

Leather Britches

Part A

Part B

Part C

"Leather Britches," a well-known reel in British and American tradition, is probably Scottish in origin. An eighteenth-century Scottish version in Gow's *Collection of Slow Airs, Strathspeys and Reels* (ca. 1795) is called "Lord Macdonald's Reel," the name under which it usually appears (with or without "lord") in nineteenth-century tune collections. **One Thousand Fiddle Tunes**, p. 22, is a typical set. The title "Leather Britches" (or "Breeches") is primarily an American title; it appears in sets from Pennsylvania (Bayard, **Hill Country Tunes**, #1) and West Virginia (Artley, **The West Virginia Country Fiddler**, p. 38) to points west and is now widely distributed on the contest fiddle circuit. But there may be an Irish connection to the title. In the Appalachian South the term "Leather Britches" is also used to describe string beans strung on strings and hung up on porches to dry.

Most printed versions have two strains, but Henry Reed's version is not alone in adding a third strain that essentially repeats the low strain an octave higher.

This plays nicely in medleys with:

"Barlow Knife"

"Big Sciota"

"Bill Cheatum"

"Old Mother Flanagan"

"Sandy River Belle"

which are also in this section.

I don't know where I picked up this version. I suspect Mike Seeger had something to do with it. One day I picked up the banjo and it sort of played itself.