

The Cuckoo's Nest

The musical score is written in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 4/4 time signature. It consists of four staves of music. The first staff is labeled 'A' and contains the first part of the melody. The second staff continues the melody and includes a triplet of eighth notes. The third staff is labeled 'B' and contains the second part of the melody. The fourth staff continues the melody and includes a triplet of eighth notes. Chord symbols (A, Em7, D) are placed above the staff to indicate the harmonic accompaniment.

"The Cuckoo's Nest", also known as "Good Ax Elve", "All Aboard", "Forty Pounds of Feathers in a Hornet's Nest" is an old-time reel known in southwestern Pa., West Virginia and northeastern Kentucky in A Mixolydian. The parts are played AB.

Bayard (1944) identifies these Pennsylvania collected versions as derived from the Irish original, some more true to the original than others and notes that it enjoyed great popularity in southwestern Pa. His (A) version (from Emery Martin) represented the prevailing one in that region and he found published sets which indicated that this version was also known elsewhere. He gave a children's game rhyme collected in western Pennsylvania that ran:

Wire, briar, limberlock,
Three geese in a flock,
One flew east, and one flew west,
And one flew over the cuckoo's nest.

but said there was no proof that the rhyme was associated locally with this melody. The Pennsylvania versions differ from most Irish versions in that the latter often have three parts, of which parts two and three correspond to parts one and two in the Martin (western Pennsylvania) version. Bayard (1944) says "it has survived in this country where the first part as given in Irish sets does not occur and is sometimes given the position of first part in the western Pennsylvania sets". Further differences are the American sets are more strongly mixolydian in character than many Irish ones and while the Irish tune was sometimes used as a song air the American versions were not and it remained a dance tune there. Another version is in **The American Veteran Fifer**, No. 8.

This version is the one collected from Emery Martin in Dunbar, Pa., October 14, 1943. (He learned it from his father).

The banjo tablature come from Josh Turknnett's Brainjo website.

It was printed in Bayard's **Hill Country Tunes** (1944) and Bayard's **Dance to the Fiddle** (1981). It was recorded by Ed Haley in his home (1946 & 1947). These recordings were later released by Rounder records as **Parkersburg Landing** and **Grey Eagle**.