

Judge Parker

Musical score for "Judge Parker" in G major, 4/4 time. The score consists of five staves of music.

Staff 1: Marked with a boxed **A**. Chords: G, C, G, C, G, C, G. First ending bracket.

Staff 2: Chords: C, G, C, G, C, G, D7. First ending bracket.

Staff 3: Marked with a boxed **B**. Chords: G, D7, C, D7. Second ending bracket.

Staff 4: Chords: C, G, D7, C, D7.

Staff 5: Chords: C, G.

"Judge Parker" also known as "Old Judge Parker", "Judge Parker Take These Shackles Off of Me", "Take the Shackles Off" or "Take Your Shackles Off of Me" is an American reel in cut time and G Major. The parts are played AABB (Thede) or AA'BB' (Beisswenger & McCann). The infamous "Hanging Judge" Isaac Charles Parker, of Fort Smith, Arkansas, in the twenty-one years between 1875 and 1896 sentenced 164 men to the gallows. A United States District Judge for part of Arkansas and about 70,000 square miles of untamed land to the west (at that time including the Indian Territory which later became the state of Oklahoma), his was the sole court for the region until 1889, when it became possible to appeal to the United States Supreme Court. The Parker name became iconic for judges and was used frequently to represent hard justice; thus the tune title probably does not refer to Isaac Parker himself, with the plea "Judge Parker, Take These Shackles Off of Me" being condensed to "Judge Parker".

As with many American fiddle tunes, variants are sometimes quite distanced from one another. The first strain of Dick Hutchison's blues-tinged version (see Milliner-Koken) is similar to the second strain of Frank Maloy's version (Devil's Box), but the other strains diverge.

The banjo tablature is by John Letscher. His comment:

First heard from Tom, Brad and Alice. Just a little crooked, but interestingly so.

It was printed in Beisswenger & McCann's **Ozarks Fiddle Tunes** (2008) (appears as "Old Judge Parker"), Milliner & Koken's **Milliner-Koken Collection of American Fiddle Tunes** (2011) (appears as "Judge Parker, Take These Shackles Off of Me") and Thede's **The Fiddle Book** (1967).

It was recorded by Tom, Brad & Alice on **We'll Die in the Pig Pen Fighting**, Lymon Enloe on **Fiddle Tunes I Recall** (1977), Uncle Dick Hutchinson on **Sharecropper's Blues** (2015), Dick Hutchinson on **More Old Time Fiddlin'** (1969), Noel Scott on **Traditional Fiddle Music of the Ozarks, vol. 3: Down in the Border Counties** (2000), and Bill Northcutt on **Front Porch Fiddling** (1973).