

## Arkansas Traveler

### Information

#### Lyrics

According to The Fireside Book of Favorite American Songs, The Arkansas Traveler was a hit play in the mid 1850s in the taverns of Salem, Ohio, where travelers stayed. In the play a traveler finds a squatter at a cabin playing this tune. The squatter is trying to remember the end of the tune, which he learned in New Orleans. The entire play revolves around the squatter's efforts to remember the end of the tune and it is played in different keys to different times with much improvisation. The play would vary according to the skill of the musicians and their ability to improvise. The words are credited to David Stevens.

However, according to Vance Randolph, the words and music are usually credited to Colonel Sandford C. Faulkner (d. 1875), a "well-known Arkansas character." The story, according to Randolph, is that Faulkner was travelling on a political mission in Pope County, Arkansas in 1840 when he met a mountain fiddler who figures in the song. Faulkner told the tale at banquets and in barrooms. It was often repeated and Faulkner himself became known as the Arkansas Traveler. Several pictures of the Arkansas Traveler were done, and the likeness is that of Col. Faulkner. Also according Randolph, the play Kit, the Arkansas Traveler, by Edward Spencer of Baltimore, was first performed in Buffalo, NY in 1869.

The song was printed in New York circa 1850. It was later reprinted in The Arkansas Traveler's Songster (1864) with credit given to Mose Case as author and composer. In 1896 Century Magazine credited the music to Jose Tasso, a famous fiddler of the time.

played AABB just sing an AB

A: D / / / | A / / / | D / / / | / / A D  
B: D G D A | D G D A | D G D A | D / A D

Oh once upon a time in Arkansas  
An old man sat in his little cabin door,  
And fiddled at a tune that he liked to hear,  
A jolly old tune that he play'd by ear.  
It was raining hard but the fiddler didn't care  
He saw'd away at the popular air,  
Tho' his roof tree leaked like a water fall  
That didn't seem to bother the man at all.

A traveler was riding by that day,  
And stopped to hear him a-practicing away  
The cabin was afloat and his feet were wet,  
But still the old man didn't seem to fret.  
So the stranger said: "Now the way it seems to me,  
You'd better mend your roof," said he.  
But the old man said, as he played away:  
"I couldn't mend it now, it's a rainy day."

The traveler replied: "That's all quite true,  
But this, I think, is the thing for you to do;  
Get busy on a day that is fair and bright,  
Then pitch the old roof till it's good and tight."  
But the old man kept on a-playing at his reel,

And tapped the ground with his leathery heel:  
"Get along," said he, "for you give me a pain;  
My cabin never leaks when it doesn't rain."

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