

Banjo Tunings

gDGBD

OPEN-G, Standard G

Now the most common banjo tuning, for any key.

aEAC#E

Open-G + 2

The most usual tuning for accompanying fiddle tunes in A.

eBEG#B

Open-G - 3

Dock Boggs, *Peggy Walker*, key of E ("[Dock Boggs Vol 3](#)"). (I mention it only because it took me a while to realize where Dock - I think - was coming from on this song.)

fCFAC

Open-G - 2

Rufus Crisp often used open-G tuned down to F.

Ron Mullenex, *Barker's Creek* ("[Taking Yesterday Along](#)"). Rick Abrams, *Abner's Shoes*, fiddle tuned GDAC ("[The Piney Creek Weasels: Squirrel Heads & Gravy](#)"). Stu Jamieson, *Pretty Polly* (fretless banjo) ("[Banjos, Lamas & Bagpipes](#)").

aDGBD

Open-G, raised 5th string

Mostly for tunes in the key of D or F. More common in bluegrass than old-time playing.

John Burke, *Eight More Miles to Louisville* (Tab, BNL, Oct 1982). Bill Keith, *Footprints in the Snow* ("Muleskinner"; tab, BNL, Jan 1989). Ken Perlman, from Johnny Morissey, *Darlin' Nelly Grey*, key of F (Tab, BNL, Nov 1994). Tom Glazer, *The Days of '49* (A-minor). Peggy Seeger, *Lonesome Road Blues*. Stu & Gloria Jamieson, *What Shall We Do With the Baby-Oh?* (capo-2) ("[Banjos, Lamas & Bagpipes](#)").

bDGBD

Open-G, raised 5th string

Earl Scruggs, *Lay Me Down in Dixie* ("Top of the World"; tab, BNL, Jul 1990). Anthony Shostak, *The Changeling* (Tab submitted by A. Shostak to Banjo-List, 21 Nov 1997, with the note 'here's a tab for a beautiful waltz in Bm which I learned from flutist/banjoist Jim DiCarlo').

dDGBD

Open-G, raised 5th (octave above 1st string)

Pete Seeger suggests this for *Green Corn* ("[How to Play the 5 String Banjo](#)").

g#DGBD

Open-G, raised 5th string

Paul Gunnells, 16 Sept 1997, submitted this tuning to me, saying that he had explored it while studying with Tony Trischka. He comments that it 'works very well for playing in E without a capo. The combination of 2nd and 5th string really nails down the major tonality, and the 1st, 3rd, and 4th strings make it easy to achieve a real "bluesy" sound.' Paul has used it for *Reuben's Train*, *John Henry*, and *Little Maggie*.

eDGBD

Open-G, lowered 5th string

Buell Kazee, *Lady Gay; Roving Cowboy* ("[Buell Kazee](#)"). Art Rosenbaum suggests it for *Pretty Little Miss* or *Little Rabbit*, using the 5th string for melody notes (in "[Old Time Mountain Banjo](#)"). Ken Perlman, *Devil's Dream* (tab in "[Clawhammer Style Banjo](#)"). Joel Mabus, *Little Rabbit* ("[Clawhammer](#)"). Stu Jamieson, *The Wicked Wife* ("[Banjos, Lamas & Bagpipes](#)").

f#DGBD

Open-G, lowered 5th string

Indian Creek Delta Boys, *Wolfe Creek* ("[Indian Creek Delta Boys](#)"). Mark Rader, from Joe Mullins, *The Blues Are Still the Blues*, key of B (Tab, BNL, Feb 1994).

fDGBD

Open-G, lowered 5th string

Danny Barnes, *Stevejames*, G-mixolydian ("The Bad Livers: Horses in the Mines"; tab, BNL, Aug 1995).

gDGBE

Open-G variant. A "guitar tuning"

Equivalent in F is **fCFAD**.

Retta Spradlin, *Wild Bill Jones* ("[Gettin' Up the Stairs](#)"). Barry Hall, *Lady Gay* ("[The Virtuoso 5-String Banjo](#)"). Ray Stewart (Aberdeen, Scotland) likes it for *Forks of Sandy* among others. Reed Island Rounders, *Big Scioty* ("[Wolves in the Wood](#)").

gDGBC

Open-G variant

Tony Trischka, *Kentucky Bullfight* ("Country Cooking"). Buzz Fountain, *Southern Rose Waltz* ("[Old-Time Banjo in America](#)").

gFGBD

Open-G variant

A Rufus Crisp tuning, according to Pete Seeger ("[How to Play...](#)").

gEGBD

Open-G variant

Molly Tenenbaum, *Charming Betsy*, capo 3 for G-minor ("[And the Hillside Are All Covered in Cakes](#)").

gDGDD

G variant

Or **ddGDD**. A Peggy Seeger "dulcimer" tuning. The same principle of tuning several strings to the same note & playing on one string against the drone of the others can be applied in various combinations & keys.

gBGBD

G variant

Low B on 4th string.

Hank Sapoznik, *President Garfield's Hornpipe* (tab in Ken Perlman's in "[Melodic Clawhammer Banjo](#)"). Morgan Sexton, *London City Where I Did Dwell* ("[Rock Dust](#)").

gDGAE

G variant

In "[Old-Time Mountain Banjo](#)" Art Rosenbaum suggested this tuning for *Sugar Hill* and *Willie Moore*.

gDFAD

G modal/minor variant

An unusual tuning evidently invented by Miles Krassen to fit Frank George's fiddle version of *The 28th of January*. Krassen uses the tuning to play in the key of A (i.e. aEGBE). See Miles Krassen's books, "[Clawhammer Banjo](#)" and "[Appalachian Fiddle](#)". I don't believe Frank George has recorded this tune, but versions of it may be found on: "[The Fuzzy Mountain String Band](#)"; The Bing Brothers, "[Just For the Sake of It](#)"; The Ill-Mo Boys, "[Fine As Frog's Hair](#)".

ddGAC

G variant

See under [eEABD](#).

eEGBD

G variant

I landed on this by accident. Capoe up 3, can be used for G-minor.

gGGBD

"G-bass", "low-G"

4th string tuned an octave below 3rd string.

Fred Cockerham, *Long Steel Rail* ("[Clawhammer Banjo](#)", where it is claimed that Cockerham invented this tuning). Paul Brown, *Roundtown Gals* ("[A Tribute to Tommy Jarrell](#)"). Dwight Diller, *Yew Pine Mountain* ("[Just Banjo](#)"). Rufus Crisp is also said to have used this tuning. Bob Carlin lowered it to open-E for his version of *Chilly Winds* ("[Fiddle Tunes for Clawhammer Banjo](#)").

aAAC#E

"Tommy Jarrell's Open-A"

The G-bass tuned up to the key of A. (On another County recording, Tommy Jarrell's Banjo Album: "[Come & Go With Me](#)", it is claimed that Tommy was responsible for this "fantastic tuning". Perhaps Fred invented it in G, and Tommy in A.)

Tommy Jarrell, *John Brown's Dream* ("[More Clawhammer Banjo](#)"). Tommy Jarrell & Paul Brown, *Roundtown Gals* ("[Appalachia, The Old Traditions, vol 2](#)"). Jont Blevins, *Train 45* (I can't find my source). Art Rosenbaum, *John Henry* ("[Five String Banjo](#)"). John Herrmann, *Polly Grant; Brushy Fork of John's Creek* ("[Dirk Powell & John Herrmann](#)").

gGA#CD

G-bass variant

Frank Proffitt, *Satan Your Kingdom Must Come Down* ("[High Atmosphere](#)").

gGDAD

Rufus Crisp G-bass variant

Pete Seeger ("[How to Play...](#)") mentions this as among the tunings Rufus Crisp used. I'm assuming that the 4th string is tuned 2 octaves below the 5th, and the 3rd one octave below the 1st. I've no recorded examples.

cGGAC

G-bass variant

This could be my misinterpretation of a weird & wonderful tuning that Jody Stecher came up with for his banjo/vocal rendition of *Snake Baked a Hoecake*. I only have this on a tape passed on to me by a friend; the original LP ("[Jody Stecher & Friends: Snake Baked a Hoecake](#)") was recorded in 1974. On the tape I have, the banjo is tuned even lower, to something like bF#F#G#B. Stecher seems to be playing it as a slide-banjo.

gDGCD

"G-modal", "Mountain Minor", "Sawmill"

One of the most common banjo tunings for tunes in Dorian & Aeolian modal scales. E.g. *Cluck Old Hen; Pretty Polly; Shady Grove; Little Sadie; The Cuckoo; East Virginia*.

Also sometimes used for D-centered tunes: e.g. Dock Boggs, *Sugar Baby* ("[Dock Boggs: 12 Original Recordings](#)"; "[Dock Boggs, Vol 2](#)"). Heath Curdts, *Boll Weevil* ("[A Tribute to Tommy Jarrell](#)") Curdts says that Jarrell used it for *Chilly Winds*.

In BNL, Dec 1988, Ken Perlman discussed the use of this tuning for playing in B-flat and E-flat.

aEADE

Mountain Minor + 2

Changed up mainly to accompany A-modal fiddle tunes.

aDGCD

G-modal, raised 5th string

Art Rosenbaum, *Frankie Was a Good Girl*, key of F (Tab in "[Old Time Mountain Banjo](#)"). Rosenbaum suggests trying *Cumberland Gap* or *Buck Creek Girls* in this tuning or the variant [fdGCD](#).

fdGCD

G-modal, lowered 5th string

Equivalent, for the key of F, of [gEADE](#).

Roscoe Holcomb, *The Hills of Mexico* ("[The Music of Roscoe Holcomb & Wade Ward](#)"). Kimble Family, *Goin' Down to Raleigh (Silly Bill)* ("[Carroll County Pioneers](#)"). Brad Leftwich, Linda

Higginbotham, *Are You Getting There, Rabbit?*, from Matokie Slaughter (["Say, Old Man"](#)). Bob Carlin, *Trouble* (["Fiddle Tunes for Clawhammer Banjo"](#)). Greg Jowaisas, *Harlan County Farewell Tune* (["Old Time Banjo Pieces"](#)). Joel Mabus, *Kitchen Girl; Hen House Door* (["Clawhammer"](#)). Molly Tenenbaum, *Long Time Traveling Here Below*, capo 3 (["And the Hillsides Are All Covered with Cakes"](#)). Darrell Hensley, *Whiskey Before Breakfast* (Tab, BNL, Feb 1987). George Gibson likes to play *Shady Grove* and *Cumberland Gap* in this tuning. Dwight Diller, *Sail Away Ladies* (["Harvest: West Va. Mountain Music"](#)).

f#DGCD

John Cohen, *Buck Creek Girls*, fretless bjo (["New Lost City Ramblers: There Ain't No Way Out"](#)). John gives his source for this as Banjo Bill Cornett's performance on ["Mountain Music of Kentucky" CD version](#).

gFGCD

G-modal variant

Sidna Myers, *Twin Sisters; Shady Grove* (["Clawhammer Banjo vol 2"](#); also ["High Atmosphere"](#)). Rufus Crisp, *Shady Grove* (["Rufus Crisp"](#)). George Gibson says that his father played *Big Jug of Liquor* in this tuning, and that he knows of only one other old-timer (also from Knott County) who played this song.

fFGCD

G-modal variant

Matokie Slaughter, *Big-Eyed Rabbit*; Sidna Myers, *Shady Grove* (both on ["Clawhammer Banjo vol 2"](#)). Clyde Davenport, *Shortenin' Bread* and *Untitled Tune* (both on ["Puncheon Camps"](#)). Allen Hart, with Kerry Blech, *Will Davenport's Tune*, learned from Clyde Davenport (["The Young Fogies, vol. 2"](#)). Brad Leftwich, *Kitty Wells*, tuned to eEF#BC# (["Say, Old Man"](#)). George Gibson also likes this tuning.

eFGCD

G-modal "accident"

Mike Seeger, *Little Betty Ann* (["Music from True Vine"](#)). I read somewhere that Seeger picked up this tuning from an old country banjo player he encountered on his travels. Later he ran into that man again and learned that the tuning was an accident; the 5th string peg had been slipping. Seeger uses the "E" as a melody note, very effectively.

gDGAD

"Willie Moore" G/D Tuning

This produces a cross between a G-chord (DGBD) and a D-chord (DF#AD). I don't know if it is traditionally called the "Willie Moore" tuning; Art Rosenbaum (in ["Old-Time Mountain Banjo"](#)) suggested that this song falls into it naturally. George Gibson calls this the "Moonshiner" tuning, and says it's good for songs like *Knoxville Girl*, as well as *Moonshiner*.

Gaither Carlton, *Pretty Saro* (["The Watson Family Tradition"](#)). Pete Seeger, *Jinny Git Around* (["How to Play..."](#)). Barry Hall, *Peggy-O* (["Virtuoso 5-string Banjo"](#)). Morgan Sexton, *Little Sparrow* (["Rock Dust"](#)). (Although the liner notes say Sexton is playing this in [fCFCD](#), key of F, I'm 99 & 44/100% sure he's in gDGAD; and certainly in the key of G. Anyway, a very beautiful performance.) Bob Clayton, *Bill Cheatham* (Tab, BNL, Jan 1980).

f#DGAD

A "Dock Boggs" D tuning

Though there are more recorded examples of this tuning in the Dock Boggs canon than I've found elsewhere, Dock clearly didn't "invent" it. George Gibson lists it as a variant of the "Moonshiner" gDGAD tuning; he plays in it a version of *Texas Rangers* that he learned from Mel Amburgey, a Knott County old-timer.

Dock Boggs, *Danville Girl* (["His 12 Original Recordings"](#) and ["Dock Boggs Vol 2"](#)). Dock Boggs, *Pretty Polly* (["His 12 Original Recordings"](#); "Dock Boggs"). Dock Boggs, *Glory Land* (["Dock Boggs Vol 2"](#)). Dock Boggs, *Cuba; Prayer of a Miner's Child* (["Dock Boggs Vol 3"](#)). John Hilston, *Bonaparte's Retreat* (["A Tribute to Tommy Jarrell"](#)). Molly Tenenbaum, *Little Birdie*, in E (["And the Hillsides..."](#)).

f#CGAD

Another favorite Dock Boggs tuning

Dock Boggs, *Country Blues* ("[His 12 Original Recordings](#)"; "[Dock Boggs](#)"). Dock Boggs, *Oh Death; Prodigal Son; Drunkard's Lone Child* ("[Dock Boggs](#)"). Dock Boggs, *The Death of Jerry Damron* ("[Dock Boggs Vol 2](#)"). Dock Boggs, *Loving Nancy; Calvary* ("[Dock Boggs Vol 3](#)"). John Cohen, *John Johanna* ("[Old Time Banjo Project](#)"). Mike Seeger, *Pretty Polly* ("[Mike Seeger & Alice Gerrard](#)").

gCGAD

What George Gibson calls "Oma Wise" tuning, from his father's playing of this song.

Dock Boggs, *Little Black Train* ("[Dock Boggs Vol 2](#)"). Mike Seeger's liner notes say Dock usually plays this "with 5th string tuned to F#. Probably forgot to tune it". Whether he did or not, it's effective, and does not sound like a mistake.

dDGAD

G/D variant

Art Rosenbaum, *Little Sadie*, from Hobart Bailey (tab in "[Old-Time Mountain Banjo](#)").

aDGAD

G/D variant

Benji Aronoff, *Red Apple Juice (Sugar Baby)*; *St. James Hospital* ("The 2 Sides of Benji Aronoff").

bdGAD

A Tony Trischka D/G tuning

Tony Trischka, *Garlic and Sapphires* ("Psychograss: Like Minds"; tab, BNL, Nov 1996).

gGGAD

G-bass variant of ..GAD

Known both as "Wade Ward's Fox Chase Tuning" and "Rufus Crisp's Brighter Day Tuning".

Wade Ward, *Wade's Fox Chase* ("[Fields & Wade Ward](#)"). Rufus Crisp, *Brighter Day* ("[Rufus Crisp](#)").

Hank Schwartz, *Brighter Day* ("[Old Time Banjo Project](#)"). Art Rosenbaum, *Got a Little Home to Go To* ("[5 String Banjo](#)").

gEADE

A "Cumberland Gap" Tuning

See also under the equivalent [fdGCD](#). Traditional esp. in Kentucky. Good, among other things, for accompanying fiddle tunes in G (e.g. if your banjo is already tuned up, sans capo, to A or D). From gDGCD ("Mountain Minor"), capo-2, leaving 5th string as is. Or from aEADE, tune 5th string down. Often heard in this tuning: *Cumberland Gap*; *Sandy River Belles*; *Stoney Point*.

Walter Williams, *Wild Horse (Stoney Point)*, tuned down one tone ("[Library of Congress Banjo Collection](#)"). McKinley Asher, *Hand Me Down My Old White Hat* ("[Library of Congress Banjo Collection](#)"). Andy Cahan, *Hello Raccoon* ("[Old Five-String](#)"). Kimble Family, *Troubles (Sugar Babe)*, ("[Carroll County Pioneers](#)"). Bob Clayton, *Barlow Knife* (Tab, BNL, Jan 1979). Art Rosenbaum, *Stoney Point*; *Buck Creek Gals*; *Harlan County Farewell Tune* ([Tabs](#) & also LP, "[The Art of the Mountain Banjo](#)"). Bob Carlin, *Trouble* ("[Fiddle Tunes for Clawhammer Banjo](#)"). Cathy Fink, *Cumberland Gap*; *Miss McLeod's Reel* ("[Banjo Haiku](#)"). Molly Tenenbaum, *Sail Away Ladies* (on Mark Simos, "[Race the River Jordan](#)"). Mike Seeger, *Shady Grove*, fretless bjo tuned down to d#CFA#C; with Tracy Schwarz's fiddle tuned to FCDG ('[New Lost City Ramblers: There Ain't No Way Out](#)'). Mike gives his source as Lee Sexton, on '[Whoa Mule](#)'.

gGADE

Variant of [gEADE](#)

Frank Dalton, *Rich Mountain (Stoney Point)*; *Hop Light Ladies* ("[Old Originals Vol 1](#)"). N.B. Dalton called this tuning "high bass, high second". Matokie Slaughter, *Big Eyed Rabbit* ("[Saro](#)"). W. Guy Bruce, setting Art Rosenbaum, *Shady Grove* (Tab, BNL, Dec 1982).

gdGDE

"Old G", "Sandy River Belle" tuning

I read somewhere that in Kentucky this tuning has been called "Old G". It's the equivalent of [fCFCD](#) (see below). Like [gEADE](#), it's a good way to get to G if your banjo is already tuned up to aEAC#E or aDADE, and many of the tunes often played in [gEADE](#) (e.g. *Stoney Point*; *Cumberland Gap*) are also played in gDGDE. But together with [gEGDE](#) (see below) it seems to have a particular association with the "Sandy River Belle"/"Last Chance" group, which also includes "Rambling Hobo", "Davenport", "Warfield", "Mulberry Gap", "Dead Man's Piece"... These are all closely related, and what I'd call "Urbanjo" tunes; but I know little of their early relationship to the fiddle tradition. (BTW, I saw in liner notes for ["Old Originals, Vol 1"](#) that Oscar Wright knows the fiddle tune "Sandy River Belle" as "Stoney Ridge Stomp".)

Gaither Carlton, *Rambling Hobo* (["High Atmosphere"](#)). Doc Watson, *Rambling Hobo* (["Memories"](#)). George Stoneman, *Sandy River Belle* (["Clawhammer Banjo"](#)). (The sleeve notes on this recording mistakenly, I believe, give the tuning as fCFAD.) Oscar Wright, *Sandy River* (["Clawhammer Banjo"](#)). Blanton Owen, *Cumberland Gap* (["Old Originals, vol 2"](#)). Ron Mullenex, *Dead Man's Piece* (["Old Five String"](#)). Bob Carlin, *Walk Along John; Big Footed Man in the Sandy Lot; Little Boy, Little Boy* (["Banging and Sawing"](#)). Bob Carlin, *Ain't Gonna Get No Supper Here Tonight* (["Fiddle Tunes for Clawhammer Banjo"](#)). Bob Carlin, *Ten Yards of Calico; Hosses in the Canebrake* (["Banging & Sawing"](#), CD reissue only). Bob Carlin, with John Hartford, *Shortnin' Bread* (["The Fun of Open Discussion"](#)). Bill Mansfield, *Wild Horse (Stoney Point)* (["Root Hog or Die"](#)). Gene Brown, *Blackberry Blossom* (Tab, BNL, Jan 1983).

dDGDE

DGDE variant, lowered 5th string

Chords: D/G/Bm. Bob Carlin, *Ninety Degrees*, capo 2, to eEAEF# (["Banging & Sawing"](#)). **eDGDE**

DGDE variant

Dirk Powell, *Dirk's Escape* (on Mark Simos, ["Race the River Jordan"](#)).

gEGDE

"Last Chance"/ alt. "Sandy River Belle" tuning

The equivalent of [fDFCD](#).

Hobart Smith, *Last Chance* (["Hobart Smith of Saltville, Virginia"](#)). Albert Hash, *Rambling Hobo* (["Albert Hash & the Whitetop Mt. Band"](#)).

gDGA#D

Open G-minor tuning

Austin Harmon, *John Hardy*, tuned down to eAEAB (["Library of Congress Banjo Collection"](#)). Pete Seeger, *All the Pretty Little Horses* (["How to Play..."](#)). Dick Weissman, *The Parting Song* (["Old-Time Banjo Modern Style"](#)). Jane Keefer, *Ghost Riders in the Sky* (Tab, BNL, Aug 1979). Jane Keefer, *Joshua Fit the Battle of Jericho* (Tab, BNL, Mar 1980). Molly Tenenbaum, *John Hardy* (["And the Hillside Are All Covered with Cakes"](#)). *The Bunch of Keys* ("Banjo Picker's Fakebook"). John Roberts, *Paddy on the Turnpike* (Tab, BNL, Mar 1984). Jack Marcovitch, *King William's March* (Tab, BNL, Apr 1990). Bill Barclay, *Star of the County Down* (Tab, BNL, June 1993). Mike Seeger, *Free Little Bird*, fretless banjo tuned down to eAEAB (["New Lost City Ramblers: There Ain't No Way Out"](#)).

Tunes often played in Mountain Minor tuning (e.g. *Shady Grove*) can be effective in the open G-minor.

a#DGA#D

G-minor variant

I read somewhere that Alan Munde has used this for *Done Gone* (the fiddle tune in B-flat, with a G-minor part).

fDGA#D

G-minor variant

Jack Bunch, *Not a Flower on Dogwood Flats* (["Old Time Banjo Pieces"](#)). Ron Lunceford, *Jerusalem Ridge*, A-minor (Tab, BNL, Dec. 1996).

gCGA#D

G-minor variant

Mike Seeger, *Roustabout* ("[Solo](#)"). Seeger plays this on a gourd banjo, tuned down. He gives his source as "Josh Thomas of Hollins, VA, an exceptional blind black banjo picker and singer", who was recorded in 1970 by Cliff Endress.

gCGBD

"Standard-C", "Single-C", "Drop-C", "C-tuning"

Used to be one of the most widely used banjo tunings, and is a "standard" in bluegrass as well as old-time music. C-tuning was the basis for most of the 19th century banjo methods and the written banjo literature. Nowadays, many old-time pickers use "Double-C" for tunes that were formerly more often heard in "Standard-C" (e.g. *Mississippi Sawyer*, *Soldier's Joy*, *Arkansas Traveler*, *Turkey in the Straw*, to name a few in the canon). Tuned up to D, this becomes **aDAC#E**.

Just a few examples: Wade Reedy, *Old Jimmy Sutton* ("[High Atmosphere](#)"). Buell Kazee, *Black Jack Davy* ("[Buell Kazee](#)"). Hobart Smith, *Cindy*; *John Greer's Tune*; *Soldier's Joy* ("[Hobart Smith of Saltville, Va.](#)"). Fred Cockerham, *Roustabout* ("[Clawhammer Banjo vol 2](#)"). Dock Boggs, *Turkey in the Straw* ("[Dock Boggs Vol 3](#)"). Pete Seeger, *Cumberland Mountain Bear Chase*; *Hard, Ain't It Hard* ("[How to Play...](#)").

eAEG#B

Standard-C - 3

Apparently the most common tuning in the minstrel-style era (early to mid-19th century). John Cohen says that "19th century banjoists wrote all of their music in A notation, although after 1870, they generally actually performed the pieces in the absolute key of C."

Wayne Shrubsall, *Do, Mr Boker Do* (*Johnny Booker*) (Tab, BNL, Feb 1985). Bob Winans, *The Grapevine Twist* ("[Old-Time Banjo in America](#)"). (There will be many more examples on recent minstrel-style recordings.)

dGDF#A

Standard-C - 5

Apparently the tuning used by Thomas Briggs.

Wayne Shrubsall, *Darkey Money Musk*; *Darkey Fisher's Hornpipe* (Tabs, BNL, Mar 1987). Ken Perlman (from Briggs' "Banjo Instructor", 1855), *Dance, Boatman, Dance*; *Old Zip Coon* (Tabs, BNL, Feb 1988).

eCGBD

Standard-C, lowered 5th string

Muller & Koehler, *Morpeth Rant*, from "Allan Block & Ralph Lee Smith" (tab in Mel Bay's "[Frailing the 5-String Banjo](#)").

aCGBD

Standard-C, raised 5th string

Douglas Wilson, *Fur Elise* (Communication to Banjo-L Internet Discussion Group, 12 April 97)

gCGBE

Standard-C variant

Art Rosenbaum, *Texas Rangers*, 3-finger picking ("[Five String Banjo](#)"). Also see his [tab](#) in "[The Art of the Mountain Banjo](#)".

cCFBD

A Tony Trischka C-tuning, lowered 5th string

Tony Trischka, *River of Steel* ("Skyline Drive").

gCGCD

"Double-C", "Two-C", "C-modal"

Now one of the commonest tunings in clawhammer style, above all for playing with "D" fiddle tunes. Also used by Tony Ellis in many of his lovely bluegrass-cum-old-time 3-finger style tunes, and perhaps by other bluegrass musicians. For all I know, this tuning may have a history reaching at least as far back as the [Standard-C \(gCGBD\)](#) recorded in so much of the 19th C literature. Blanton Owen's liner notes

for ["Old Originals Vol 2"](#) say that the Virginian Stuart Carrico considers the Double-C tuning to be older than the Standard-C. (Stuart was born at the turn of the century.)

Tuned up to D, this becomes **aDADE**. Tuned down to B-flat, fBbFBbC.

eCGCD

Double-C, lowered 5th string: Wade Ward's "High Atmosphere" tuning

Wade Ward, *Half Shaved* (["High Atmosphere"](#)). Pete Steele, *The Train A-Pulling*. (["Pete Steele: Banjo Tunes & Songs"](#)).

Art Rosenbaum, *Heavy Loaded Freight Train* (Tab in ["Old-Time Mountain Banjo"](#)).

Bob Fulcher, *Lost Indian* (["Old Five-String"](#)). Clyde Davenport, *Sugar in My Coffee-O* (["Puncheon Camps"](#)).

Joel Mabus, *Briarpicker Brown/ Spider Bit The Baby; Soldier's Joy* (["Joel Mabus, Clawhammer"](#)).

Molly Tenenbaum, *Jack O' Diamonds* (["And the Hillsides Are All Covered with Cakes"](#)).

Hank Bradley, *Ducks on the Millpond* (Tab courtesy of Ray Stewart. I've no recorded example).

Dwight Diller, *Callaway* (["Harvest: West Va. Mountain Music"](#)).

fCGCD

Double-C, lowered 5th string

I've only (I think) come across this tuning on the one Molly Tenenbaum recording I have, and she makes very effective use of it.

Molly Tenenbaum, *Wilson's Clog*, capo 2 (["And the Hillsides Are All Covered with Cakes"](#)).

Molly Tenenbaum, *Roscoe's Gone*, from the tune Hank Bradley made up in honor of Roscoe Holcomb (["And the Hillsides..."](#); Hank Bradley, "Hassle the Caller").

aCGCD

Double-C, raised 5th string

John Burke, *Forked Deer* (Tab, ["Old-Time Fiddle Tunes for Banjo"](#)). Carl Baron, *Rye Straw* (Tab, BNL, Jul 1986).

gCGCD#

C-minor variant of Double-C

Or **aDADF** for D-minor.

Bill Mansfield, *Bonnie Prince Charlie*, D-minor (["Root Hog or Die"](#)). Dick Weissman, *Music Box*

(["Old-Time Banjo Modern Style"](#)). Michael J. Miles, *Greensleeves* (Tab, BNL, Feb 1985). John

McEuen, *Miner's Night Out* (Tab, BNL, Nov 1990).

gCGCC'

"Triple-C"

1st string an octave above 2nd.

Ken Perlman, *Reuben's Train* (Tab, BNL, Mar 1984). E. Sweeney, *The Star of County Down* (Tab,

BNL, July 1984). Dick Weissman, *Laredo Fantasy* (["Old-Time Banjo Modern Style"](#)).

Molly Tenenbaum, *Georgia Railroad* (["And the Hillsides Are All Covered with Cakes"](#)).

gCGCC

"Darling Cora" tuning

First string lowered to play in unison with 2nd.

According to George Gibson this is quite an old tuning, giving 'a wonderful droning sound'. His father used it for *Darling Cora*, and GG believes that B. F. Shelton did as well.

I realize that I made an error in listing eDADD, and I've now eliminated this tuning (though, who knows, there may be some use for it!). My previous story ran that Art Rosenbaum (in London, 1995) - having been tuned to aDADE - ran his 1st string down to D, and played us Darling Cora as he thought Shelton had, in aDADD (gCGCC tuned up 2 steps), instead of in the open-D (f#DF#AD) tuning Pete Seeger used for this song. I later went back to Shelton's classic recording and decided that he had his fifth string tuned lower (to match 1st string at the 4th fret). That's not 'E', that's 'F#!'. So: if B.F. Shelton were doing this tune in the key of C, his tuning would be eCGCC, and if in the key of D, f#DADD. He is 2-finger picking, with a thumb lead; and in fact, on recordings I've got, is in the key of C#...My conclusion: this is another great episode in the saga of "wonderful droning sounds" to be found on the 5-string.

B.F. Shelton, Darling Cora, 1927 (["Music of Kentucky Vol 1"; "Old Time Mountain Ballads"](#)).

gCGCE

"Open-C"

Uncle Dave Macon used this tuning a lot; so did Frank Proffitt. Some frailers/clawhammerers and old-time finger-pickers (e.g. Tom Paley) consistently use Open-C rather than Double-C. Ray Stewart says it makes far better sense for *The 8th of January* and *Turkey in the Straw* than Double C. Tuned up to D, this becomes **aDADF#**, and as such has the name of "Quince Dillon's High D".

A few examples: Dave Macon, *Way Down The Old Plank Road; Rise When the Rooster Crows* (& many others). Frank Proffitt, *Bonnie James Campbell; I'll Never Get Drunk Any More*, 2-finger style (["North Carolina Songs & Ballads"](#)). Dock Boggs, *Little Omie Wise; Sugar Blues; I Hope I Live a Few More Days* (["Dock Boggs Vol 3"](#)). At any rate, it sounds to me as if Dock is using the Open-C on these songs). Taj Mahal, *Colored Aristocracy* (["De Old Folks at Home"](#)). Reed Martin, *Snowdrop* (["Old-Time Banjo in America"](#)). Bob Fulcher, *Redbird* (["Old Five-String"](#)). Ken Perlman, *Billy in the Lowground* (tab in in ["Clawhammer Style Banjo"](#)). Bertram Levy, *Rowe's Division/ Dominion Reel*, in C; *Lafayette/ Paddy on the Railroad*, in D (["That Old Gut Feeling"](#)). Fuzzy Mt. String Band, *Quince Dillon's High D* (["Summer Oaks & Porch"](#)). Tom Paley, *Wolves Howling* (Tab, BNL, Nov 1984). Ray Stewart, *Four Cent Cotton* (no recordings). Don Stover, *Things in Life* (["Things in Life"](#)). Bob Carlin, *Pretty Polly Ann* - tuned down to A: eAEAC# (["Banging & Sawing"](#)).

aCGCE

'Open-C', raised 5th string

Stu Jamieson, *The Cumberland Mountain Deer Chase* (capo-2) (["Banjos, Lamas & Bagpipes"](#)). Stu's liner-notes tell us that one day he cornered Uncle Dave Macon backstage at the Grand Ol' Opry and obtained the tuning for this song, along with some 'handy hints' - which Stu does not divulge. See also under [gA#FA#D](#)

f#DF#AD

"Open-D", "Graveyard", "Reuben" tuning

As common among bluegrass as among old-time players. *Old Ruben* or *Reuben's Train* is traditionally played in this tuning.

A few examples: McKinley Asher, *Shortnin' Bread* (["Library of Congress Banjo Collection"](#)). Pete Steele, *Coal Creek March* (["Pete Steele"](#)). Dock Boggs, *Coke Oven March; Ruben's Train* (["Dock Boggs Vol 3"](#)). Buell Kazee, *Look Up Look Down That Lonesome Road; Jay Gould's Daughter* (["Buell Kazee"](#)). Wade Ward, *Peachbottom Creek*, capo 3 to F (["The Music of Roscoe Holcomb & Wade Ward"](#)). Fred Cockerham, *Little Satchel* (["High Atmosphere"](#), on CD reissue, not on original LP. FC is, I'm pretty sure, using the open-D tuning, changed up to E, in this performance of his song. But see also under f#BEAD). Fred Cockerham, *Frankie Baker* (["High Atmosphere"](#), CD reissue only. But see under f#DEAD). Snuffy Jenkins, *Lonesome Road Blues* (["American Banjo, Scruggs Style"](#)). Earl Scruggs, *Mama Blues* ("Carnegie Hall Album"; tabs, BNL, Nov, Dec 1989). J. D. Crowe, *Reuben* ("Lonesome Rubin: Tony Rice, Guitar"; tab, BNL, Jan 1988). Ola Belle Reed, *Boat's Up the River; Doney Where You Been So Long* (["Old Time Banjo in America"](#)). Pete Seeger, *Darling Corey* (["Darling Corey"](#)). Jack Bunch, *Shortnin' Bread* (["Old Time Banjo Pieces"](#)). Rick Abrams, *Little Nell*, fiddle tuned GDAD (["Piney Creek Weasels: Squirrel Heads & Gravy"](#)). Art Rosenbaum, *Tennessee Line Hard Times*, tuned down to C: eCEGC (["Tab & LP, "The Art of the Mountain Banjo"](#)). John Herrmann, Dirk Powell, *Rosalee McFall*, in E (["One Eyed Dog"](#)).

aDF#AD

Alternate Open-D, raised 5th string

Ralph Stanley, *Hard Times*. Merle Watson, *Wreck of the Old No. Nine*. Eric Mintz, *Peachbottom Creek* (Tab, Ken Perlman's in ["Clawhammer Style Banjo"](#)). Dick Weissman, *Down in Denver* (["Old-Time Banjo Modern Style"](#)). Bill Ogden, *The Wagoner's Lad* (Tab, BNL, Nov 1975). John Hartford, *Gentle On My Mind* (Tab, BNL, Apr 1992).

gDF#AD

Open-D, raised 5th string

Dan Gellert, *Johnny Booker*, tuned up to aEG#BE ("[Forked Deer](#)").

eDF#AD

Open-D, lowered 5th string

Ray Stewart, *Dry and Dusty* (no recording).

f#DADF#

D variant

Bertram Levy, *A Shamrock in the Galax* ("[That Old Gut Feeling](#)"). Levy wrote the tune. Chesley Chancey, *Mole in the Ground*, finger-picking ("[Folk Visions & Voices, vol 2](#)"). I've a feeling that Chancey is here using this tuning, though maybe it's the open-D.

f#BF#AD

D variant

Eric Weissberg, *No Title Yet Blues* ("[New Dimensions in Banjo & Bluegrass](#)"), tuning courtesy of Donald Zepp. I've a note that Fred Cockerham may have used this tuning, but no reference.

f#CF#AD

D variant

Mac Benford, *Maggie Walker Blues*, in E ("[Highwoods String Band: No. 3 Special](#)"). Benford discusses this major/minor tuning in BNL, May 1977. John Hermmann, *Rosalee McFall*, also tuned up to E, with Dirk Powell's fiddle tuned BEBE ("[One Eyed Dog](#)"). Blanton Owen's notes for "Old Originals Vol 2" say that Jont Blevins used this tuning for *Reuben*.

f#CF#CD

D7 variant

Dick Weissman, *Blues for Dock Boggs* ("[Old-Time Banjo Modern Style](#)").

cDF#AD

D variant

Hank Schwartz, with John Cohen, *Banging Breakdown* ("[Old Time Banjo Project](#)").

f#ADAD

D variant: "John Henry", "Dead Man's" tuning

See also [g#BEBE](#), below.

Roscoe Holcomb, *Old Smokey* ("[The Music of Roscoe Holcomb & Wade Ward](#)"). Greg Jowaisas, *Valley Forge* ("[Old Time Banjo Pieces](#)"). Bob Carlin, *Payday* ("[Where Did You Get That Hat?](#)"). John Les, *Elkhorn Ridge* (not recorded). Dwight Diller, *John Henry Blues ; Washington's March* ("[Piney Woods](#)"). Paul Brown, *The Old Man's & Old Woman's Quarrel (Grumbling Old Man...)*, from Fields Ward (Tab, BNL, Aug 1994). Stu Jamieson, *Georgie Buck* (fretless banjo) ("[Banjos, Lamas & Bagpipes](#)"). Dwight Diller, *John Henry Blues* ("[Harvest: West. Va. Mountain Music](#)"). Ernie Fasse (communications to Banjo-L) has also, on his fretless banjo, been delving into this tuning, e.g. for *Dance Boatman Dance; Say Darling Say; If I Lose Let Me Lose; Billy Wilson...*

f#DADE

D variant

Bruce Molsky, *Wild Bill Jones* ("[Lost Boy](#)").

dADAD

D variant

See also [eBEBE](#).

Reed Martin, *Off to California* ("[The Young Fogies, Vol. 1](#)"). Reed notes that the banjo on which he recorded the tune "belonged to the 'Cox' family of Hillsville VA...It was tuned to dADAD when found so it stays in that tuning." (Communicated to Banjo-L by Jeff Chumley, 23 March 97)

aADAD

D variant

Dick Weissman, *Country Blues* ("New Directions in Folk Music").

f#DDAD

D variant

Try: *Mole in the Ground***aDAAD**

D variant

Dick Weissman, *Snowbird* (["Old Time Banjo Modern Style"](#)).**aADF#A**

D variant

Jim Connor, *Ragtime Annie; Columbus Stockade* ("Alabama Old Time Music").**f#DGAC**

D variant

John Hilston, *Raleigh and Spencer*. I've no recorded example, but somewhere Bob Carlin mentioned learning this tuning from Hilston, who used to play with Tommy Jarrell. TJ fiddled this tune in DDAD, "Bonaparte's Retreat" tuning. (If you fret the 1st string, you get the D-note, but you also have access to the C-note.)

f#DACD

D variant

Rick Abrams, *Reilly and Spencer* ("Piney Creek Weasels: Weasels!"). I don't have the recording, but read in an interview with Rick Abrams that this was the tuning he used.

f#DF#BD

D variant

Ray Andrews, *Meadowlands*, in Bm (Tab, Ken Perlman's in ["Clawhammer Style Banjo"](#)). Robb Goldstein, *Bonaparte Crossing the Delaware* (Tab, BNL, Oct 1986).

gDFA#D

D variant

Virgil Anderson, *Miner's Dream*, in the key of E, aEGCE (["On the Tennessee Line"](#)).

f#DF#BC#

D variant

Tony Trischka, *China Grove For You*, D ("Bluegrass Light"). I don't recall where I heard about this

aDGCE

D variant

This tuning, mentioned to me by Sara Grey, is a cross between an open D & an open C chord. The half-barre (0222) gives the D-chord; 2200 gives the A-minor chord. Can also be used for minor and modal scales (0221).

Bob Clayton, *Reuben's Train* (Tab, BNL, Jan 1980). Alec Slater, *Frost and Snow*, A-Dorian (Tab in ["Clawhammer Banjo Solos..."](#)).

fDFAD

Tommy Jarrell's open D-minor "Reuben" tuning

Tommy Jarrell, *Reuben* (["Come and Go With Me"](#)).**aDFAD**

"Nashville Blues" D-minor variant

Earl Scruggs, *Nashville Blues*. Bill Evans, *Native and Fine* (["Native and Fine"](#)). Don Borchelt, *Greensleeves* (Tab, BNL, Dec 1994). (I haven't come across this tuning in old-time settings.)

dDFAD

Open D-minor variant

Dick Weissman, *East Virginia* ("The Things That Trouble My Mind"). Dick Weissman, *Ode to Amuse* (["Old-Time Banjo Modern Style"](#)).

fCFCD

"Cumberland Gap" F-tuning

Equivalent of [gDGDE](#), "Old G".

George Landers, *Cumberland Gap* (["High Atmosphere"](#)). Gaither Carlton, *Rambling Hobo* (["The Watson Family Tradition"](#)). Doc Watson, *Rambling Hobo* (["The Essential Doc Watson"](#); ["The Doc Watson Family"](#)). Dock Boggs, *Davenport*, tuned dADAB; i.e. fCFCD - 3 (["Dock Boggs Vol 3"](#)). The tune belongs to the "Last Chance" & "Rambling Hobo" group). Morgan Sexton, *Little Frankie*; John Henry (["Rock Dust"](#)). The Kimble Family, *Gypsy Girl* (["Pine Knots School Rowdies"](#)). John Cohen, *Cumberland Gap* (["Brandywine 1976"](#)). Bob Carlin, *Ladies on the Steamboat*; *The Last Time* (["Where Did You Get That Hat?"](#)). Bob Carlin, *Big Scioty*, tuned down to eBEBC# (["Fiddle Tunes for Clawhammer Banjo"](#)). Bob Carlin, Bruce Molsky, *Old Blue Sow* (["Take Me As I Am"](#)). Cathy Fink, *Wild Hog in the Woods/ Safe Harbor Rag* (["Banjo Haiku"](#)).

fDFCD

"Last Chance" F-tuning variant

Equivalent of [gEGDE](#), see above.

Land Norris, *Charming Betsy* (["Mountain Banjo Songs and Tunes"](#)). Chesley Chancey, *Mulberry Gap*; a tune belonging to the "Last Chance" group (["Folk Visions & Voices, vol 2"](#)). It sounds to me as if Chancey is also playing *Shoot the Turkey Buzzard* in this tuning, slightly lower pitch (same recording). However Art Rosenbaum has said that Chancey was playing in fCFCD (Tab, BNL, Dec 1982).

fFGCD

F-tuning variant

Matokie Slaughter, *Big Eyed Rabbit* (["More Clawhammer Banjo"](#)) Mike Seeger, *Bowling Green*, tuned down to E (["Mike Seeger & Alice Gerrard"](#)). Molly Tenenbaum, *Cumberland Gap* (["And the Hillside Are All Covered with Cakes"](#)).

fFFCD

An F-bass tuning

John Les, *Farewell My Home* (adapted from Tony Ellis. No recording.)

f#BEAD

"Cumberland Gap" tuning

John Cohen's notes for "High Atmosphere" state that "Amongst many old time banjo players from widespread parts of the mountains, this is the "Cumberland Gap" tuning - which can only be used for this tune. (In fact Fred Cockerham uses it for *Frankie* as well.)" To obtain the D-chord, fret 4th string at 3rd fret and 3rd string at 2nd fret.

Frank Proffitt, *Cumberland Gap* (["High Atmosphere"](#)). Rufus Crisp, *Cumberland Gap* (["Rufus Crisp"](#)). Dock Boggs, *Cumberland Gap* (["Dock Boggs Vol 3"](#)). Fred Cockerham, *Little Satchel*, tuned up to the key of E (["Down to the Cider Mill"](#); ["Brandywine 1974: The Galax Sound"](#)). The Wandering Ramblers also use this tuning for Fred's *Little Satchel*, on ["Rambling & Wandering"](#); as does Dirk Powell on ["If I Go 10,000 Miles"](#).) Jont Blevins, *Cumberland Gap*; *Sugar Babe* (mentioned in notes for ["Old Originals Vol 2"](#)). Kyle Creed, *Cumberland Gap*, tuned up to E ("Liberty"). The Kimble Family, *Cumberland Gap* (["Kimble Family Vol 1: Carroll County Pioneers"](#)). Bob Carlin & Bruce Molsky, *Cumberland Gap* (["Take Me As I Am"](#)). Morgan Sexton, *Mexico* (["Rock Dust"](#)). Dan Gellert, *Liza Jane* (["Old-Time Banjo in America"](#)). Paul Brown, *Shortnin' Bread* (["Old Five-String"](#)). Bob Carlin, *Old Sledge* (["Banging & Sawing"](#)). Cathy Fink, *New River Train* (["Banjo Haiku"](#)). Larry Unger, *Two Rivers* (Tab, BNL, Nov 1988). N.B. In the article accompanying the tab of Unger's original composition, Ken Perlman discusses some features of the f#BEAD tuning & notes that Unger's tune manages to avoid its usual cliches. The chord sequence for the A part of the tune is Bm/F#m/Bm/G/A/D/F#m/Bm/A/G...

gBEAD

f#BEAD, raised 5th string

Carl Baron, *Pastures of Plenty* (Tab, BNL, Dec 1980).

Dan Gellert, in a Tunings-Submission form sent on 18 Nov 1997, says that he uses this tuning for *Turkey in the Straw* ('you can play it in the fiddle's key this way'), for *One Morning in 1845* ('an old song from Ky/southern Indiana'), and for *Captain Kidd* (an old English/colonial American ballad).

aBEAD

f#BEAD, raised 5th string

A "Cumberland Gap" variant.

eBEAD

f#BEAD, lowered 5th string

I've got a note saying that Mike Seeger has used this for "Black Jack Daisy"; but can't find it on my recordings.

f#DEAD

Variant of f#BEAD or f#DF#AD

George Landers, *Rolling Mills Are Burning Down* ("[High Atmosphere](#)"). ?Fred Cockerham, *Frankie Baker*, tuned up to E ("[High Atmosphere](#)", CD reissue only. Although John Cohen claims that FC is using f#BEAD here, I think he's either tuned to f#DEAD or to the open D, f#DF#AD. But f#BEAD also works.) Paul Brown, *Half Shaved* ("[Old Five-String](#)". For Wade Ward's "Half Shaved" tuning, see under [eCGCD](#)). Kimble Family, *Pennsylvania Rambler; High Paper Collar* ("[The Kimble Family Vol 1: Carroll County Pioneers](#)"). Rick Abrams, *Yeller Cat* ("[Piney Creek Weasels: Squirrel Heads & Gravy](#)"). George Gibson, considering this a variant of the open-D tuning, mentions that his father used it for Frankie and Albert, holding down the 2nd string at the 2nd fret and the 3rd string at the 3rd fret. He comments that Morgan Sexton used a similar rhythmic picking-pattern in his own version of the tune, Little Frankie (on "[Rock Dust](#)" and "[Shady Grove](#)". BTW, I highly recommend the 2 Morgan Sexton recordings listed in my [discography](#), especially for anyone interested in old-time finger-picking styles.)

gDEAD

f#DEAD, raised 5th string

Virgil Anderson, *Wild Goose Chase* ("[On the Tennessee Line](#)"). Dee & Delta Hicks, *The Lost Gander* (*Wild Goose Chase*) ("[Ballads & Banjo Music From The Tennessee Cumberland Plateau](#)").

eDEAD

f#DEAD, lowered 5th string

Benji Aronoff, *Shady Grove* ("The Two Sides of Benji Aronoff").

eCGAD

"Little Birdie" C-tuning

"There ain't no tune played in this tuning except Little Birdie" said Pete Steele. For the C-chord, fret 1st string at 2nd fret, 2nd string at 3rd fret. The equivalent tuning for the key of D is **f#DABE**.

Pete Steele, *Little Birdie* ("[Pete Steele: Banjo Songs & Tunes](#)"). Gaither Carlton, *Little Birdie* ("[Clawhammer Banjo](#)"). Willie Chapman, *Little Birdie* ("[Mountain Music of Kentucky](#)"). Roscoe Holcomb, *Little Birdie* ("[The Music of Roscoe Holcomb & Wade Ward](#)"). Art Rosenbaum, *Little Birdie* ("[Art of the Mountain Banjo](#)" and [tab](#)). Burl Hammons, *Singing Birds* ("[Shaking Down the Acorns](#)"; "[Visits](#)"). Morgan Sexton, *Little Birdie*; Omie Wise (Dm) "[Rock Dust](#)".

gCGAD

"Little Birdie" variant

Lily Mae Ledford, *Little Birdie* ("[Coon Creek Girls](#)"). (Sounds like Lily Mae plays it in this tuning.)

f#DABD

"Little Birdie" alternate tuning

If you change the "Little Birdie" eCGAD tuning up one whole step, except for the 1st string, this is what you get. George Gibson says he learned this tuning from Clay Engle of Knott County, who in turned had learned it from an old black man. Here, "Little Birdie" is played out of the D-chord made by holding the 1st string down at the 4th fret and the 2nd string down at the 3rd fret. G. Gibson comments that "Little Sparrow" also sounds great in this tuning.

g#BEBE

Oscar Wright's "Dead Man's" E-tuning

Equivalent of [f#ADAD](#) (see above).

Oscar Wright, *Shaving a Dead Nigger* ("[Clawhammer Banjo Vol 3](#)"). Fuzzy Mt. String Band, *Protect the Innocent*, from Oscar Wright ("[Fuzzy Mt. String Band](#)"). The "Shaving" tune was renamed by Fuzzy Mountain, via Claude Keaton, a guitarist & flat-foot dancer. "Mr Keaton was listening to the tune on a cassette recorder one day at work when a co-worker, who was black, asked him its name. Thinking of the TV program *Dragnet*, he said..." Ron Mullenex and Gerry Milnes have also recorded this tune as *Shaving a Dead Man*.

Ron Mullenex, *Turkey in the Straw; Houston* ("[Sugar in My Coffee](#)"). (N.B. I think 'Turkey', played in the key of E, sounds great in this tuning. Mullenex says he got 'Houston' from Burl Hammons; the fiddle is tuned EEBE in this performance.)

eBEBE

Alternative "Dead Man" tuning

See also [dADAD](#)

I don't know if Oscar Wright also used this tuning, though the liner notes on "[Clawhammer Banjo Vol 3](#)" cite it as his tuning for "Shaving...".

f#BEBE

"Dead Man's" variant

Eli Shapiro, *Protect the Innocent* (Tab, BNL, Sept 1978).

bBEBE

"Dead Man's" variant

Or [aADAD](#). Jane Keefer, *Sweet Sunny South* (Tab in BNL, Sept. 1989).

eEABD

Hammons family "Sugar Babe" E-minor tuning

Sherman Hammons, *Sugar Babe* (capo 3, key of G. "[Shaking Down the Acorns](#)"). Dona Gum, *Sugar Babe*, capo 1, key of F ("[Old Time Banjo Anthology, Vol 1](#)"). Dona Gum is kin to the Hammons family). Reed Island Rounders, *Sugar Babe* ("[Wolves in the Wood](#)").

Two steps down, this becomes [dDGAC](#), a tuning which Howie Bursen said he got from Reed Martin, claiming that it's used "for just a few tunes in the key of G". Bursen has used it for *Indian Nation*. For the G-chord, fret the 1st & 2nd strings at the 2nd fret. (BNL interview, Nov 1980.)

g#EADE

Another E-minor tuning

Mike Seeger, *Sugar Baby*, tuned down to f#DGCD ("[Mike Seeger & Alice Gerrard](#)"). Dan Gellert, *Red Rocking Chair (Sugar Baby)* ("[Forked Deer](#)"). Joel Mabus, *Darling Corey*, tuned to eCFA#C, key of C ("[Clawhammer](#)").

bBGBE

Dick Weissman E-minor tuning

Dick Weissman, *If He Had Stayed in Oregon* ("[Old-Time Banjo Modern Style](#)").

gEGBE

An E-minor tuning

Mentioned in Muller & Koehler, "[Frailing the 5-String Banjo](#)"; no examples given. Ernie Fasse, *Flora McDonald* (Communication to Banjo-L, 11 July 97). Ernie comments: "The Scottish reel 'Flora McDonald', which is technically either E-dorian or E-aeolian (I forget), is much easier to play in gEGBE than gDGBD. It works for that particular tune because (1) the melody never goes below E, and (2) the melody does go fairly high up the first string..."

eEACD

Another for E-minor tunes

Can't find any notes about this one. 1st string fretted at 2 gives the Em chord.

fA#FA#D

Clyde Troxell B-flat tuning

Clyde Troxell, *Wild Bill Jones* ("[The Troxell Brothers: Troxsong](#)"). Although the song is in B-flat, it starts on the G-minor chord. (Without retuning from open-G, one could play along with this & get the main idea, although not the "atmosphere", by capoing at the 3rd fret & leaving the 5th string at G.) Apparently Troxell learned the song from Retta Spradlin, although making it (remarkably) his own; see under [gDGBE](#). Whit Mead, *Backside of Buncombe* (Tab, Bubba Hutch, BNL, Jan 1992. This is taken from a nifty B-flat fiddle tune made up by Chirps Smith; it can be heard on "[The Volo Bogtrotters: Backside of Buncombe](#)").

gA#FA#D

"French Waltz" B-flat tuning

Equivalent tuning is **aCGCE** ("Open-C", raised 5th string).

Clyde Troxell, *French Waltz*, ("[The Troxell Brothers: Troxsong](#)"; also "[Trad. Music from the Cumberland Plateau, vol 1](#)"). "Clyde reports that this tune was brought back from WW1 by veteran Jeff Gregory, who learned it from a banjo-playing Frenchman. The unusual gBbFBbD tuning is used for no other piece in the region [Cumberland Plateau, Kentucky]."

The chord progression (I think) is B-flat/E-flat/F (= G/C/D). (1) 1st string at 3rd fret, 2nd at 4th fret, 3rd at 5th fret; (2) Barre at 5th fret; (3) Barre at 7th fret; (4) 1st at 8th fret, 2nd at 7th, 3rd at 9th. 5th string used for melody notes.

Also, Bob Fulcher, *French Waltz*, in aCGCE ("[Old Five String](#)").

fA#FCD

(Bob Carlin) B-flat tuning

I.e. fBbFCD. Bob Carlin, *Bob Carlin's Dream/ Briar Picker Brown; Tippy Get Your Haircut* ("[Where Did You Get That Hat?](#)"). Bob Carlin, with James Bryan, *Geese Honking (Wild Goose Chase)* ("[Banging & Sawing](#)"). (Clyde Davenport, their source, fiddles "Wild Goose Chase" in B-flat on "[Gettin' Up the Stairs](#)".) Try: *Mole in the Ground*...

g#CFA#D#

A B-flat tuning

I.e. abCFBbEb. I have a note that Bob Carlin has mentioned this tuning, with the principal chords being B-flat7/ Cm7/ E-flat. But no examples.

aAEAE

A-minor modal tuning

Shorty Ralph Reynolds, *Want to Go to Cuba But I Can't Go Now* ("[Old-Time Banjo in America](#)"). On sleeve notes for this recording, Art Rosenbaum says that Reynolds learned this archaic tuning, dating from the Spanish American War, from his father.

aCACE

An open A-minor tuning

Mentioned in Muller & Koehler's "[Frailing the 5-String Banjo](#)"; no examples given.

aCACD

A-minor tuning

Also **eCACD**.

Mentioned in Muller & Koehler's "[Frailing the 5-String Banjo](#)"; no examples given.

<>gFG#CD#

Fm9 Jazz Tuning

I.e. gFAbCEb. Tune to [gEGBD](#) (see above) and capo at 1st fret. There was a discussion, which I haven't seen, (BNL, Sept 1985) of this tuning by Kenton McPeake. But see his tab for *How High the Moon* (BNL, Oct 1985; recorded source, "Fascinating 5-String").

gCFBbEb (gCFA#D#)

Sonny Osborne "John Henry Blues" tuning

Sonny Osborne, *John Henry Blues* ("[Bluegrass Instrumentals by the Osborne Brothers](#)"). Fred Geiger has commented to me (15 July 97) that this is the "most radical" Sonny Osborne tuning he's aware of. "The tune is played in the key of Eb and sort of toggles between Eb and its relative minor, Cm. Sonny said he conceived of this tuning in the studio when another tune was needed ('Don't ask me how I thought of it, it just seemed the right thing to do'). The tuning, going up in fourth intervals, is the opposite of fiddle/mandolin tuning, which goes (4th to 1st) downward in fourths, or upward in fifths. The open strings, which Sonny 'chimes' at the end of JHB, spell a 'jazzy'-sounding Eb6 add9 chord (or Eb6/9). The cycle of fifths put to very good use, I'd say."

bC#F#BE

Don Stover, *Footprints in the Snow* ("[My Blue Ridge Memories](#)", w/Herb Applin, Red Rector, Art Stamper, Tom Gray, and Roger Williams).

Harry (Hank) Edenborn, who co-produced the recording, passed on to me these reminiscences. "Don said to me: 'I toyed around with clawhammering *Footprints In The Snow*...thought I'd just wax that thing, put it on a record. That crazy way I tuned it? I tuned the banjo in an open E...it's an E minor really, and you only note the 3rd and 4th strings.' We sped the tune up on the record a half step, giving an apparent open F tuning of: cDGCF. The business about only using the 3rd and 4th strings apparently only relates to the opening chord position...He used my 1890s open-back Lyon & Healy/Washburn banjo, too, which was a thrill." (BTW, Hank still had, as of July 97, some copies left of this recording, as well as cassettes of 2 live Don Stover shows. If you want to buy any of these, his email address is edenborn@cobweb.net)

d#BEF#B

Mike Seeger, with Tracy Schwarz and John Cohen, *Miner's Lament*, key of B ("[New Lost City Ramblers: There Ain't No Way Out](#)"). Seeger cites as their source the LP "Home on the Range: Folksongs from the Univ. of Arizona Archive 1945-1955", produced for the Ariz. Friends of Folklore. Of the song's origin, nothing is known; it was sung, unaccompanied, on the recording by 2 U. Ariz. graduate students. - It looks as if Mike Seeger will never run out of new banjo-tunings!