

Set two

Mississippi Sawyer – widely known in Europe in the mid-1700s, then Britain and Ireland, and eventually some parts of the USA as “The Downfall of Paris” this tune was known to Revolutionaries in France who sang verses describing lynching Aristocrats. In American the ‘Sawyer’ title is often explained as a river boat term referring to floating hazards in the river.

Frenchman’s Bellyache – played around New England by French-Canadian fiddlers such as Wilfred Guillette in Vermont, I think most of us learned this from fiddler/harmonica player/luthier Deck Nieforth and his group, The French Connection with fiddler Dan Lanier and guitarist Mike Fischman.

Rakes of Mallow – Mallow is a town in County Cork, Ireland. This is one of many ‘Rakes’ songs, suggesting ‘Good Fellows’ or possibly slightly lower reputation. It has been in print in tune collections since 1733. An American musical amateur, Henry Livingstone included it in his 1770-era notebooks along with the verses:

*Beauxing, belling, dancing, drinking,
Breaking windows, damning, sinking,
Ever raking never Thinking
Lives the Rakes of Mallow.*

*Spending faster than it comes,
Beating Bawds, whores, and duns,
Bacchus’ true begotten sons,
Lives the Rakes of Mallow.*

Liberty – probably not an old tune, it’s not in any of the 19th C tunebooks. In the mid-20th C it was recorded by Bob Wills, Don Messer, Vassar Clements, Gid Tanner, John Carson and many others.

Mayflower – There are several Mayflower Reels, including one composed by Cecil MasEachern and played by Don Messer and included in his anthology publications of fiddle sheet music.

Green Cockade – cockades were traditional symbols of allegiance. Green, of course, the color of Irish patriots. The tune was annotated by folklorist Sam Bayard in Pennsylvania as “Falling off a Log” and is in Miller-Perron’s ‘New England Fiddler’s Repertory’ under that title.

Off She Goes – widespread in England and Ireland since the 1700s, the composers name is lost to time.

Down Yonder – recorded by the influential Georgia group, the Scottsdale String Band in 1926, this tune quickly spread itself around. The Skillet Lickers recorded it in 1934 and their RCA record was in print until 1960, selling over a million copies.

Suwanee River – Published by Stephen Foster and the Christy Minstrels as “Old Folks at Home” about 1851, The Suwanee River runs from southern Georgia southwest thru Florida to the Gulf. This is the official state song of Florida, with the words slightly altered.

Alabama Jubilee – music by George L Cobb and words by Jack Yellen, recorded in 1915, it had a revival in the 1950s when it reached #3 on the Country Hit Parade.

Jambalaya – written by Hank Williams and released in 1952, the tune has been recorded numerous times. Jumbalaya the food is made with shrimp, andouille sausage and long grain rice with cayenne, paprika cumin and oregano....

White Rose of Avondale – some name confusion here. “The Rose of Avondale” is a romantic novel written in 1872 by Elizabeth Mary Parker. ‘The Rose of Allendale’ is a romantic English song “*Sweet Rose of Allendale, Sweet Rose of Allendale, the Rose of Allendale*”. A lovely version was recorded by Scottish singer Mary Black about 1980. Jean Redpath, the Copper Family and other notable folk artists also recorded it.

Bill Arnold’s Waltz – no information.

Westphalia Waltz – derived from a widely known Polish waltz “Pytala Sie Pani” (‘the Lady Asked’), the Texas fiddler Cotton Collins introduced this tune via the Texas Playboys in 1947 and supposedly named it after a town where the band was playing. Some say that he learned it while overseas in WW II while others claim it was already known in the USA through immigrant musicians. Hank Thompson’s 1955 recording was a hit and spread it around the country.

Turkey in the Straw - At the 1926 New England Fiddle Championship in Providence, RI, this was the mandatory tune played by every contestant and named by many early OFCRI members as their favorite tune. Originating in the 1700s, it was played all over America by whites, blacks, minstrels, immigrants, factory workers and pioneer settlers.

White Cockade – This is a Jacobite tune – that is, the ‘white cockade’ was the symbol of allegiance to Bonnie Prince Charlie, Charles Stuart, the Pretender to the British throne who led the 1745 Rebellion in Scotland which gave rise to many fine songs. The song describes a woman following the boy with the white cockade off to the war. Robert Burns wrote some toned down lyrics about 1790.

Marching Through Georgia – written by Henry C. Work in 1865, this song was popular with Union army veterans after the end of the Civil War. The original lyrics celebrate the liberation of slaves during General William Sherman’s march thru Georgia in 1864, but Southerners tend to regard it as bragging about deliberate destruction caused by the Union army. It has been adapted internationally for use in political and military events.

Jacky Tar – “Jack Tar” is a nickname for sailors, especially British sailors. There are quite a few tunes or songs which include this term in the title - some sound a lot like ‘Cuckoo’s Nest’. Probably this is really a variant of that tune, diverged over the years until it became distinct in the 1800s. There is a nice version by Dale Russ on Youtube.

Cuckoo’s Nest – at least as old as the 1700s, many versions include 3 or 4 parts, and there are many sets of lyrics most of which are at least slightly lewd. It is a common belief that the title refers to female genitalia.

Father Kelly’s – The most famous of many tunes composed by Father P. J. Kelly, (1925-2006) originally entitled by him ‘The Rossmore Jetty’. This tune is routinely part of medleys at Irish seisuns around the world - in Providence recently we medleyed it with Ali Bain’s tune “The Reconciliation” and the traditional tune ‘Mountain Road’.

Maple Sugar – a composition of the great Ontario fiddler Ward Allen, many times champion fiddler, showman and radio personality.

Silver Bell – The song “Silver Bells” was composed in 1910 by Edward Madden and Percy Wenrich of Tin Pan Alley, and later transmogrified into a fiddle tune in the 1930s and 1940s by Bob Wills, Johnny Gimble and Cliff Bruner and others.

Alice Blue Gown – a hit song from the 1919 Broadway musical “Irene” written by Harry Tierney. “Alice Blue” is a pale blue color made fashionable by Alice Roosevelt Longworth, daughter of Theodore Roosevelt.

My Wild Irish Rose – an 1899 pop song by the Irish-American Tin-Pan Alley composer and Broadway star Chauncey Olcott (1858-1932). This was written for his show “A Romance of Athlone”. There is an early audio online of Chauncey performing the song. The 1947 film of this name is loosely based on Olcott’s life with songs performed by Dennis Day.

When Irish Eyes are Smiling – Chauncey Olcott also co-wrote this perennial favorite which was the hit song of his 1913 Broadway show “The Isle o’ Dreams”.

Note that nearly all of these tunes have excellent versions available on YouTube. The fiddle tunes as annotated by folklorist collectors are included in Miller and Perron’s “New England Fiddler’s Repertory”, in “The Milliner-Koken Collection of American Fiddle Tunes”, in “Old Kentucky Fiddle Tunes” by Jeff Titon, in “The Waltz Books I, II, III” by Bill Mattingley, “The Portland Collections 1,2, 3” by Songer and Curley, David Brody’s “The Fiddler’s Fakebook”, Samuel Bayard’s “Hill Country Tunes” and others...