**Nutmeg Dulcimer Club - March 2020 - Song History**

**BILE THEM CABBAGE DOWN**. AKA ‑ "Boil Them Cabbage Down," "Bake Them Hoecakes Brown." AKA and see “Carve Dat Possum [1],” “Possum Pie.” Old‑Time, Breakdown. USA; Oklahoma, Arkansas, southwestern Pa., northeast Alabama. D Major (Bayard, Thede): A Major (Beisswenger & McCann, Reiner, Ruth, Sweet): G Major (Silberberg). Standard or AEae (McMichen) tunings. One part: AABB (Sweet): AA’BB’CC’ (Beisswenger & McCann): AABBCCDD’ (Ruth). The word 'bile' means 'boil'. Ralph Rinzler traces the tune to an early English country dance “Smiling Polly,” in print in 1765. “Bile Them Cabbage Down” is commonly found in beginning fiddle instructors and in ditty‑books, and is "a negro reel tune which has become universally popular among white square dance musicians” (Alan Lomax). African-American origins are evident in collections of White, Scarborough and Brown—all from black informants. Tennessee banjoist and entertainer Uncle Dave Macon recorded one of the first versions of the song in 1924; that same year Georgia fiddler and entertainer Fiddlin’ John Carson, and Georgia guitarist and singer Riley Puckett both separately recorded the tune. Clayton McMichen put together a virtuoso version of this tune to use in competition at various major fiddle contests. Also played by Arthur Smith on his radio broadcasts (Frank Maloy). The tune was Clayton McMichen's favorite contest tune, by his own account (Charles Wolfe). Richardson, in "American Mountain Songs", pg. 88., thought the tune was derived from "Oh Susanna." The title appears in a list of traditional Ozark Mountain fiddle tunes compiled by folklorist/musicologist Vance Randolph, published in 1954. Cauthen (1990) found evidence the tune was commonly known in northeast Alabama from its mention in two sources: reports of the De Kalb County Annual (Fiddlers') Convention 1926‑31, and in the book Sourwood Tonic and Sassafras Tea (where it was listed as one of the tunes played by turn of the century Etowah County fiddler George Cole). Richard Nevins believes the tune was not known in the Mt. Airy, N.C., musical community until the advent of the phonograph. Beisswenger & McCann (2008) note that Ozark fiddlers typically employ the “Nashville shuffle” bowing pattern when playing this tune, and that it is often used as the vehicle for contest fiddlers to show off crowd-pleasing virtuostic techniques.

**FLY AROUND MY PRETTY LITTLE MISS**. AKA and see “Blue Eyed Girl/Gal,” “Blue Eyes Run Me Crazy,” “Fare Thee Well My Pretty Little Miss,” “Pretty Little Pink,” “Susannah/Suzanna Gal [1],” "Western Country." Old‑Time, Breakdown and Song. USA; Virginia, North Carolina. D Major: A Major (Silberberg). Standard tuning. AB. See also related tunes "Fare Thee Well My Pretty Little Miss," "Your Blue Eyes Drive Me Crazy." Among the several early recordings of the tune was a version by the Ashe County, North Carolina, string band Frank Blevins and His Tar Hell Rattlers, a name made up on the spot at the 1927 Columbia recording session in Atlanta for 16-year-old fiddler Frank Blevins, his older brother and guitarist Ed Blevins and banjo player Fred Miller. The band’s playing was inspired by a few shots of corn liquor from a convenient jug.

**MAIRI'S WEDDING**. AKA – “Mari’s Wedding.” AKA and see “Jack Sweeney’s [3],” "Lewis Bridal Song." Scottish, Scottish Measure (4/4 time). Scotland, Hebrides. G Major. Standard tuning. AABB. The tune is from the Hebrides Islands (the alternate title refers to the Isle of Lewis) which lie off the north coast of Scotland and was first printed in Marjory Kennedy-Fraser’s Songs of the Hebrides (1909). It was written originally in Scots Gaelic and was translated into English a year later by Sir Hugh Robertson. There is nothing that particularly distinguishes this tune as Scottish, notes Emmerson (1972), save for the "hint of Rant in the first two phrases." Nevertheless, it has had remarkable longevity, and is popular in traditional circles to this day. An article in the Glasgow Daily Record by Stephen Houston claimed that the song "Mairi's Wedding" was originally written for Mary McNiven by her friend Johnny Bannerman (in Gaelic) and was first played to her at the Old Highlanders Institute in Glasgow’s Elmbank Streeet for the Mod of 1935 (where she won the prize for singing). The article states that although the song was written for her, it was not on the occasion of her wedding, but rather for her birthday. In fact, she was unmarried at the time, remained so until she wed Skye-born sea captain John Campbell 6 years later. The article (date unknown) was published the day before Mary's 90th birthday.

**ASH GROVE** (Llwyn Onn). AKA ‑ "Ashtree Grove"?? AKA and see “Llewellyn,” "Sir Watkin William Wynn." Welsh (originally), Scottish, New England; Waltz. C Major (Laufman): G Major (Johnson). Standard tuning. AB (Kerr): AAB (Johnson, Laufman). The air is considered by some to be an early 18th century melody from Wales, perhaps because it is attributed to that country in Gow’s Strathspey Reels (book 4, pg. 24), where it appears as "Sir Watkin William Wynn." In fact the earliest Welsh printing is not until Jones’s Bardic Museum (1802), where it is given that it was named after ‘Mr. Jones’s mansion near Wrexham’. Robin Huw Bowen says it is played in the form ‘theme and variations’, a form poular with Welsh harpists of the early 18th century. It appears under different guises in period publications and can be found in Gay’s Beggar’s Opera (1729) and in the repertoire of Irish harper Turlough O’Carolan (1670-1738). “The Ash Grove” was used as a vehicle for English morris dancing, and various words were set to it, bawdy and otherwise.