

Fortune

Musical score for "Fortune" in D major, 4/4 time. The score consists of five staves of music.

Staff 1: Melodic line starting with a D chord. Chords: D, A, D, A7.

Staff 2: Melodic line continuing from Staff 1. Chords: D, G, A7. First ending bracket over the final two measures.

Staff 3: Melodic line starting with a D chord. Chords: D.

Staff 4: Melodic line continuing from Staff 3. Chords: A7, D, G, A7.

Staff 5: First ending (1. D) and second ending (2. D) brackets over the final two measures.

"Fortune", also known as "Once I Had a Fortune" is an old-time song and breakdown that was popular around Galax, Va. It is in D Major and played in standard or ADae fiddle tunings. The parts are played AB (Silberberg) or AABB (Brody, Krassen, Kuntz, Phillips).

Sometimes called a Blue-Ridge Mountain standard, it is found in western North Carolina and southwest Virginia, but has become particularly identified with Galax/Hillsville, southwestern Virginia area style bands. It was, for example, one of the few tunes recorded by legendary Galax, Va. fiddler Emmett Lundy. Galax, Va. storekeeper, banjo and fiddle player John Rector was recorded playing "Fortune" in 1926 by collector John Lomax.

The banjo tablature is by John Letscher who says "it is from Tommy Jarrell, Kirk Sutphin, Brad Leftwich and many others. It is a deservedly well-traveled tune."

Mt. Airy, North Carolina, fiddler Tommy Jarrell (1901-1986) said of the melody:

I can recollect hearing my daddy play it as far back as I can recollect. I don't know where that started from...it was more just an old, well, a flat foot dance tune I'd say.

Some lyrics sung to this tune:

Tommy Jarrell:

Once I had a fortune, I put it in my trunk,
I lost it all a-gambling one night when I was drunk.

The Backwoods Band:

Once I had a fortune but now I've lost it all,
Drinkin' and a gambling and playin' at the ball.

I'm packin' up my suitcase and now I say goodbye,
I'm gonna live a gamblin' man until the day I die.

It was printed in Brody's **Fiddler's Fakebook** (1983), Krassen's **Appalachian Fiddle** (1973), Kuntz's **Ragged but Right** (1987), Leftwich's **Round Peak Style Clawhammer Banjo** (1999), Milliner & Koken's **Milliner-Koken Collection of American Fiddle Tunes** (2011), Phillips' **Traditional American Fiddle Tunes, vol. 1** (1994), Lamancusa's **The Gettysburg Collection of Old-Time Fiddle Tunes** (2021) and Silberberg's **Tunes I Learned at Tractor Tavern** (2002).

It was recorded by The Bogtrotters on **The Original Bogtrotters** (Wade, Crockett, and Fields Ward), Otis Burris on **Virginia Breakdown**, Tommy Jarrell on **Pickin' On Tommy's Porch** (1984), The Camp Creek Boys, Roger Sprung on **Bluegrass Blast**, Smokey Valley Boys on **Music of North Carolina** (1978), Andy Cahan on **Old Time Friends** (1987), Bruce Molsky on **Lost Boy** (1996), Rob Tate on **Far in the Mountains, vols. 1 & 2** (2002), Pete Parish on **Clawhammer Banjo**, Fred Cockerham on **High Atmosphere**, The Backwoods Band on **Jes' Fine** (1980) and Barry Poss on **Galax '73**.