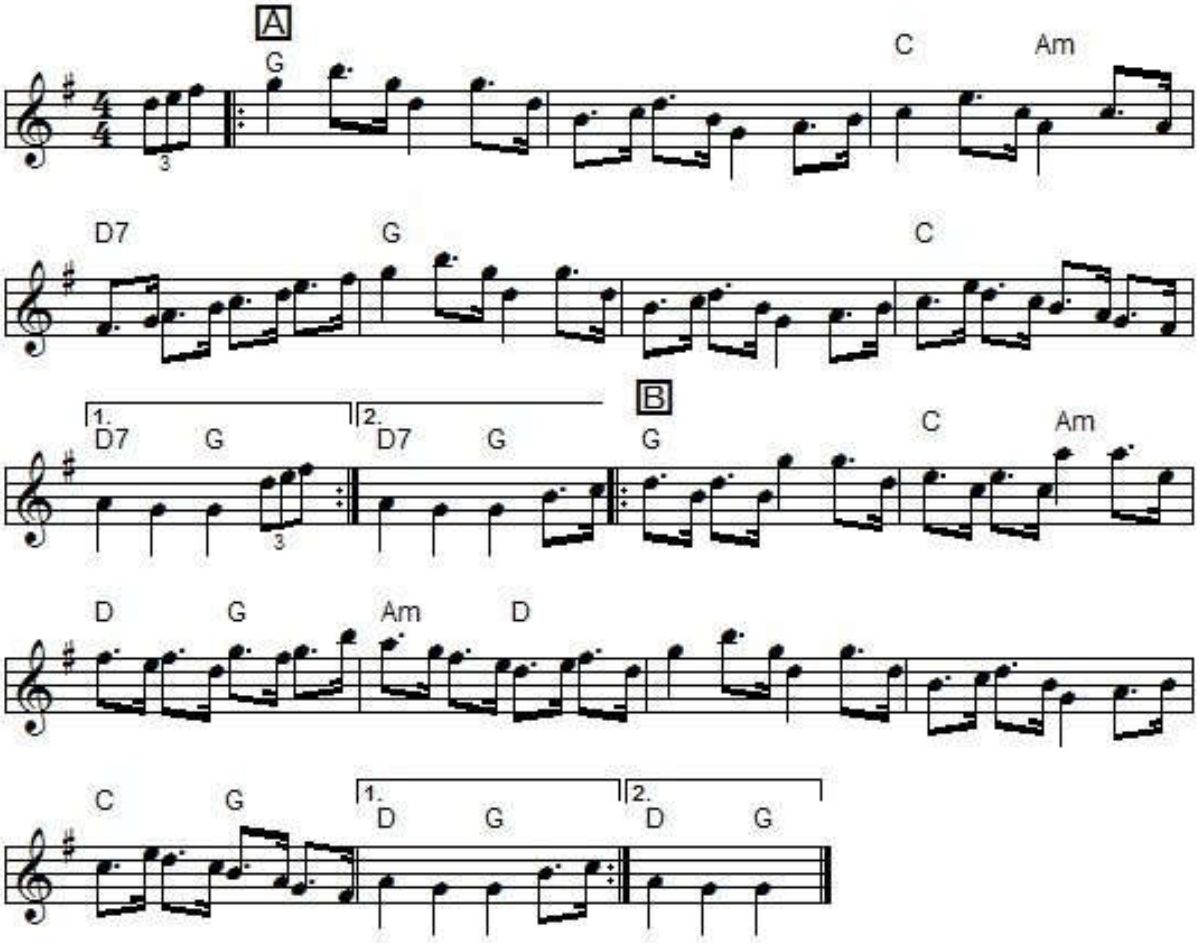
The Steamboat Hornpipe



"The Steamboat Hornpipe", also known as "The Steam Boat", "The Goodnatured Man" and "Tim the Turncoat" is an English and Scottish hornpipe in G Major and occasionally A Major. It is usually played AABB but occasionally without repeats AB.

It is a popular English hornpipe. The first part is equivalent to the first part of the first several versions of Bayard's (1981) Pennsylvania-collected "Chapultepec". Paul Cranford notes the tune was played in G Major by Cape Breton fiddler Johnny Wilmot under the title "Tim the Turncoat", the key and title under which it appears in **O'Neill's 1001 Gems**.

"The Steamboat Hornpipe" was in the repertoire of the 19th century Tyneside, Northumberland, fiddler and composer James Hill (c. 1815-c. 1860), to whom it is sometimes attributed, although this has not been ascertained. Hill was Scottish-born, but lived most of his life in Gateshead, Northumberland, and was known as the 'Paganini of the hornpipe' for his famous hornpipe compositions. Not much is known about him, although he appears to have been a popular tavern fiddler, sometime publican, and sports enthusiast.

The first half of the tune is employed in an untitled hornpipe in the **Ellis Knowles Manuscript**, c. 1847, from Radcliffe, Lancashire, England (printed in the **Plain Brown Tune Book**).

Similarly, the first part of the tune appears in the 1831 music manuscript of George Spencer (Leeds, England). Hill's heyday was in the 1840's to early 1850's, and it may be that the first part of the melody was in circulation prior to his "improvements" (Hill was also apparently not one to discourage attributions of popular melodies to himself).

It was printed in Cole's **1000 Fiddle Tunes** (1940), Cranford's **Winston Fitzgerald** (1997), Kennedy's **Fiddlers Tune Book**, Kerr's **Merry Melodies**, MacDonald's **The Skye Collection** (1887), Miller's **Fiddler's Throne** (2004), Raven's **English Country Dance Tunes** (1984) and Ryan's **Mammoth Collection** (1883).

It was recorded by The Boys of the Lough on **The West of Ireland** (1999), Tom McConville on **Fiddler's Fancy** and the Old Swan Band on **Swan-Upmanship** (2004).