
"Callahan", also known as "The Last of Callahan", "Callahan Reel", "Last of the Callahans" and "Old Sport" is an old-time breakdown known in Arkansas, Oklahoma, West Virginia, Virginia, Kentucky in D Major. The parts are played AABB (Thede) or AA'BB'CC (Brody, Reiner & Anick).

Thede says that fiddlers in Arkansas and Oklahoma attribute the tune (as in the "MacPherson's Farewell" story) to an outlaw who, just before being hanged, requested to play the fiddle one last time ... "In his standing position he played an unnamed fiddle tune and then handed the fiddle down to one of the bystanders. Justice was meted out...and the likeness of the tune became "Last of Callahan". Reiner & Anick (1989) say the first published report on the tune is from 1912, which relates the story of a Kentucky outlaw named Callahan who was executed around the year 1835; only in this account he played his tune while sitting on his awaiting coffin and when finished broke the fiddle over his knee before stepping up to the gallows. The tale is an example of a traditional tune-story that goes far back in musical tradition, in the case of the fiddle at least, to the old Scottish song "MacPherson's Farewell" and in America is similar to the legend behind the musically related West Virginia/Virginia tunes "Camp Chase", "Joe Coleman's March" (Pa.) and "George Booker". A Cajun version of the legend is attached to the tunes "Guilbeau's Waltz" and "*Valse a Napoleon*".

The title appears in a list of traditional Ozark Mountain fiddle tunes (as "Last of the Callahans") compiled by musicologist/folklorist Vance Randolph, published in 1954.

There are many variations of this tune and the one given here is rather basic. There is a short measure between the B and C parts. There is a phrase in the C part that resembles phrases in the B part of "Sandy River Belle".

It was in the repertoire of Kentucky fiddlers Luther Strong and Bill Stepp (who recorded for the Library of Congress).

It was printed in Brody's **Fiddler's Fakebook** (1983), R.P. Christeson's **Old Time Fiddlers Repertory, vol. 2** (1984), Reiner & Anick's **Old-Time Fiddling Across America** (1989), Thede's **The Fiddle Book** (1967).

It was recorded by Mike Cross on **Child Prodigy** (1979), Highwoods String Band on **Fire on the Mountain**, Fuzzy Mountain String Band (1972) (Learned from a West Virginia source via revival fiddler Dave Milefsky), Roane County Ramblers (eastern Tenn. as "Callahan Rag" {1929}), Clyde Davenport on **Clydescope: Rare & Beautiful Tunes from the Cumberland Plateau** (1986), Fiddlin' Doc Roberts & Asa Martin (1930), Dave Spilkia on **Old Time Friends** (1987), Dykes Magic City Trio (eastern Tenn.) (1927), George Lee Hawkins on **Traditional Fiddle Music of Kentucky, vol. 1** (1997), Fiddlin Cowan Powers (Russell County, S.W. Va. {1924}), Jim Taylor on **The Civil War Collection** (1996) (appears as "McLanahan's March"), Fiddling Powers and Family as "Callahan's Reel" (1924).