SPECIAL QUARANTINE ISSUE

FIVE STRINGER AMERICAN BANJO FRATERNITY

NUMBER 219 AUGUST 2020 SUMMER

A Notable Explanation

By Joel Hooks

A topic that often comes up is the question of A notation. It is inevitable that someone studying banjo history will run into this question early on; it's been the subject of arguments and confusion starting in about 1885 and lasting until generational shifts brought in new music styles in the 1920s. The issue is often neglected (as are most aspects of written music) by banjo historians, yet the theme of "systems of notation" follows in tandem with the evolution of banjo construction as well as with changing musical tastes. Indeed, it could be argued that banjo notation (as well as musical content itself) is a more important part of understanding the big picture of banjo history than are the nuts and bolts of assembly—the real story of the banjo is told through those dots and hieroglyphics.

The subject of banjo notation has several facets, one of which is pitch. It is advantageous to use the word "pitch" instead of "tuning" in discussions of historical banjo, as "tuning" may cause confusion for people familiar with the "old time" tradition of scordatura or alternate tunings. For this article we will be using "pitch" in the place of "tuning". Pitch will refer to the relative string intervals of gCGBD, in order from the short fifth string to the first string. Those intervals remained the same while the overall pitch changed. The pitch—the way in which the banjo is tuned—is named for the 4th (or bass) string, and the system of notation is referenced the same way.

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October 15-17, 2020
Newark Garden Hotel
125 N. Main St, Newark, NY
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Theme "Play Your Favorites"

Banjo music has always been written on the treble clef staff one octave above the frequency that it actually sounds.

This article does not cover the Standard of Pitch, albeit an interesting companion topic. For this work the term "pitch" will be used for the set of string intervals based on the 4th string note.

The strongest documentation for establishing a timeline of the use of different banjo pitches is found in instruction books, or "tutors", which are supported by articles and letters published in periodicals of the same period. Printed sheet music for banjo seems to first appear in the mid-1870s, picks up velocity by 1879, and reflects what was taught in the books.

It is important to establish pitch, as it did not always match the notes on the sheet, and this is where some confusion sets in. For much of its history the banjo was treated as a "transposing instrument", which means that the pitch produced on the banjo was not the same as the notes written on the musical staff. Frank Converse described the subject in his Analytical Banjo Method, published in1886:

"CONCERNING THE KEY OF A, AND THE PITCH.

"In the study of music, the key (or scale) of C is the first considered and explained, it being the natural scale,—i.e. not requiring sharps or flats. It is the 'model scale,' to which all other major diatonic scales must conform in the arrangement of their scale intervals. This, however, belongs to the Theory of Music, and in no way implies that any string of the banjo should either be called C, or be pitched to that tone as established.

"From 'early times' the letters A, E, G#, B and E have been used to name, respectively, the 4th, 3rd, 2nd, 1st and 5th strings of the banjo, the letters defining the different intervals as well, and, theoretically establishing the key of A irrespective of the pitch of the instrument; hence it may be inferred that, with the banjo, the question of pitch is

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Treasurer Position Available

The ABF needs your help. We are looking for a new Treasurer. The duties include: managing the ABF budget; keeping track of members and maintaining the members list; collecting dues; mailing out reminders/membership cards; and presenting the budget report at the annual business meeting. This position is best held by an active member who attends at least one rally per year. Please contact the editors for more information.

NO RALLY RECAP!

As we all know, the Spring 2020 Rally was cancelled due to concerns with the Coronavirus. While we were disappointed by this, the safety of our members is of utmost importance. We have booked the Hotel for the Fall 2020 Rally and are 'playing it by ear' in the hope that we will be able to make it happen. The possibility does exist that we will need to cancel again. Please check the website or contact your Executive Secretary for the latest information.

As of this publication the next Rally is booked for October 15-17th (some early birds may show up on the 14th). We recommend booking your room now and keeping your fingers crossed that all will go as planned.

MUSIC IN THIS ISSUE

Since the theme of this issue is pitch and tuning, we thought we would include two rare examples of scordatura for the banjo.

"Sebastopol" by Henry Worrall was arranged for banjo by S. S. Stewart and published by Oliver Ditson & Co. in 1880. The version we present here is from J. E. Brewster's Banjoist of 1885 (transposed to C notation). Watch out for the typo in measure 23. Thanks to Satoshi Hara for the scan from the Reuben Reubens Paper Collection.

Cont'd on p. 16

NOTICE

Postage and printing costs keep going up!
We are having to raise dues to keep up.
We will now have two options:
$20US for Two Years' Membership and Digital Copies of the 5-Stringer.
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arbitrary, and may be modified by circumstances, as, for instance, when playing with other instruments; or again, when accompanying the voice.

"In the latter instance, to avoid difficult accompaniments, the pitch of the instrument should be made to accord, as nearly as possible, with the voice register, and this may be ascertained by a few careful trials with the aid of pitch pipe.

"It may further be inferred from the above that, as relates to reading music, *changing the pitch of a string does not change its name;* that is to say, for instance, A (4th string) pitched to any degree of the scale would still be called A. For example, should it be desirable when playing with a piano to pitch the banjo at C, the 4th (bass) string would be tuned to that tone (piano) and the remaining strings relatively to the established intervals of the 'standard' tuning and, although with respect to the piano, the performer would be playing in the key of C, yet he would *think* only in the 'standard key,' for, viewed practically, the keys of C, on the piano and A, on the banjo would be identical." (Analytical Banjo Method, p. 4.)

Confused yet? You are not alone. So let us rewind a bit.

The earliest "real" banjo tutor (a book that was clearly written by someone well versed on the banjo) is Briggs' Banjo Instructor (Oliver Ditson, 1855). Briggs' establishes the 4th string as G. This is the lowest pitch given for banjo.[1] The music in Briggs' was published with notes matching this pitch.

According to Briggs', "Owing to the peculiar construction of the banjo, the performer can play in *two* keys only, without changing its *pitch*, these two keys, are the keys of the 3d string and the 4th string. … All banjo music is *written* in the keys of G and D, therefore, when the performer wishes to play in any other keys, he has but to change the *pitch* of the strings, and then play in the key of G or D, producing the *sounds* of whatever key he tuned to. … It will thus be seen that the banjo can be played in *any* key."

Briggs' also provides a handy chart with the "Manner of Tuning the Banjo in the Different Keys." It then explains how one can raise or lower the pitch of all strings equally to match the desired key while playing as normal. The following explanation is given: "If the performer wishes to play in the Minor Key, he must tune the Second String a Minor Third from the Third String, [leaving] the other strings at the same pitch as in the Major Keys. The learner should frequently change the PITCH, in playing the foregoing pieces, and he will thus obtain a pleasing variety in the sound."

At this early date, Briggs' is treating the banjo like an adolescent instrument, only capable of playing in two keys (or positions) without adjusting the pitch (or the intervals between the strings, as for minor keys).

This system of re-tuning was something Albert Baur later referred to as "playing in any key with a vengeance."[2]

By 1858 the given pitch was raised to A in Phil Rice's Correct Method for the Banjo, With or Without a Master, also published by Oliver Ditson.

Rice states that the banjo "is pitched to play in the key of E, four sharps, and A, three sharps, which are the natural keys for the banjo, although it can be played in any other key, but not with the same ease. … To play in the keys of D and G, tune the thumb string to D, and the other strings accordingly; which will bring G, D, F#, and A, at the nut." So while claiming that the banjo may be played in any key, the scheme of altering pitch is still being recommended. The last sentence was apparently included to prevent a remaining inventory of Briggs' books from becoming wholly obsolete.

There are only two pieces in the Rice book that would use the G pitch: "Machine Poetry—Oh, Ladies All!" (key of G), and "Dick Sliter's Reel" (key of D). All other pieces are noted to be used with the A pitch.

The next book to hit the market was Buckley's New Banjo Method (Oliver Ditson, 1860), by James Buckley, in which the instructions for tuning the banjo are identical to those found in Rice. Buckley's does have a number of pieces in the back of the book in the keys of G and D. Rather than the pieces being included for those still using Briggs' tuning, though, as Albert Baur subsequently explained, Buckley's "was partially filled with violin tunes".[3]

By the 1860s the pitch settled on A. In 1865 the "banjo is only capable of playing in two keys" theory was crushed by the publication of Frank B. Converse's New and Complete Method for the Banjo With or Without a Master, and from the 1860s until 1900 the written recording method for banjo in America was A notation.

The pitch of A remained in constant use until the 1870s. In the mid- to late-1870s many professional banjoists began to raise the pitch to B♭, which served to brighten the tone of the banjo as well as to match the pitch of the brass bands and orchestras that were accompanying minstrel shows.

Samuel Swaim Stewart gave a good explanation of the current state of banjo pitch in 1880:

"It is impossible to designate the pitch to which any banjo should be tuned, owing to the various sizes of instruments and different lengths of necks adopted by different manufacturers. In tuning the instrument, it is proper to begin with the fourth, or silver string, and after having tuned it to the desired pitch, then tune the other strings to correspond. A banjo having a short neck should be tuned to a higher pitch than one having a longer neck.

"For public playing, especially fine instrumental pieces, where the performer uses an instrument of concert size, the following will be found the most desirable pitch for tuning: Tune the fourth string to B♭, a semi-tone above the reading pitch. If you are accompanied by piano or orchestra, the accompaniment must be written a semi-tone above your own music. This is the method adopted by the author, and, in common use among professional players."[4]

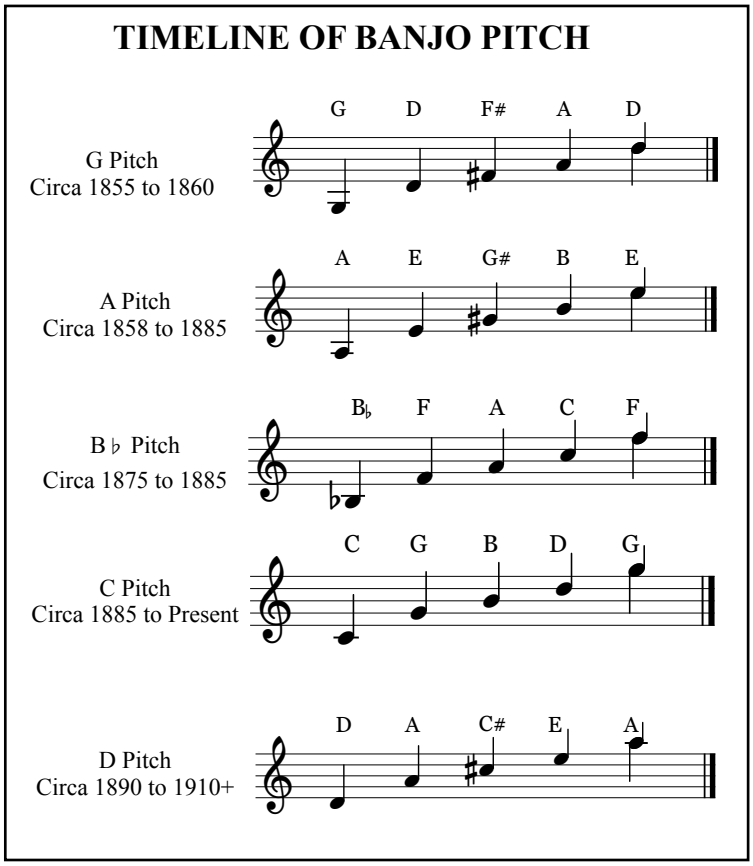
The earliest sheet music published for the banjo shows up in the mid- to late-1870s. While much of it is rebranded guitar music, a few titles are actual "banjo music", meaning separate sheet music published specifically for banjo. One early example is "The Spanish Fandango and Galop" by John Magez, published in 1877. By 1880 publishers like S. S. Stewart were widely circulating many titles in addition to the music collected in folios and instruction books.[5] All of this sheet music was published in A notation despite the fact that many banjoists had actually raised the pitch to B♭.

Stewart's 4th title, "The Banjorett Schottische", was issued in 1879, written in the key of A with piano accompaniment in B♭. In 1882 we see piano accompaniments issued in both B♭ and C, starting with "Banjeau Mazurka" (with instructions to pitch the banjo to match the piano parts).

In April of 1885 Stewart published a form of tablature, "Stewart's Short-Hand Banjo Method, Without Notes", "for all persons who, having no musical ideas, desire to 'pick the Banjo' for pastime".[6] In it Stewart explains to "tune the fourth, or silver wire, string to C, (with piano, organ or tuning pipe)". There is no mention of the pitch or key of A in this work.

By April 1886, Stewart announces that he is discontinuing B♭ accompaniments and will only issue piano parts in C.[7]

These dates help to establish a timeline for banjo pitch; it is clear that the pitch of C was common and established by the mid-1880s.[8] To reinforce this, J. E. Brewster published an early (if not the first) tutor in C notation in 1885 in England[9]—it was around this time that the banjo fad hit England in a big way. Since banjos were currently pitched



to C, the English naturally published music and books to match. They further issued (plagiarized) hundreds of American titles transposed note for note from A to C, some credited, some altered, with different titles and composer credits.

Stewart explains the pitch shift to C and why banjo music continued to be written in A in the U.S. in his Complete American Banjo School: Part First, 1887 —

"RELATIVE TO CONCERT PITCH.

"Years ago, when music was first printed for the Banjo, the natural keys of the Banjo were noted as A and E major. At the present time we find the impracticability of this notation, as no Banjo is tuned in the pitch in which its music is noted; this fact alone is of no moment, for neither the B♭ or E♭ Cornets sound their tones as noted, nor do Clarinets. The main objection to the notation is because the pupil is taught in the keys of two, three or four sharps before he has learned to play in the natural key of C.

"The reason the Banjo was noted in the keys in which it is presumed to be because long ago the instrument was strung with heavy strings like the Guitar, and was also of large

size. By increasing the thickness of a string we produce the same effect as by lengthening the string. Hence Banjos strung with thick strings were tuned lower than Banjos of the present day which are strung much thinner."

Sometime around 1890 the idea of matching pitch to the size of the instrument led to "small sized" banjos (10.5" rim x 18" neck) to be pitched one step higher, at D. This was done for the same reason that the banjo pitch was raised in the past, for a brighter tone with more "carrying power" for concert work. Alfred Farland was one who took to using smaller sized banjos pitched in D, preferring Stewart's "Specialty Banjo" model, which was introduced at about the same time. Farland claimed he needed the smaller banjo to play his arrangements of violin music, and Stewart built a custom Specialty-sized Thoroughbred Model banjo for him in 1893 that included a three-octave, or 22 fret, neck.[10]

This "higher pitch equals better carrying power" was extended to "regular sized" banjos (11 to 11.5" x 19"), with Stewart encouraging soloists to raise the pitch one half step to C#/D♭.[11] Stewart even conducted experiments with regular sized banjos (11.5" rim) with a shorter neck (18") to be pitched to D.[12] George Gregory was known to play a large (12" x 19") banjo pitched to D.[13]

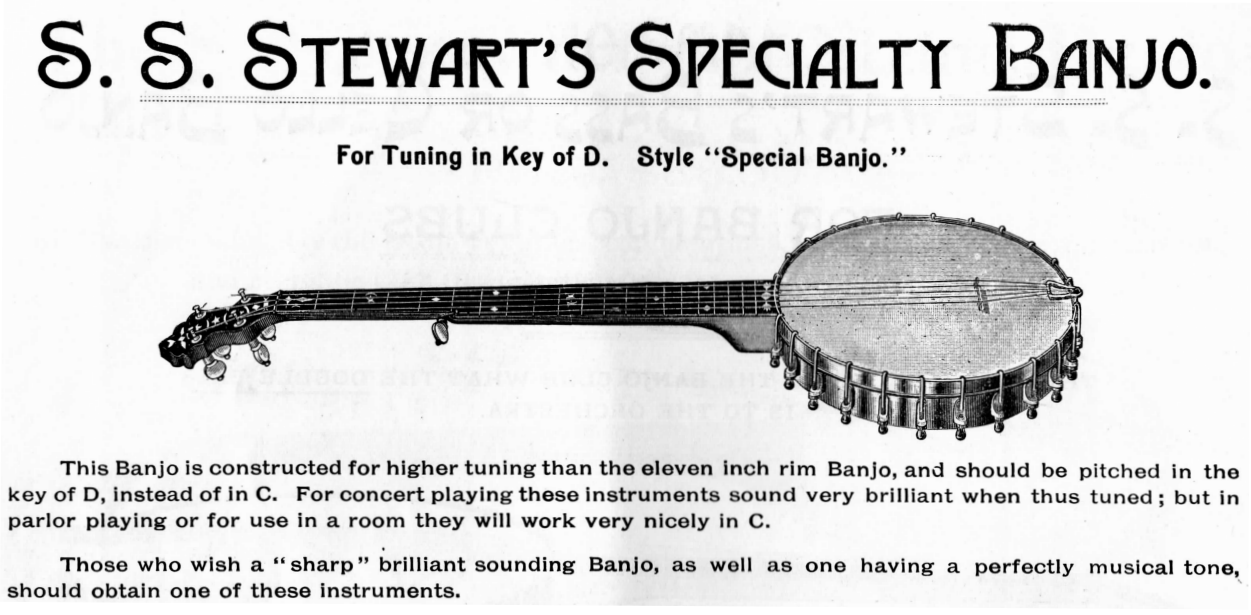
Despite the popularity of D among some concert banjoists, the pitch of the banjo settled at C.

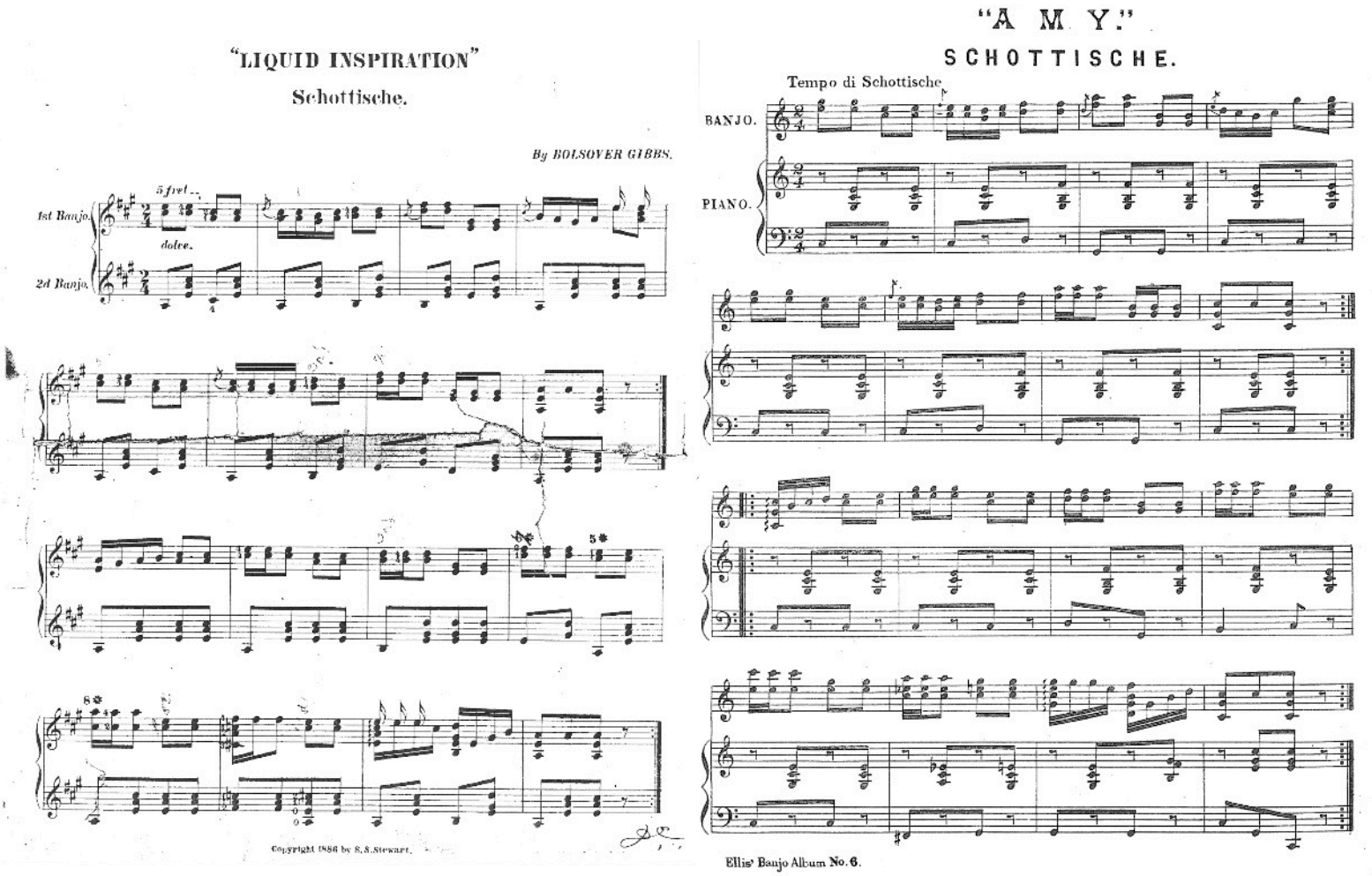
When C pitch came along in the mid 1880s, publishers had already made a sizable investment in engraved plates and inventory of music and instruction books in the pitch of A. It would have been costly to scrap it all and start over—and, by that time, there was a large existing market that read in A. So American publishers continued with A notation, ignoring the pitch change as it related to printed music.

The confusion started almost immediately, as did the debates on which was better. A relentless discussion continued in print (and likely in person) until the early 1920s, when she subject of notation seems to finally have been settled.[14] Many long and tedious articles and letters were written on the advantages and disadvantages of both systems, although much of it was just repeating the same points over and over for each side. Periodicals were regularly answering questions about pitch and notation.

Arguments for A notation included: The banjo is a transposing instrument.[15] Even people reading in C did not read the exact note, but read an octave lower.[16] Pitch did not matter.[17] There was already a lot of music printed in A, and inventories of sheet music would become worthless if a change was made.[18] Learning in three and four sharps makes for a smarter student and stronger music / English banjo teachers are not familiar with musical notation and wanted to avoid explaining sharps, flats, and naturals.[19] There are other instruments that are transposing.[20] A notation uses fewer ledger lines above the staff. It is how it was *always* done.[21] The banjo is an American instrument so banjo music should be written the way Americans want.[22]

Arguments for C notation included: A banjoist who can read in C can read music for other instruments without transposing. It is easier to begin reading in the keys of C and G. You play the same notes you read (one octave lower). Musicians who play other instruments could read banjo music.[23]





Examples of American and English editions of the same piece

The point of being able to read music for other instruments was countered by Clarence Partee, who claimed that this was moot. His logic was that the average banjoist would not be experienced enough to play from music for other instruments without arranging it specifically for the banjo: and while transposing would not be necessary, the banjo was such a different instrument that the notation would still need to be altered before it was playable on the banjo.[24]

Back and forth it went.

By 1900 the terms for the different systems of notation in general use changed. "A Notation" became the "American System".[25] "C Notation" became the "English System"[26] and "Universal Notation".[27]

It was also in the couple of years leading up to 1900 that arguments in favor of Universal Notation become more prevalent.

In October of 1900, a transposed version of S. S. Stewart's First Lessons For The Banjo, revised by Paul Eno, was published in S. S. Stewart's Journal.[28] It had originally been published in A notation in 1880.[29] In the same issue, the piece "Restless Rastus Schottische" by Eno was published for banjo, mandolin, and guitar with the banjo part noted in C.

George Morris wrote in the following issue, "BANJO MUSIC IN UNIVERSAL NOTATION. Because banjo music in the last issue was printed in only this notation, it does not follow that the Journal proposes to abandon the American System right away. American notation banjo music will appear *every month*, together with the Universal when practical. The best American notation banjo music procurable will always be found in the Journal. At present this is merely the experimental period of the Universal Notation in the United States. One of the strongest reasons for the Journal's advocacy of the adoption of the Universal System is a business reason, as set forth in the paragraphs

beginning 'to Manufacturers and Publishers', and this should appeal to every person who composes banjo music."[30]

That aforementioned paragraph was about expanding the market for American-made instruments and published music for export to countries that had already adopted the Universal System.

The first complete banjo instruction book to be published in America entirely in C notation seems to be The 20th Century Method for the Banjo by J. E. Agnew (Eastman Co., Cleveland, OH, 1901). This work was announced as ready in August 1901.[31]

Agnew was followed in 1902 by The Witmark Progressive Method for the Banjo, by George Lansing (M. Witmark & Sons, NY). This is a strange book that, while providing instruction in both C and A notations, defaults to A for the majority of the work and music.

In the Music Trade Review it was reported that on March 26, 1907, at the Sixth Annual Convention of The Guild of Banjoists, Mandolinists and Guitarists, "One of the leading discussions brought out by the convention was the adopting of the English system of writing for the banjo, which was adopted, so that hereafter the banjo will be uniform in notation."[32] Now that the discussion was decided, the industry promptly ignored the ruling and continued to publish banjo music in A. A survey of periodicals in 1908 shows nearly no new music published in the U.S. in C notation (but plenty in A).

As a step back, the (English) Clifford Essex Co. placed an advertisement in the March 1909 issue of The Cadenza[33] that they were offering 24 of their best-selling solos in "the U.S. notation", prompting this poem to be included three pages over:[34]

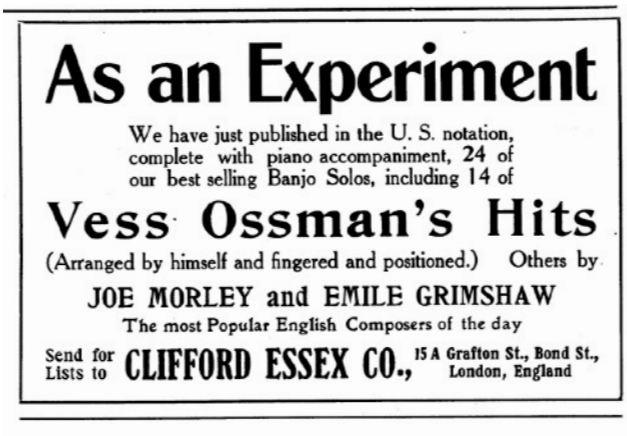
"A" VERSUS "C"

"Abolish 'A'", the "C" men cry,
"Adopt the English notion."
Yet seamen now bring to our shores
The "A" from 'cross the ocean.

—E. O.

(Essex' Cadenza ad, this issue, responsible.)

The next month a compromise was struck at the Eighth Annual Convention of The Guild of Banjoists, Mandolinists and Guitarists. It seems that there was some apprehension regarding adopting C notation, with concerns about people raising the common pitch of the banjo to D[35] —but a day later an agreement was made that suited all parties.



"After a lengthy discussion, the question of C notation was settled on the basis that the Guild recommends that publishers of banjo music issue their *new* publications in both C and A notation, and also, so far as they may find it expedient, publish in the new notation such pieces as have been classed under the head of their 'best sellers.' It was also recommended that, when practical, teachers start all beginners in the C notation. It was generally conceded by the body of teachers present that drawing the line more rigidly would probably tend to bring about disastrous results, and retard the reviving interest in the banjo. Several of the Guild members by forceful and convincing arguments were instrumental in shaping the final decision. Among the speakers we might mention D. Acker, N. S. Lagatree, W. C. Knipferm, Walter Jacobs, and L. A. Williams. An interesting and well-written paper on the subject was read by D. L. Day."[36]

That very issue of The Cadenza included "Yankee Dandy" by A. J. Weidt in C notation.[37]

And that is how it continued for as long as banjo music was commercially viable. Some music was published in A, some in C, and most in both. Magazines like The Cadenza and The Crescendo would often publish the same piece twice to cover both systems of notation. Some publishers went so far as to publish both systems of notation *on the same page*, with A notation over C notation.

As the regular banjo started to fall out of fashion, publishers started to drop A notation. By 1919 Walter Jacobs was running ads in The Cadenza putting all of their A notation music on clearance.[38]

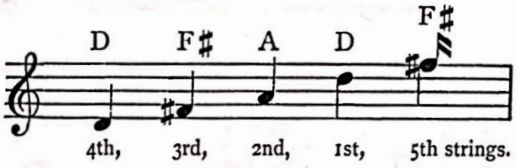
Conclusion.

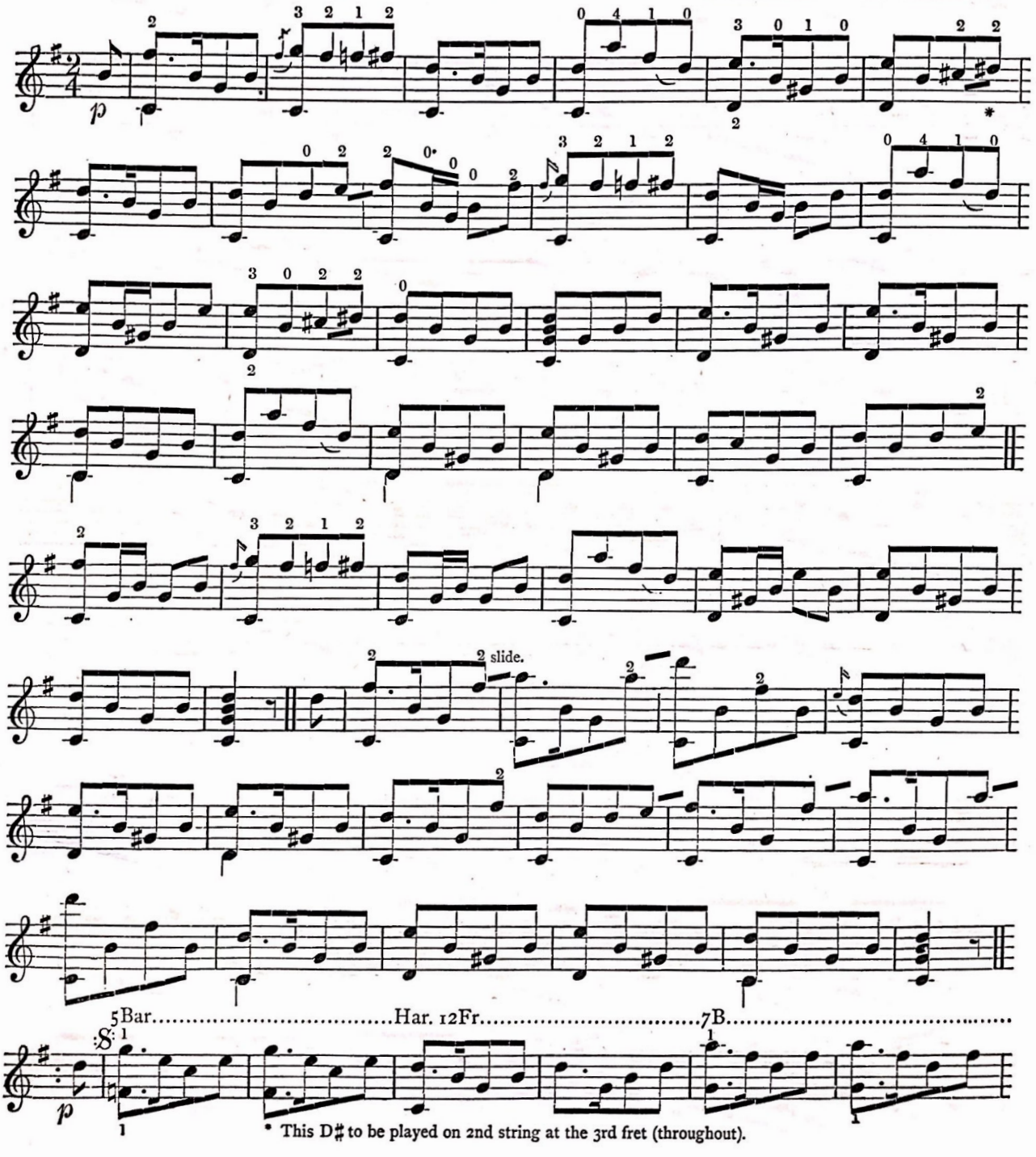
While on paper it is easy to establish a timeline for pitch and the banjo, and as much as this documentation represents what many, or even most, banjoists were doing, things were not always so clear cut. If one banjoist raised the pitch on his banjo, that didn't mean that the switch was flipped and *all* banjoists went along with it. There is

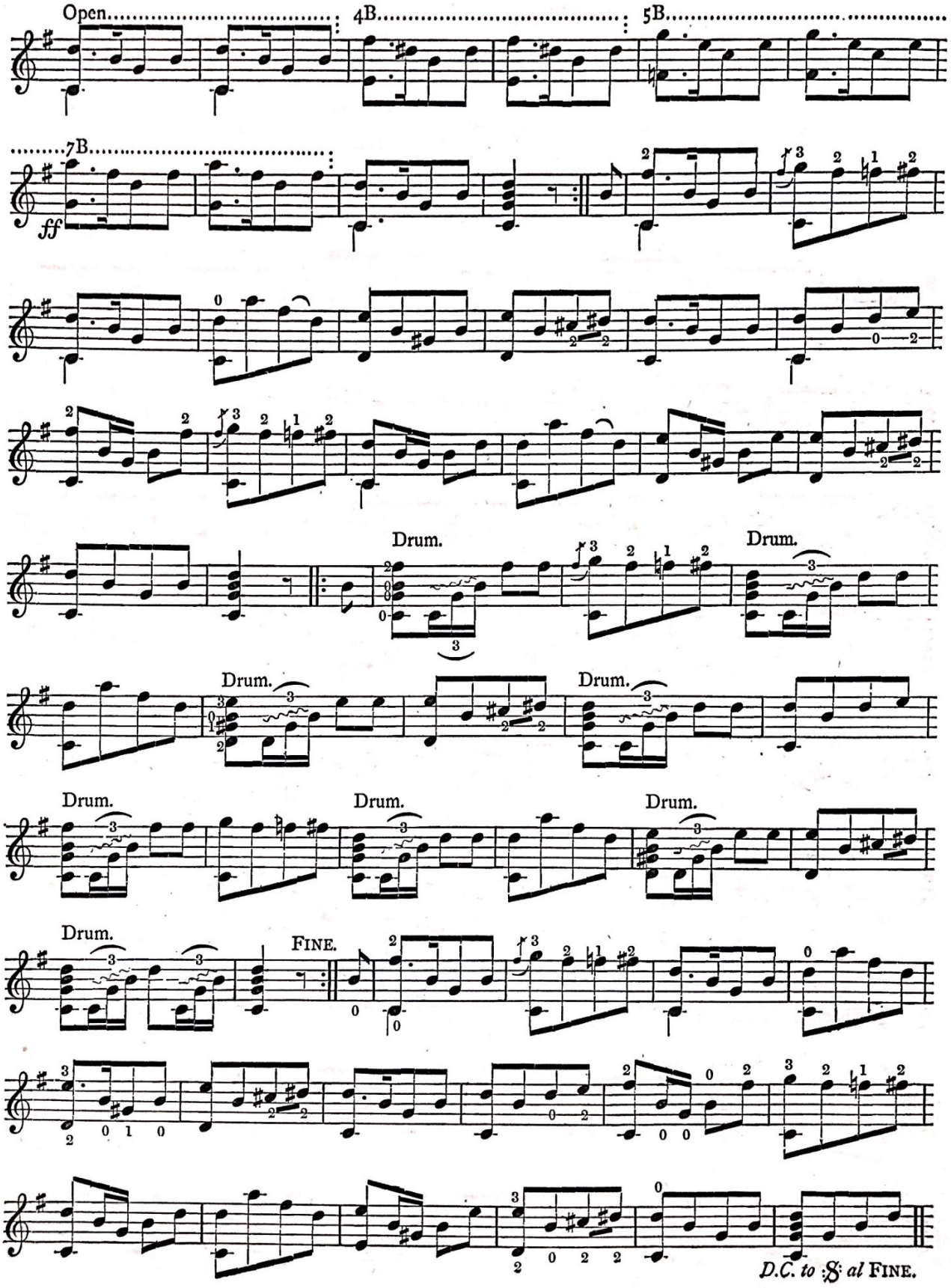
SEBASTOPOL.—(Trick Solo.)

Descriptive Fantaisie by H. Worrell.

Tune the Banjo as follows, and read as usual.



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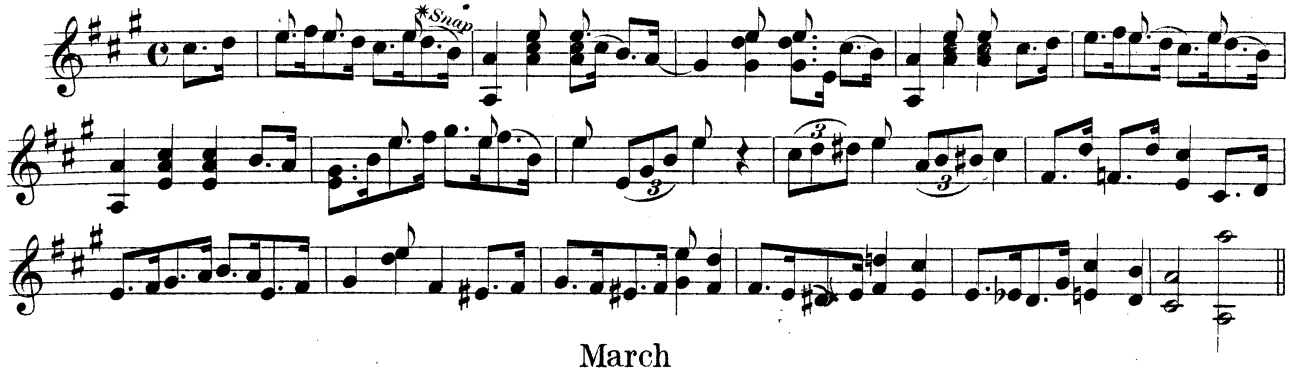

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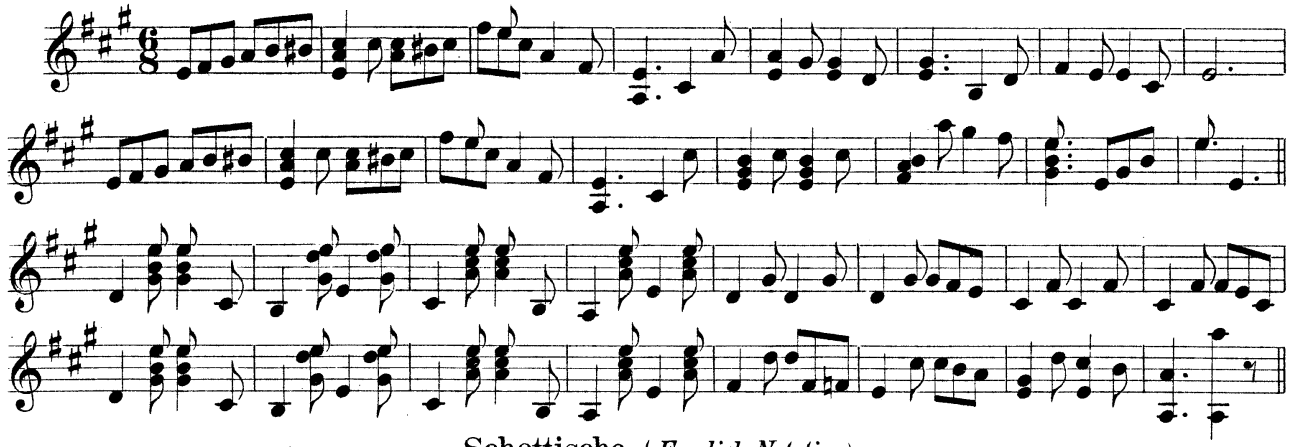
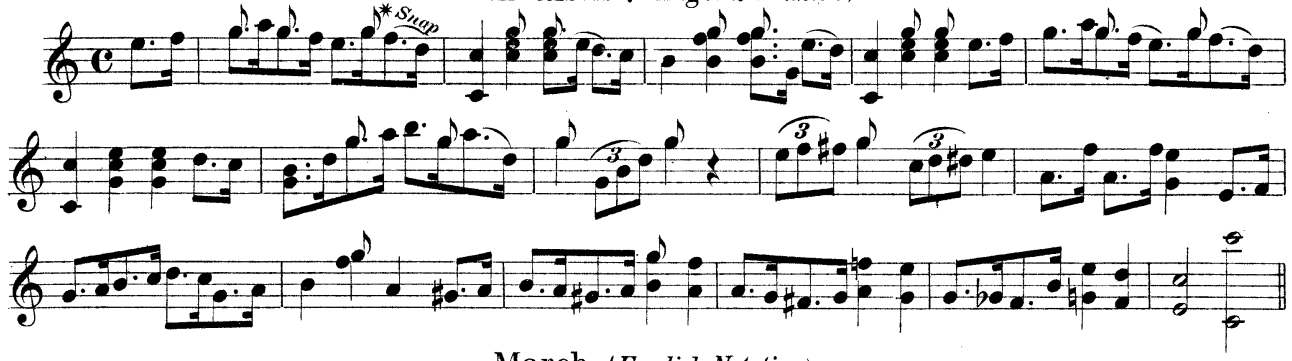
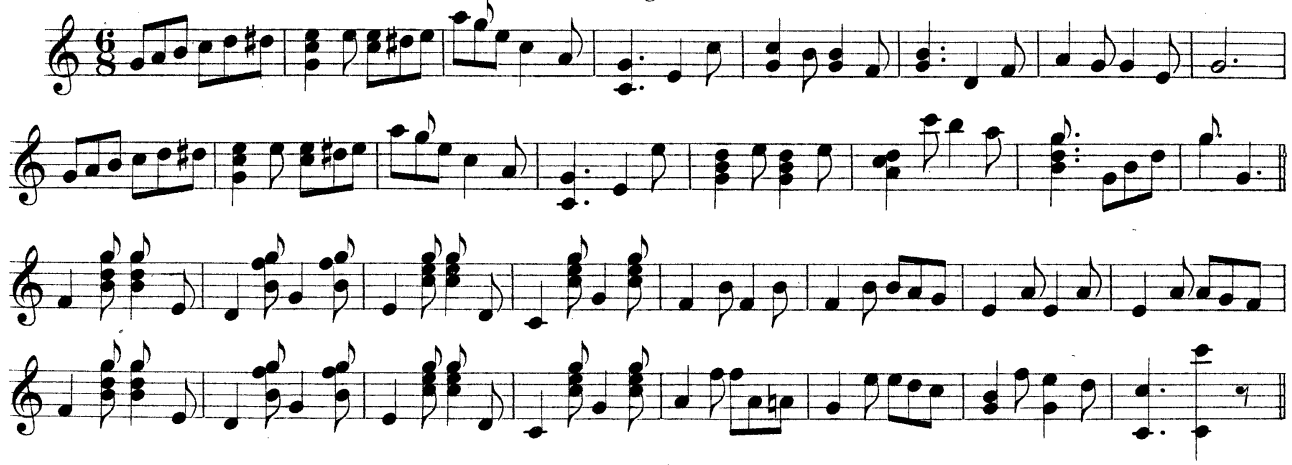


Schottische. (*English Notation*)



March. (*English Notation*)



* The snap is executed by pulling the string instead of picking it. It is written as a slur ⌒

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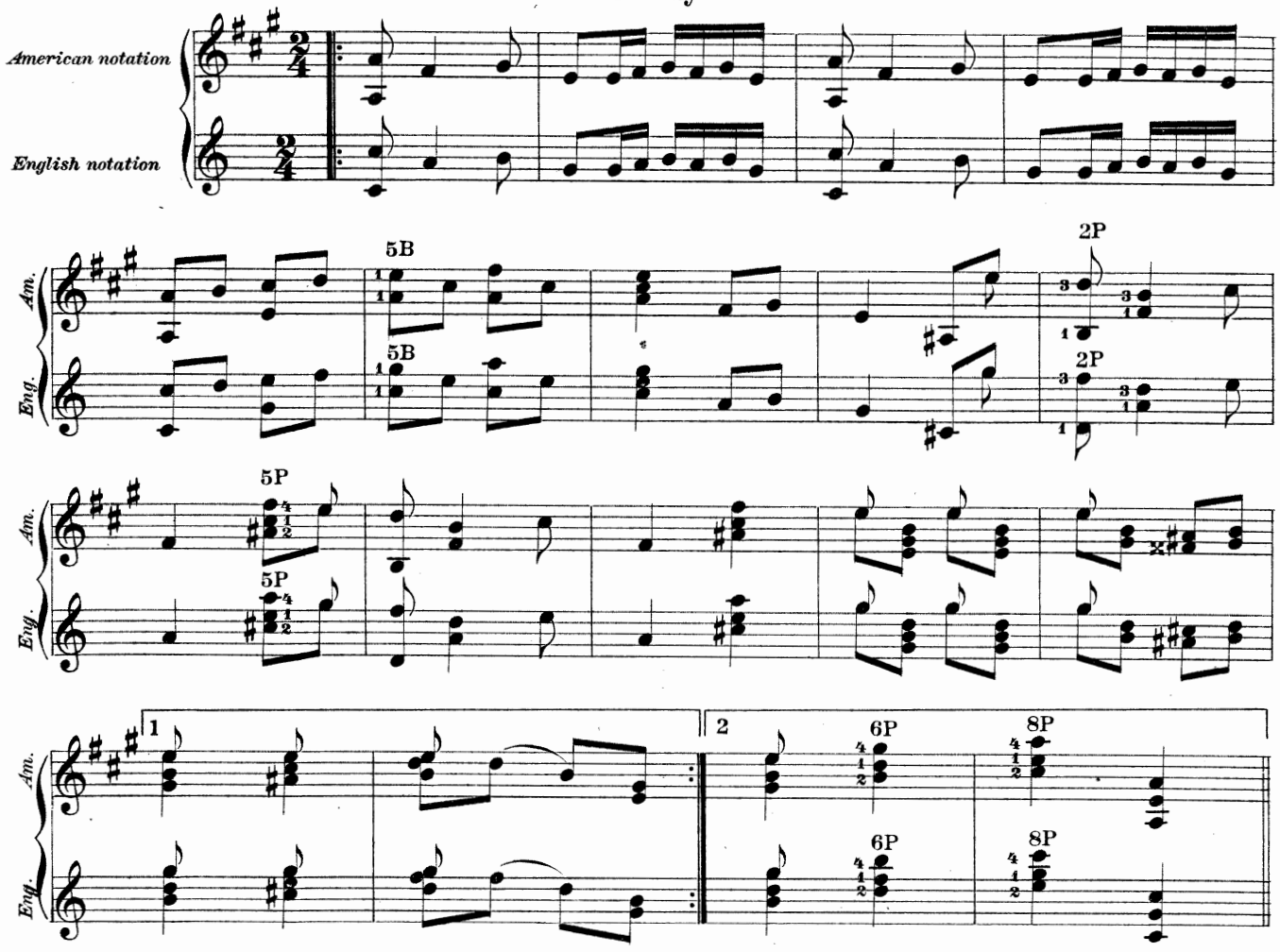
Exercise

Showing the Witmark System of both notations.

Melody



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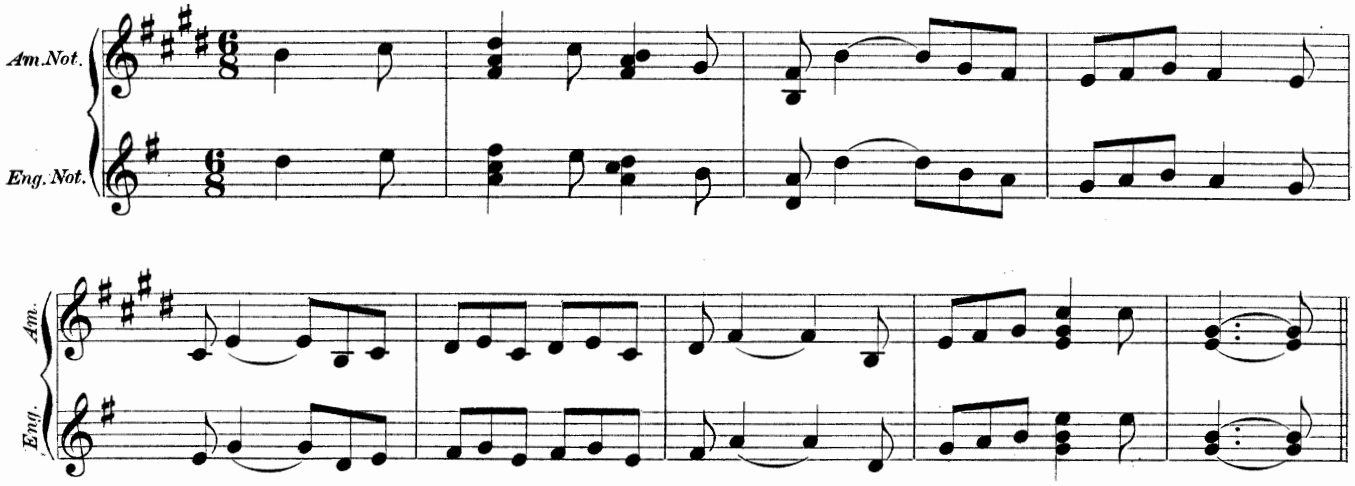

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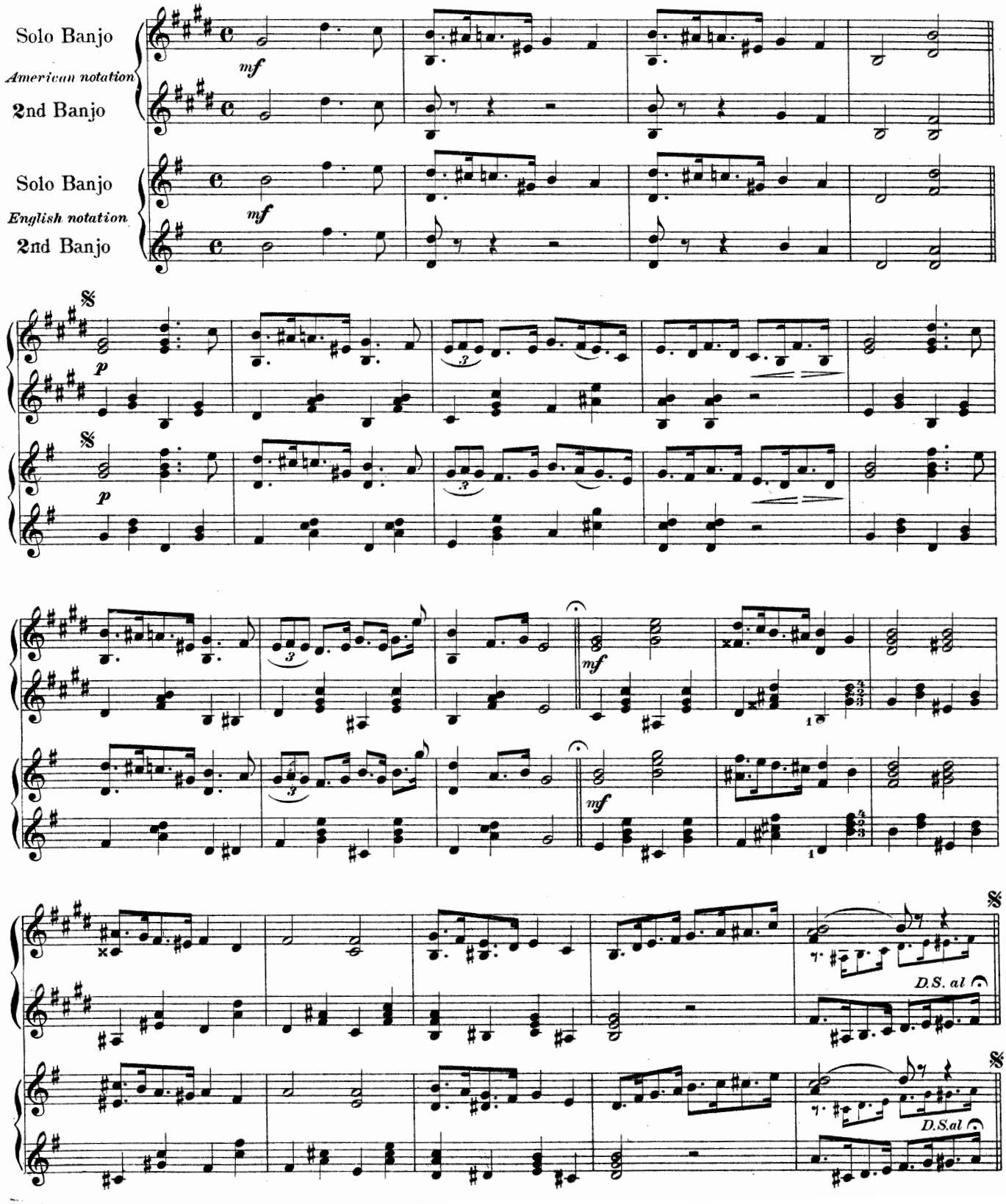
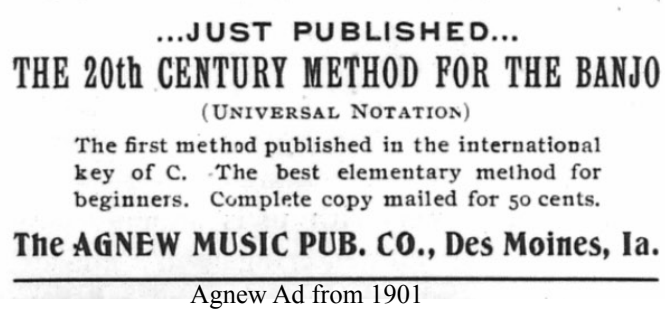




Agnew Ad from 1901

plenty of evidence to the contrary. A good example is a note written in the back of the copy of Banjo Playing Made Easy by Frank Converse, held by Hamilton College and posted by the College online for viewing:[39] the hand-written note makes it clear that the former owner of the book was still using the old "Briggs' G" pitch in the 1890s or later, or at least was taught the concept of altering pitch to match the desired key (see illustration).

George Lansing recommended in 1889 that "although the pitch now used by banjoists is somewhat higher than A, I deem it advisable to adhere to the old method of tuning, as it is more easily understood by the student and it is in keeping with the natural key (so called) of the banjo."[40] Lansing went on to become an early supporter of C pitch and notation, authoring one of the first books published in the U.S. that taught it.[41]

One cannot help but draw a connection from the early instructions for changing the pitch of the banjo to match the key to the tradition of "alternate tuning" (scordatura) used by "old time" banjoists. While it is not conclusive that "alternate tuning" is directly connected to this early tradition, it cannot be ruled out.

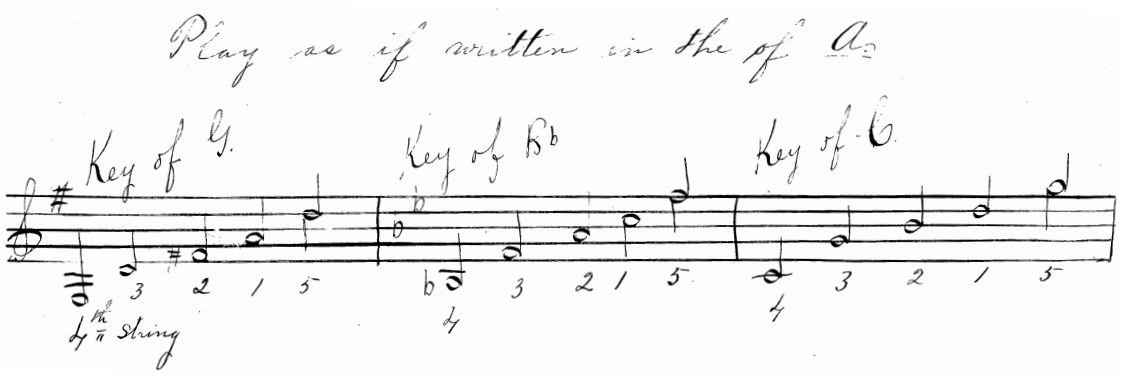
An exception to the scheme of altering pitch to match the desired key is the use of a Capo d'Astro (or "capo"). The two recommendations for using a capo that can be found in banjo books have a gap of nearly three decades between them: Buckley's New Banjo Method (1860)[42] and Frank Converse's Banjo Songs (1888).[43] Buckley's motives for capo use might be called into question, as he is pictured on the cover holding an Ashborn-made banjo. James Ashborn had patented[44] and manufactured a Capo d'Astro, and Buckley's recommendation could have been purely to sell product.

Converse's suggestion for a Capo d'Astro was specifically to match the banjo, pitched in C, to the voice of a singer —"which otherwise would necessitate an entire re-tuning of the instrument".[45]

In 1926 Hohner announced their new line of "Trutone" pitch pipes.[46] Offered in variations that cover most stringed instruments, two versions were included for five-string banjo, one for "Banjo" the other for "Banjo C-not". The Trutone pitch pipe for Banjo has the staff and notes stamped on the back cover for A pitch. It also sounds the correct notes (one octave lower than shown on the cover). A number of these pitch pipes can be found on online auction sites at any given time, showing that many were produced, purchased, and used.

As of this writing, the Kratt Pitch Pipe Company of Kenilworth, NJ still offers three banjo pitch pipes, for "Banjo", "Banjo C Notation", and "Banjo G Notation (Bluegrass)". The pitch pipe marked "Banjo" is in A notation, no explanation given other than that the individual pipes are marked with the notes they sound. Again, these turn up regularly on auction websites in both used and new old stock.

Frank Bradbury provided an explanation for the manufacturers making these "A" pitch pipes in The Crescendo, saying that "In the past there have been pitch-pipes for the banjo (A notation) on the market that were incorrect in the respect that the manufacturers were confused by the naming of the strings and made their pitch-pipes sounding these tones (A, E, G#, B and E) in place of the tones to which the banjo was actually tuned, in other words they did not recognize the fact that the banjo (A notation) was a transposed instrument and altho' the



Handwritten note in the back of a copy of The Banjo Made Easy by Frank Converse found in Hamilton College Digital Collection

banjos [sic] open tones were such in the A notation as to reading they were actually tuned and sounded (C, G, B, D and G) same as in the modern C notation. …

"I just recently found that a new pitch-pipe put on the market for the banjo was incorrect in the same way. The manufacturers made two separate pitch-pipes for the banjo, one for the C notation and one for the A notation, so labelled and the first named was correct while the second was made for a banjo actually tuned to A.

"It seems rather sad to have these mistakes repeatedly occur but it all goes back to the fact that the banjo is in reality a new instrument and has had in its evolution many things to contend with and these things are what we now have to put up with on account of the many changes in the 'not so distant past'."[47]

It is not difficult to see how all this led to the five-string banjo falling out of favor. Imagine walking into a music store in 1910 to enroll in banjo lessons, only to have the salesperson try to explain the two systems of notation. Consider your reaction to being told that they teach C notation, but their inventory of music consists of 40 years of titles that you won't be able to read. Charles McNeil observed in 1928, "the confusion caused by the two notations printed in banjo music caused the on-coming generation to disregard the instrument and the banjo suffered a lull in popularity".[48]

As it stands today, A notation is more accessible than when it was current. No true banjo historian can fully understand the instrument without being able to read in both systems. There is also a seemingly endless number of titles that have not been transported to C, available with a computer and internet connection. A good portion of the ABF library is in A notation as well.

In 1966 Cliff Spaulding wrote, "I am not advocating that we should go back to the use of A notation, but I do deplore the fact that there is the danger of so much good banjo music being forgotten because it hasn't been transcribed to C notation."[49]

I agree with him.

A special thanks to Eli and Madeleine Kaufman, Jim Bollman, Marc Smith, F. Chris Ware, John Hoft, Richard Davis, Robert Coldwell, University of Rochester Eastman School of Music Digital Collection, New York Public Library Digital Collection, The Internet Archive, and anyone else from whom I have absorbed information but can't think of at this time. Without you this sort of research could not happen.

Hohner Trutone Pitch Pipe first put on the market in 1926

1. The earliest known instruction book for the banjo is Elias Howe/ Gumbo Chaff, The Complete Preceptor For The Banjo (Oliver Ditson & Co., 1851), which gives the 4th string as F. This book is believed to have been printed to try and supply market demand for the growing popularity of the banjo and minstrelsy. While it contains some banjo instruction, it is a repackaging of previously published guitar and violin music.

2. Albert Bauer, "Reminiscences of a Banjo Player, Ninth Letter", S. S. Stewart Banjo & Guitar Journal, Vol. 9, No. 2, June & July 1892, p. 4.

3. Ibid.

4. Samuel Swaim Stewart, The Banjo Player's Hand Book, (S. S. Stewart, Philadelphia, PA, 1880) p. 9,10.

5. By 1880 S. S. Stewart had published 22 sheet music titles, not including the unnumbered songs.

6. Samuel Swaim Stewart, "Stewart's Short-Hand Banjo Method Without Notes", S. S. Stewart's Banjo & Guitar Journal, Vol. 3, No. 3, April & May 1885. An earlier tablature method, Samuel Swaim Stewart, The Banjo By Ear (S. S. Stewart, Philadelphia, 1880), p. 1, states "Tuning The Banjo. Begin with the 4th or silver string which tune to any desired pitch, so long as you do not get it too high." No mention of pitch was given.

7. Samuel Swaim Stewart, "Banjo and Piano Music", S. S. Stewart's Banjo & Guitar Journal, Vol. 3, No. 9, April & May 1886, p. 5.

8. "General Information", S. S. Stewart's Banjo & Guitar Journal, Vol. 4, No. 3, April & May 1887, p. 6: "Banjos of medium size (such as 11 or 11 1/2 inch) are tuned in the keys of C and G. That is, the bass or A string is tuned to C, and the third string is tuned to G. Hence, the key of A on the banjo will accord with C on the guitar, piano, violin or

mandolin. The key of E on the banjo will accord with G on either of the other instruments".

9. J. E. Brewster, The J. E. Brewster Banjoist (J. E. Brewster, The American Banjo Studios, London, 1885); "Stewart's Imitators", S. S. Stewart's Banjo & Guitar Journal, Vol. 3, No. 9, April & May 1886, p. 3.

10. "Farland's Banjo", S. S. Stewart's Banjo & Guitar Journal, Vol. 10, No. 5, December 1893 & January 1894, p. 9.

11. "A Test of Banjos", S. S. Stewart's Banjo & Guitar Journal, Vol. 10, No. 5, April & May 1893, p. 1, 2.

12. Ibid.

13. "Farland's Banjo", S. S. Stewart's Banjo & Guitar Journal, Vol. 10, No. 5, December 1893 & January 1894, p. 9: "Mr. Gregory, the noted New York banjoist, uses a 12 inch Stewart banjo, with 19 inch neck, but tunes to the same pitch as Mr. Farland. This gives very tight strings, and increases the power of tone."

14. M. L. Hallett, "A Symphony in 'C'", The Cadenza, Vol. 28, No. 7, July 1921 (Walter Jacobs Inc., Boston, MA), p. 14.

15. S. S. Stewart's Banjo & Guitar Journal, Vol. 2, No. 4, February & March 1887, p. 7.

16. Ibid.

17. Frank B. Converse, Analytical Banjo Method (Hamilton S. Gordon, New York, 1886), "Concerning the Key of A, and Pitch", p. 4.

18. David L. Day, "Notation", The Crescendo, Vol. 2, No. 1, July 1909, (Crescendo Publishing Company., Inc, Boston, MA), p. 4.

19. Samuel Swaim Stewart, "Notation and Pitch", Observations on the Banjo, (S. S. Stewart, Philadelphia, PA, 1892), p. 28.

20. Samuel Swaim Stewart, "Relative to Concert Pitch", The Complete American Banjo School, (S. S. Stewart, Philadelphia, PA, 1887), p. 3.

21. Samuel Swaim Stewart, "Notation and Pitch", Observations on the Banjo, (S. S. Stewart, Philadelphia, PA, 1892), p. 28.

22. Ibid.

23. David L. Day, "Notation", The Crescendo, Vol. 2, No. 1, July 1909, p. 4, 9.

24. Clarence L. Partee, "Banjoisms V", The Cadenza, Vol. 7, No. 1, September 1900, p. 2.

25. "Banjo Music in Universal Notation", S. S. Stewart's Banjo, Guitar, & Mandolin Journal, Vol. 18, No. 1, December 1900 (Charles Morris, Philadelphia, PA), p. 8.

26. "Innovations", S. S. Stewart's Banjo, Guitar, & Mandolin Journal, Vol. 17, No. 4, October & November 1900, p. 10.

27. "Banjo Music in Universal Notation", S. S. Stewart's Banjo, Guitar, & Mandolin Journal, Vol. 18, No. 1, December 1900 (Charles Morris, Philadelphia, PA), p. 8.

28. Revised by Paul Eno, "S. S. Stewart's New Edition First Lessons for the Banjo", S. S. Stewart's Banjo, Guitar, & Mandolin Journal, Vol. 17, No. 4, October & November 1900, music supplement.

29. Stewart's First Lessons for the Banjo (S. S. Stewart, 429 N. Eighth St., Music Depot, 1880).

30. "Banjo Music in Universal Notation", S. S. Stewart's Banjo, Guitar, & Mandolin Journal, Vol. 18, No. 1, December 1900 (Charles Morris, Philadelphia, PA), p. 8.

31. "Publisher's Notes", The Cadenza, Vol. 7, No. 12, August 1901, p. 26.

32. "A Great Gathering", The Music Trade Review, Vol. 44, No. 13, March 30 (Edward Lyman Bill, New York, NY 1907), p. 41.

33. Clifford Essex Co., "As an Experiment", The Cadenza, Vol. 15, No. 9, March 1909, p. 5.

34. Ibid, p. 8.

35. "The Eighth Annual Convention of the American Guild of Banjoists, Mandolinists And Guitarists", The Cadenza, Vol. 15, No. 10, April 1909, p. 14.

36. Ibid, p. 15.

37. Ibid, p. 22 & 23.

38. "Banjo Music in A Notation", The Cadenza, Vol. 26, No. 10, October 1919, p. 28.

39. Frank B. Converse, The Banjo Made Easy (Hamilton S. Gordon, New York, NY, 1893), handwritten note on the last page before the back cover, copy posted online by Hamilton College Library, Digital Collections, Robert Fraker Collection of Nineteenth-Century Banjo Instruction Manuals.

40. George Lansing, Lansing's Practical Banjo Instructor (L. B. Gatcomb Co., Boston, MA, 1889), p. 5.

41. George Lansing, The Witmark Progressive Method for the Banjo (Witmark & Sons, New York, NY, 1902), Eastman School of Music - Sibley Music Library.

42. James Buckley, "Directions For Making Banjos", Buckley's New Banjo Method (Oliver Ditson, Boston, MA, 1860), p. 6.

43. Frank B. Converse, "The Capo d'Astro", Converse's Banjo Songs (S. T. Gordon & Son, New York, NY, 1888), p. 2.

44. James Ashborn US Patent No. 7,279, "Guitar-Head and Capo Tasto", April 16, 1850.

45. Frank B. Converse, "The Capo d'Astro", Converse's Banjo Songs (S. T. Gordon & Son, New York, NY, 1888), p. 2.

46. "M. Hohner, Inc., Announces Complete New Line of 'Trutone' Pitch Pipes", The Music Trade Review, Vol. 83, No. 16, October 16, 1926, p. 37.

47. Frank C. Bradbury, "The Banjoists' Round Table", The Crescendo, Vol. 21, No. 1, July 1928, p. 21.

48. Charles McNeil & Warren J. Marler, McNeil Chord System for Plectrum (Long-Neck) Banjo (Forster Music Pub. Inc., Chicago, IL, 1927), p. 3.

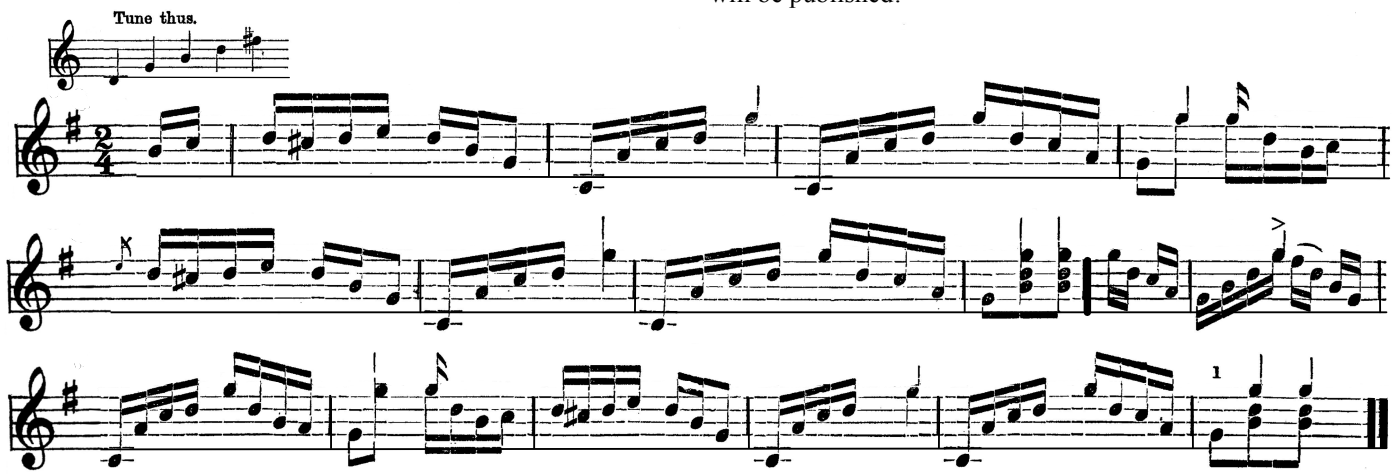
49. Cliff Spaulding, "In Mild Defense of 'A' Notation", The 5-Stringer, No. 98, Summer-Fall 1966, p. 8.

Music, cont'd from p. 2

"Lon Morris's Jig" from Buckley's Guide for the Banjo, 1868 also features scordatura. It is a strange piece that could be interpreted a few ways. It could be played in standard tuning ignoring the "tune thus" instructions, it could be played using the given tuning by playing all Gs on the 5th string (tuned to F#), or it could be played by playing the Gs with the open 5th string or stopped at the 5th fret to suit the player. This was transposed using the "whiteout method" digitally.

The three pages from The Witmark Progressive Method for the Banjo by George Lansing are provided to illustrate the two systems of banjo notation discussed in the main article of this issue. Some music was published in the format of both systems on one page.

LON MORRIS'S JIG.



THE TAIL PIECE

The Banjo Gathering, formerly known as **The Banjo Collector's Gathering**, which was scheduled for November, has been canceled—however, they are hosting a one-day virtual event. Check banjogathering.weebly.com for more information.

Clarke Buehling is offering online, one on one, classic banjo lessons via Skype and Facebook Messenger. Clarke learned classic banjo from Frank Bradbury. This is an excellent opportunity for anyone looking to start playing or improve their performance. Contact buehlingbanjo@yahoo.com for more information.

Jerron Paxton is also offering video and online lessons. Jerron is a professional musician and fantastic classic banjoist with a background in many genres. Contact him at blindboypaxton@gmail.com or see his YouTube channel Jerronimo.

Robert Coldwell has recently posted downloadable PDF files for the entire run of The Cadenza and The Crescendo magazines on www.digitalguitararchive.com. Also included are a large number of S. S. Stewart Journals, as well as guitar-related magazines. This is a huge and important resource for banjo history. I recommend that people take advantage of this, stay home, and read all of these issues. A good start would be to check the issues referenced in this issue of the 5-Stringer. The issues include a lot of great banjo music in both systems of notation.

We were not able to have our business meeting at the Spring Rally so we are tentatively moving it to the Fall Rally, on Saturday. Please contact your Executive Secretary with anything that you would like to add to the agenda.

We want to hear from you! This is your newsletter. Tell us what you want to read about. Let us know what you have going on that is classic-banjo related. Articles and letters submitted will be published!