

Little Burnt Potato

The musical score for "Little Burnt Potato" is presented in five staves. The first staff begins with a boxed letter 'A' above the first measure. The second and third staves are grouped by a bracket labeled '1.' and '2.' respectively, representing the first ending. The fourth and fifth staves are grouped by a bracket labeled 'B' and '2.' respectively, representing the second ending. Chord symbols (D, G, A7) are placed above the notes. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 6/8.

"Little Burnt Potato", also known as "Burnt Potato" or "Frank's Two-Step" is a Canadian, American, English, Irish jig in D Major. The parts are played AB (Begin), AABB (Brody) or AA'BB' (Barnes, Bayard, Carlin, Messer, Miller & Perron, Perlman, Phillips).

"Little Burnt Potato" was popularized by Canadian Maritime radio and TV fiddler Don Messer. The tune has been characterized as Irish in origin, although in fact it is the composition of Canadian fiddler Colin J. Boyd, who was himself of Scottish descent. Boyd was born in West Lakeville, Nova Scotia, in 1891, and learned to play the fiddle as a child, inspired by his uncle Hughie MacGillivray (whose fiddle he inherited). Like many in the community, he learned and spoke Gaelic. Due to a declining economy, Boyd found work in 1909 in Ontario, then moved to Boston for the years 1911-1916 where he studied violin and learned to read music. It was during his Boston years that he composed "Little Burnt Potato". Boyd had the distinction of being the first Nova Scotian fiddler to record in 1932, in Montreal for the Brunswick label. He later settled in Ontario, and passed away in 1975.

"Little Burnt Potato" is Boyd's adaptation of an old Scottish jig passed on to him by Dan "The Ridge" MacDonald, formerly of Mabou, Cape Breton, and then Antigonish, Nova Scotia. It was printed in Barnes' **English Country Dance Tunes, vol. 2** (2005), Bayard's **Dance to the Fiddle** (1982), Begin's **Fiddle Music in the Ottawa Valley: Dawson Girdwood** (1985), Brody's **Fiddler's Fakebook** (1983), Carlin's **Master Collection** (1984), Messer's **Anthology of Favorite Fiddle Tunes** (1980), Miller & Perron's **New England Fiddlers Repertoire** (1983), Miskoe & Paul's **Fiddle Tunes of Omer Marcoux** (1994), Perlman's **The Fiddle Music of Prince Edward Island** (1996) and Phillips' **Traditional American Fiddle Tunes, vol. 2** (1995). It was recorded by Don Messer & His Islanders (1943), The Fireside String Band on **Square Dance Tunes for a Yankee Caller** (1976), Rodney and Randy Miller on **Castles in the Air**, William Santos on **Ole Time Fiddling** (1976) and Colin J. Boyd on **Pioneer Scottish Fiddler** (1979).