mountain Breakdown" (Key: G)

Cecil Plum, fiddle; Ralph Budrow, guitar

Another of Cecil's compositions, "Laurel Mountain Breakdown" is particularly well tailored for playing in fiddle contests. The complex melody demands an accuracy in fingering that has dazzled numerous judges at fiddlers' contests. Cecil's slides into the high chords in this tune reflect the influence of Western-style fiddling which has helped to shape the style of modern contest fiddling.

LONNIE SEYMOUR

Alonzo Frederick Seymour — Lonnie — was born in 1922 in Chillicothe, Ohio, where he still lives. His father, Webster Seymour, fiddled and whistled fiddle tunes; his grandfather and an uncle also played the fiddle. Lonnie was influenced by these family musicians as well as other community fiddlers such as Chum Gallagher and Sanford Vaughn, but he never directly learned to play from them and considers himself a self-taught musician.

Lonnie began playing the fiddle as a teenager in what he calls "just a kids' band, playing around on fiddles, banjos, and guitars" with his sister and other friends. As his playing developed, he was influenced by the early com-

mercial country music he heard on the radio — especially the fiddling of Arthur Smith. This influence is reflected in the tunes included in his repertoire. Lonnie's style is very individualized, employing a lot of short bow strokes and a heavy emphasis on rhythm.

Lonnie's right arm was badly injured by shrapnel during World War II, preventing him from working for several years during the 1940s. This setback did not keep him from fiddling, however, and he became very much involved in the local musical community during that period in Chillicothe. In the late 1940s, Lonnie played in a band called the Ross County Farmers that played every Saturday night for a few years on station WBEX in Chillicothe. From this exposure the band was also asked to play for many square dances and other community

WBEX

Radio and Stage Stars

Ross
County
Farmers



PRESENTING BIG

Hillbilly Jamboree

DATE _____

AT _____

Publicity poster for public appearances of the Ross County Farmers, ca. 1940s

Courtesy Lonnie Seymour

events. Lonnie's lively fiddling still stirs up the dancers, so it is not surprising that some of Lonnie's favorite times were fiddling for square dances. He also fiddled in a few other bands that featured the popular country music of that period.

Lonnie recently retired from the W. H. Kiefaber Company in Chillicothe. He now plays for his own enjoyment at home and occasionally plays in fiddle contests in the area. He is often accompanied by his friend and neighbor, Tony Ellis, originally from Sylva, North Carolina. Tony learned to play the banjo from an older banjo player in North Carolina and eventually became a superb Scruggs-style banjo player. He has played professionally with such bluegrass greats as Bill Monroe and the Bluegrass Boys and Mac Wiseman. In the late 1970s Tony's job brought him to Chillicothe where he now lives and enjoys playing the guitar, mandolin, and especially the banjo with Lonnie's fiddling. The two make an outstanding musical team, creating some of the most lively and exciting dance music to be found anywhere.

I started playing on the radio after World War II. Filling station down there; always took my old Model A coupe down to have it greased and oil changed, and a fellow down there run the station played the guitar. So he wanted to come over and play some parts, so I said come ahead. That was Eldon Shoemaker and he had Joe Elliott working for him and he played the guitar. So they came over and we got to playing and somehow or other we ended up on the radio station WBEX; me and Eldon had two girls singing, Carl Riley on the banjo, and we formed a little group called the Ross County Farmers. We played on there probably four or five years, something like that. But every Saturday night we had a dance to play for, and that's what we got out of playing on the radio — just advertisement to play for parties and dances. And the radio station was upstairs on the second floor. Eldon got to playing the bass fiddle. I had the bass, I had to go out, roll the window down on my Model A, set the bass over to the side, stick my arm through the window and hold it and I get in, sit down, lift it up on the running board and up to the radio station. We had a good time. That's all it amounts to, anyhow, really, is enjoying yourself. We enjoyed that.

Lonnie Seymour, Chillicothe

SIDE A Band 7 "Sugar Barrel" (Key: G)

Lonnie Seymour, fiddle;

Tony Ellis, banjo; Jeff Goehring, guitar

This tune is a straightforward, driving hoedown piece which Lonnie plays for dances. Lonnie learned the tune from his uncle Lon Seymour, who lived outside of Ringold, Ohio. Lonnie knows of no other fiddlers in the area who played this tune. "Sugar Barrel" is, however, quite similar to the tune "Pretty Little Girl with the Blue Dress On."

"Pretty Little Girl with the Blue Dress On," John Summers, *John W. Summers: Indiana Fiddler* (Rounder 0194).

SIDE A Band 8 "Chillicothe Two-Step" (Key: G)

Lonnie Seymour, fiddle;

Tony Ellis, banjo; Jeff Goehring, guitar

Lonnie learned this tune from his uncle Lon, who played for dances and for enjoyment at home. Of this tune and "Sugar Barrel" Lonnie says, "the tunes just stuck in my mind." Although the tune was passed on, the name was lost. "Chillicothe Two-Step" is the name Lonnie gave to the tune.



Lonnie Seymour

JOHN HANNAH

John Scotland Hannah was born on April 9, 1920 in Mango County, West Virginia. John was raised in a mountain family and community deeply rooted in traditional music. His grandfather, Isaac, a Civil War veteran, was a master old-time fiddler. According to John he was considered the best fiddler in the area at the time and was even sought out at one time by the legendary blind fiddler, Ed Haley. John's parents were also fine traditional musicians. His father, Wallace, followed in Isaac's footsteps as an exceptional old-time fiddler, and his mother, Rebecca, played clawhammer-style banjo on a fretless, open-backed banjo. John says, "she played some of the prettiest music I ever heard come out of a banjo." John's parents often began and ended the day with old-time music. John recalls often waking up in the morning to the sound of his parents' fiddle and banjo duets just after breakfast before his father left for work, and retiring in the evening to the same music being played by the fireplace.

John's first instrument was the fretless banjo, which he took up at the age of six. Within a matter of weeks he was closely following his father's fiddling on tunes like

"Sourwood Mountain" and "Brown's Dream." Soon, he and his father began playing fiddle and banjo for square dances in the community. The dances were mostly held in people's homes and in coal mining camps. They usually earned five to ten dollars a night, which was considered good pay in the 1930s.

John eventually took up the fiddle. His family owned a Victrola and a radio, so he was able to listen to many early country musicians such as Fiddling John Carson, the Carter Family, and Arthur Smith. He became especially interested in Arthur Smith's music and learned many of his tunes, several of which John still plays today.

As a young man, John worked in coal mining, setting dynamite (or "shootin' coal," as John puts it). He also worked timber, laid block, and did carpentry. He maintained an interest in music and played in the evenings and on the weekends with his brother, Flem, accompanying him on guitar. The Hannah brothers played in clubs and for square dances in the late 1930s. After World War II they joined up with a singer and guitarist named Harold Kirk and called themselves the Echo Mountain Boys. They played country songs, fiddled for square dances, and were influenced by some of the boogie-woogie music of the 1940s. John says that there often was square dancing and jitterbugging at the same dance.

John moved to Columbus in the early 1950s. He worked as a copper finisher for the Clark Vault Company for thirty-two years and is now retired. John now plays for his own pleasure at home and for church picnics and family gatherings. His son-in-law, Tim Duncan, often accompanies him on the guitar.

John's fiddling is driving and exciting. His style is deeply rooted in the short-bowed mountain style, but his repertoire reflects years of evolution in country music. His tunes range from early mountain tunes played by his grandfather, dating back to the nineteenth century, to the more modern country classics.



John Hannah and Tim Duncan

As far as reading music, I couldn't read, never tried to read music, but that wouldn't be too hard, you can read. I can learn the tune a lot faster than I could try to learn the music. If you start depending on learning it from a sheet, I imagine that would take away from your ear, you know. If you're not depending on a sheet then you have to depend on listening to the tune. I try to play it just by memory then. I don't think old-time music was meant to be played from a music sheet, anyway; I think it was just meant to be played by ear. Now on a lot of these tunes you can play the tune out, some of them not so noticeable if you leave a little note out of the tune. That might be the note that makes the fiddle tune stand out, see. And often people get in the habit of leaving that little note out, maybe something just a little hard for them to get. And just one or two notes there make a world of difference in the sound of the whole fiddle tune because you've learned that by experience. Usually somebody has trouble and then they just play it their way. And somebody else will learn that changed tune from that guy; well, by the time he leaves out a note or two and it gets down two or three generations, why it's a different tune altogether.

John Hannah, Columbus

SIDE B Band 1 "Coon in a Treetop"
(AEAC#, coarse to fine)
John Hannah, fiddle

John learned this tune from his father, Wallace Hannah, who John suspects learned it from his father, Isaac Hannah. John has never heard anyone else play the tune. John says that his version is quite close to his father's.

In the late 1960s, while in his 80s, Isaac Hannah was asked to perform on radio station WBTA, in Williamson, West Virginia, some ten miles from his home. He performed a weekly thirty-minute radio program of solo fiddle tunes for two years, sponsored by local business establishments.

SIDE B Band 2 "Cumberland Blues" (Key: C)
John Hannah, fiddle;
Tim Duncan, guitar

In the early 1930s John and his family listened regularly to the Grand Ole Opry on their battery-powered radio. Through those broadcasts John was introduced to Arthur Smith, from whose playing he learned "Cumberland Blues." Today John's repertoire includes a number of Arthur Smith tunes. John tells of a man he met in Columbus in the 1950s who would only play Arthur Smith tunes, among them this tune; John learned his version some years earlier, however. In its bluesy character it is strongly reminiscent of Smith's fiddling style, although Smith himself evidently never recorded the tune. Kentucky fiddler Doc Roberts recorded a "Cumberland Blues" in the 1920s, but his version bears little resemblance to the tune which John plays.

CLIFF and TELFORD HARDESTY

The Hardesty brothers were raised on a farm between Fresno and Bakersville in Coshocton County, Ohio. Their father played the harmonica and their mother accompanied him on pump organ; both were self-taught musicians. Telford recalls that there was music in their home many evenings, with several brothers and sisters standing behind their mother at the pump organ and singing. Country dances often were held in the Hardestys' and neighbors' homes, where fiddles, banjos, accordions, and guitars were played.

In 1923, when he was about thirteen, Telford began fiddling for these dances, his mother accompanying him on the pump organ. Telford, who is eleven years older than Cliff, played for many years with a guitar and piano player named Ernie Honeybarger. They played regularly for dances and community events until about 1937, when Telford married.

In 1931, Telford left home for about a year to work on a dairy farm in Wisconsin. During that time, ten-year-old Cliff took up the fiddle and soon was playing for dances. Though Telford is a fine example of a home- and community-based fiddler, he did not pursue music the way Cliff did. Over the years, Cliff has played with several country bands at local events and on the radio. He has also actively participated in the fiddle contest circuit throughout Ohio and has won countless awards and contests. He has also been to Canadian fiddle contests and has been attending the Galax Virginia Fiddlers' Convention for more than ten years. He is in great demand to play for the ever-popular community square dances in local grange halls and fire stations.



Cliff Hardesty

Cliff has a distinctive style that is entirely his own. His bowing is strongly rhythmic and is reminiscent of

Cajun fiddling. Cliff is well known throughout Ohio and has a world of friends of all ages and from all walks of life. Even many Amish people in the area have heard and enjoyed Cliff's fiddling.

Since 1974 Cliff has been devoting much of his time to making fiddles. Like his fiddle playing, Cliff has learned fiddle making much on his own. He has even designed and made many of the tools that he uses. His instruments are solidly constructed, good looking, and built to sound good for fiddling.

Cliff and Telford currently are next-door neighbors in West Lafayette, Coshocton County, and still occasionally play music together.

My family, far as I knowd, were mostly farmers. And my father, he was a farmer-coal miner. Farmed enough to feed us kids. And of course, he was a jack of all trades. He made about everything that he could make out of wood or metal, whatever he needed. Of course, he bought all his plows, but if there was a piece broke that had to be made, he made it. Well he didn't have much money to buy, so if it could possibly be made, he made it. And that's the way it was. Now if I want something that I think I can make, then I'll do me a job, that's what I do in this line of work.

I always wanted, in the back of my mind, to make fiddles. I didn't really get into it until I was semi-retired in 1973. Of course, that winter gave me time to tackle to see if I could make a fiddle. That first one looked like I carved it out with a hatchet, really. I really believe that if I had it to start over again, like a lot of things I had to start over again, there'd be a lot of changes. I would have tried to make my first fiddle the best. I really just wanted to make one so that I could have made one and it really didn't sound that bad, it turned out pretty decent. But if I was going for beauty, it wouldn't be that. I wondered how beautiful the first violin ever made was. And if I built a thousand of 'em, I wonder how beautiful the thousandth one would be.

I make all the parts except the strings, bridges, and fine tuners. I like that. I don't even buy the tailpiece or the guts that holds it on. I use, I borrow and beg the strings off of bass fiddle players. Gut strings make the nicest tail guts for the tail piece. I don't mean to be a-knockin' the people that's building this better stuff, but you don't need the better stuff to make it through life.

Cliff Hardesty, West Lafayette

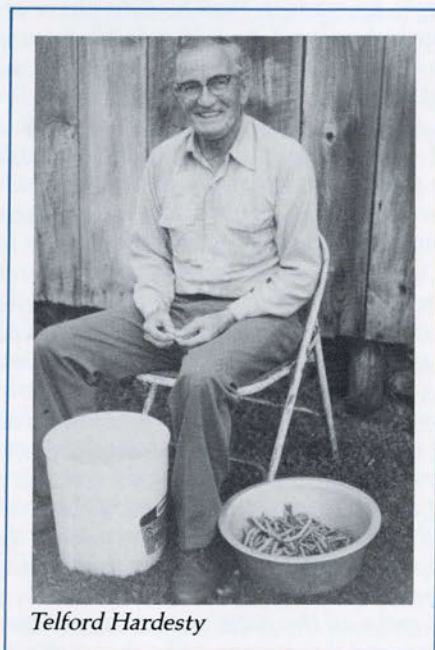
SIDE B Band 3 "Turkey in the Straw" (Key: G)
Cliff Hardesty, fiddle;
Howard Sacks, guitar

Few traditional tunes are better known than this melody, which is popular throughout the nation. The song is attributed to nineteenth-century minstrel Dan Emmett of Knox County, Ohio, although the tune has its roots in

the earlier minstrel song "Zip Coon," composed in 1834 and sung by blackface entertainers George W. Dixon and Bob Farrell. Minstrel shows traveled to virtually every small town which could be reached overland or by water in the mid-nineteenth century. During the Civil War, many a soldier would find a break from the hardships of battle by attending minstrel shows, and regiments would value a musician among its ranks who could provide a lively tune. In this way melodies composed for the minstrel stage were absorbed into traditional culture and subsequently transmitted to succeeding generations of fiddlers in countless local communities.

The popularity of this tune through the years is testimony to its quality. Cliff's version, in his phrasing and ornamentation, is absolutely unique, and brings alive this old favorite.

"Turkey in the Straw," John Baltzell (Oriole 945, Paramount 3015, Broadway 8052, Homestead 16492, Conqueror 7741. Broadway released as John Barton; Homestead and Oriole as Hiram Jones).



Telford Hardesty

SIDE B Band 4 "Heel and Toe Polka" (Key: D)
Cliff Hardesty, fiddle;
Howard Sacks, guitar

Also known as the "Jenny Lind Polka," this is a widely known dance tune. In Ohio, the tune has words which form the calls for the dance. The tune has been recorded by a number of fiddlers, including bluegrass fiddler Kenny Baker.

"Jenny Lind Polka," Kenny Baker, *Bill Monroe's Uncle Pen* (MCA 500).

SIDE B Band 5 "Soldier's Joy" (Key: C)
Cliff and Telford Hardesty, fiddles;
Howard Sacks, guitar

It's been said that whenever a group of fiddlers gets together, the one tune you can count on everybody knowing is "Soldier's Joy." For many a fiddler, "Soldier's Joy" is the first tune ever learned. Versions of this tune can be found in the fiddle music of Scandinavia, the British Isles, and throughout America.

Fiddle and harmonica players among the Amish, who live throughout the counties in north-central Ohio, know this tune by the name "Two Rattle." In the absence of music, the Amish pat out the rhythms of this tune with their hands as a play-party game.

While a common tune, "Soldier's Joy" is almost always played in the key of D. The Hardesty version is unique in that it is played in the key of C. Cliff and Telford's playing of the tune, which emerged quite spontaneously during the recording session, captures the informality and warmth that characterizes traditional music played at home.

ROLLIE HOMMON

Roland Hommon was born in 1905 in Hilliard in central Ohio. He moved to Newark in 1917 where he has lived ever since, only a short distance from Kenny Sidle.

Rollie's mother had a music degree from Ohio State University and taught piano at the Moore-Brock Music Store in Columbus for several years. Rollie's interests in music, however, led him to traditional fiddlers of the area, from whom he learned tunes by ear. Among the older generation of fiddlers who influenced Rollie were Don Shirk, a fiddler he heard in Hilliard; the famed Clark Kessinger, whom he met in the 1920s; John Baltzell, an Ohio recording artist of the 1920s; and Vernon Sidle, Kenny's father (Rollie remembers playing music at the Sidles' home a couple of nights before Kenny was born; he "watched Kenny grow from a baby to a great fiddle player").

Rollie also heard the jazz fiddling of Joe Venuti, and Rollie's technically sophisticated long-bow style reflects the merging of these popular and traditional influences. With Harold Henthorne, his musician partner of fifty years who accompanies Rollie on guitar, Rollie was part of a twelve-piece ensemble after World War II which played jazz, swing, Dixieland, as well as more traditional dance tunes.

At the age of fifteen, Rollie entered his first fiddle contest in Newark and won, beginning a long career as a contest and dance fiddler. He has since won several state fiddling championships, including three in Ohio. He still often attends and sometimes judges fiddle contests, though he no longer competes in them.

Rollie has also spent many years as a fiddle repairman and fiddle trader; he claims to have retired from both avocations, having replaced these interests with hunting and fishing. He is now retired from his job as a machinist for the Miller Company in Utica, where he

worked for twenty years. He plays regularly with a senior citizens' orchestra in Newark and is still actively involved in the old-time music community in Ohio.

I played in my first fiddle contest when I was fifteen years old. Them days you were not allowed to play a waltz, at least in this part of the country. You played two hoedowns, that was it. And everybody would get on the stage, say fifteen or twenty fiddlers, and they would have numbers. Number one fiddler would start off, walk out on the stage, no microphone, no nothing. Just walk out on the stage and play one number. And immediately number two fiddler would follow right out behind him and play his. And your judges were sitting out there in the audience in different places; and then the third, fourth, right through the sequence of numbers. And then when everybody played around one time, then fiddler number one went back again for his second tune. Until they played around again and then the judges would make their decision. And sometimes, many times, you'd have a lot of ties. I tied with a fellow over here in Purity and we had to play six tunes in the tie-off. Six tunes; each time we'd play our tunes the judges were still talking and we had to play some more. So I played six tunes and finally come out the winner. I have done several contests where they judged by applause. They stand over you and then try to decide who got the most applause. But then this other contest or two they had an applause meter. I suppose when I was around 21 or 22 the fiddlers' contest come into change and then you were allowed to play a waltz, or even a schottische. And then as time went on it became mandatory for you to play a waltz, a hoedown, and a tune of your choice.

Rollie Hommon, Newark

SIDE B Band 6 "Baltzell's Tune" (Key: C)
Rollie Hommon, fiddle

Rollie plays two tunes by John Baltzell of Mount Vernon, some twenty-five miles north of Newark. One is "Emmett Quadrille," which Baltzell recorded for the Edison Recording Company in 1929. Rollie does not recall a name for the jig included on this album, and it is not among the thirty-two sides Baltzell recorded in the 1920s. Rollie heard John's recordings and on one occasion traveled to Mount Vernon to visit Baltzell at his home. A friend of Rollie's, Harley Claggett, was taking lessons from Baltzell, and Rollie accompanied Harley to Mount Vernon. Rollie learned this tune from Harley Claggett.

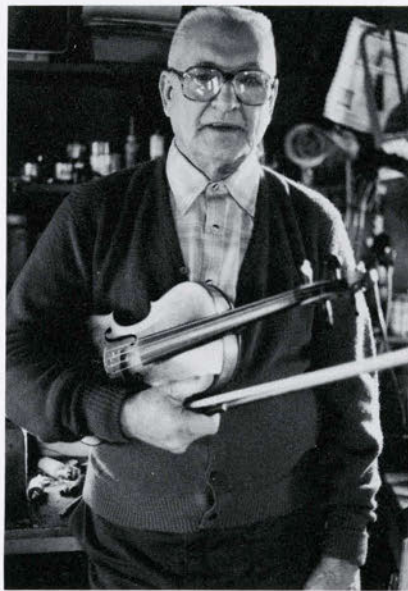
Like many of the fiddlers whose repertoires were formed in the nineteenth century, Baltzell played a wide variety of tunes, including jigs, quadrilles, waltzes, hornpipes, and reels. "Baltzell's Tune" displays a noteyness typical of both Baltzell's music and the playing in central Ohio to this day.

"Emmett Quadrille," John Baltzell (Edison Disc 52281, Cylinder 5562).

SIDE B Band 7 "Snowshoes" (Key: D)
Rollie Hommon, fiddle;
Harold Henthorne, guitar

This tune is also known as "Spotted Pony" and is particularly popular among Western fiddlers. Rollie heard the tune on a recording and liked it enough to learn it. He points out, however, that his own version differs from the one he heard on record. Rollie changed the key of the tune to better suit his playing style. His improvisations on the melody, as well as the backup guitar playing of Harold Henthorne, also reflect the influence of the jazz and popular music which Rollie and Harold have been playing together for some fifty years.

"Spotted Pony," Pete McMahan, *More Fiddle Jam Sessions* (Voyager VRLP 304).



Rollie Hommon

KENNY SIDLE

Kenny Sidle was born in 1931 in a log cabin and grew up in the country near Toboso in Licking County. He now lives in Hanover, a short distance from his homeplace, and works in Newark for the Owens-Corning Fiberglas Corporation.

Kenny grew up listening to and learning from the reputable fiddling of his father, Vernon Sidle; his uncle, John Cromer; and many other fine musicians in his community. He was also influenced by medicine shows and other traveling musical troupes. Kenny began fiddling when he was only five. He played for community dances in his earlier years and began to play professionally in the 1950s. He has played for country music stage and radio shows throughout Ohio. In the 1970s he played with the Cavalcade Cut-Ups, the "house band" for North American Country Cavalcade, a program that aired every Saturday night from the Southern Hotel in Columbus on radio station WMNI.

Through the years, Kenny has developed a strong "contest" style and has acquired a reputation as one of the finest Western-style fiddlers in this part of the country. His playing is smooth, melodic, and very sophisticated, reflecting Canadian and Texas influences. His repertoire includes the slow quadrilles and waltzes typical of an older generation of fiddlers of central Ohio such as Caney Perry and John Wiley. Kenny travels all over the country and Canada to compete in prestigious fiddle competitions. He has won numerous state championships and placed this year and in past years among the top ten finalists at the prestigious Grand Masters fiddle championship in Nashville, Tennessee.

The precision of Kenny's fiddling is ably matched by the innovative guitar playing of Troy Herdman. Originally from Evans, West Virginia, Troy now lives in Columbus and works at the Timken Roller Bearing Company. Troy grew up in a very musical family and learned to accompany the fiddling of his father, uncle, and brother. Troy's brother, the late Clarence "Curly" Herdman, was a widely known champion fiddler in the 1950s who played a style quite similar to Kenny's.

Kenny and Troy play together in the Independence Band, which plays regularly for square dances and other country music events at the Flowers Music Hall in Hanover. Both Kenny and Troy are master musicians in the truest sense — not only do they play with a high level of proficiency, but their approach to music is warm and good natured.

I started playing when I was about four and a half. They brought a medicine show down there at Toboso. And my dad says to my mom, you know I'm going to take Kenneth down there to that show and I want you to get him ready to go because we're going to feature him on that show. And he worked with me on it and I played a tune called "The Mockingbird." So I played "The Mockingbird" on one string with one finger; that was a lot of squeaking, but I'll never forget it. They took me down and they had some girls there that had the cosmetics and they took me backstage. I was scared to death, I was so timid. They put rouge on my face and got me all fixed up and they had a terrible crowd there. They had these little boxes of chocolate-covered cherries done up real fancy. My dad says, you go out there and do real good now, and I'll see that you get a box of those chocolate-covered cherries. Boy, I thought that was the greatest thing ever was! I come out there and I played "The Mockingbird" on the little fiddle dad bought for me. And, oh my, the crowd just carried on and roared and I had to play it again, to give them a little more of it. It went over so well that they took me down to Frazeysburg Homecoming. You know, that was a big thing — well, still is, as a matter of fact. They have good crowds down there. Once in a while I still run into old folks who remember the time that I walked out down there and played; they've never forgotten it.

Kenny Sidle, Hanover

SIDE B Band 8 "Durang's Hornpipe" (Key: D)
Kenny Sidle, fiddle;
Troy Herdman, guitar

"Durang's Hornpipe" was named after John Durang, American dancer of the late eighteenth century, who became a featured performer in J. B. Rickett's Circus troupe. The tune was composed by a New York fiddler named Hoffmaster at the request of Durang. Kenny's version is quite close to that of Western fiddlers such as Major Franklin of Denison, Texas. "Durang's Hornpipe" is one of Kenny's favorite contest pieces.

"Durang's Hornpipe," Major Franklin, *Texas Fiddle Favorites* (County 707).



Kenny Sidle and Troy Herdman

SIDE B Band 9 "Brushy Fork" (Key: G)
Kenny Sidle, fiddle;
Troy Herdman, guitar

Kenny attributes "Brushy Fork" to George Stevens, a blacksmith from Clay Lick, near Kenny's birthplace. Kenny learned the tune from another fiddler in the area, Roy Mars. Although the tune seems to be unique to a local area, the coarse part of the tune is similar to a number of other melodies, including "Texas Quickstep," "Rachael," Ed Haley's "Cherokee Polka," and Lonnie Seymour's "Hog Trough Reel."

SIDE B Band 10 "Cottage Hill" (Key: D)
Kenny Sidle, fiddle;
Troy Herdman, guitar

"Cottage Hill" was composed by Caney Perry of Toboso, Kenny's home town. This hornpipe lends itself to the complex playing demanded of contest fiddling. Kenny's playing of the tune, however, retains the flavor of old-time fiddling.



Kenny Sidle as a boy (lower right), with his father Vernon (fiddle) and brothers and sisters, early 1940s

Courtesy Kenny Sidle

Other Albums Including Fiddle Music from Ohio

Rats Won't Stay Where There's Music. Sacred and secular fiddle, banjo, and songs by Ward Jarvis and family of Athens County, Ohio. Ohio Folklife Group: OF-1003, 1979.

Folk Music of Ohio, 1938-1940. Field recordings made by folklorists John, Alan, and Elizabeth Lomax; includes the fiddling of Henry Davis of Hamilton, Ohio. Ohio Folklife Group: OF-1001, 1978.

Traditional Music of Central Ohio. A sampler of folk music, including the fiddling of Ward Jarvis of Athens County, Rollie Hommon of Licking County, and Woody Inboden of Fairfield County, Ohio. Traditional Arts Program of the Ohio Foundation on the Arts: TALP-001, 1979.

The above albums are available from:
Tim Lloyd
Ohio Arts Council
727 East Main Street
Columbus, Ohio 43210-1796

Folk Music in North-Central Ohio. A sampler of folk music, including the fiddling of Bill Holmes, John Donaldson, Stanton Taylor, and Harry Van Vranken of Huron County, Ohio. Three Seas Institute for the Study of World Religion: TCLP-001, 1981.

Three Seas Institute for the Study of World Religion
312 Park Street
Huron, Ohio 44839

Snow on the Roof, Fire in the Furnace. Cincinnati area traditional musicians, including fiddler Guy Blakeman of Hamilton County. June Appal Recordings.

June Appal Recordings
Whitesburg, Kentucky 41858

The White Eyes Music Club. Live recordings of traditional music in southeastern Ohio, including the fiddling of Cliff and Telford Hardesty, Bill Cunningham, and Chester Gray, all from Coshocton County; Raymond Klass of Guernsey County; Carl Harney and Bob Mason of Muskingum County; and Jayne Lucas of Boden. Western Kentucky University: WKU #1, 1977.

Burt Feintuch
Department of Folk Studies
Western Kentucky University
Bowling Green, Kentucky 42101

Favorite Fiddle Tunes. Fiddle music by Kenny Sidle of Licking County, Ohio. Rome Recording Company: RLP 1128, 1977.

Kenny Sidle
275 N.E. Darla Drive
Newark, Ohio 43055

Curly Herdman: Ohio State's Best Fiddler. Fiddle music by Ohio state champion fiddler Curly Herdman. Kanawha Records: 310, 1967.

My Home in West Virginia. Bluegrass music by A Touch of Grass, featuring the fiddling of Cliff Hardesty of Coshocton County, Ohio. #41783.

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A Note About the Recordings

The recordings on this album were made between December 1983 and March 1984 in the homes of the fiddlers. Taping was done with the use of a Nagra SB tape recorder and two Neuman microphones. Recordings were made on Scotch 208 and 226 recording tape at 7½ ips.

GFS 901