

Bitter Creek

The musical score for "Bitter Creek" is written in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. It consists of three sections: A, B, and C. Section A (measures 1-8) features a melody of eighth notes with chords G, C, G, C, G, and D7. Section B (measures 9-16) features a melody of eighth notes with chords G, C, G, C, G, C, G, and C. Section C (measures 17-24) features a melody of eighth notes with chords G, D7, G, G, Am, G, C, G, D7, G, C, G, C, G, and G. The score is presented on a single treble clef staff with a key signature of one sharp (F#).

A
G C G C G D7

B
G C G C G C G C

C
G D7 G G Am G C G D7 G C G C G G

"Bitter Creek", also known as "Bitter Creek Breakdown", is an American reel in cut time and G Major. The parts are played AABB (Brody, Phillips), ABB'C (Harper), ABCDD (Devil's Box) or AABBCDD (Christeson).

The tune was recorded in Dallas, Texas, for Okeh Records at the end of November, 1929, by Texas fiddler Oscar Harper (1888-1952), accompanied by guitar player Doc Harper. In 1942 Harper was recorded playing "Bitter Creek" by John Lomax for the Library of Congress.

Although "Bitter Creek" was a local Texas tune, it was popularized by fiddler Tommy Jackson and quickly became widely disseminated. Texas fiddler Benny Thomasson also had an influential version, played in five parts.

Bitter Creek, Nolan County, Texas, is a ghost town and no longer exists, although it is thought to have been located south of present Sweetwater. In 1923 oil was discovered there, leading to its brief existence; by the 1950's only five residents remained.

The tune was printed in Brody's **Fiddler's Fakebook** (1983), R.P. Christeson's **Old Time Fiddler's Repertory, vol. 1** (1973), **The Devil's Box** (1988), Martin's **Benny Thomasson Fiddle Transcriptions** (1997) and Phillips' **Traditional American Fiddle Tunes, vol. 1** (1994).

It was recorded by Benny Thomasson on **Country Fiddlin' from the Big State** (1970), Art Stamper on **The Lost Fiddler** (c. 1982), Oscar & Doc Harper (et al) on **Dallas Bound: Old-Time Texas String Bands, vol. 2** (the four-part version of the tune), Tommy Jackson on **Square Dances Without Calls**, Oscar & Doc Harper (1929), Clark Kessinger on **Old Time Music**, Benny Thomasson on **Say Old Man Can You Play the Fiddle?**.