'A Fiddler was a Great Acquisition To Any Neighborhood:

TRADITIONAL MUSIC AND ULSTER CULTURE on the PENNSYLVANIA FRONTIER

by Peter Gilmore
When an elderly Greene County fiddler played his version of the folk melody “Sam King’s Tune” for a visiting folklorist in the 1930s, he offered unexpected insight into the cultural heritage of 18th century Western Pennsylvania. The fiddler was James Lindsay Morris, who lived in Ruff Creek, 90 miles southwest of Pittsburgh; the folklorist was Samuel P. Bayard, a leading collector of traditional music.

More than just a catchy Pennsylvania “march,” “Sam King’s Tune” was a product of cultural adaptation, part of the legacy of those immigrants generally known as “Scotch-Irish.” The ancestry of this tune (and many others like it) not only suggests how these immigrants from the north of Ireland helped establish the instrumental music tradition in Western Pennsylvania; because music is a critical component of culture, the ancestry of many folk tunes also raises important questions about the immigrants themselves. In Morris’ rendition, Bayard heard echoes of Irish dance music and of slower Scottish listening music, and concluded the Pennsylvanian march might be a mixture of the two traditions.

Interaction between the Scots and Irish in the north of Ireland (Ulster) certainly was not a theme developed by filiopietistic chroniclers who, with their intimations of aloofness from Celtic and Roman Catholic culture, popularized the Scotch-Irish label nearly a century ago. As a result, the Scotch-Irish are typically viewed as a group ethnically (or even racially) distinct from the native Irish.

Part I of this article is an overview of why the history of Ulster ensured that native Irish and Scots immigrants would share many influences in music, language, and other features of the cultural domain. In Part II, readers with special interest in American folk music can gain more detailed knowledge of those tunes specifically affected by this shared heritage.
The Scotch-Irish are descendants of Presbyterian Lowland Scots who settled in Ulster in the 17th century. For many long centuries, the Irish remained Gaelic-speaking, living by Celtic customs and social organization alien to that of the English who had claimed sovereignty over Ireland since the 12th century. English policy in the 16th century sought to bring Ireland more directly and firmly under English authority, a goal brought closer to reality with the defeat of Hugh O’Neill and the Ulster clans in 1603 at the end of the reign of Elizabeth I. Her successor, James I, directed the colonization of a vast territory in the north of Ireland escheated by the Crown when O’Neill and other clan leaders fled to the continent. James intended to create a secure (and self-supporting) beachhead in his rebellion-prone Irish kingdom. The “Plantation of Ulster,” begun in 1610, attracted many tens of thousands of Scots and English settlers, overwhelmingly Protestants, to the modern counties of Armagh, Cavan, Donegal, Fermanagh, Londonderry, and Tyrone. Elsewhere in Ulster, private schemes brought numerous Scots to Antrim and Down, the counties physically closest to Scotland.

Rooted in 17th century religious and political conflict, the Scotch-Irish label was created by Americans near the end of the 19th century in response to modern social and political concerns. Although it is a kind of convenient historiographic shorthand, the Scotch-Irish concept obscures the millennia of contact and exchange between the north of Ireland and the west of Scotland; the Plantation-era represents but a brief moment. The long interaction, which G.M. Trevelyan described as “a constant factor in history,” began with the arrival of prehistoric farmers in Ireland by way of Scotland. The original Scots were Gaelic-speakers from the north of Ireland, who migrated to northern Britain in the first Christian millennium; they gave their new country its name, its original national language, and much of its Christianity, place-names, and other aspects of its dominant culture.4

A common language facilitated cultural exchange between Irish and Scots. Gaelic was the first language of a large proportion of the Scots population at the time of the 17th-century movement to Ulster; indeed, Gaelic was still spoken (albeit by a minority) as late as about 1600 in the southwestern region of Scotland from which many of the initial settlers to Ulster were drawn. Although not considered progenitors of the Scotch-Irish because of their Gaelic language and religion, numerous Highland Scots also came to Ulster, particularly the Glens of Antrim, between 1400 and 1700. Their presence, like that of the Lowland Scots, helped shape Ulster’s language, music, and folkways.5

Harpers and bards, mercenaries, and merchants maintained cultural contact between “the sea-divided Gaels;” such exchanges continued despite the demise of Gaelic and the religious differences engendered by the Reformation. Thus, before the 17th-century Scots settlement ensued, traders sailed the 20-odd miles from Galloway ports to County Down, spent the day peddling their wares (and swapping news and possibly tunes), and returned home to Scotland in the evening. In the late 1500s, some Lowland Scots who made the crossing came to stay, without the benefit or encouragement of formal colonization schemes.6
The Ulster harper Ruairidh Dall Ó Catháin spent considerable time in Scotland between 1601 and 1650; there he composed the well-known Irish air “Tabhair Domh Do Lamh” (“Give Me Your Hand”) for his Scots patron, the Lady Eglinton. (Robert Burns also married at least one of Ó Catháin’s melodies to verse.)

As early as the 12th century, the observant Norman-Welsh monk Giraldus Cambrensis noted that Scotland, “from its community of race,” strives “to rival Ireland in the art of music.” Harps and various kinds of bagpipes enjoyed special status in both countries; the fiddle had largely become the instrument of choice for dancing in both Ireland and Scotland by 1700. In tracing the origins of traditional dance tunes—including tunes brought to Pennsylvania in the 18th century—one finds a discernible borrowing between the Scots and Irish traditions.

Scots dance music of the 17th century would have been characterized by a wide variety of regional styles, paralleling differences of dialect within the Scots and Gaelic languages. “Tunes were widely shared and crossed the natural and national boundaries with ease,” says Scots musical authority George Emmerson. Similarly, Caoimhín MacAoidh has posited a close parallel between regional Irish fiddling styles observed in the 20th century and the regional dialects of modern Irish Gaelic. The distinctiveness of the Ulster dialect, as well as Ulster fiddling, is attributed, in part, to the persistent influence of adjacent regions in Scotland.

Music and dance were embraced by 17th century Scots as part of everyday
life, regardless of religious affiliation.\textsuperscript{12} Anthropologist and musician Gearóid Ó hAllmhuráin writes that although the 17th-century plantation of Scots in Ulster "nurtured the seeds of sectarian bitterness," something else happened when new music-makers arrived. Dr. Ó hAllmhuráin observes, "Ulster-Scots settlers brought jigs and weavers' ballads with them to Ireland. Ironically, many of their dance tunes were similar to those enjoyed by their dispossessed neighbors!"\textsuperscript{13} Additionally, the noted authority on Irish traditional music, Breandán Breathnach, argues the "very strong case" for assigning a Scots ancestry to many Irish reels.\textsuperscript{14} What is now considered "typical Irish dancing" may have come to Ireland with 17th-century planters from the Anglo-Scots border region.\textsuperscript{15}

The Ulster Plantation redefined but did not end the long-established cultural interaction between Scotland and Ireland. Indeed, the arrival of Scots with related folkways was no alien invasion of Ulster. The standard Scotch-Irish histories deny any significant occurrence of intermarriage between Ulster Scots and native Irish in the 1600s and are silent on the issue of religious conversion during the same period. Yet both occurred, undoubtedly facilitated by cultural familiarity.\textsuperscript{16} Alan Gailey has argued that the arrival of Gaelic-speaking Scots from Carrick and Galloway (areas in southwestern Scotland adjacent and culturally related to northeastern Ireland) "meant that the plantation was not so revolutionary as some historians have asserted."\textsuperscript{17} Although religiously distinct, many Scots had similar surnames to their new Irish neighbors, were familiar with the production and consumption of whiskey, and shared some supernatural beliefs and delight for dancing to fiddle or pipes. The Scots in Ulster called their hamlets by the Gaelic name clachan, a word familiar to the native Irish.\textsuperscript{18}

Philip Robinson concludes his study of the Ulster Plantation by proposing that:

Cultural fusion, the mutual adoption of traits, interdependent development and subsequent evolution have given rise to patterns of cultural phenomena that are neither "Irish" and "Catholic" nor "British" and "Protestant" in type. The stimulus for dramatic change in the Ulster landscape has been cultural contact, and in no period can such contact be more clearly identified than during the Ulster plantation.\textsuperscript{19}

Estyn Evans argues for the existence of an Ulster regional culture in The Personality of Ireland: "The two communities in the north, however deeply divided by religion, share an outlook on life which is different from that prevailing in the south and which bears the stamp of a common heritage."\textsuperscript{20}

This common culture came across the Atlantic in the 18th century with the roughly 250,000 immigrants from Ulster. Many settled in Pennsylvania. These mostly Irish-born pioneers pushed westward through the forests and over the mountains, or followed the valleys south into Virginia and the Carolinas. The immigrants came in several great waves, starting between 1717 and 1720, and continuing to the eve of the American Revolution. These emigrations were triggered by natural disasters and the greed and rack-renting of absentee landlords, as well as the lack of religious and political freedom. The emigration began afresh after the Revolution, and by the end of the century included those fleeing Ireland because of their part in the 1798 rebellion inspired by the American and French revolutions.\textsuperscript{21}
Although largely Presbyterians, the “Scotch-Irish” also encompassed native Irish Catholics. However misleading, the Scotch-Irish label has a basis in the superior numbers and cultural hegemony of the Ulster Scots. This was accomplished, David Noel Doyle believes, “by absorption, socio-cultural familiarity, inter-marriage, co-settlement and at times the strong arm!” While more research is needed on this “co-settlement” in Pennsylvania, individuals with surnames of native Irish origin can be found in Scotch-Irish settlements across the state throughout the 18th century. Traditional dance music attributed to the Scotch-Irish is likely an example of absorption achieved through “socio-cultural familiarity.”

Arriving at Delaware River ports from Ireland, the newcomers were referred to as being “Irish” and frequently saw themselves the same way. Their rough-hewn frontier settlements, from Chester County westward to Washington County, were named “Donegal” and “Derry” after homes left behind in Ulster. While immigrants from southern Ireland tended to be scattered amongst the towns of the Eastern Seaboard, those from the north tended to band together in communities that moved ever westward. The “marked propensity” of Ulster immigrants “to congregate in what were known as ‘the Irish settlement’ —ethnically homogeneous townships with names such as Colerain, Donegal and Fermanagh—suggests a desire to preserve traditional values as well as nomenclature,” suggests Kirby Miller.

So many families from Ulster streamed across the Alleghenies that it
was easy for visitors to Western Pennsylvania to assume nearly the entire population was Irish. Arthur Lee, the brother of two signers of the Declaration of Independence, visited Pittsburgh in 1784 and decided: “Pittsburgh is inhabited almost entirely by Scots and Irish, who live in paltry log houses, and are as dirty as in the north of Ireland, or even Scotland.”

These “paltry log houses,” however, were alive with music, a consequence of what was known in Ulster as cayleying (from the Gaelic word for “visit”). Gatherings of neighbors, especially in the depths of dreary winter, were given over to songs and stories, music, and dancing. Samuel Jones, who grew up in the Pittsburgh of this period, wrote:

The long winter evenings were passed by the humble villagers at each other’s homes, with merry tale or song, or in simple games; and the hours of night sped lightly onward with the unskilled, untiring youth, as they threaded the mazes of the dance, guided by the music of the violin, from which some good-humored rustic drew his Orphean sounds. In the jovial time of harvest and hay-making, the sprightly and active of the village participated in the rural labors and hearty pastimes, which distinguished that happy season. The balls and merry-makings that were so frequent in the village were attended by all without any particular deference to rank or riches.

The Ulster immigrants had brought with them their familiar amusements. “Travellers through the (Scotch-Irish) frontier districts of America from 1780-1820, particularly Englishmen, commented on the boisterous, assertive, undisciplined and convivial culture of the region as similar to that of the wild Irish in Ireland.”

“Music, song and dance formed an essential part of their frontier milieu. They played music for flax-scutching frolics, weddings and other ‘cayley’ gatherings.” What has been observed of the southeastern states is as true of Pennsylvania, which was a first stop for many Ulster immigrants, as dancing masters, accompanied by a blind fiddler or piper, traveled throughout the country. As early as 1674, an English visitor said of the Irish peasants’ Sunday amusements: “In every field to a fiddle and the lasses footing it till they are all of a foam.” Similar rage for dancing seems to have been found in the “Irish” region of Western Pennsylvania in the same period. An historian tells us that “all classes and nationalities danced, and dancing was cultivated as an art. Dancing masters came to Pittsburgh to give instructions, and adults and children alike took lessons.”

Francis O’Neil (the Chicago police chief and Irish music collector) observed in 1913: “The music of the fiddle has a wonderful hold on the affections of the people of West Virginia, Kentucky and Tennessee, many of whom are the descendants of Irish settlers of the eighteenth century.”

The dances found on the Western Pennsylvania frontier 200 years ago were largely the same dances found in Ireland, to the music of the same dance tunes. Dancing and fiddle playing were nearly universal pastimes along the frontier. The Ulster immigrants’ store of jigs, reels, and country dances would have formed an appreciable foundation for regional fancies.

In Ireland of 200 years ago, travelers commented on how dancing was universal among the poor;
years of the nation included the cotillion and the minuet, as well as jigs, and "the country dance," which was performed by four men facing four women. This dance, says a historian, "comprised a variety of steps and a surprising number of evolutions, of which liveliness was the characteristic." Pittsburgh's bigger taverns had rooms set aside for dancing; popular taverns with ballrooms included Patrick Murphy's the "Sign of General Butler" and Robert Campbell's "Sign of General Washington." In his history of music in Pittsburgh, Dr. Edward G. Baynham stresses the importance of dancing to frontier communities. "It was a form of entertainment in which everyone could take part. Jigs, reels, hornpipes, country dances, and even the minuet and cotillion kept everyone in good spirits, along with imbibing Monongahela Rye." Some observers have suggested that "reels were often danced, but the jig was the dance of the commonality." Joseph Dodridge, born on the Pennsylvania frontier in 1769, recalled pioneers executing three- and four-hand jigs, and "a dance which was called the Irish trot." This is one of the earliest references to Irish dancing in the region. Breathnach notes that "the reel of the three, and the reel of four or the common reel, appear to have been the first of what would nowadays be described as 'céilí' dances." Breathnach also tells us that the Irish trot was a round dance from Ireland's colonial enclave, the Pale, which "included figures in which the women wound in and about their partners." In addition to these social dances, solo or step-dancing came with the immigrants as well. Commenting on the Irish sword dance, "Rince an Chlaidhimh," Breathnach says, "Sweeping-brushes, shovels or spades, sticks, chalked lines, or even a bow laid across a fiddle" came to replace "the swords of the seventeenth century." We find a similar, if not the same, dance occurring in this region. In an interview with Pennsylvania folklorist Bayard, a source recalled that when he was a boy in Wetzel County, West Virginia, a "sword dance" was executed by stepping between "swords" represented by crossed broomsticks on the floor. A specific tune was used, which in Pennsylvania had words; it was sung full-length to "Billy O'Rourke the Bouchal" (Bouchal, from buachaill, the Irish word for "boy.") Bayard cites several variants of the tune, including an air with a Gaelic title. "The only diversions of the early pioneers were weddings and attending church," says a Washington County historian. "A wedding on the frontier was a big event, and was attended by everyone for miles around without the formality of an invitation." After the party, continues Earle Forrest, "the entire neighborhood joined in erecting a cabin and clearing
ground for the young couple. The completion of the new home was followed by a house warming, which sometimes lasted for several days.”

At one wedding party of the post-Revolution period, “the celebrants danced ninety-two jigs, fifty-two country dances, forty-five minuets, and seventeen hornpipes, which at five minutes per dance would add up to more than seventeen hours of dancing.” Doddridge recalled how at a frontier wedding the dancing would commence after dinner and generally last until morning, with “three and four handed reels, or square sets and jigs.” However exhausted, the luckless fiddler was “ordered to play ‘Hang on till tomorrow evening.’”

In Washington County, where the Presbytery officially cautioned against horse racing, balls, and dances, “music became a desirable thing to relieve the monotony ... a fiddler was sometimes found and was a great acquisition to any neighborhood.”

In Pittsburgh, meanwhile, a fiddler apparently known only as “Crowder” was an “important personage in town, as was the fiddler in all frontier villages and on every keelboat fortunate enough to have one.” Crowder, we are told, “could usually be found at the fairs on Grant’s Hill making the dust fly with four-handed Irish reels.”

One indication of the fiddle’s importance to frontier and hill country dancing might be the instruments collected more than 75 years ago by Captain J.G. Dillin of Philadelphia. He accumulated some 50-odd violins—all of which he claimed to have found in the backwoods of the Pennsylvania mountains “in attics, hay lofts, over hog-pens and corn-cribs.” Among them were reputedly violins crafted by Stradivarius and other classical masters.49

An idea of what tunes Crowder and his contemporaries might have wrung from their fiddles is found in the wealth of Pennsylvania traditional music collected over the course of several decades by Samuel P. Bayard. Beginning in his Greene County boyhood, Bayard’s collecting continued through and beyond his years on the faculty of Pennsylvania State University.

In his first published collection, Hill Country Tunes (1944), Bayard affirms the strength of Irish influence on Pennsylvanian traditional music.

He finds Anglo-Scots and Irish origins of those tunes whose origins could be traced; a number of other tunes have similar construction and melodic traits. The folklorist reports that even in German-speaking areas in the state he has heard “radio programs of fiddlers with Teutonic names playing Irish and Scottish reels.” Bayard believes this is a result of 18th century settlement patterns. “The Scotch-Irish poured into these regions in early days, preceding or accompanying the Germans. Their influence, therefore, was doubtless exerted from the times of the earliest considerable settlement.”

Bayard confirms that this inheritance of tunes forms “part of a basic and strongly-established repertory.”

The most extensive published record of instrumental folk music in Pennsylvania is Bayard’s unparalleled collection, Dance to the Fiddle, March to the Fife. This volume contains 651 tunes collected in the Commonwealth between 1928 and 1963. A large number are of clearly of Irish or Scots origin, or
both. Among the tunes in this collection are at least four that can be linked to particular religious-political movements or events in Ulster: “The Boyne Water,” “The Protestant Boys,” “The Sons of William” and “Kick the Pope.”

The title of the “The Boyne Water” (also known as “King William’s March”) celebrates the 1690 victory of William of Orange over James II, an event that continues to figure prominently on the Ulster Protestant calendar. Federalist poet David Bruce used this melody for his song, “To All Scots-Irishmen, Citizens of America.” (Bruce chose “the Scots-Irishman” as his pen name.) Bayard gives “The Boyne Water” a 17th century origin and, as might be expected, finds the melody (under various names) in 18th century Scottish collections. But the story is more complicated, for Bayard writes: “In Irish tradition, too, the melody seems to have long been well known. Aside from the ‘Boyne’ titles, we find associations with some songs in Gaelic.” Other titles found in Ireland have also been noted in Scotland.

“The Protestant Boys” turns out to have a special place in history; as the melody to “Lillieburlero” it is said to have helped oust (the Roman Catholic) King James II. Written in the 1680s, the satirical song was apparently based on a popular folk melody. In addition, anti-Catholic broadsides were apparently sung to this tune, “in which the phrase ‘Protestant Boys’ is both prominent and recurrent—so that the tune could have picked up this name at any time from the late 1680s on.” Of “The Rising Sun” or “The Sons of William,” Bayard says: “The names which the player gave this tune mark it unmistakably as one
used by the North Irish Protestants, the ‘Orangemen.’ It is a dance tune, better known as ‘La Belle Catherine,’ which dates from sometime in the 18th century.”56 “Kick the Pope,” a tune that became associated with Orange marches in the 19th and 20th centuries, also appears (under a politically inoffensive name) as a jig in an Irish collection of dance tunes.57

Another title of political significance is the jig known both as “Over the Water to Charlie” and “The Shambuy.” The first title refers to the Young Pretender, “Bonnie Prince Charlie;” the latter title is a corruption of the Irish Seán Buidhe (Yellow John), “a term of contempt for the Irish adherents of William III.” (These may have been Irish converts to one of the Protestant denominations.) Under various names, this tune is well-documented in the 18th century. It has appeared in both Scottish and Irish tune collections.58

A song in reel time but given the name of the popular Irish slip jig (that is, a dance tune in 9/8 time) “The Rocky Road to Dublin” turns out to more closely connected with the Scots air “Loch Erroch Side,” which has served as reel, strathspey, and song melody. The tune was first published as “Local Erroch Side” in 1786 and appeared in print in 1758 as “I’m O’er Young to Marry Yet.” A march setting of the tune was played in Ireland under the name “Vive La! The French Are Coming,” which suggests a connection to the United Irishmen Rebellion in 1798 in which Ulster Presbyterians played a prominent role.59

While Bayard was unable to trace the tune itself, he identifies the title of the Pennsylvanian melody “The Shepherd Boy” as being the same as “a North Irish Biblical Ballad about the encounter between David and Goliath.” Bayard suggests a ballad was once sung to this tune.60

These tune titles, with their allusions to battles, Bible stories, political movements, or sectarian animosity, demonstrate a link to Ulster. But it is the dance music itself, with antecedents in the Scots and Irish traditions, that demonstrates the crucial significance of Dance to the Fiddle to the Ulster immigrants and their legacy. In tune after tune, Bayard’s collection suggests the extraordinary influence of Scotch-Irish music makers on Pennsylvanian tradition. In Dance to the Fiddle, we repeatedly come across music with deep roots, the product of borrowing between Scots and Irish repertories. The following examples represent a small sampling.

Of the four variants of the tune to which he assigns the name “Lanigan’s Ball,” Bayard says: “[W]e again confront a British traditional tune-family of widely varying developments and of probable antiquity. It is uncertain (and must remain so) whether, in the past, two or more airs have ‘fallen together’ by recombining or fusing of strains, or whether some single piece has split into increasingly divergent forms.”61

“Lanigan’s Ball” is a jig well-known among Irish musicians today; of his four variants, Bayard says, the Scots tune “O As I Was Kist Yestreen” is particularly close to that Irish jig. The tune has other close Irish relatives, among them “The Princess Royal,” attributed to the harper Turlough O’Carolan (1670-1738).62 O’Sullivan, in his study of O’Carolan, regards “The Princess Royal” as one of the famous harper’s “most celebrated compositions, largely because of its association with the words of the song ‘The Arethusa,’” which dates from the 18th century.63
In “Sam King’s Tune,” as noted at the outset, Bayard identified strong similarities to a Scots air called “Logan Water,” first noted in the latter half of the 17th century, and to an Irish dance tune known as “Ant Seanbhean Bhocht” (“The Poor Old Woman”), dating probably from the 1700s. Bayard postulated that “Sam King’s” was either a mixture of the two tunes or an indication that the Irish hornpipe developed out of the Scots song-melody.64

“Captain Collins,” which Bayard took down from both fifers and fiddlers, likewise has a relatively long history. It was also known as “The Belling Tune” for its use in “serenading” newlyweds in a custom associated with Scotch-Irish pioneers. Bayard finds 17th century references that link the jig-time march to Scotland. There are also Irish (including Ulster) citations. “The Chicken Reel,” a tune well-known in American “old-time” fiddling circles, enjoyed popularity in Pennsylvania. Bayard thought it resembled a Scots dance air. “But even more striking,” he says, “are its resemblances to a couple of sets of an Irish reel.... [making] one wonder whether the very ‘American-sounding’ [tune] may not have Scottish or Irish ancestry after all.”65

The Pennsylvanian tune “Good Lager Beer,” Bayard says, “is a schottische arrangement of an old Scotch tune, one of whose other descendants is the well-known Irish air, ‘The Wearin’ of the Green.’”66

Dance to the Fiddle contains regional variants of one of the best known of old-time American fiddle tunes, “Turkey in the Straw.” Francis O’Neill, the Chicago police chief and indefatigable collector, included the tune in his collections. O’Neill explained that
he had his version from County Mayo fiddler John McFadden, who, in turn, learned it from Daniel D. Emmett, the 19th century American band leader. “Turkey in the Straw” had been popularized by blackface minstrel shows. But it has an older and still more interesting history.  

Bayard suggests that the Scots “The (Bonny) Black Eagle” could be the direct ancestor of our “Turkey in the Straw.” But then again, the first part of the American tune “resembles even more strongly” the Irish “The Rose Tree” or “Máirín Ni Chuilleneáin.” Here again is a fairly old lineage and another link to the harper O’Carolan. “The Rose Tree” is the basis for the air “The Landlady,” to which O’Carolan wrote Irish language lyrics. Since the second part of “Eagle” shows a strong affinity for the second half of “Turkey,” Bayard concludes the American tune is a composite of popular Scots melodies also well-known in Ireland.

One final example should underscore the intricacy of cultural processes. The first half of an old march collected from fifers “appears to be derived from Stephen C. Foster’s ‘Farewell My Lily Dear,’” wrote Bayard, who wondered if Foster actually inspired it—or if Foster was “himself unconsciously reproducing part of an older traditional air? Or were the fifers, independently of Foster, doing the same thing?” This portion of the tune “corresponds rather closely” with the old Scots reel “The Lass of Patie’s Mill;” this, in turn, “is virtually identical” to the opening phrase of “Carolan’s Cup,” composed by the celebrated 17th century Irish harper. This strain, Bayard says, is also reminiscent of an Irish reel “The Miller’s Maid” (O’Neill, Music of Ireland No. 232).

The many airs, marches, jigs and reels collected by Bayard raise the question: Where did the blending, borrowing, and reconstruction of tunes occur—in the hills of Pennsylvania or in Ulster itself, prior to the great dispersal of the 18th century?

David Noel Doyle suggests that the pentatonic mode of Scottish and Irish musical tradition “preempted the folk music tradition of the entire Appalachian region.” To Doyle, “the conservatism and continuity of the musical culture of the area points to the exclusive and familiar culture exchanged over generations of evening visiting in the Back Country.” Interruptions in otherwise ceaseless toil afforded by celebration, mutual assistance, and conviviality provided the Ulster pioneers with a “base of community,” writing of their weddings, flax-pullings, corn huskings, and wakes, Doyle argues convincingly, “The intense and indispensable neighbourliness which was the basis for the reconstruction of society in the Back Country was grounded in such events.”

Lonely families spent whole evenings together, in a custom German and Anglo-American followers did not follow as systematically and expectedly. It owed its form to the ‘cayleying’ of Presbyterian mid-Ulster almost certainly. Dunaway, Leyburn and other authorities [on the Scotch-Irish] have missed this connection, as they have also failed to register the role that music played on these occasions!

Arguably “the intense and indispensable neighbourliness” cited by Doyle refers to the “rural labors and hearty pastimes” recalled by Samuel Jones as being a feature of life in frontier Pittsburgh.

On these occasions we can easily imagine blending and borrowing of tunes brought by immigrant fiddlers. Certainly in their material culture, the Scotch-Irish of the American frontier were particularly adept at adaptation and borrowing. Ulster pioneers borrowed the log cabin from German and Swedish settlers, altering the design to fit the layout known in their homeland. Indian corn became a substitute for oats and barley. Native Americans’
deerskin was readily adapted for clothing and the indigenous peoples' store of plant lore was substituted for old-world ways.  

This musical borrowing and blending almost certainly began in the north of Ireland before continuing in American frontier settlements. In his important essay, “Irish Traditional Music in the United States,” W.H.A. Williams asserts that “however one may define their particular religious and ethnic identity, musically they should be considered Ulstermen, for they brought with them the mixture of Scottish and Irish tunes which is still characteristic of large parts of Northern Ireland.”

Doyle, considering the eclecticism of the Appalachian ballad tradition with its Scots, Irish, and English elements and the “tri-cultural nature of Ulster’s” population, concludes: “We will probably never discover whether the three Ulster streams pooled their songs after migration or before.” However, the dance music recorded in Western Pennsylvania suggests the pooling had been an ongoing process, with the centuries-old borrowing between the Scots and Irish musical traditions continuing on the frontier.

Whether it be largely Presbyterian Donegal Township in Washington County or the Roman Catholic enclave in Butler County's Donegal Township, settlers enjoyed “frolics” and dancing to the fiddle. However much the migration from the north of Ireland to Western Pennsylvania may have replicated the religious animosities of the Old World, a shared musical tradition continued to evolve. The plantation of Ulster music in Pennsylvania formed a substantial basis of our region's traditional music.
NOTES

'Samuel Preston Bayard, Dance to the Fiddle, March to the Fife (Penn. State Univ. Press, 1982), 313-314. See also Note 64.

'For much of the last century, the distinction has been described as not only ethnic but racial. See, for example, Wayland Dunaway, The Scotch-Irish of Colonial Pennsylvania (Univ. of N. C. Press, 1944), 8-11. Dunaway cites approvingly the comments of a writer in The Edinburgh Review (April 1869) who claims the 17th century Plantation of Ulster "effectually separated the two races and kept them apart. It planted a new race in the country which never coalesced with the native population." (In challenging the implication of these arguments, the present writer rejects the underlying assumption that cultural traits are genetically transmitted.)

Even the name "Scotch-Irish" is controversial. Dr. Joyce Alexander of the Scotch-Irish Society of the United States of America vigorously protests the use by some writers of the more modern replacement designation, "Scotts-Irish." Writing in the society's newsletter (March 1997), Dr. Alexander avers that "this incorrect term can create a number of problems: one is that it gives the impression that the ethnic group is a mixture of Scots and of Irish people and is thus, in some sense, Celtic. The Celtic tradition is a fine one, but it is very different from the Scotch-Irish tradition!"

'See Steve Icklingill, "Not Just a Typographical Error: The Origin of Scotch-Irish" in Gaelway, Cultural Traditions Journal (Winter 1994, 32-35). Icklingill examines the changing self-identification of Irish Protestants and their descendants and neatly explains how in the 1880s a movement of successful middle-class professionals strove to distinguish their forebears from more recent Irish Catholic immigrants and to prove to their fellow Calvinists the contributions of the Scotch-Irish "race."

"G.M. Treveylan, A Shortened History of England, quoted in Ian Adamson, "The Ulster-Scottish Connection," in Scotland and Ulster, Ian S. Wood, ed. (The Mercat Press, 1994), 1. In their introduction to Cultural Traditions in Northern Ireland, Varieties of Scottishness (The Institute of Irish Studies,1997), editors John Erskine and Gordon Lucy write (p. 1): From earliest times to the present—from Mesolithic settler and missionary saint to migrant seasonal labourer and twentieth-century student—the narrow waters of the North Channel have witnessed and carried a constant traffic of people and ideas between the two coasts. Proinsias MacCanna has remarked: "Archaeologists speak of an 'Irish Sea culture-province'... one might with comparable justification speak of a North Channel culture—province within which obtained a free currency of ideas—literary, intellectual and artistic." See also the present author's Celt or Saxon? The "Scots-Irish," Gaelic and Celtic Identity (Unicorn Limited, 1996).

'Gilmore, I-2; 10-11; 22-23. These Highlanders, Gaelic in speech, tended to be Catholic or Episcopalian in religion, unlike the largely Presbyterian Lowlanders.


'For O Cathain, see W.H. Grattan Flood, A History of Irish Music (Irish University Press, 1970), 186-187, and The Memoirs of Arthur O'Neill, reprinted in Donal O'Sullivan, Carolan, The Life Times and Music of an Irish Harper, vol II, (Celtic Music, 1983), 160-161. Near the end of this long tradition, the Sligo harper Thomas O'Connellan (1625-1698) likewise spent considerable time in Scotland; he is credited with authorship of two Scottish tunes, "Killecrankie" and "Farewell to Lochaber." See Flood, 202-203, and O'Sullivan, 125, 182-183. Like the Scottish air "Farewell to Lochaber," the Irish air "The Lament for Limerick" is also attributed to O'Connellan. The two tunes are remarkably similar; if O'Connellan was not the author of both, clearly one tune influenced the other. While near the end of a long tradition of Irish harpers and bards earning their living in Scotland, O'Connellan was not the last. Dennis Hempson or Hampson, born near Garvagh in County Derry in 1697, was in Scotland in 1745, where he was presented to Charles Edward Stuart, "Bonnie Prince Charlie." Flood credits Hempson with introducing the air "Eibhlin A Rùin" to Scotland, where it became popular as "Robin Adair." Near the end of his long life, Hempson performed at the 1792 Belfast Harp Festival, organized largely by the city's Presbyterians. (Flood, 248-249; O'Sullivan, 138, 174.)

'George S. Emmerson, Ramtin' Pipe and Tremblin' String, A History of Scottish Dance Music (J.M. Dent & Sons, 1971), 9-10. (See also Note 10.)

'Caomhin MacAoidh, Between the Jigs and Reels, The Donegal Fiddling Tradition (Drumlin Publications, 1994), 24, 27; Emmerson, 119; see also Mary Anne Alburger, Scottish Fiddlers and Their Music (Vicotor Gollance, 1983). Tomáš Ó Canainn has given an example of the transformation of a Scots melody into an Irish air: it is often difficult to establish ownership of a particular tune, though one can discover where the tune was first published. One example of an air first published outside Ireland and absorbed into the Irish tradition may be of interest. It is the tune "Tweedside", first published in the Orphens Caledonians Collection in 1733. It was taken into the Irish tradition and combined with a text in Irish in praise of the river Lee, to give the well known 'Abha na Laoi' ("The River Lee"). The tune is now better known as 'Ar Eirinn Ni Neosainn Cí Hí' ("For Ireland I Would Not Tell Her Name"), with its eighteenth-century text from the Maigue school of poets from Limerick. In this version the air, with its decorations, has been finally put into what traditional Irish musicians of today would recognize as an acceptable Irish mould. Tomáš Ó Canainn, Traditional Music in Ireland (Routledge & Kegan Paul, Ltd., 1978), 6.

'Emmerson, 118. He also writes: "We must suspect many a travelling minstrel issued forth into the Lowland towns along the Highland Line. The occasional Irish harper, too, carried his fertilizing influence into Scotland in continuation of that reciprocal process established long ago and remarked upon by Giraldus."

'Caomhin MacAoidh, "A Reappraisal of Irish Fiddle Styles," An Fhiddel Guelach (undated periodical). Allen Feldman, in The Northern Fiddler, Music of Donegal and Tyrone (Oak Publications, 1985), writes (29): "Because of the strong regional diversions found in parts of Ulster, the traditions there have been dismissed as Scottish, and as non-Irish."

' Evidence of a 17th-century Scots contribution to Irish music and dance might seem to be at odds with the stereotype portrayal of dour Scots religious reformers and their baleful influence on folk culture. While the Scottish reformed church often cast a cold eye on popular amusements, Emmerson asserts that "it is preposterous to suggest that the song and dance of the countryside, Highland and Lowland, was allowed to decay." To the contrary, he concludes that for Scotland, "The evidence is that the native music and dance were, in general, taken very much for granted—an inevitable part of life." This accepted, it becomes less surprising that a Scots Presbyterian army in 1641 was recorded as being "well provided of piper" (although lacking sober fiddlers!), or that Rev. James Guthrie, a Presbyterian minister executed for sedition in 1670, left behind a manuscript of 40 melodies, many of them popular Scottish tunes. (35, 36, 29, 30.)


"In much of Ulster during the 17th century, suggests Jonathan Bardon in *A History of Ulster* (Blackstaff Press, 1992), the planters and natives mingled and to a greater extent than is often acknowledged. In Antrim and Down Gaelic families often dropped the "O" and the "Mac" from their names and became Protestants. In western Ulster many Protestant planters married local women and after a generation or two became Catholic and Gaelic-speaking. (147) Bardon says further (401), "Genealogists have uncovered a far greater degree of religious conversion and native-planter, Catholic-Protestant intermarriage than might be expected." G.B. Adams, in his study of language in Ulster, concludes that the presence of Gaelic speakers among the incoming Scots in County Down, "Must have been a catalyst in the introduction of new ideas among the native population," leading to conversion to Presbyterianism. (Quoted in Gilmore, 12) Roger Blaney argues in his *Presbyterians and the Irish Language* (Ulster Historical Foundation and Ulatch Trust, 1966) for "a significant influx into the pool of Irish-speaking Presbyterians" as a result of conversion. During the formative years of Presbyterianism in Ireland, "at least half of the early Presbyterians in Ulster were Irish/Gaelic speakers." (16, 19) Intermingling and intermarriage in the 17th and 18th centuries led in the 19th century to the existence in Ulster of "several population groups... partly of Irish and partly of Scots origin who were Irish in language and who belonged to one or another of the Protestant churches," says Breandán Ó Buachalla. (Quoted in Gilmore, 20)


"Estimates of how many emigrated from Ulster in the 18th century vary; estimates cited by James Leyburn (The Scotch-Irish, A Social History [Chapel Hill, 1962], 180) range from 200,000 to 300,000. David Noel Doyle, in *Ireland, Irishmen and Revolutionary America* 1760-1820 (The Mercier Press, 1991), insists: "The eighteenth century saw well over the certain 130,000 Ulster Scottish migrants go to America before 1776. There it absorbed a large element of native Irish migration." (72) Doyle argues further that in 1790 the Irish element in the U.S. population was around 447,000, up to two-thirds being of Ulster background. "That over a quarter million Scottish stock Ulster folk are the key to this picture cannot be doubted; with the absorption of most Ulster English and many Ulster Irish, perhaps 300,000." (73-74) Kirby A. Miller notes: "Most contemporaries testified that Irish emigration in 1700-1776 was overwhelmingly of Ulster origin and Protestant composition." Reviewing the evidence, including Doyle's study of shipping records, Miller suggests that "one-fifth to one-fourth of the emigrants of 1700-1776 were Catholics, with about another one-fifth Anglicans, and the rest Dissenters, primarily Protestants from Ulster." (Emigrants and Exiles, Ireland and the Irish Exodus to North America [Oxford Univ. Press, 1985], 137.) For a discussion of Pennsylvania as a leading destination of Ulster immigrants, see Leyburn, 170-172, 186-200; R.J. Dickson, *Ulster Emigration to Colonial America* 1718-1775 (Ulster Historical Foundation, 1988), and Wayland E. Dunaway, *The Scotch-Irish of Colonial Pennsylvania* (Univ. of N.C. Press, 1944), 46-49. Doyle (75) estimates that 23.6 percent of Pennsylvania's population in 1790 was of Irish background, with Ulster supplying the largest element. Some Ulster immigrants (a minority of indeterminate size) were born in Scotland.

"Writing in 1946, the prominent Irish historian T.W. Moody proposed: "It may well be that the catholic and protestant emigrations from Ireland were more closely intermingled than has commonly been supposed." (T.W. Moody, "Irish and Scotch-Irish in Eighteenth Century America," *Studies* 35 (1946), 84-90 [quoted in Doyle, 57]) R.J. Dickson, in his *Ulster Emigration to Colonial America* 1718-1775, suggests that "the number of non-presbyterian emigrants may have been greater than has been generally thought." (4) In an introduction to a new edition of Dickson's study, Graeme Kirkham points out that 20 years after the book's initial 1966 publication, subsequent research had confirmed the correctness of Dickson's caution with regard to the Scots Presbyterian monolith: "Recent studies have provided evidence of the mixed religious and ethnic composition of the exodus." (Graeme Kirkham, in his introduction to Dickson, xvii.) Based on a close reading of the historical record, David Doyle concludes that one-quarter of the Ulster emigrants, and almost one-half of the indentured and redemptioner passengers, were native Ulster Catholics in what was otherwise a "predominantly Ulster Scots movement." (70) See also Note 21.

"Doyle, 71.

"To give a few examples, we find Michael A' Dougharty listed as a freeman in Londonderry, Chester County, in 1735; Hugh Galahor and Patrick O' Harrah in Drumore, Lancaster County in 1759; John Murphy in Colerain, Lancaster County, in 1751; Hugh Swainey in Marsh Creek settlement in Adams County, c. 1740; Quigleys in the environs of Lisburn in Cumberland County, 1760; Felix Boyle among the Ulstermen whose illegal cabins in what is now Franklin County were burnt by provincial authorities in 1750; and the 1767 assessment list for Tyrone Township in Perry County including a Kelly and a Roddy. Hercules Roney, who emigrated in 1775, was among the earliest landowners in Donegal Township, Washington County, in 1779; early settlers in Donegal Township also included Donoughys and Kellys. Many of these can be assumed to be Protestants. An eighteenth-century Ulster bard, writing in Irish, tells of traversing American wilderness "and never meeting a Christian," only to eventually encounter an old woman, who like himself was an Irish-speaking emigrant. The song is "An t-Oileán Ór," this phrase, which translates, "The New Island," was an Ulster Irish term for America.

"Ongoing research by the present writer suggests that Pennsylvania surpasses at least the original 13 states in the number of Ulster place-names, and may well lead the nation. Seven of the nine counties of Ulster are present in Pennsylvania as place-names: Antrim, Armagh, Derry, Netherlands, Border Countys, Ulsterman, and Ulster.
Donegal, Fermanagh, Monaghan and Tyrone. The name Ulster itself appears, along with cities and towns in the north of Ireland such as Belfast, Coleraine, Letterkenny, Lisburn and Strabane. The majority of the names appear to date from the 18th century.

Miller says (161) that “by 1790 perhaps 50 percent or more of the settlers on the trans-Appalachian frontier were of Ulster lineage.” Dunaway (85) asserts the Pittsburgh region was “prevailingy Scotch-Irish by 1790.” Leyburn (234) suggests this assertion is “strengthened by the preponderance of Presbyterian churches in the area.” And Dahlinger (38) reports: “The majority of the English-speaking inhabitants were of Irish or Scotch birth, or immediate extraction.” Ted Grame, writing on Pittsburgh’s “Ethnic Music” in Carnegie Magazine (Vol. XLIX, No. 3, March 1975, 110), observed: “When the Scots and Scotch-Irish began to enter the country they brought with them a powerful ballad-singing tradition, and a strong and abiding interest in fiddle-playing.”

Sarah H. Killikelly, The History of Pittsburgh, Its Rise and Progress (Pittsburgh, 1906), 85. The “Irish” to whom Lee refers would have been Ulster immigrants for the most part.

Samuel Jones, Pittsburgh in the Year 1826 (Pittsburgh, 1826); quoted in Charles W. Dahlinger, Pittsburgh, A Sketch of Its Early Social Life (New York, 1916), 68.

Doyle, 80.

O Hallmhurain, 51.

Philippe Varlet and Dick Spottswood, notes to the recording Milestone at the Garden, Irish Fiddle Masters (Rounder C1123, 1996).

Dr. Edward G. Baynham, A History of Pittsburgh Music, 1758-1958 (privately published, 1970). Again, the “Irish” referred to here were, for the most part, from Ulster and many of these “Scotch-Irish.”

Dahlinger, 55.

Dahlinger, 67-68.

Dahlinger, 68.

Killikelly, 111; Dahlinger, 34.

Baynham.


Joseph Doddridge, Notes on the Settlement and Indian Wars (reprinted by McClain Printing Co., 1989), 123.

Breathnach, 37-38, 45-46.

Breathnach, 42.

Bayard, 493.


Baynham.

Doddridge, 104.

Joseph F. McFarland, 20th Century History of the City of Washington and Washington County, Pennsylvania and Representative Citizens (Richmond-Arnold Publishing Co., 1910), 116, 170. Dancing seems to have been exceeded in popularity in early southwestern Pennsylvania only by horse racing; they became intertwined when William Irwin named his race horse “Dancing Master.” (Dahlinger, 68.)

Baynham. His source is probably lawyer and writer Henry Hugh Brackenridge, who recalled, “There was Crowder with his fiddle and his votaries, making the dust fly with a four-handed or rather four-footed reel.” Cited in Leland D. Baldwin, Whiskey Rebels, The Story of a Frontier Uprising (Univ. of Pittsburgh Press, 1967), 32-33.

Henry W. Shoemaker, Mountain Minstrels of Pennsylvania (Philadelphia, 1931), 26-27. Shoemaker, a noted Pennsylvania folklorist, says other instruments found in our mountains were a drum made from wolf skin or groundhog skin—which brings to mind the Irish drum, the bodhrán. He also mentions (26) what was called the “David’s Harp,” which sounds like the Celtic small harp.


Hill Country Tunes, xxxi.

Bayard, Dance to the Fiddle, “The Boyne Water” (No. 317); the transcription appears on 271-273, commentary on 273. Bayard also sees a relation between this tune and “O Dear Mother My Toes Are Sore,” No. 452. (434)

David Bruce, Poems Chiefly in the Scottish Dialect (Colerick, 1801), in Jacob A. Evanson, Two Hundred Years of Pittsburgh Region Folksongs (privately printed, 1956). “The Bard of Burgetstown” chose the tune “Gilderoy” for his song “The Forlorn,” written c. 1800. In these verses, Bruce melancholically recalls “a bonie lass” left “ove the rowan [bodhrán] sea.” (Evanson) This is the melody of a 17th century ballad commemorating a McGregor outlaw nick-named Gille Ruadh (Red-haired Lad), who was executed in 1636. The tune, which was printed as early as 1726, was also used by Robert Burns. Bayard printed seven variants of the tune; of them he says: Pennsylvania sets of ‘Gilderoy’ tend to be in the Mixolydian mode—a sign, I conjecture, of Irish tradition. This contrasts with the old English and Scottish versions, which are nearly always in Aeolian or Dorian tonality. (Bayard No. 169; [119-121; 121-122])

Bayard, 273.

Bayard No. 445 (414; 414-415).

Bayard No. 375 (364; 364).

Bayard No. 605 (534; 535).

Bayard No. 556 (494-5; 495).

Bayard No. 304 (258; 258).

Bayard No. 361 (356-357; 357).

Bayard No. 542 (481-2; 482-4).

Bayard, 483.


Bayard No. 333 (310-313; 313-314). The version of the tune by James Morris is one of four which Bayard says are “pretty clearly forms” of the Irish tune; three others show greater kinship to the Scots tune. Bayard adds that all seven versions he collected “show relationships one to the other.”

Bayard No. 567 (504-507; 507); see also Gilmore, “Scots-Irish” Words from Pennsylvania’s Mountains (Scotpress, 1998), 109-110; Bayard No. 327 (292-293; 293).

Bayard No. 421 (398-399).

Bayard No. 320 (276-279; 279-280).

Bayard, 279. (I have corrected Bayard’s spelling of the Irish name.)

Sullivan, 117. (In his notes on Tune No. 27, “An Old Dance,” which is in the “Rose Tree” family, Bayard points out that the tune, well-documented in both Scotland and Ireland, received its usual title from the song “A Rose Tree In Full Bearing” to which it was joined in William Shield’s 1782 opera The Poor Soldier. [28])

Bayard, 279.

Bayard No. 289 (242; 242-243). O’Sullivan, 112; Bayard, 243. The great-grandfather of Stephen Collins Foster emigrated from Derry in the north of Ireland in 1728; Foster’s father came to Pittsburgh from Virginia in 1795 at age 16. (Pittsburgh’s Tribute To Her Gifted Son Stephen Collins
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