

Two Tunes from Memory

Elmer Campbell's Barn Dance

Inglewood, Ontario, had its share of square dances when I was growing up, but by the time I was old enough to participate the dances were dying out. However, since my father was a musician, and I was learning to play, I got in on some sessions with the old-time fiddlers. One tune which stuck in my mind, and which I've never heard anywhere else, was associated with Elmer Campbell, clerk at the hardware store and resident of nearby Campbell's Cross. He played it for the "barn dance," which I recall as being a circle dance with changing partners (what we'd call a "circle mixer" at our contra dances nowadays), and the tune was always called "Elmer Campbell's Barn Dance." (I don't know whether Elmer composed it or just played it a lot.)

The other Inglewood fiddler was Harry Gibson, the local blacksmith. Recently I came across a tape of a session in which Harry participated along with my father and me; I've tentatively fixed the date at 1964, based on the instruments I was playing and the people whose voices are heard on the tape. In the course of the session Harry played "Elmer Campbell's Barn Dance." This transcription is made from that taping.

Ian Bell, former member of Muddy York and knowledgeable on old Ontario fiddle tunes, tells me he's never heard this one, but it's typical of tunes that were used for barn dances in the early 20th century. —JL



Though a quadrille seems to me as dreary as a funeral, yet to look at a polka, I own, is pleasant. See! Brown and Emily Bustleton are whirling around as light as two pigeons over a dovecot; Tozer, with that wicked whisking little Jones, spins along as merrily as a May-day sweep; Miss Joy is the partner of the happy Fred Sparks; and even Miss Ranville is pleased, for the faultless Captain Grig is toe and heel with her. Beaumonts, with a rather nonchalant air, takes a turn with Miss Trouter, at which Lord Methuselah's wrinkled chops quiver uneasily. See! how the big Baron de Bobwitz spins lightly, and gravely, and gracefully round; and lo! the Frenchman staggering under the weight of Miss Bunion, who tramps and kicks like a young cart-horse.

But the most awful sight which met my view in this dance was the unfortunate Miss Little, to whom fate had assigned THE MULLIGAN as her partner. Like a pavid kid in the talons of an eagle, that young creature trembled in his huge Milesian grasp. Disdaining the recognized form of the dance, the Irish chieftain accommodated the music to the dance of his own green land, and performed a double shuffle jig, carrying Miss Little along with him. Miss Ranville and her Captain shrank back amazed; Miss Trouter skirried out of his way into the protection of the astonished Lord Methuselah; Fred Sparks could hardly move for laughing; while, on the contrary, Miss Joy was quite in pain for poor Sophy Little. As Canaillard and the Poetess came up, The Mulligan, in the height of his enthusiasm, lunged out a kick which sent Miss Bunion howling; and concluded with a tremendous Hurroo!—a war-cry which caused every Saxon heart to shudder and quail. William Makepeace Thackeray (London, England, 1848), *Mrs. Perkins's Ball*

My Aunt Sally Ann

I have memories of my mother and my aunt dancing the schottisse around the kitchen while my father and I played this tune, but it comes out of my memory as more like a strathspey than a schottisse. (Not that we knew the term "strathspey" in those days.) This was in Kearney, Ontario (my mother's home town), so likely the tune was popular in that area in my parents' younger days. We called it "My Aunt Sally Ann," and sang a couplet to the Δ part:

My Aunt Sally Ann is good enough for any man,
My Aunt Sally Ann is good enough for you!

Years later my bandmate, Dick Lofthouse, found the tune in a couple of Scottish music books, under the title "Loudon's Bonny Woods." The books were: James S. Kerr, *Kerr's First Collection of Merry Melodies for the Violin*, Glasgow, undated

(likely pre-1960), p.19, and *Scots Guards Pipe Tune Book* (undated), p.173.

Recently I heard the tune on the CD *Moving Cloud* (Green Linnet GLCD 1150), under the title "Loudon's Braes are Bonny." It's played there as a "fling," so the tempo would take adjusting (and slowing down!) to make it suitable for the schottisse. The sleeve notes tell us it was "featured in an accordion duet recorded by Cork-born Jerry O'Brien and his one-time pupil, Boston-born Joe Derrane. It was originally recorded by O'Leary's Irish Minstrels in New York in 1936. The tune, which is Scottish in origin, dates back to the 17th century." I've also heard Winnipeg harper Danishka Esterhazy sing a set of Gaelic words to this tune, but the song isn't included on her CD.

—JL



GRAND POLKA.