



Fiddler's Rag

Vol. 44, Number 10
Celebrating 43 years

Santa Clara Valley Fiddlers Association
www.scvfa.org or www.fiddlers.org

October 2016
Next Jam: Oct. 2



President's Note

The September jam brought our members back to Hoover School. Attendance was rather light as many folks were traveling over Labor Day. Bert did a fine job as jam manager... Topher led the slow jam... And Sarah Kirton brought her Scandinavian expertise to the Tune Builder Circle. Thanks to all these leaders and all of our volunteers for making the jam happen.

Elizabeth Dequine, Cape Breton and Irish fiddler, will lead the **KidFiddle Workshop** at the October jam. She will also perform a mini-concert. Elizabeth is a musical powerhouse of energy, talent, and flair, having been on stage for as long as she can remember. As the lead of her family's nationally and internationally acclaimed band, Celtic Spring, Elizabeth was a world-traveled, veteran performer before she was through her teens. Audiences are drawn to Elizabeth's captivating stage presence, ease of expression, high energy, musical rhythm and exuberance. She performs with a flair that suggests she was made for the stage. It will be well worthwhile to take a fifteen minute break from jamming to hear Elizabeth play.

NEW - Youth Jam! I believe this to be a first for SCVFA. Wes Mitchell will guide our youth in their own jamming circle. Pass on the word to the young musicians you may know.

SCVFA now has a Facebook Page. Look for: "Santa Clara Fiddlers Association SCVFA". Share with your friends and invite new friends to get to know our music community. Remember to 'like' our page. Posts are encouraged, but limit the content to that which is directly related to SCVFA. All posts will be moderated in keeping with the best interests of SCVFA.

Some may say it was the luck of the draw... some say the roll of the dice... and others say it was following the

path that sang true to my heart. Landing in California's Bay Area was my first lucky break. Finding SCVFA was a close second. Here at SCVFA, I have been mentored by many fine musicians to enable me to join the ranks of the oldtimey fiddlers. And now, I find myself in the leadership role encouraging others to be an active part of the community that is bigger than us.

It is important that each one of our members talks about SCVFA and shares our enthusiasm with fellow musicians, family, and friends. Take a few business cards and share them when the opportunity presents itself.

It takes a village to keep SCVFA running smoothly. Let's all do our part,

Susan Goodis

SCVFA is now on Facebook. Search for:
"Santa Clara Valley Fiddlers Association SCVFA"

- ❖ Share your enthusiasm; take a few SCVFA business cards to hand out to fellow musicians.
- ❖ Show your pride in SCVFA, get your wearable art in one of two designs.
Email [sgoodis \[at\] gmail.com](mailto:sgoodis[at]gmail.com) for information.

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The Fiddler's Rag is published monthly by the Santa Clara Valley Fiddlers Association and is provided to members of the Association. The Santa Clara Valley Fiddlers Association (SCVFA), founded in 1973 in San Jose, California, is a nonprofit, volunteer-operated organization dedicated to the preservation, teaching, and enjoyment of traditional music. The first membership in a household includes the Fiddler's Rag; additional members sharing the newsletter are steeply discounted. To join, sign up at the jam or see www.fiddlers.org/join.

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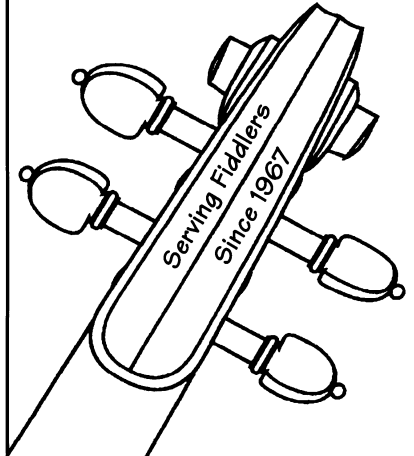
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Sept. Jam clockwise from top left: - Hoover Middle School friendly neighbor with Lee Clark, Vic Corsiglia, Ken Smith, Fred Pekkonen (Photos by Paul Barnett)

SCVFA Happenings

- ❖ Pass on performance inquiries to Dave Williams at performances [at] fiddlers.org
- ❖ Be a leader - Teach a tune at the monthly Tune Builder Circle.
- ❖ Board meeting - all SCVFA members are welcome - For date and location, ask any Board member.

SCVFA Slow Jam

Barbara Pratt was among us at the jam in September. I first met Barbara when she attended one of my first organized slow jams about ten years ago. Since then, I have attended a number of Barbara's jams as well.

I have confidence in her leadership. I will be at my father's 88th birthday party next month. Barbara Pratt has graciously agreed to lead the jam in my absence.

Thank you all for participating in the slow jam. The slow jam is for beginners who want to participate in a slow-paced jam (60-90 BPM). To participate, you should be able to tune your instrument, play chords at a steady pace, and (optionally) work up melodies / leads.

We keep things at an easy pace and we often play breaks together (old time style) even on non-fiddle tunes. This makes it possible for you to join the jam where ever you are at in your development as a musician. So, come join us!

All the tunes we have played so far are fair game even if they are not on the active list. We can revisit tunes especially at the end when we have gone through the active list.

The active song list is:

Angeline The Baker (D)	Red-Haired Boy (A)
Arkansas Traveler (D)	Red Wing (G)
Girl I Left Behind Me (G)	Soldier's Joy (D)
Jaybird (D)	Squirrel Hunters (A)
June Apple (A)	St. Anne's Reel (D)
Liberty (D)	Swallowtail Jig (E)
Mississippi Sawyer (D)	Whiskey Before Breakfast (D)
Over The Waterfall (D)	Wildwood Flower (C)

Check here first for songs: www.scvfa.org/tunes

If you have trouble finding a song, feel free to contact me for ideas.

Note: To add or remove yourself from the email list for the Slow Jam, send a request to [topher.heath \[at\] yahoo.com](mailto:topher.heath@yahoo.com).

Topher Heath

Board Meeting Highlights

- At the board meeting on September 7 we welcomed our newest board member, Cindy Dinga.
- We discussed costs, benefits and logistics of some possible workshop/concert performers.
- Our next jam on October 2 will be managed by trustee Wes Mitchell, and we'll welcome Elizabeth Dequine, who will be running a KidFiddle workshop at the jam. Be sure to tell your friends who have young fiddle players to come, both for the workshop and for the youth jam session that will follow!
- The December holiday potluck party should be fun as always.
- We spent a lot of time discussing what brings people to the monthly jams. Lately we are barely covering rental expenses, and membership is slightly down, so we need to work at both increasing membership and increasing jam attendance.
- Do folks come just to jam with friends? To hear the mini concerts? To play in the open mike sessions on stage? To learn with the no pressure slow jam? To learn new tunes in the tune builder sessions? Are we offering a reasonable mix of bluegrass and old timey groups? We would love to get feedback from members at the jams!

Anne Raphael
Recording Secretary

Silicon Valley House Concerts presents

Sunday October 9th 2016

Megan Lynch Chowning and Adam Hurt

House Concert 6 PM

Jam with the musicians immediately following

Friday October 28th

Stuart Mason & John Weed

House Concert 8:00 pm

Workshops: Guitar 3:15 pm - Fiddle 5:00 pm

Reservations:

[SV.houseconcerts \[at\] gmail.com](mailto:SV.houseconcerts@gmail.com)

The Big Scioty

Transcription and Article by Bob Palasek

The Name

The title of this tune refers to The Big Scioto River which drains much of central Ohio, joining the Ohio River near Portsmouth, Ohio. The *Sc* in Scioty is pronounced as in the word *science*, and not as in the name *Nova-Scotia*. The *y* in Scioty is a phonetic spelling of one of the several different regional pronunciations of the name Scioto. Pronounced, *Sigh-oh'-tee*. There is a frequent alternate spelling Sciota, *Sigh-oh'-tuh*.

From a geographic perspective, this river in southern Ohio marks the actual boundary between the foothills of the Appalachians and the American Midwest. You can look east and see the knobs and hollows of the Appalachian foothills. You can turn around and look west and see the arable, rolling land that flattens as the Midwest.

There is also a Little Scioto River. It drains some local foothills and joins the Ohio River about ten miles east, upstream from where the Big Scioto meets the Ohio.

I think I once read that the name derives from an Iroquois word that means eye of a deer, and hence is also related to the word "Ohio." But I spent a couple of hours, unable to find that reference again. So don't just go quoting this factoid. Hopefully some reader will do their own scholarship that will either corroborate or disprove this, or maybe come up with a better, more solid explanation.

The Tune

In April of 1972, musicologist and folklorists Carl Fleischauer and Alan Jabbour recorded this tune, among others, from the Hammons family of remote Pocahontas County, West Virginia.

(Continued on page 5)

The Big Scioty (continued from page 4)

All subsequent renditions of this tune seem to trace back to that first field recording of Burl Hammons. Album¹ notes say that Burl got it from his uncle Pete Hammons (b. 1862).

Burl played it at about 111 beats per minute. One YouTube video of Aly Bain with Jay Unger clocked in at about 116 bpm. I have a bluegrass band rendition from 1975, perhaps the earliest bluegrass recording, where the Hutchison Brothers band plays it at 131 bpm. Burl played it somewhat crooked, inserting an occasional repetition of the previous phrase, and in two or three cases just dropping whole phrases. But most folks will play the tune square, an even 16 measures per part.

One of the hooks of this tune, what grabs listeners and musicians, is its syncopation. There is an accent sometimes occurring a half beat after the down beat. The performer does not have to play the note louder, the timing itself just gives it a natural accent. For example, we can see/hear this in measures 2, 4, and 8, and so on. Along with this syncopation, the accompanist may consider not changing the chord until after the lead instrument gets to the melody point that implies the change.

The B part

How people play the chordal accompaniment in the B part goes all over the map. In the source recording, Burl Hammons played the tune unaccompanied. And so groups who wanted to play the tune as an ensemble made the chords up according to whatever their own backgrounds were. The tune is in the key of G. Bluegrassers tend to use an E minor in the B part instead of either one of those C chords. And one band

¹The Library of Congress, Archive of Folk Culture. *The Hammons Family, the traditions of a West Virginia Family and their friends.* Rounder CD 1504/05. Two CDs plus 120 pp. booklet.

even threw in a B minor on top of the D chord, which was even more foreign to my ear, *eeewww!*

While old time music from that region does have modal tunes, I cannot recall where any such tunes in a major key might use one of those relative minor chords that we now often hear being loaded onto The Big Scioty.

This summer, at a small old time jam at The Grass Valley Festival, Barbara Lubanes played the C chords on guitar that I show here (I think), and for the first time in a long time I recognized that it sounded right. I smiled and commented, “C?” And she replied, “Yes, C.” And this week I found Martha Burns playing it that way, too, with Allan Block on a performance of Big Sciota they did at the New Hampshire Folk Festival.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=QzNUNwdyNCg

If what I wrote for measure 16 sounds too final in the first repeat, it's easy enough to substitute measure 8 or measure 4. Also, the first chord in measure 15 is ambiguous; accompanists should consider laying back on both the downbeat and not get too heavy on the change to D at the second beat.



Bob Palasek attended his first SCVFA Jam in 1979, since then, he's been a frequent, then regular participant in the SCVFA jams. In the early days he was a bluegrass mandolinist, guitarist, and lead and tenor singer. Bob took up old time fiddling in earnest in 1991.

Tricia Spencer and Howard Rains

Compiled by Susan Goodis



“These two fiddlers have found their groove and it is rich.”

Bob Buckingham, Fiddler

Tricia and Howard have just completed their California Tour. They warmed up to the Bay Area at a house concert at my home in Mountain View and followed up with a long weekend in Berkeley for the Berkeley Oldtime Music Convention.

Tricia Spencer is a Kansas fiddler who grew up learning the tradition of old time music from her grandparents. At an early age, she was perched up on some stage tapping her foot to the beat of fiddles, banjos, mandolins and guitars. While growing up, her free time was spent traveling to festivals and fiddling contests throughout the Midwest where she learned from the likes of Pete McMahan, Cyril Stinnet, Lymon Enloe, Dwight Lamb, Amos Chase, and Lucy Pierce. Tricia is multi-instrumentalist who has studied with some of the great masters in old time and is highly sought after as a performer, dance fiddler, and instructor.

Howard Rains is a native Texas artist and fiddler from a musical and artistic family whose two obsessions are painting and playing traditional American fiddle music. Howard plays rare, old tunes learned from friends, family, mentors, and old recordings. As much known for his painting as his fiddling, Howard has painted many of the great old time musicians, both living and gone.

Rus Bradburd wrote in Fiddler Magazine

Tricia found herself at an event called Milfest in Kennard, Texas, in the Davy Crockett National Forest. “I showed up in Kennard with my kids,” Spencer recalls, “and I was exhausted but

desperate for a jam. I didn’t know where the campers were jamming, but I saw this guy leaning against a tree while I was playing my fiddle.” A short time later, Howard Rains walked up and joined her on a tune. Rains recalls, “We played ‘Texas’ [an A tune from seminal Appalachian fiddler Henry Reed] and that’s how we met, playing that tune. And we played all night, shared tunes and stories.”

Together, Spencer & Rains have performed and taught nationally and internationally, playing old time fiddle tunes and singing old songs in the style of their home states while also exploring other American regional styles. Both multi-instrumentalists and known for their twin fiddling, they are steeped in traditional music. Their releases “The Old Texas Fiddle Vols. I & II” reintroduce listeners to the pre-contest styles of Texas fiddling while “The Old Man and the Old Woman” shows off their vocal chops. In their unique and powerful style, Howard and Tricia are dedicated to the preservation, performance, and teaching of old time music. spencerandrains.com



Thanks to Howard and Tricia for reminding the world what traditional fiddling was like at dances and social gatherings on the western frontier, before the old styles were swept away by modern jazz- and swing-inflected contest fiddling in the latter part of the 20th century. They preserve the music of their families and of their homes (Texas and Kansas) with love, dedication, and skill.

Brad Leftwich, Old Time Fiddler

Get involved!

- ❖ Amazon purchases – go to Amazon from the SCVFA home page to give a small commission to SCVFA.
- ❖ Come and jam with us every month.
- ❖ Offer assistance 1-2 times a year to transport sound equipment from the storage locker.
- ❖ Play on stage for the SCVFA open mic.

Key: D
♩ = 90

Whiskey Before Breakfast

Traditional
Arr. Pete Showman

(to repeat
tune)

This is how I learned it. I prefer this first (and fifth) measure, similar to the version in the Fiddler's Fakebook, to the perhaps more common "D-F#-A" beginning. Metis fiddler Andy DeJarlis (Northwestern Canada) is credited with popularizing the tune in the 1950s, and some suggest he wrote it (or at least adapted it from earlier tunes). See below for a transcription from his *Backwoods Fiddle Tunes* LP (128 bpm; www.youtube.com/watch?v=7RZ25JBzQR8).

Key: D
♩ = 100

Whiskey Before Breakfast

From Andy DeJarlis's playing;
transcr. and arr. by Pete Showman

(to repeat
tune)

Arranged and typeset in ABC Plus by Pete Showman. Rev. 1: 8/20/2016.

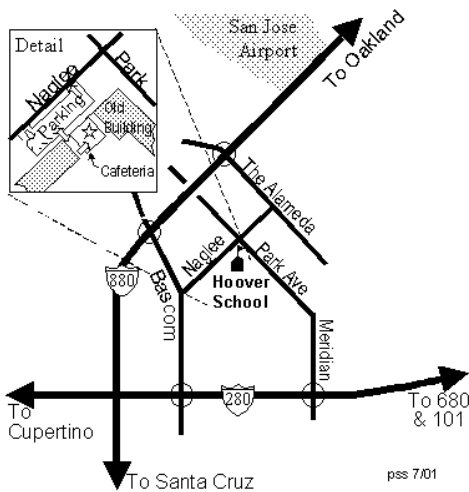
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SCVFA Jam on the first Sunday of each month.
Location: Hoover Middle School, 1635 Park Ave.,
San Jose. The school is at the corner of Naglee and
Park. Cafeteria parking is on the Naglee side.

**Next Jam: Sunday Oct. 2nd, 1-5 pm
at Hoover Middle School**

**Damaged or Missing Issue? Call us,
or email to: [newsletter \[at\] scvfa.org](mailto:newsletter@scvfa.org)**



“Here, we played in the French Quarter at Burning Man. As long as there was music, we were fed sweets.”
(Photo: Susan Goodis)

Burning Man is an annual gathering that takes place at Black Rock City—a temporary community erected in the Black Rock Desert in Nevada.

❖ Photographers ... or “wanna-be’s” - share your talent by photographing memorable times at SCVFA events.
Send to Pat Tanti at newsletter@fiddlers.org.