

Old Reel of Eight

The musical score for "Old Reel of Eight" is presented in five staves. The first two staves represent the A part, each containing a 9-measure phrase. The third, fourth, and fifth staves represent the B part, each containing a 9-measure phrase. The key signature is D Major (one sharp) and the time signature is cut time (C/2). Chords are indicated above the notes: D, G, A7, and D. Section B includes first and second endings, and a 3/2 time signature change.

"Old Reel of Eight" is a Canadian reel in cut time and D Major. The parts are played AABB. It is a 'crooked' tune of Métis origin. There are nine measures in the A part and measures of 3/2 inserted at two places in the B part.

The Métis are the descendants of the French, English, Scottish and Irish fur trappers and their native wives in the 17th century. In Canada, the Métis are one of three major groups of Indigenous peoples that were legally recognized in the Constitution Act of 1982, the other two groups being the First Nations and Inuit. The Métis live mainly in the prairie provinces of Alberta, Manitoba and Saskatchewan.

"Reel of Eight" is the name of a dance for four couples, with dancers facing each other in two lines (one of men, one of women). Anne Lederman continues the description: "Each alternate couple moves (man forwards, lady backwards) to create a new set of four couples beside the first. The dance proceeds with an alternation of jigging on the spot to one part of the tune, and 'travelling' on the other in a figure of 8 pattern with the corresponding couple in the other set." A number of tunes were called "Reel of Eight" in association with dance whose names (if any) were lost in the tradition. "Old Reel of Eight" was recorded in the field from the playing of Métis fiddler Gilbert Anderson (1934-2011, Edmonton, Alberta), but it was well-known among older Métis fiddlers.

It was recorded by Gilbert Anderson on **Drops of Brandy** (2001). Molsky's Mountain Drifters on **Molsky's Mountain Drifters** (2016) and John Arcand on *La Celebration '92* (1992. Cassette).