

Black Mountain Rag

The musical score for "Black Mountain Rag" is written in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. It consists of six staves of music. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a 4/4 time signature. The music starts with a repeat sign and a first ending bracket. Chord markings include G, C7, and G. The second staff continues the melody with a second ending bracket and chord markings C7, G, G, C, and G. The third staff features a section labeled 'C' with chord markings D7, G, G, D7, G, and C. The fourth staff has chord markings F, C, G, C, and D7. The fifth staff has chord markings G, D7, and G. The sixth staff shows a final chord of G. The score concludes with a double bar line and a final chord of G.

"Black Mountain Rag" is an old-time bluegrass rag in A Major (Brody) or G Major. The parts are played AA'BB'CC'. It is often played in AEac# or GDac fiddle tuning.

It been called "One of the most popular fiddle tunes in modern history".

When we first heard Doc Watson's guitar version, we would have given anything to have had that ability. It was claimed by fiddler Leslie Keith (who is featured on the very first recordings of the Stanley Brothers), who said he wrote it in the early 1940's after taking "a little bit of" the west Alabama group The Stripling Brothers' recording "The Lost Child", and "a little of two or three of the Carter Family's tunes". He named it "Black Mountain Blues" after the name of a mountain in Cumberland County, Tenn., however, "The Lost Child" is the basic melody for the tune, although some credit "The Lost Indian" as the ancestral tune. Curly Fox changed the name from "Black Mountain Blues" to "Black Mountain Rag" on his 1947 recording for King, which eventually sold over 600,000 copies (Charles Wolfe, **The Devil's Box**, Dec. 1982, pp. 3-12).

In 1952 the Stripling Brothers were recorded in the field by Ray Browne, on a collecting trip for the Library of Congress and although they had never recorded "Black Mountain Rag" commercially, Browne did record them playing it that day.

Several 'black mountains' have been suggested as the one referred to in the title, including one of the tallest peaks east of the Mississippi, Mount Mitchell. Mitchell was apparently called by various names in the past, beginning with Grey Eagle (due to a rock formation on its side). Later it became known as lack Mountain because of the dark appearance of the balsams at the top.

The tune appears in a list of "traditional" fiddle tunes common to the Ozark Mountains, compiled by musicologist/folklorist Vance Randolph in 1954. It was also a favorite "trick" fiddling tune in the Texas tradition.

It was printed in Brody's **Fiddler's Fakebook** (1983).

It was recorded on **Will the Circle Be Unbroken** (1972), The White Brothers on **The White Brothers, Live in Sweden** (1976), Doc Watson on **Doc Watson** (1964) and **The Essential Doc Watson** (1973), Benny Thomasson on **Texas Hoedown** (1965), The Dillardards with Byron Berline on **Pickin' and Fiddlin'** (1965), Country Gazette on **Country Gazette, Live** (1976), Vassar Clements on **Superbow** (1975), Kenny Baker on **Baker's Dozen** (2008), New Lost City Ramblers on **New Lost City Ramblers, vol. 3** (1962), Curly Fox (78RPM) {1946} and Lonnie Robertson on **Country Fiddling**.