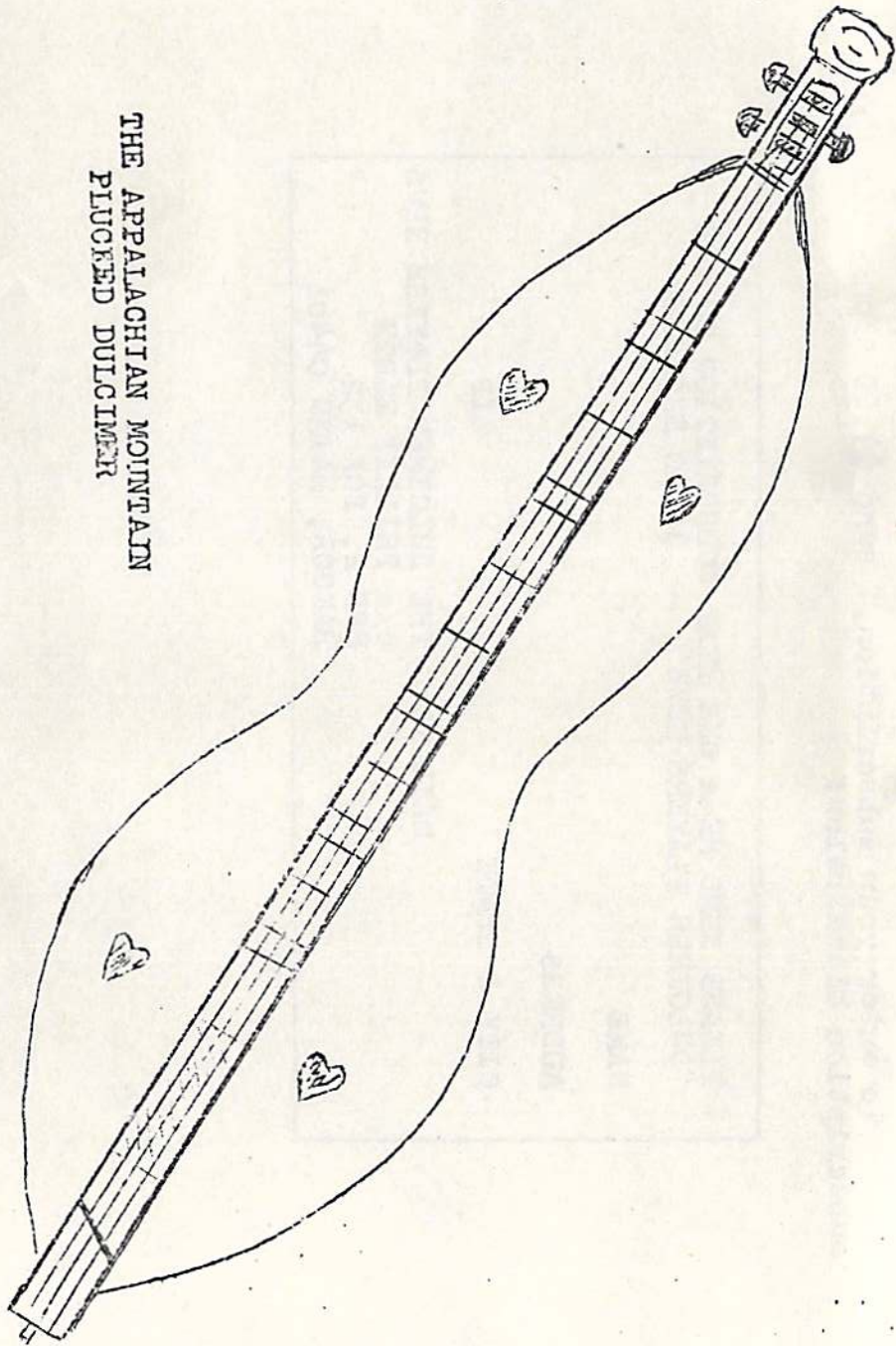


THE APPALACHIAN MOUNTAIN
PLUCKED DULCIMER



Volume 1, Number 1

THE DULCIMER PLAYERS NEWS

January 1975

Address all inquires to:



THE DULCIMER PLAYERS NEWS
c/o Phillip Mason
RFD 2, Box 132
Bangor, Maine 04401

ABOUT THE DULCIMER PLAYERS NEWS

The "Dulcimer Players News" has been established as a monthly newsletter for the purpose of providing a flow of information on all phases of the plucked dulcimer, both traditional and contemporary. We accept no paid advertising. Any reader who feels they have something to say or pass on to others about the dulcimer is welcome to do so through this newsletter, which will reach many hundreds of dulcimer oriented people throughout the country. In short, its your magazine!

Our subscription rate is \$4.00 per year. (Pretty reasonable for a non-advertising monthly, considering printing and mailing costs.) We depend pretty much on word-of-mouth (the old oral folk tradition) to get the word around about our newsletter, so please feel free to have any interested friends contact us at the "News". We always appreciate the chance to correspond with others who are into the dulcimer.

To enter your subscription, send \$4.00 along with the subscription blank below:

PLEASE SEND ME A ONE YEAR SUBSCRIPTION TO THE
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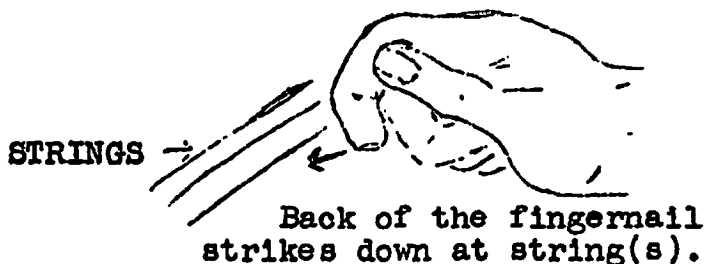
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FRAILING THE DULCIMER

Frailing is a playing technique used on the banjo which can easily be applied to the dulcimer with excellent results. The frailing style utilizes playing strokes which are always directed away from the player (downward & outward) and it is the back of the fingernail of the index finger (or middle finger if you prefer) which strikes the strings. The index finger stroke is sometimes followed by a quick flick of the thumb down across all of the strings, which enables the player to sound additional fill-in notes.

Frailing is best accomplished by holding your hand in a loose fist-like position which will allow it to strike the strings and hit them cleanly with the back of the fingernail.



When playing in the frailing style, the hand should remain relatively frozen into the position shown in the above diagram. You should allow the wrist to accomplish most of the frailing motion. You will find it handy at first to steady your index finger with your thumb, as shown in the illustration above.

If you want to get that real galloping rhythm into your playing, try frailing the strings (hitting with the index finger) and then quickly follow up with a quick flick of the thumb across all of the strings before going on to the next melody note to be frailed. This will give you that tickah tockah rhythm. Try mixing up the rhythms to suit the melody of the tune you are playing. For example, try a tickah tock - tickah tockah - tick tock. The tickahs' and tockahs' are index finger hits followed by quick thumb brushes; and the plain old ticks and tocks are single hits of the index finger upon one string only.

The frailing style can become even more exciting when you incorporate two-finger plucking into the basic frailing rhythm. To accomplish this on the dulcimer, you would stop your frailing on the melody string for part of a measure and start playing the melody string with your thumb while alternately frailing the drones with your index finger. The very essence of the frailing style is to mix the different techniques that have been discussed here around so that your musical phrases do not become overly repetitious.

Now try the following song "Buck-Eye Jim" in the frailing style and see what you can do with it. The rhythm of the first measure goes tick tock tickah tock.

The tablature for this song has a musical notation line which indicates the rhythm of the notes, while the number directly below each note indicates where to fret the dulcimer's melody string to obtain that note. Incidentally, you will find frailing an especially good technique for songs in a fast 2/4 time.

BUCK-EYE JIM

S. Appalachian Folk Song

ANY MAJOR (IONIAN) TUNING

Way up yon-der a - bove the moon, A jay bird lived in a

sil-ver spoon. Go lim-ber Jim, you can't go. Go

CHORUS

weave and spin, you can't go, Buck-eye Jim.

2. Way up yonder in the sky,
A bluebird lived in a jay-bird's eye.
3. Way up yonder on a shooting star,
A bullfrog jumped, but he jumped too far.
4. Way down yonder on a holler log,
A cow-bird danced with a green bullfrog.
5. Way up yonder in a dogwood tree,
A red-bird fiddled with a bumblebee.
6. Way out yonder there in space,
Man -in-the Moon's got egg on his face.

A LETTER TO OUR READERS

Dear Friend:

This newsletter is the first of a monthly basis trial period, which we will try out for a year to see if there will be enough interest to continue. Our intention is to print and pass on the kind of information you would like to have about our common interest in a love for the dulcimer. If you have a question to ask, or something you would like to pass on to others (no matter what) please send it along to us at the "Dulcimer Players News". We will print it up and get the information passed on to others -hopefully in our next issue.

Our purpose is to channel information on all aspects of the dulcimer; and besides contributions to our regular builders section, song section, and techniques sections, I am sure all of us would be interested in more information on such aspects of the dulcimer as design, building tips, history, lore, building materials, info on old instruments, playing styles (traditional & contemporary), songs, techniques, etc. Full credit is, of course, given to all contributors.

For your subscription and support we will be able to pass on to you over 130 pages of important information pertinent to the dulcimer. This small fund of knowledge will accumulate each month into an annual collection containing vastly much more information about the dulcimer than has ever before been published in a single year. At the "News" we are just thrilled to be able to have the opportunity to pass on this sort of information to you the reader.

--- Editor

COMING UP IN NEXT MONTHS ISSUE

- BUILDING PLANS (its easy to build your own dulcimer)
- ALL ABOUT THE VERSATILE MIXOLYDIAN MODE
- BUILDERS PAGE
- MORE SONGS
- THE TECHNIQUE SECTION (about beating)
- AND MUCH MORE !!

SOME TYPICAL SOUND-HOLE DESIGNS



ABOUT THOSE VERSATILE "EXTRA" FRETS

by: P. Mason

It seems that there are an increasing number of dulcimers being built which incorporate one or two extra frets; so here is some of the story on them and what they can be used to advantage for.

You will find that dulcimers with extra frets placed on them are usually set up as shown in the following diagram:



Figure 1. Fret numbers

The dashed lines at positions $6\frac{1}{2}$ and $13\frac{1}{2}$ indicate the placement of the "extra" frets. You will not find many dulcimers with the second octave $13\frac{1}{2}$ fret, but the $6\frac{1}{2}$ fret in the first octave of the scale is becoming much more commonly seen.

A major advantage of the "extra" frets is the capability that is gained for playing the same keyed scales in two tunings without changing the initial tuning pitch of the strings. For example, when tuned into any scheme of the mixolydian tuning mode, you will be able, by utilizing the "extra" frets, to play a Mixolydian or a Major (Ionian) diatonic scale through either one or two octaves, and can play songs in both tunings without having to re-tune the instrument.

Lets say that we are tuned up into the Mixolydian in the key of C. For this tuning key we would tune the first string (or double strings on a double melody stringed 4-string dulcimer) to C (the key note) the second string to G (the fifth) and the bass string to the C one octave below the pitch of the first strings C tone. In an alternate tuning, you might try reversing the two drones- strings 2 and 3 tuned C and G, instead of G and C. This will sometimes give you a fuller sound in some keys, especially the higher pitched ones. If you use this alternate tuning you must remember to reverse everything you do on strings 2 and 3, such as fingering chords, etc.

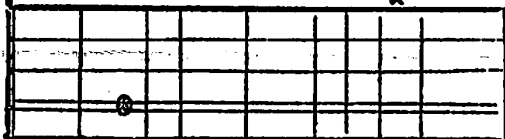
Now that you are tuned up, lets play the two scales and see just where the "extra" $6\frac{1}{2}$ fret comes into the picture.

First play the Mixolydian scale from "do" to "do". This starts with the open (unfretted) melody string, and then proceeds to frets 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, (skip $6\frac{1}{2}$), and 7. Now play the Major (Ionian) scale, which starts again with the open first string and then proceeds to frets 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, (skip fret 6), $6\frac{1}{2}$, 7. There is not really all that much difference between the two tunings except that the Mixolydian mode has a lowered seventh note. Now that you have seen the scheme of the two different scales, you can proceed to tune into any Mixolydian key and play songs in either the Mixolydian or the Major tuning modes. Try "Old Joe Clark" in the Mixolydian tuning - its designed for it.

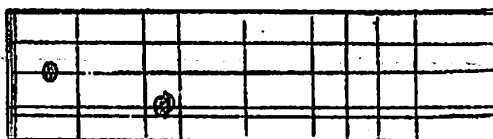
FOUR EASY CHORDS

The following diagrams will show you the fretting positions for the four most used chords; and these may be used in either of the two tunings (Mixolydian or Major) which you can use with the above described "extra" frets. The standard tuning which keys on C would call for your strings to be tuned C, G, low C.

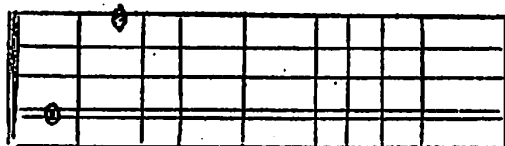
MUT 1 2 3 4 5 6 $6\frac{1}{2}$ 7 8



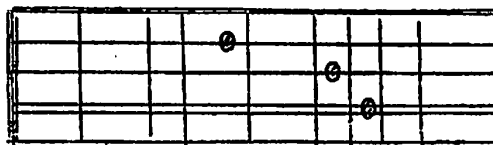
C



F



G



G7

These same four chord fingering patterns can be used in any tuning key. For example, if you were tuned into the key of G, your open strings would be tuned G, D, low G and your new chords would be G, C, D, and D7, which are the proper chords for that tuning key. With your "Extra" frets you can now play Mixolydian and Major tunes in the key of G, etc.

Try chord playing to the tune of this familiar song:

HUSH, LITTLE BABY

C
Hush, little baby, don't say a word

G7
Poppas gonna buy you a mocking bird.

DULCIMER RECORDINGS
(DISCOGRAPHY)

Folks have been asking us whats available and where to obtain records which feature dulcimer music on them, so we have started up this list of the ones we know about, and will continue to list new ones that come to our attention in future issues. If you are aware of something that is not on our list please let us know and we will pass on the information. You will, however, find the following list to be pretty complete as far as the important dulcimer recordings which are currently available is concerned.

The "Dulcimer Players News" has also compiled an extensive "Bibliography" of the printed material available concerning the Plucked Dulcimer. We will gladly send a copy of this "Bibliography" FREE to anyone who is interested. Please enclose a stamped, self-addressed envelope and a note requesting the "Dulcimer Bibliography".

THE DISCOGRAPHY

"DULCIMER - TRADITIONAL & OLD TIME" - Ralph Lee Smith & Louise Hollowell - Skyline Records; Stephen City, Va. 22555.

"OLD TRADITIONS" - Jean & Lee Schilling - Jeans Dulcimer shop; Box 8; Cosby, Tenn. 37722.

"PORCHES OF THE POOR" - Jean & Lee Schilling

"WANDERING THROUGH THE RACKENSACK" - Simmons Family

"THE SIMMONS FAMILY" (Renee, Tommy, Jean and Pam Simmons)

"OHIO STATE BALLADS" - Anne Grimes - Folkways FH 5217

"NORTH CAROLINA BALLADS" - Artus Moser - Folkways FA 2112

"CUMBERLAND MOUNTAIN FOLK SONGS" - Paul Clayton - Folkways FLW 2007

"DULCIMER SONGS & SOLOS" - Paul Clayton - Folkways FG 3571

"HOW TO PLAY DULCIMER" - Nat Winston

"BEST OF RICHARD & MIMI FARINA" - Vanguard Records VSD - 21/22

"DICK FARINA & ERIC VON SCHMIDT" - - -

"CAROLS OF ALL SEASONS" - Jean Ritchie - Tradition TLP 1031

"STONE COUNTY DULCIMER" - The Simmons Family

"THE RUSSELL FAMILY" - County Records; 307 E. 37th St.; N.Y., N.Y. 10016 - Old time Instrumentals featuring dulcimer.

DISCOGRAPHY CONTINUED:

"INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC OF THE SOUTHERN APPALACHIANS" (few dulcimer tunes by Mrs. Ed Presnell) Tradition Records TLP 1007

"AN EVENING WITH JOHN JACOB NILES" - Tradition TLP 1036

"JOHN JACOB NILES-I WONDER AS I WANDER" Tradition TLP 1023

"ON THE MOUNTAINS HIGH" - Margaret MacArthur - Living Folk Records F- LFR - 100

"FRANK PROFFITT" - Frank Proffitt - Folkways FLW 2360

"BLUE" - Joni Mitchell - Reprise S 2038

"HOWIE MITVHELL" - Folk-Legacy Records FSI - 5

"THE MOUNTAIN DULCIMER-HOW TO MAKE AND PLAY" Howard Mitchell Folk-Legacy Records FSI - 29

Riverside Records
553 W. 51st St.
N.Y., N.Y.

Folkways Records
701 7th Ave.
N.Y., N.Y. 10036

Living Folk Records
65 Mt. Auburn St.
Cambridge, Mass. 02138

Folk-Legacy Records
c/o Sandy & Caroline Paton
Sharon, Conn. 06069

PHOTOS WANTED: We will be putting out a photo edition of the "DULCIMER PLAYERS NEWS" in the near future and need black and white, or color photos of both new and old time instruments, along with a history and description of each, if possible. This photo edition should be a great one!

- Editor

ROW YOUR BOAT

3 3 3 4 5
Row, row, row, your boat

5 4 5 6 7
Gently down the stream

10 7 5 3
Merrily, merrily, merrily, merrily,

7 6 5 4 3
Life is but a dream.



(think about it!)

DISCOGRAPHY CONTINUED:

- "FOLK SONGS OF OLD ERIE" - Judy Mayhan
- "GOLDEN RINGS" - Mitchell & Friends
- "APPALACHIAN DULCIMER" - Jean Ritchie
- "SOUTHERN MOUNTAIN FOLKSONGS AND BALLADS" RIVERSIDE RLP 12-612
- "SINGING FAMILY OF THE CUMBERLANDS" - Jean Ritchie - RIVERSIDE RECORDS RLP 12-653
- "SATURDAY NIGHT & SUNDAY TOO" - Jean Ritchie Riverside RLP 12-620
- "RIDDLE ME THIS" - Jean Ritchie & Oscar Brand - Riverside Records RLP 12-646
- "AS I ROVED OUT" - Jean Ritchie - Folkways FW 8872
- "FIELD TRIP" - Jean Ritchie - Folkways FW 8871
- "OSCAR BRAND, JEAN RITCHIE, DAVE SEAR" (in concert) Folkways FA 2428
- "PRECIOUS MEMORIES" (Jean Ritchie & Group) Folkways FA 2427
- "CHILDRENS SONGS AND GAMES FROM THE SOUTHERN APPALACHIANS" Jean Ritchie - Folkways Records FA 2316
- "THEVRITCHIE FAMILY OF KENTUCKY" - Folkways FA 2316
- "BRITISH TRADITIONAL BALLADS IN THE SOUTHERN MOUNTAINS" Vols. 1 & 2 - Jean Ritchie * Folkways Records FA 2301 & FA 2302
- "COURTIN'S A PLEASURE" - Jean Ritchie - Elektra EKL 122
- "JEAN RITCHIE" - Jean Ritchie - Elektra Records EKL 125
- "SIMPLE GIFTS" - Gerry & George Armstrong - Folkways FA 2375
- "EDNA RITCHIE" - Folk-Legacy Records
- "OHIO VALLEY BALLADS" - Bruce Buckley - Folkways FLW 2025
- "ANDREW ROWEN SUMMERS" - Folkways FA 2348
- "HYMS & CAROLS EARLY AMERICAN" - A.R. Summers - Folkways FA 2361
- "FULL HOUSE" (few songs on dulcimer) A&M Records S 4265
- "ANGEL DELIGHT" Fairport Convention A&M Records S 4319
- "THE UNQUIET GRAVE" - A.R. Summers - Folkways FA 2364
- "SONGS WE LOVE TO PLAY AND SING" - The Ledford Family; 125 Sunset Heights; Winchester, Kentucky 40391

"CUMBERLAND GAP"

Any Major (Ionian) tuning

Traditional

3
2
1

5 4 3 3 5 5 7 7 9

Lay down, boys, and take a lit - tle nap,

CHORUS: Cum - ber - land Gap, Cum - ber - land Gap,

7 5 3 3 1 1 3 3 3

Fif - teen miles to the Cum - ber - land Gap.

We're all goin' down to Cum - ber - land Gap.

ADDITIONAL VERSES:

Me and my wife, and my wife's pap
We all live down to Cumberland Gap.

I got a gal in Cumberland Gap
She's got a baby that calls me pap.

Cumberland Gap it ain't very fur
Just three miles from Middlesboro.

The first white man in Cumberland Gap
Was Doctor Walker, an English chap.

Cumberland Gap is a noted place
Three kinds of water to wash your face.

Cumberland Gap with its cliffs and rocks,
Home of the panther, bear, and fox.

Old Aunt Dinah, if you don't care
I'll leave my jug sittin right here.

If its not here when I come back
I'll raise hell in Cumberland Gap.

Old Aunt Dinah took a spell
Broke my liquor jug all to hell.

Cumberland Gap is a real place of historic interest located near the present day city of Middlesboro, Kentucky. It was through the Cumberland Gap area of the Cumberland Mountains that some of the earliest pioneers first crossed the Appalachians on their way westward.

THE DULCIMER BUILDERS PAGE

Each month the "Dulcimer Players News" will profile a few dulcimer builders on this page and tell you something of the instruments they build. This is not paid advertising, nor will paid advertising be accepted elsewhere for inclusion into the content of this newsletter.

Any builders who would like to be listed in a future issue are urged to contact the "News" by mail outlining their involvement with the dulcimer. We will get you all listed at your request, and again I repeat, this is a FREE service to builders by the "Dulcimer Players News".

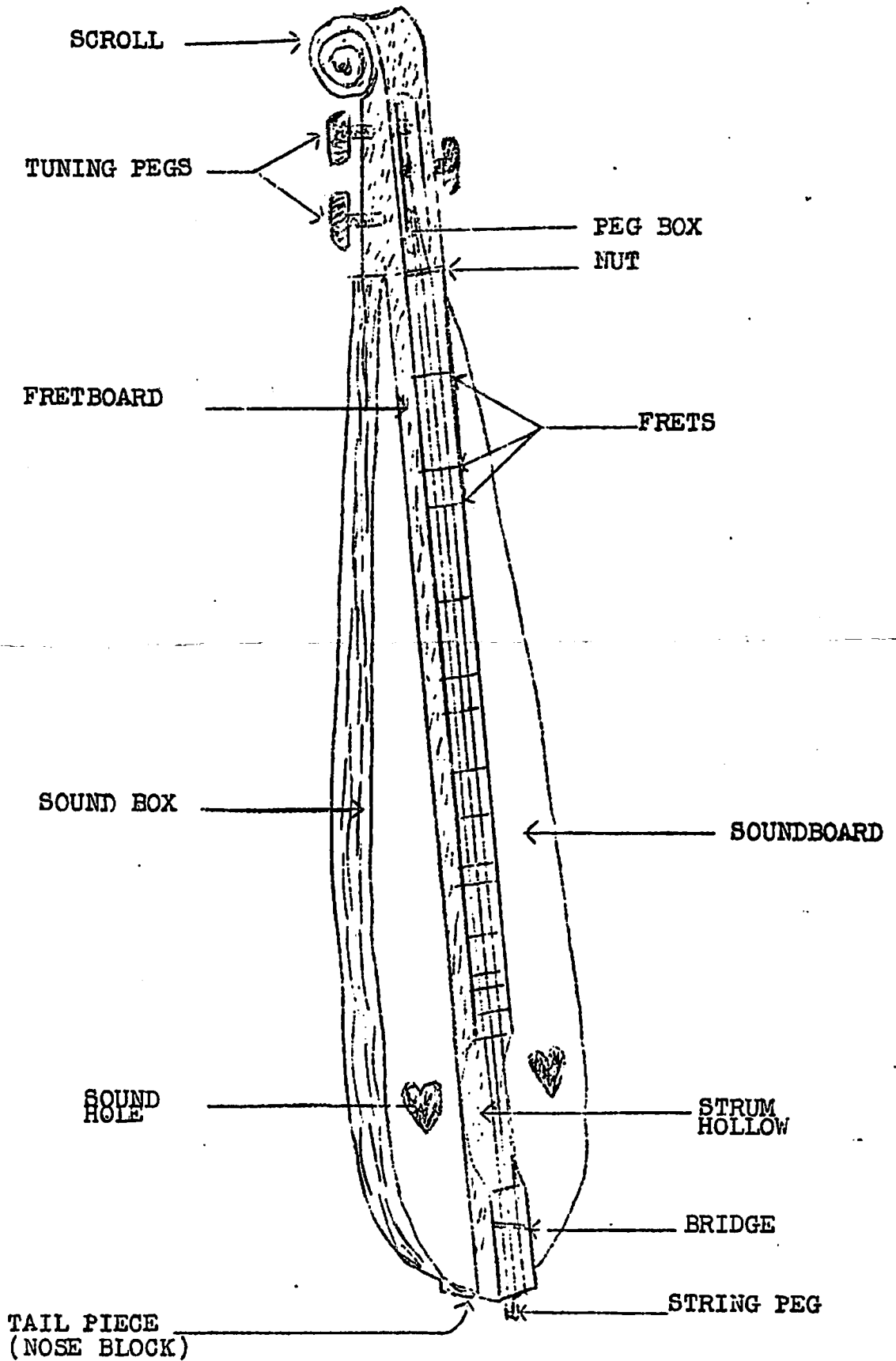
A.W. JEFFREYS, JR. - 232 WEST FREDERICK ST. - STAUNTON, VA. 24401 ----- The Jeffreys family has been making dulcimers for a long time and only turn out quality stringed instruments. The back and sides of a Jeffreys Dulcimer are guaranteed not to crack (given proper care, of course). The Jeffreys Family is also preparing a history of the Appalachian Dulcimer and they hope to be able to soon find some clear answer to the naming of the instrument (dulcimer) to complete their account of the history of this terrific instrument. Inquires which are addressed to Mr. Jeffreys will bring you his brochure and prices. They build fine quality instruments at very reasonable prices. With each instrument Mr. Jeffreys includes a noter & pick, as well as a comprehensive booklet outlining detailed tuning and playing instructions.

CAPRITAURUS DULCIMERS - P.O. BOX 153 - FELTON, CALIF. 95018
Stephen Jeckel informs me that since 1965, CapriTaurus has been making a basically traditional instrument with some contemporary additions which combine to an outstanding instrument. The instruments which they make under the name "CapriTaurus Dulcimers" are all high quality solid wood models. They also offer a great mailorder service, and have a catalog loaded with dulcimer accesories - even quills. They also offer kits.

In a recent letter from Mrs. Henry Steele of Belvidere Tennessee, she tells me that Henry is no longer making any dulcimers because he is laid up in a wheelchair and can't do too much work. Henry has been a dulcimer maker around his area for over half a century (made his first one at 18) and has done much to help preserve the tradition of this fine instrument which he loved. Mrs Steele plays the dulcimer in her Church and it is the only music the Church has. We certainly wish the Steeles well and offer our best to Henry in the coming year.

TRY BUILDING YOUR OWN !!!

ANATOMY OF THE DULCIMER



As we know the Appalachian Dulcimer today, it is a product of the evolution of similar and related stringed instruments dating far back to a very remote, murky, and far reaching ancestral heritage. Just how far back some of our folk instruments do date into history is something no one can say for certain. Suffice to say that the dulcimer, like the banjo, fiddle, washtub bass, and many other folk instruments, shares its common roots in a global musical remoteness. It is obvious to scholars, who study these things quite closely, that folk music is carried on in a universal manner around the world; and is indeed a music that can be called one-with-the-world. Similarities amongst all peoples (folks) folk instruments can be noted in many and widely varying separate areas of the world. All similar types of folk instruments, including the dulcimer, are a part of a world-girdling folk tradition, which tends to make the instruments of the "folks" as diverse in form and nature as the areas from which they come.

Traditionally, the Mountain People who developed this instrument had the tuning of the dulcimer down to a simple science. There simply was no definite tuning pitch. To tune their dulcimers, the first string (melody string(s) was simply tuned to a pleasing pitch, and the second string was tuned in unison with it; then the last string was tuned a 5th below strings one and two. This tuning translates on the dulcimer into the last string being tuned to the first note of a major scale (do, re, mi, etc.) and the other strings acting as harmonious fifths. The scale can now be played on the melody string beginning at the third fret. Whatever the actual pitch was, was usually determined by the individual players own singing voice ("do" for the bass string and "sol" for the first and second strings.

Seated one day at the organ,
I was weary and ill at ease,
And my fingers wandered idly
Over the noisy keys.
I know not what I was playing,
Or what I was dreaming then,
But I struck one chord of music
Like the sound of a great Amen.

-ADELAIDE A. PROCTOR, "The Lost Chord"

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