

Katy Bar the Door

The musical score for "Katy Bar the Door" is written in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. It consists of five staves of music. The first staff begins with a boxed section labeled 'A'. The second staff contains a first ending bracket labeled '1.' above the staff. The third staff contains a second ending bracket labeled '2.' above the staff, followed by a boxed section labeled 'B'. The fourth and fifth staves continue the melody with various chords and repeat signs.

Chords indicated in the score: D, G, A7, D, G, A7, G, A7, D, G, A7, D, G, A7, D.

"Katy Bar the Door", also known as "Katie, Bar the Door" is an American reel in cut time and G Major. The parts are played AA'BB'.

The tune is known from the banjo and fiddle playing of Grayson County, southwest Virginia musician Roscoe Parish (1897-1984).

The phrase "Katie, bar the door" is an Americanism that roughly means "Watch out, there's trouble ahead and you'd better be ready". The phrase can be traced in print to the latter 19th century, where it appears in the newspaper **The Louisiana Democrat** of Alexandria, Louisiana of October, 1872:

The Custom House Packet, with the Custom House colored band, U.S. Marshal Packard, in command, with the old flag triumphantly kissing the breeze of old Red, the band playing "Katie, Bar the Door" and with waving rags touched the wharf and proceeded to land her precious cargo.

There are several speculations about the origin of the phrase, some dating to incidents in the British Isles. William and Mary Morris's book **The Dictionary of Word and Phrase Origins** suggests that it derives from a traditional ballad, most probably the medieval Scots one usually entitled "Get Up and Bar the Door".

The tune is usually played as an instrumental, although these words have been collected with it:

Katy bar your door,
Katy bar your door;
The Indians jumping all around your house,
Katy bar your door.

The banjo tablature is by John Letscher. His notes:

From Rayna Gellert's **Starch and Iron** CD mostly. First learned from playing with John Lamancusa. Has a "Grandpa's Hat" feel to it. Not meaning what's in the hat.

The reference is to "Fire in the Log", also known as "Who Shit in Grandpa's Hat".

It was recorded by The Harmony Sisters on **The Harmony Sisters: The Early Years** (1999), Roscoe Parish on **The Old Time Way** (1986. Originally recorded in 1974) and Rayna Gellert & Susie Goering on **Starch and Iron** (2012).