



Fiddler's Rag

Vol. 42, Number 9
Celebrating 41 years

Santa Clara Valley Fiddlers Association
www.scvfa.org or www.fiddlers.org

September 2014
Next Jam: Sept. 7



President's Note

Ever wonder where my usual first-page photo comes from? It's from this photo of me with jazz violinist Claude "Fiddler" Williams, 94, at Mark O'Connor's Fiddle Camp in San Diego in August 2002. Claude was a master of the Kansas City style swing. Considering that Charlie Parker was once his roommate, it's not surprising that his jazz violin style came from horn players rather than violinists. Jazz violinist Matt Glaser called him "fearless" when he reached for high notes on his fiddle. Claude died in 2004 at the age of 96.

My t-shirt has a photo of me with another great jazz violinist, Svend Asmussen, at his home in Copenhagen. Svend is now 98. My tribute to Svend is in an article on our website in the Newsletter section: click on the "Selected Articles Archive" link on that page.

August Rose Garden Park Jam – Another Great Day

Gary Breitbard and Jena Rauti led a very successful beginners circle. Thank you both!

I met with the Parks Division staff about needing a permit to have our jams at the Rose Garden Park. They acknowledged that we acted in good faith by submitting a permit request. Everything worked out fine. Next year I hope we get a no-cost "informational" use permit.

Back at the Hoover Middle School

On September 7, we return to Hoover Middle School for our jam.

Our "Christmas in July" Playout was a Big Success

On July 19, Art Friedman, Dave Barton, Paul Clarke and Tom Clausen along with dancer Lee Clarke performed at a "Christmas in July" event in downtown San Jose, for which we were paid. The event organizer, Marci Pick, wrote, "We were very happy with the performance! They were on time and I didn't see a lull in their playing at any point of the event. It really was great!" Thank you all!

October 5: Two Historic Reunion Bands

Next month's jam on October 5 will have a historic reunion of two Jack Sadler bands: the Overlook Mountain Boys, a 1970s bluegrass band, will include Art Kee (bass), John Lytle (vocals, guitar), Jack Sadler (vocals, fiddle), Jack Tuttle (fiddle), Ron White (vocals, Dobro).

Lone Prairie, a 1990s western cowboy music band, will have Rob Horgan (banjo), Art Kee (fiddle), Paul King (vocals, guitar), Jim Mintun (vocals, Dobro), Louise Mintun (vocals, bass), Jack Sadler (vocals, fiddle). The October 5 reunion performance starts at 3:00 PM.

Uncertain Youth Fiddle Contest This Year

Whether we have a Youth Fiddle Contest this year depends on having enough contestants. Encourage youths interested in entering to contact Pete Showman. We will decide in early September whether it's on.

Share Your Photos

Share your photos and we will include your name if they are used in the Rag. Email them to the editor (currently Pete Showman) at newsletter at fiddlers.org.

Amazon Buyers

On the lower left side of our www.fiddlers.org website we have a link to Amazon. If you click on it to go to Amazon, we get a small commission if you make a purchase. It costs you nothing and it really helps us.

- Richard Brooks

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The Fiddler's Rag is published monthly by the Santa Clara Valley Fiddlers Association and is provided to members of the Association. The Santa Clara Valley Fiddlers Association (SCVFA), founded in 1973 in San Jose, California, is a nonprofit, volunteer-operated organization dedicated to the preservation, teaching, and enjoyment of traditional music. The first membership in a household includes the Fiddler's Rag; additional members sharing the newsletter are steeply discounted. To join, sign up at the jam or see www.fiddlers.org/join.

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Since 1982 the Northern California Bluegrass Society has promoted bluegrass and old time music in the San Francisco Bay and Monterey Bay areas. This highly active club has nurtured the development of bands and venues. The NCBS hosts the Good Old Fashioned Bluegrass Festival each August, an event that solely features California bands. We sponsor festivals, concerts and jams all over the area. Members receive the Bluegrass By the Bay magazine each quarter. Please join us!



Pete Showman photo

Bill Hall plays an old favorite, "Sierra Swing," at the August Jam in the Rose Garden Park.

SCVFA Happenings

Back to Hoover Middle School

The **September 7 SCVFA jam** will mark the end of summer, and our return to our regular venue: Hoover Middle School. Because we rent the school cafeteria, there's an entry fee: \$6 for members, \$8 for non-members.

At Hoover we'll resume our regular jam schedule, including the on-stage open-mike performances:

- The jam starts at 1:00 PM as usual.
- On-stage performances usually start about 1:30 (usually with an informal "jam" group). Look for a sign-up sheet at the entrance (near the treasurer's desk, or check with Jam Manager George Bradshaw.)
- The Beginners' Circle will run from about 2:00 to 3:00, outside.
- We end at 5:00, and need to be out of the school by 5:30.

Hope to see you all there!



Good Upcoming House Concerts

Allan French writes: The *Mountain View House Concerts* series (organized by Daniel Steinberg) presents two events that should be of special interest to fiddlers:

Thursday Sept. 18: Genticorum: traditional Québécois music and song. Information about Genticorum is at www.genticorum.com/en/home.html.

Tuesday, Oct. 28: Pete Sutherland: traditional American folk music and song. Pete Sutherland's website is at www.epactmusic.com.

For these house concerts there's a suggested donation of \$20. All proceeds go to the artists.

For reservations and directions, email Daniel Steinberg: Concerts at InstantHarmony.com.

No email? Call 947-9669 in area 650

September Board Meeting Schedule

The September board meeting has been re-scheduled a week earlier than usual, to September 14. The location is still to be determined, so contact Richard if you're interested in attending. Regular SCVFA board meetings are open to all SCVFA members.

August Jam Photos



Stalwarts **Tom Clausen** and **Arsie Bigby** hanging out at the jam.



Trustee **Charlotte Prater** and Secretary **Dinah Showman** staff the membership table at the jam.

Pete Showman photos

The Language of Fiddling © 2014

by Wayne Erbsen

Listening to a great fiddler play his or her instrument is certainly one of life's great delights. But listening to a fiddler talk can be a bewildering experience if you are not acquainted with the language of fiddling.

Over the years, fiddlers have developed their own slang, so here is a dictionary of some of the common words used by fiddlers, along with their meaning. The next time you talk with a fiddler, sprinkle in some of these words and watch their response.

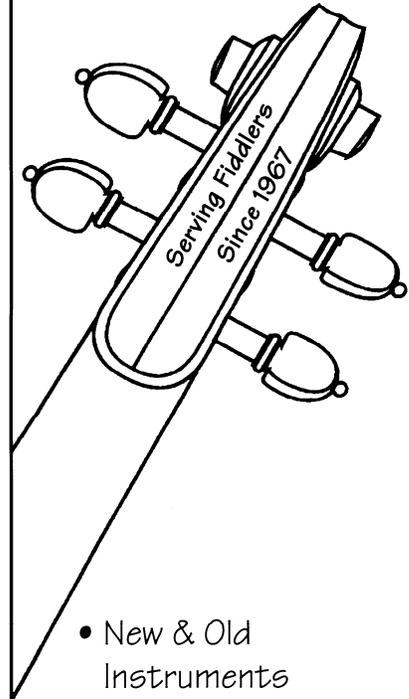


- **Air** - A slow tune meant for listening, not dancing.
- **Barn dance** - An old-time dance held in a barn.
- **Bass** - The lowest pitched string on a fiddle.
- **Beating straws** - Playing rhythm with straws or sticks on the fiddle while the fiddler is playing.
- **Black Mountain Rag tuning** - A E A C# (from low to high).
- **Bluegrass fiddle** - Longbow fiddling that's highly improvised with elements of blues, jazz, swing and old-time.
- **Bob Wills** - Legendary Texas fiddler, the father of Western Swing.
- **Brag fiddlers** - Popular fiddlers.
- **Breakdown** - A fast fiddle tune designed more for show than for dancing.
- **Bull fiddle** - Bass.
- **Catguts** - Strings.
- **Clawhammer** - Rhythmic old-time banjo style produced by hitting down on the strings.
- **Clifftop** - Appalachian String Band Festival in Clifftop, West Virginia.
- **Counter** - The D or third string (from the high end) on a fiddle.
- **Coarse string** - Bass string on the fiddle.
- **Coarse part** - Lower part of a tune.
- **Crooked tune** - A tune with an odd number of measures [*or just with extra or missing beats - ed.*]

- **Cross tuning** - A non-standard fiddle tuning.
- **Cross key** - See cross tuning.
- **Cross-eyed tuning** - Fiddlin' Arthur Smith's term for cross tuning.
- **Devil's box** - Fiddle.
- **Devil's riding horse** - Fiddle.
- **Dischord tuning** - To retune into a non-standard tuning.
- **Double Shuffle** - Fancy bowing used on songs like "Orange Blossom Special."
- **Double stop** - Playing two notes on different strings at the same time.
- **Drone** - Playing an open note on the fiddle at the same time you play a melody note.
- **Drunk as a fiddler's clerk** - Very drunk.
- **Fiddlededee** - Nonsense.
- **Fiddle-faddle** - To fuss with trifles. Nonsense.
- **Fiddle-footed** - A wanderer.
- **Fiddler's Grove** - Ole Time Fiddlers and Bluegrass Festival in Union Grove, N.C.
- **Fiddlers news** - Old news carried by wandering fiddlers.
- **Fiddlesticks** - Sticks or straws used to play rhythm on the fingerboard of the fiddle.
- **Fine strings** - Upper two strings of the fiddle.
- **Fine part** - High part of a fiddle tune.
- **Flat footing** - Clogging.
- **Four potatoes** - The four shuffles at the beginning of a fiddle tune that sets the rhythm.
- **Frog** - The part of the bow that holds the hair near the handgrip.
- **Frolic** - An old-time party.
- **Galax** - The fiddlers convention in Galax, Virginia.

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- **Georgia shuffle** - Fancy bow work such as heard on "Orange Blossom Special."
- **Gig** - A paying music job.
- **High bass** - When the G string is tuned up to A.
- **High bass and counter** - Cross A tuning: A E A E (from lowest to highest).
- **Hillbilly music** - Named for an old-time band called "The Hillbillies" led by Al Hopkins that first recorded Jan. 15, 1925.
- **Hoedown** - An old-time instrumental tune played at square dance tempo.
- **Hornpipe** - An old English dance tune that was played more slowly than a reel.
- **Italian tuning** - Standard tuning.
- **Jam** - An impromptu music session.
- **Jam sessioning** - Coined by fiddler Ralph Blizzard.
- **Jig** - An Irish tune in 6/8 or 9/8 time, or an 19th century minstrel tune in 2/4 time.
- **Kick off** - How a bluegrass fiddler starts a tune or song.
- **Lazy enough to be a good fiddler** - A bum.
- **Lick** - A short musical passage or a bowing pattern.
- **Long bow fiddling** - A style of bowing using many notes per bowstroke.
- **Mean fiddle** - Hot fiddling, as in "He plays a mean fiddle."
- **Mean as a fiddler's bitch** - Rather mean.
- **Mount Airy** - Bluegrass and Old Time Fiddlers Convention in Mount Airy, N.C.
- **Not enough to dust a fiddle** - A paltry amount.
- **Oh fiddlesticks!** - Oh shucks!
- **Pick up** - 1. A truck. 2. Someone you meet in a bar. 3. The notes a fiddler plays that lead into the first beat of the tune.
- **Reel** - A lively dance tune in 2/4 or 4/4 time, or a dance done in longways formation.
- **Rocking the bow** - Going back and forth between two adjacent strings.
- **Rosin** - Sticky substance made from pine tree sap which is rubbed on the horse hair of the bow to help grab the strings.
- **Sawing** - Bowing.
- **Sawmill key** - Where the fiddle is tuned AEAE [*or sometimes GDGD - ed*].
- **Scotch time** - A jig as used by fiddler Woodrow Boone from Madison County, N.C.
- **Schottische** - Mid 19th century dance tunes played somewhat slower than reels.
- **Second fiddle** - Harmony fiddler. Taking a back seat to a more dominant person.
- **Shuffle** - Rhythmic bowing consisting of three strokes: long-short-short.
- **Stick** - Bow.
- **Straaaaaaaaaangs** - Southern pronunciation for strings.
- **Thick as fiddlers in hell** - Plentiful or crowded.
- **To hang up your fiddle** - To die, or quit.
- **Tommy Jarrell** - Legendary old-time fiddler from Toast, N.C.
- **Triplum** - The A string on the fiddle.
- **Turn around** - A short musical phrase used as an intro or between a chorus and a verse of a song.
- **Twin fiddling** - Two fiddles played in harmony.
- **Vibrato** - The quavery sound produced by wiggling a finger that's pressing down a string.

- **Waltz** - A tune and a dance in 3/4 time.
- **Weiser** - National Old Time Fiddlers Contest and Festival held in Weiser, Idaho.
- **Wires** - Strings.

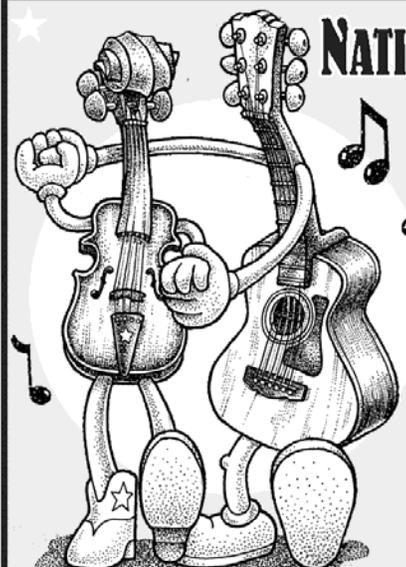
"The Language of Fiddling" is taken from Wayne Erbsen's book, *Old-Time Fiddle for the Complete Ignoramus!*, which is available from Native Ground Books & Music, 109 Bell Road, Asheville NC 28805. 299-7031 in area 828.

Contact us for a complete catalog of bluegrass and old-time music songbooks plus instruction books for banjo, fiddle, guitar, mandolin and dulcimer.

Web: www.nativeground.com;

Email: banjo@nativeground.com

© 2014 Wayne Erbsen. Wayne is a native Californian who has made his home in Asheville, North Carolina since 1972. A musician and teacher, Wayne has written and published over thirty music instruction books and songbooks for bluegrass and claw-hammer banjo, mandolin, fiddle and guitar on his Native Ground Books & Music label. www.nativeground.com. For the past thirty years, Wayne has hosted "Country Roots," a bluegrass and old-time radio show that streams live on Sundays 7:00 - 9:00 EST at www.wcqs.org.



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Photos from the August 2014 Jam



President **Richard Brooks** (L) and cool-looking banjoist **Dave Magram** play some hot bluegrass, along with ...



Pete Showman photos

... champion fiddler **Arthur Kee** (foreground) and **Frank Fox**



Linda Maki, Jack Sadler and Matt Small (L-R) blend their voices as a trio.

Richard Brooks photos



The **Beginners' Circle**, with (foreground, L-R) **Jean Avram**; leaders **Jena Rauti** and **Gary Breitbard**; **Susan Goodis** and (far right, standing) trustee and banjo player **Élan Alford**, trying a new instrument.

Campbell's Farewell to Red Gap

(aka Campbell's Farewell to RedCastle)

Key: A Mixolydian; AA.B.CC
♩ = 180

Traditional Scottish Pipe March
Arr. Pete Showman

Section A (Measures 1-12):
Measures 1-4: A, A, G
Measures 5-8: A, G
Measures 9-12: 1 A, 2 A

Section B (Measures 13-24):
Measures 13-16: A, G
Measures 17-20: A, G
Measures 21-24: A, G, A

Section C (Measures 25-32):
Measures 25-28: A, G
Measures 29-30: A, G, (alt.)
Measures 31-32: 1 A, 2 A

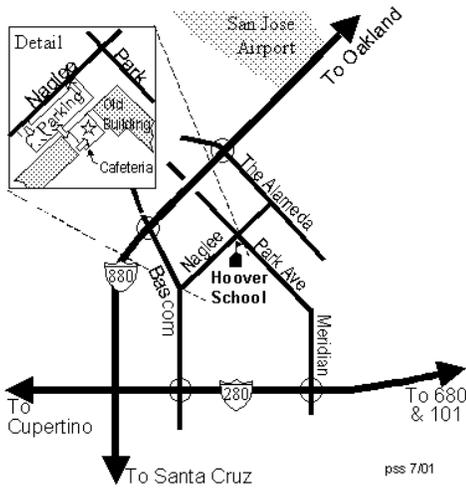
Nigel Gatherer (nigelgatherer.com) writes that this is a Scottish pipe march, also called "Campbell's Farewell to Redcastle", that's now played in old-time (and bluegrass?) circles in the U.S. It's apparently unclear what event, which Campbell, and which Redcastle, if any, this commemorates. Arr. and typeset into ABC by Pete Showman 7/29/2014, slightly revised 8/26/2014 for the Fiddler's Rag.

Santa Clara Valley Fiddlers Association
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SCVFA Jam on the first Sunday of each month.
Location: Hoover Middle School, 1635 Park Ave.,
San Jose. The school is at the corner of Naglee and
Park. Cafeteria parking is on the Naglee side.

**Next Jam: Sunday Sept. 7, 1-5 pm
at Hoover Middle School**

Damaged or Missing Issue? Call us,
or email to: [newsletter at scvfa.org](mailto:newsletter@scvfa.org)



A bluegrass circle at the Rose Garden Park in August. Seated, L-R: **Dennis Gale, Bill Boiko, Mike Bell and Ralph Stark.** (Sorry, we need help identifying the standing banjo player.)