



**THE WAYNE ADAMS'
OLD 'CLASSIC'
BANJO
COLLECTION 1897-1952**

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Gérard De Smaele
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"So English, You Know!". George du Maurier (Paris, 1834 – Hampstead 1896). London, in *Punch*, 1891.

Pete Stanley's collection, London, 2019. Photo: G. De Smaele.

THE WAYNE ADAMS' OLD 'CLASSIC' BANJO COLLECTION 1897-1952

By Gérard De Smaele

"The banjo is the greatest of musical instruments when it is played well [...] In tone quality it is very much like the harp, and its flexibility of playing is unexcelled, for in the hands of a skilled player it is as good for classical music as for dance tunes. It is the only original American instrument, and is coming into its own as the greatest of them all."

Frederick Bacon, ca. 1900.



THE OLD CLASSIC BANJO

The earliest known recordings of the five-string banjo were made in 1889 for the Edison Laboratory by Bill Lyle, the stage name of William Lomas (1859-1941). In the same year, one of them was exhibited among other cylinders presented to the public at the Paris World Fair. The niece of this forgotten musician had married the son of John Henry Buckbee (1837-1890), the founder of what was considered in the last third of the 19th century to be the largest banjo factory in the world. It is likely that Lomas had his instruments made there, before letting them be distributed by Bruno & Son, a major musical instrument wholesaler¹.

If the once famous names of the Buckleys, Frank Converse, the Dobson brothers, Samuel Swain Stewart and others such as Vess Ossman, Fred Van Eps, Alfred Farland or Frederick Bacon²... are nowadays forgot-

ten by the general public, the so-called 'classic' banjo still plays a major part in the history of the five-string banjo, and certain aspects of the playing technique are still evident even in modern bluegrass. From the end of the American Civil War and for more than half a century afterwards, this classic style prevailed both in the United States and in England. It even seems that it has spread a little in France, too³.

It was during this time that the instrument was perfected, ultimately leading to a physical design that remains the same today. Its eclectic repertoire, comprising a mixture of traditional melodies and more elaborated classical music, is surprisingly diverse: dedicated compositions, adaptations of purely classic works, rags and other popular tunes of the time⁴. This body of work shows that, in addition to its traditional (folk) repertoire, the banjo offers a whole range of other possibilities.

The initial attempts at the first wave of banjo recording only came to fruition around the 1900s but it was still this ‘old style’ that led the way, a good 20 years ahead of commercial country music.

At the same time, since the end of the 19th century there have also been various revivals of interest in traditional music from the South of the United States, at the heart of which the five-string banjo - recognised as ‘America’s Instrument’⁵ - has a privileged place. Indeed, what else but the banjo - without underestimating the importance of jazz - could better symbolise the ‘melting pot’ that characterises the American identity? After a period of indifference towards the ‘5-string’, New York became at the end of the 1950s and through the following decade, the epicentre of a great folk revival, whose breadth, duration and international scope would largely exceed those of the earlier movements. The banjo would be one of its main symbols.

Its very diversity makes the history of the five-string banjo particularly rich: reflecting a complex adventure, which is the result of the constant migration that has been shaking up the Western world since the 16th century. Whilst the instrument finds its distant origins in obscure regions of Africa⁶, its repertoire is largely inspired by Europe and ends up with a complete blend of influences in the new world. At the end of this journey, we clearly discover the full range of all African-American music, which so marked the 20th century. This fundamental contribution testifies to the importance and international reach of the banjo. But the real reason the banjo made its mark is that it was able to inspire *images d’Épinal* (albeit romantic and imaginary both from the southern states as well as from Africa) and at the same time as creating a contagious energy in the listener.

When you want genuine music — music that will come right home to you like a bad quarter, suffuse your system like strychnine whisky, go right through you like Brandreth’s pills, ramify your whole constitution like the measles, and break out on your hide like the pin-feather pimples on a picked goose, — when you want all this, just smash your piano, and invoke the glory-beaming banjo! [Mark Twain, “Enthusiastic Eloquence,” San Francisco Dramatic Chronicle, 23 June 1865.]

But, far from being restricted by its history, the banjo will also prove to be an instrument in its own right. While it spreads the *joie de vivre*, it also has genuine appeal for each and every different human soul.

This is the “banjo!”

The basic process is ancient and its scope is universal. The body of a banjo is made up of a circular structure on which a membrane is stretched. The acoustic properties of such a design produce an invigorating sound, which lifts and touches people’s spirits whoever they are. In this way, the banjo grabbed everyone’s imagination, creating its own myths and clichés, sometimes defying historical, even musicological reality. Slaves from plantations in the Southern States, American cowboys⁷, Route 66, commercial country music, emerging jazz... without forgetting the ancient musical traditions of the Southern Appalachian Mountains⁸, bluegrass... will make up its most fertile soil.

For those in the know, however, the year 2019 will be marked by the celebration of the centenary of the birth of Pete Seeger (1919-2014), whom the Smithsonian Institution will honour with the publication of a beautiful book, accompanied by a set of 6 CDs⁹.

It is, at last, a proper recognition of the man who has enriched the catalogue of the Folkways¹⁰ house with countless recordings. Folkways was founded more than 70 years ago in New York by Moses Asch (1905-1986)¹¹, father of the non-commercial label Smithsonian/Folkways, and is an eminent, official institution of which the United States can be proud. Pete Seeger was an immense banjoist, responsible with Earl Scruggs (1924-2012) for the new development and revival of the five-string banjo. Let's not allow the press's somewhat shallow portrayal of the banjo make us forget the heroic stance of this artist who, disturbed by McCarthyism in the 1950s, accompanied Pastor Martin Luther King in the march towards Washington in 1963. In the wake of the great folk revival of the 1960s, how many young Americans, following the example of the one who showed them the way (well before the young Greta Thunberg) have, banjo in hand, challenged the society of their time?

In bringing musical elements from the west coast of Africa to the new world, sadly the banjo begins its history with the deportation of millions of slaves. The minstrel show, the Jim Crow laws and segregation are there to remind us that the roots of this rich instrument, which spread across all kinds of musical genres, are embed-

ded in this dark underworld. The international impact of *folk music* or *black music* will not let us forget it. But the five-string banjo is also a reflection of the progress of American society in all its guises.

The story of the banjo is never-ending and as complex as the human soul, incorporating a mixture of both good and bad. The stereotypical image of the banjo does not do it justice, but hopefully this brief presentation will reveal a little more and encourage the public to reconnect with its history and discover more about this astonishing stringed instrument and both its prestigious as well as its more down-to-earth authentic players.



In the 1830s, it was as part of the minstrel show that white musicians made-up in coal black, 'Europeanised' the primitive instrument of African-Americans and ap-

propriated the banjo. The five-string banjo then became the starting point from which a whole musical evolution would follow. Its most elaborate and most recent form is that of the bluegrass banjo, a hybrid instrument whose body is the same as that of the tenor and plectrum banjos, made in the inter-war period for jazz orchestras and dance music,



The first commercialised version of the five-string banjo, by W.E. Boucher from the 1840s. "The Banjo in Baltimore and Beyond," BMI Museum, Baltimore, MA, 2014. Pete Szego's collection.

Photo: G. De Smaele.

which have 4 strings of equal length. Meanwhile, from the end of the American Civil War to the First World War, it evolved into a concert and lounge instrument, derived from the classical guitar. At the same time, in the Southern States, it became a pillar of ‘country music’, a musical tradition with deep Anglo-Saxon roots, given pride of place during the great folk revival of the 1960s.

The so-called ‘classic banjo’

And so it was white musicians, who from the first half of the 19th century developed and marketed the emblematic instrument of slaves in the South of the United States. They brought profound modifications to the old banjo gourd, fretless and four strings, the highest pitched of which is shorter than the others and found in plantations. A low string was added by Joel Sweeney (1810-1860), while a box made from a bent wooden hoop gave it more rigidity. It was William Esperance Boucher (1822-1899), luthier and manufacturer of drums of German origin who added an adjustable tension system to the skin¹². His workshop was located in Baltimore, Maryland, a thriving commercial hub and an obligatory crossing point for the minstrel show troops. Initially, their music was a kind of Africanisation of Irish tunes, but at the same time German and even Italian. Although this was eventually shown in methods and collections written in classical notation, the style of play is mainly characterised by hitting the strings with the back of the index fingernail whilst the thumb is used for the chanterelle - a drone string- (as well as the other strings, except the first). This is a particular playing technique, directly linked to the African origins of the banjo.

The genre was a resounding success, even in England and the rest of Europe. It left a lasting imprint on traditional rural music from the South States of America.

After the glory years preceding the Civil War, new musicians and luthiers began to see alternatives to this practice, which was considered unrefined and manifestly disrespectful towards black people. After some experimentations (flush frets, position markers, six- and seven-string banjos, always with a chanterelle) and a transition period, a second style came to replace that of the minstrel show: that of the so-called ‘classic’ banjo. It was to extend over a period of fifty years and have a decisive impact on both the playing technique and construction of the modern five-string banjo.

This classic banjo, or finger-style - we also sometimes speak of orthodox style, parlour banjo and concert style - was derived from the classical guitar and is radically different from minstrel style (stroke style or banjo style) and other various traditional playing techniques¹³.

- The are plucked as in classical guitar, with the thumb and fingers (most often the thumb, index and middle fingers, but also the ring finger or even the little finger)
- The music is always written in classical musical notation (thus departing from the oral transmission); the use of tablature is uncommon¹⁴ while the compositions come from musicians trained at academic schools
- The usual accompaniment is a second banjo or piano, as well as other contemporary instruments, and no longer the violin (fiddle)¹⁵
- Most of the pieces played are instrumentals

A fifth string!

It is initially the timbre of the banjo that catches the public’s attention, with its acoustic sound created by a membrane stretched over a round body. The average listener has no idea of the number of different configurations possible in a banjo: all kinds of necks borrowed

from various instruments (guitar, mandolin, ukulele, etc.); a body opened or enclosed by a resonator; metallic, gut, silk or nylon strings; played with a plectrum or with fingers, nails, metal picks. If we focus on the five-string banjo - the regular banjo - it is because it is of particular musical importance. The presence of a fifth string shorter than the others, next to the lowest string, harks back to its African origins and has led to various playing techniques which are specific to it. The five-string banjo is also the only one to end up fretless.

In the traditional music of the South of the United States, these playing techniques allow the simultaneous production of a melody, a rhythm and a drone (5th string). For certain keys - and to adapt to that of the tessitura of the voice or the violin - the player needs to have recourse to a whole series of tunings¹⁶ and possibly also the capo¹⁷.

The so-called 'classic' banjo relies on other elements¹⁸: the fifth string gives an opportunity to pluck an open string to allow the player to more easily change the left-hand position. Only one tuning is used in this style, with a single variant for the bass string¹⁹. The ideal accompaniment is no longer the violin, but the piano, from which the banjo derives much of its musical development. Compositions are often written for two, even several instruments. A family of five-string banjos was developed by the

manufacturer SS Stewart: regular banjo, banjeaurine, piccolo banjo, bass or cello banjo, to form ensembles that proliferated around 1880-1900, before the rise of the recording industry, difficult to record and for which we have no period recordings.

The first recordings in history.

It was around 1890-1920 that the public really had access to the first recorded music, mainly on cylinders marketed by Thomas Edison, as well as by other competing companies, such as the Columbia Record Co. Flat discs with horizontal engraving by Emile Berliner (1851-1929) appeared in 1894, but the cylinders were not abandoned until the 1920s. The introduction and standardisation of electrical processes in the recordings was a technology that would shake up the music industry.

Until then, the first decades had been marked by the exclusive use of acoustic and mechanical processes,

both for recording and for restoration. Reading devices could also be used for recording the backing, which means that Edison's machines also continued to be used until the 1950s as dictaphones in offices.

At the outset, the problem of duplicating the original recordings had not yet been resolved. The musicians of the first era were then forced to replay the same tunes tirelessly in



Banjo orchestras were common in American clubs and universities.
Catalogue of manufacturer S.S. Stewart, Philadelphia, 1896.

front of an alignment of acoustic horns, each time producing a small series of cylinders, which could be significantly different over a number of takes. This still experimental period of the first acoustic recordings is also marked by the diversity of components: the raw material used in the composition of the cylinders (vegetable waxes and other components), the number of grooves (tracks) per inch (TPI), the speed of rotation (RPM), the length of the cylinder, the reading time (varying from 2 to 4 minutes). For better quality and to be able amplify the sound, cylinders of larger diameter were also manufactured. The 'Concerts Records' from Edison and the 'Graphophones Grand Records' from Columbia, have a diameter of 5 inches and both belong to the family of 'brown wax cylinders' which were fragile to handle. All this required adequate reading devices and needles.

For this reason, references to the records should include the detail of the type of cylinder or even disc present. It should always be taken into account when reading that the use of an unsuitable needle or an inadequate speed can ruin the recording, already fragile from the start. Brown wax, Concert, Edison Gold Molded, Edison Blue Amberol, Columbia cylinder, Pathé cylin-

der... are labels printed on the protective packaging of the cylinders. They tell us about their specific characteristics, possibly their fragility and the limits of their sound quality²⁰.

Among these first record productions, traditional music from the United States is relatively underrepresented. Although there are some notable exceptions, the collections of the Library of Congress and the recording campaigns of commercial firms in rural America did not really begin until later, in the 1920s. The acoustic qualities of the classical banjo - flourishing music in the big cities of the North East - lent themselves admirably to this emerging technology. In the studios, Vess Ossman 1868-1923) and Fred Van Eps (1878-1960) were the great representatives. For their time, their

output was enormous.

In the 21st century, we no longer have any idea of the extent of this phenomenon: a large scale production of instruments²¹, thousands of musical scores; several hundred collections, learning methods and didactic works; tons of cylinders; many specialist journals, etc. Although this trend runs out of steam in the United States after the



Examples of cylinders:

- *Hot Corn Jubilee* by Vess Ossman. Edison Gold Moulded (brown wax cylinder)
- *Happy Days in Dixie* by Vess Ossman and *Rastus on Parade March* by Ruby Brooks Edison Concert Record, National Phonograph Co., made in the Edison Laboratory (brown wax cylinder).

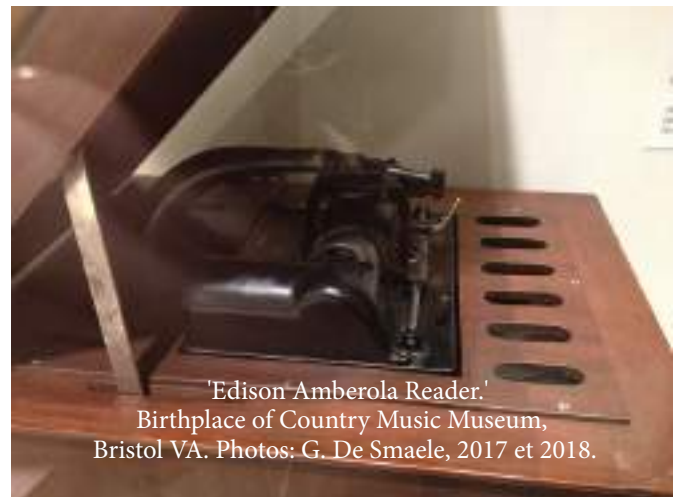
First World War, it continues in England²² with the tenor banjo, and the plectrum - a five-string banjo with the fifth string amputated and played with the plectrum - also ends up becoming the most popular.



Western Electric Microphone, Model 387,
Double Button Carbon Microphone, early 1920s.
Together with the one developed by the Bell Laboratories,
this microphone represents one of the decisive technological
advances in the history of sound recording.
Birthplace of Country Music Museum,
Bristol VA. Photo: G. De Smaele, 2018.



Different types of cylinders. E. Kaufman's collection,
Buffalo NY.



'Edison' Amberola Reader.'
Birthplace of Country Music Museum,
Bristol VA. Photos: G. De Smaele, 2017 et 2018.



*Columbia “AK” Disc Graphophone, 1903. Birthplace of Country Music Museum.
Photo: G. De Smaele, 2018.*

Effects of the “classic banjo” on traditional music from the South.

By its very nature, the five-string banjo is an instrument far removed from the world of classical music. Although the minstrel style made extensive use of musical notation, it is clear that in rural areas of the South, the playing techniques were all transmitted orally. The publication in 1948 of *How to Play the 5-String Banjo*²³ (the particularly influential Pete Seeger method), was the first of its kind and came before the great folk revival. Before this, tablature - also used for the lute - had remained practically unknown²⁴. In the 1920s, rural musicians such as

Charlie Poole (1892-1931) were exposed to the classic banjo²⁵. Ultimately, this playing technique was to be significant in the birth of the three-finger bluegrass style developed by Earl Scruggs (1924-2012) from the end of the 1930s, and which was to prevail throughout the rest of the century. Although single string style, developed by virtuoso Don Reno (1927-1984)²⁶, probably derives from flat picking (a playing technique used in folk guitar) it is reminiscent of the classic banjo. In general, from the 1960s, the bluegrass banjo would evolve in the direction of a more melodic approach, partially inspired by classic banjoists, somewhat brought to light by the activities of the American Banjo Fraternity (ABF).

The ABF was organised in 1948 by a group of former professional musicians such as Fred Van Eps, Bill Bowen (1880-1963) and Alfred Farland (1864-1954), still alive at the time, and eager to transmit their know-how. The classic banjo had been overshadowed by dance music but had partly survived in England. The Banjo-Mandolin-Guitar Magazine (BMG)²⁷, founded in London by Clifford Essex in 1903, was still available until early 2021 when it ceased publication. Pete Seeger, whose prestigious ancestors could have predisposed him to the practice of classical music²⁸ was a member of ABF in the 1950s and was probably inspired by these influences for the construction of his *Goofing-Off Suite* (Folkways Records, FA2045, 1955), taking up themes from Bach, Beethoven, Grieg and Stravinsky.

In the 1960s, Paul Cadwell (1889-1983), a lawyer trained at Harvard University, living in New Jersey, but also a keen classic banjoist who loved the old school, joined the ‘folkies’ of the ‘time. He was a guest of Pete Seeger in *Rainbow Quest*, his television show, where he shared the airtime with bluesman Lightnin’ Hopkins and singer Hedy West. He was then to be found at the Philadelphia Folk Festival, founded in 1957, surrounded by influential folk groups of the time²⁹. Cadwell, little concerned with the fact that young musicians used metal strings and fingerpicks, was welcomed by the young ‘revivalists’. He was to inspire important ‘folk’ banjoists of the new generation, such as Billy Faier (1930-2016) and bluegrass players such as Roger Sprung (b. 1930) or Bill Keith (1939-2015)³⁰. Although nowadays the classic banjo may seem somewhat outdated, even the most progressive of our contemporary banjoists, include in their training many elements specific to the playing techniques of the classic banjo. Many contemporary banjoists have experimented with this technical approach, practising scales³¹ and becom-

ing familiar with music theory, which is not the case with traditional musicians.



From the end of the 19th century to the first decade of the 20th century, banjo making had known its first golden age. Many of the best instruments were produced in Philadelphia, Boston, and also in New York or Chicago, for classic banjoists using gut strings³².

At the start of the folk revival of the 1950s there were hardly any manufacturers of five string banjos in the United States. New players used classic old instruments, as they had in the early days of Country Music in the years 1920-30. These new practitioners used metal strings, sometimes destroying the neck of a banjo, which was built for strings with less tension.

Subsequently, many luthiers made their appearance, referring to Fairbanks, Cole, Vega... as well as Dobson, S.S. Stewart, Orpheum, Bacon, who led the banjo to its final form.

Nowadays, classical banjo enthusiasts still favour these same instruments: Farland, Washburn, Van Eps, Bacon & Day... while being receptive to the old English brands which were also very numerous: Abbott, Cammeyer, Temlett, Clifford Essex, Weaver, Windsor, Dallas...

Few contemporary musicians have devoted themselves to the pursuit of the classic banjo. Disc production tends to be very limited and there are only occasional concerts. Béla Fleck, although not restricted to the classic genre, remains undoubtedly the best known of them. It’s an unprofitable exercise in terms of popularity and musical career, but which remains the most demanding and for which we will remember only a few names among our contemporaries. In England, the challenge has been picked up by William Ball, Derek Lillywhite and Chris Sands, one of Tarrant’s Bailey Jr’s last students.



Weaver Banjo belonging to Englishman Chris Sands. Circa 1900. 12" hoop,
19 frets, wooden tone ring, nylon strings, no tension tailpiece.
Photo G. De Smaele, Knuston Hall, UK, 2019.

In recent decades we have witnessed a new golden age in five-string banjo-making³³, which is reminiscent of the profusion of luthiers who worked at the end of 19th century and early twentieth³⁴. However, contemporary interpreters of the classical style generally prefer to turn to old, so-called 'original' instruments. Today a good many of them were strung with metal strings for use in old time music; but it's with nylon strings³⁵ - natural gut or synthetic - that our contemporary classic play-

ers - at least the purists - use them most often, although not always. They are most often open-backed, without a resonator; often made with a veal or goat parchment head³⁶. The major brands are those of Dobson, S.S. Stewart, Cole, Fairbanks -as well as Cole & Fairbanks-, Farland, Bacon, Bacon & Day³⁷, Vega. As the style has enjoyed immense popularity in England, it is not surprising to find English banjos on the current scene. Temlett, Turner, Weaver, Clifford Essex and also Cam-



“Vibrante Royal”, Zither banjo. A high-end model from Cammeyer. England, 1920s. You can see the exit hole of the fifth string at the fifth fret. The strings are plucked with the nails. Only the 1st, 2nd and 5th are made of metal. G. De Smaele’s collection, 2019 (from the K. Wilson’s collection, Leeds, UK).³⁸



Fretless J.A. Turner banjo, London, circa 1880-1890. Model played by some classic banjoists of the 19th century. Pete Stanley’s collection, London, 2019. Photo G. De Smaele.

England an important website making the most of the recent possibilities offered by digitalisation: **Classic Banjo Ning**⁴². (<https://classic-banjo.ning.com/>) Along with the publication of the ABF, amateur banjoists consult these two sources the most.⁴³

meyer are brands very popular with amateurs. Cammeyer, born in Brooklyn, New York, was the propagator of the zither banjo in which the end of the fifth string is not attached on the left side of the neck, but of the peghead³⁹. This string then feeds through a narrow tunnel and reappears at the level of the fretboard. We refer to this English peculiarity as a tunnelled fifth string⁴⁰.

Founded in the 1940s, the ABF continues to perpetuate the repertoire and traditions of the classic banjo. From the start⁴¹, this association has organised meetings between amateurs and published *The Five-Stringer*, a periodical which was edited by Elias and Madeleine Kaufman from 1973 to 2017. Dr. Kaufman, historian and collector, has written articles for this review that remain essential references. Joel and Aurelia Hooks are currently in charge of this publication. More recently, the Englishman Ian Holloway created in

Works and links to consult:

If necessary, copy and paste the link in the address bar of your browser.

- “The American Banjo Fraternity” - <http://banjofraternity.org>
- *B.M.G Magazine* – <https://classic-banjo.ning.com/page/bmg-magazines>
- “The British BMG Federation” - <http://www.banjomandolinguitar.org/>
- *The Cadenza* - <https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/collections/the-cadenza#/?tab=navigation>
- “Classic Banjo.ning” (Ian Holloway) - <https://classic-banjo.ning.com>
- “Classic Banjo.com” (Hal Allert’s website)
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- *The Five-Stringer* (articles by Elias Kaufman and Joel Hooks)
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- “The National Jukebox” (Library of Congress) - <https://www.loc.gov/collections/national-jukebox/?q=banjo>
- “Original Banjo Recordings” - <https://classic-banjo.ning.com/page/recordings>
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- “Vess Ossman’s Discography” - <https://www.discogs.com/artist/732768-Vess-L-Ossman?page=1>
http://honkingduck.com/discography/artist/vess_l._ossman
- “Vintage Banjo Maker”: <http://www.vintagebanjomaker.com>
- Winans Robert, Kaufman Elias. “Minstrel and Classic Banjo: American and English Connections.” *American Music*, vol. XII/1, Spring 1994, pp. 1-30.

Reissues of old recordings:

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- *Tarrant Bailey'Collection, vol. 1: Private Cyinders of England's Greatest Banjoist*. Neophone 19, 2003.
- *Banjo-istics: Finger-Stylists and Plectrum*. Americana 880, s.d. [recorded in the 1940-1950⁴⁴]
- *A Banjo Cocktail*, Neovox tapes, 5 vol., circa 1970.
- *Classic Banjo: 1925-1978 by Tarrant Bailey Jr*. The Bollington Collection. Cassette 149.
- *Classic Banjo: 1899-1923*. PSJ-CD005, s.d.
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- *Yankee Doodle Banjo: Original Recordings by Banjo Masters: 1905-25*. EFM-CD008.

Modern recordings:⁴⁶

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- Bradbury Frank. *Banjo Method*. Mel Bay MB-93238M, 2018.
[studies played by Rob MacKillop]
- Bradbury Frank. *Master of the Five-String Banjo*. Rim Records CO-1943, 1967.
- Buehling Clarke. *Banjo Gems: Solos, Duets, Trios*. Kicking Mule KM-211, 1980.
- Bullard John*. *The Classical Banjo*. Dargason Music DMCD-115, 1995.
- Camp Archibald. *A.L. Camp Plays the Banjo*. Folkways FG3525, 1965.
- Cadwell Paul. *Paul Cadwell, Shirley Keller and Charlie Wright*. Twilight Records PSC 165, 1972.
[he appears with Pete Seeger in "Rainbow Quest", episode 36, 1965]
- Datesman Kyle*. *Renaissance and Elizabethan Music for Banjo*. Mel Bay, 2009.
- Fleck Béla*. *Perpetual Motion*. Sony Classical B00005OSX6, 2001.
- Freed Geoff. *Centenial Souvenir*. Black-Tie Banjo BTB-1102, 1998.
- Keith Bill*. *Banjoistics*. Rounder 0148, 1984.
[you will find *Nola*, a piece composed by Felix Arndt initially played on the banjo by Fred Van Eps]
- Knopf Bill*. *John Philip Sousa Marches Performed on 5-String Banjo by Bill Knopf*. First Inversion Pub. FIR-CD-006, 1994.
- Labau Peter. *The Titanic String Band* -
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4XlaDB5PCH0&list=PLb6ujCgXt0SQrmdTyZ3WOJqLe2h2HxeYJ>
- Lewis Aaron. *Mozart of the Banjo*. Tiki Palour Recordings, 2020.
- Lillywhite Dereck. *Banjo Reminiscences*. Rounder 0095, 1980.

- MacKillop Rob. *Early American Parlour Banjo*. Mel Bay MB-22172M, 2016.
- Middleton Alan. *Early Minstrel Music*. Clifford Essex, 2012.
- Miles Michael. *American Bach*. Right Turn on Red Music RTOR-822, 1997⁴⁷.
- Miller Curly. *Camp Meeting: Classic Banjo & Old Fiddle Tunes*. Miller-Rose MR-0894-CD, s.d.
- Nix Michael. *Barton Cove*. "cdbaby", 2008.
[7-string banjo, like some english banjos of the 19th century]
- Parravicini Claudio*. *Classical Masterpieces for Banjo*. Mel Bay MB-30719, 2009.
- Sands Chris. *Tarrant Bailey Jr. Banjo Solos*. Mel Bay MB-98426BCDEB, 2011.
- Seeger Pete. *The Goofing-Off Suite*, Folkways FA-2045, 1955.
- Sokolow Fred*. *Ragtime Banjo Bluegrass Style*. KM-212, 1981.
- Smith Paul*. *Mysterious Barricades*. Flying Fish, FF-264, 1984.
- Twiss Tim. *Early American Banjo: Transcriptions from Buckley's Banjo Guide of 1868*. Mel Bay MB-30718M.
- Weissberg Eric. *Frederic Hand's Baroque And On The Street*. CBS-FM36687, 1981. [E. Weissberg, banjo]

In addition to Bill Keith, Béla Fleck and Tony Trischka, it should be noted that several bluegrass and old-time music personalities have recorded, sporadically, works from the classical repertoire. There are various examples on disc and on the internet: Greg Adams, Jimmy Arnold*, John McEuen*, Bill Evans, Hank Sapochnik, Jody Stecher, Stephen Wade...



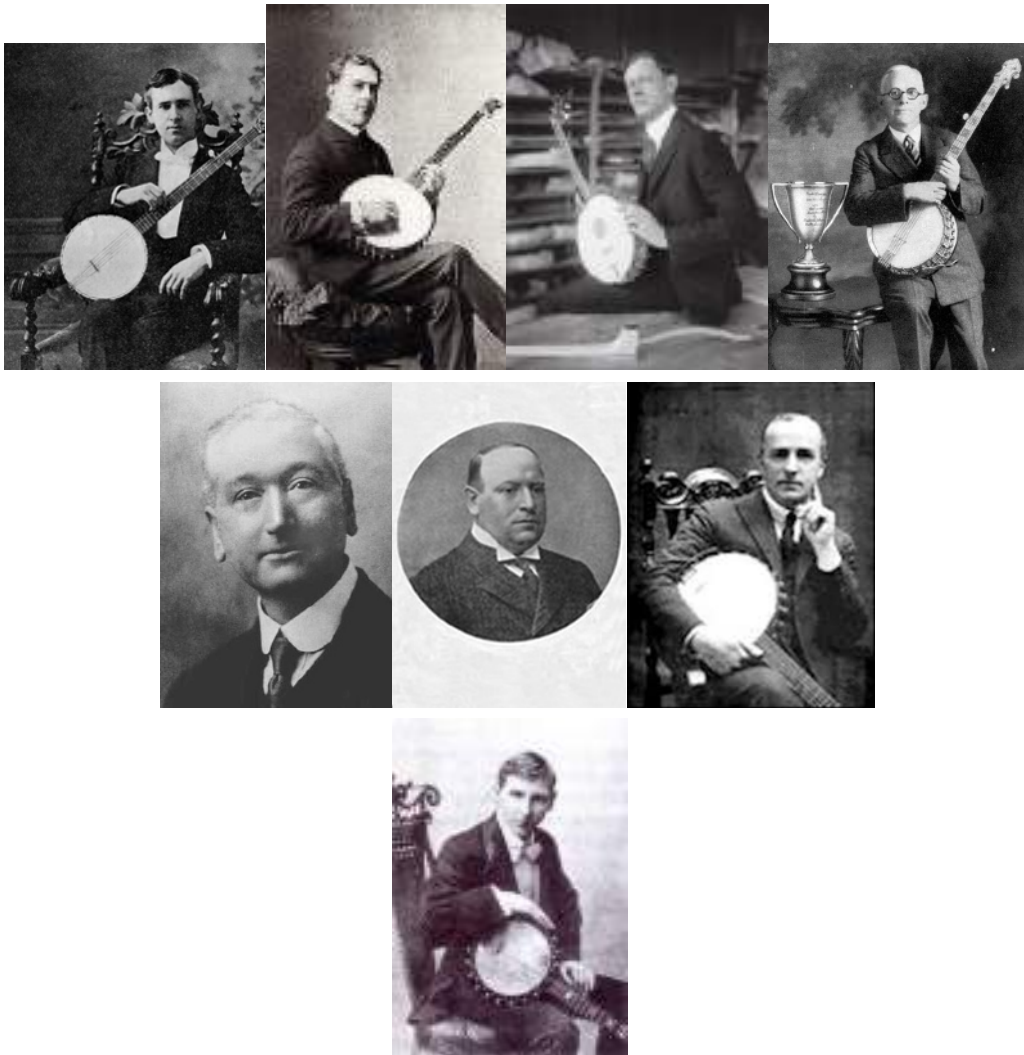
Business card of a classic banjoist and his fretless banjo.



The 'flush fret' version of the Van Eps 'Recording' banjo fingerboard. Although it has frets, it is reminiscent of the fretless. Photo G. De Smaele. ABF Rally, October 2017.



THE RECORDINGS



Some of the most illustrious members of the “Gotha” of classic banjo:
Alfred Farland – Vess Ossman – Fred Van Eps – Fred Bacon
Alfred Cammeyer – Joe Morley – Emile Grimshaw
Olly Oakley

The recordings in this box come largely from the Wayne Adams’ collection⁴⁸, a loyal member of the American Banjo Fraternity rallies, a network through which he had broadcasted his tapes.



First ABF Rally, October 2, 1949, New Rochelle, NY.

Top: Al Bluhm, Fred Van Eps, George Collins, Alex Magee, John Copeland, Burt Gedney,
Paul Cadwell, William Bowen;

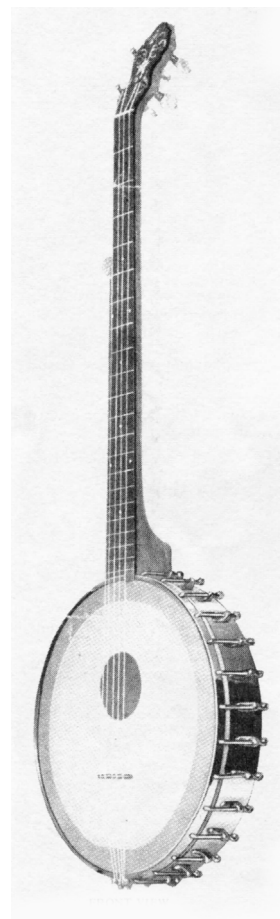
Seated: Mason Lilly, Victor Gay, Charlotte Robillard, Harry Denton, Alfred Farland, Mrs. Seufert, Charlie Gay;
Front: Thad La Viness.

In the *ABF's 50th Anniversary Calendar* (October 1998).

CD 1. VESS OSSMAN.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vess_Ossman

1. *Blaze Away* (Ossman-Farmer) / Abe Holzmamm / Victor-Monarch, 1900: 3'15
2. *A Bunch of Rags* / arr. Vess Ossman / Victor, 1910: 2'20
3. *California Dance* / George Gregory / Zonophone, 1903: 1'40
4. *Colored Major* / S.R. Henry / Harmony, 1908: 2'37
5. *Coon Band Contest* / Arthur Pryor / Lakeside, 1901: 2'30
6. *El Capitan March* / John Philip Sousa / Columbia, 1902: 2'26
7. *Florida Rag* / Geo L. Lowry / Columbia, 1908: 2'29
8. *Fun in a Barber Shop* / Jense M. Winne / Victor, 1908: 2'51
9. *Invincible Eagle March* / John Philip Sousa / Standard, 1909: 2'59
10. *Maple Leaf Rag* / Scott Joplin / Standard, 1908: 2'42
11. *A Medley of Old Timers* / arr. Vess Ossman / Victor-Monarch, 1900: 2'27
12. *The Moose March* / Flath / Harmony, 1909: 2'54
13. *The Mosquito Parade* / Howard Whitney / Columbia, 1901: 2'31
14. *Motor March* / George Rosey / Harmony, 1906: 3'01
15. *Peaceful Henry* / E. Harry Kelly / Columbia, 1903: 2'38
16. *Persian Lamb Rag* / Percy Wenrich / Victor, 1911: 2'21
17. *Peter Piper* / S.R. Henry / Victor 4541, 1906: 2'31
18. *Rusty Rag Medley* / arr. Vess Ossman / Columbia, 1901: 2'35
19. *Silver Heels* / Neil Moret / Berliner, 1904: 2'45
20. *Saint Louis Tickle* / Seymore / Berliner, 1908: 3'03
21. *Sunflower Dance* / Vess Ossman / Imperial, 1906: 2'02
22. *Turkey in the Straw Medley* / arr. Vess Ossman / Berliner, 1909: 2'21
23. *Whoa Bill* / Harry Von Tilzer / Columbia, 1902: 2'16
24. *William Tell Overture* / Rossini / Columbia, 1897: 2'44
25. *Yankee Doodle* / arr. Levy / Victor-Monarch, 1900: 2'23

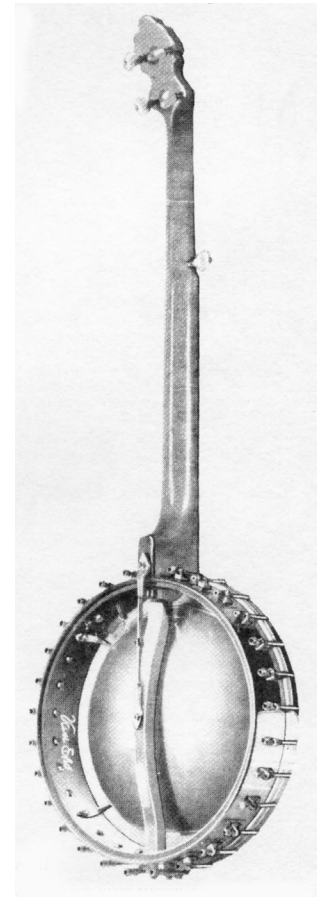


Banjo Fred Van Eps.

CD 2. FRED VAN EPS.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fred_Van_Eps

1. *Bolero* / Fred Van Eps / Fred Van Eps Lab., 1952: 2'18
2. *Chinese Picnic & Oriental Dance* / Herbert / Edison, 1923: 3'04
3. *Cocoanut Dance* / Andrew Hermann / Edison, 1923: 3'08
4. *Cupid's Arrow* / Paul Eno / Emerson, 1917: 2'16
5. *Daly's Reel Rag* (Fred Van Eps Trio) / Daly / Columbia, 1916: 2'57
6. *Dixie Medley* / arr. Fred Van Eps / Brunswick, 1930: 2'25
7. *Frolic of the Coons* / Frank Gurney / Berliner 1915: 2'31
8. *Grace and Beauty* / James Scott / Edison, 1924: 3'37"
9. *I'm Always Chasing Rainbows* / Carroll / Berliner, 1918: 2'48
10. *Infanta's March* / George Gregory / Edison, 1913: 4'22
11. *Maurice Tango* / Hein / Berliner 1912: 2'46
12. *The New Gaiety* / Durandean / Fred Van Eps Lab., 1952: 3'30
13. *My Sumurun Girl* / non identifié / Edison, 1912: 4'16
14. *Nola* / Felix Arndt / Fred Van Eps Lab., 1952: 2'23
15. *Pearl of the Harem* / Frantzen / Berliner 1911: 2'43
16. *Persiflage* / Francis / Columbia, 1925: 3'00
17. *Raggin' the Scale* / Claypoole / Berliner, 1916: 2'45
18. *A Ragtime Episode* / Paul Eno / Victor, 1911: 2'49
19. *Ragtime Oriole* / James Scott / Edison 1924: 3'22
20. *Red Pepper Rag* / Lodge / Victor, 1911: 2'15
21. *Rondo Caprice* / Silverberg / Fred Van Eps Lab., 1952: 2'22
22. *Sing Ling Ting* / Colb / Emerson, 1918: 2'37
23. *Smiler Rag* / Percy Wenrich / Berliner, 1914: 3'05
24. *Tambourines and Oranges* / Klickmann / Fred Van Eps Lab., 1952: 2'50
25. *Teasing the Cat* / Johnson / Victor, 1916: 3'02
26. *Whipped Cream* / Percy Wenrich / Diamond, 1913: 3'01"
27. *The White Wash Man* / Schwartz / Columbia, 1912: 2'56"



Banjo Fred Van Eps.

CD 3. OTHERS.

1. Bacon Fred / *Massa's in the Cold Cold Ground* / Stephen Foster / Edison, 1917: 3'32
2. Bacon Fred / *Medley of Southern Airs* (*My old Kentucky home* / *Dixie* / *Old folks at home*) / Stephen Foster / Edison, 1920: 3'05
3. Bowen Bill / *Old Stone House* / Bill Bowen / recorded at a New Rochelle concert, c. 1950 (Americana), 2'26
4. Bowen Bill / *Valse de Concert* / 3'30
5. Bradbury Frank / *Dance of the Hours* / Amilcare Poncielli, arr. F. Bradbury / c. 1950 (Americana): 4'05
6. Bradbury Frank / *Donkey Laugh* / Joe Morley / c. 1950 (Americana): 2'22
7. Brown H.C. / *Climbing Up the Golden Stairs* / Heiser / Columbia, 1917: 2'51
8. Cammeyer Alfred / *Chinese Patrol* / Jumbo, 1912: 2'58
9. Earle Bert / *The Bacchanal Rag* / Louis Hirsch / Pathé 80: 2'34
10. Farland Alfred / *Carnival of Venice* / Julius Benedict / Edison, 1917: 4'01
11. Hunter Parke / *Dixie Girl* / J.B. Lampe / Victor-Monarch, 1903: 2'35
12. Jones E. / *Pompadour* / Joe Morley / Columbia, c. 1925 (Neovox): 2'47
13. Jones E. / *Nigger Town* / Joe Morley / Columbia, c. 1925 (Neovox): 2'38
14. Kirby Alfred / *Heather Bloom* / Alfred Kirby / (Neovox): 2'35
15. Magee Alexander / *Jolly Darkies* / c. 1950 (Americana): 4'19
16. Morley Joe / *Japanese Patrol* / Joe Morley / Tarrant Bailey Snr. Coll, 1918 (Neophone): 2'23
17. Oakley Olly / *Bolero* / Alfred Cammeyer / G & T, 1907: 3'07
18. Oakley Olly / *A Banjo Oddity* / Joe Morley / (Neovox): 3'07
19. Oakley Olly / *The Palladium March* / Joe Morley / Pathé, 1923: 2'30
20. Pepper Will / *Dinky's Patrol* / Alf. W. Newton / Columbia, 1904: 3'01
21. Pidoux John / *A Plantation Episode* / Emile Grimshaw / Pathé, 1919: 2'52
22. Shawnee Ted / *Black and White Rag* / (Americana): 2'22
23. Spaulding Shirley / *A Footlight Favorite* / Emile Grimshaw / , 1922: 3'29
24. Turner Sidney / *Adante et Waltz* / Alfred Cammeyer / Pathé 80, 1913: 2'19
25. Turner Sidney, Essex Clifford / *A Bunch Of Rags* / Vess Ossman / Tarrant Bailey Snr. Coll., 1914 (Neovox): 2'22



LP by Fred Van Eps.



Footnotes

1. Reginald W. Bacon. *Chauney Richmond and the 'Old Buckbee'*. Variety Arts Press, 2018.
2. Bill Bowen, Frank Bradbury, Joe Morley, Alfred Cammeyer, Olly Oakley, Emile Grimshaw... This list could be extended by hundreds of names of authors and great interpreters listed in: Norman Howard, *The Banjo and its Players*, 1959; Lowell H. Schreyer, *The Banjo Entertainers*, 2006; Uli Heier and Reiner Lotz, *Banjo on Records: A bio-Discography*, 1993. See also, for example: Woodrow and Acker's *Standard Directory of Banjo, Guitar and Mandolin Artists, Teachers and Composers of the United States and Canada*, Newton IO: Frank M. Woodrow and Daniel Acker, 2 vol., 1895 and 1896.
Undoubtedly, this fashion from another time became anecdotal. Contemporary followers of this style are few and far between. Despite the excellence of their productions they are little known to the general public. For example, they include: Clarke Buehling, Geoff Freed, Chris Sands, Robert MacKillop and more recently Greg Adams, as well as Claudio Parravicini and Aaron Jonah Lewis or Jake Shepp. Béla Fleck has distinguished himself in genres as diverse as bluegrass and jazz, recording with the Flecktones, Chick Corea and other big names of the international music scene. His fabulous interpretations of classical pieces, published by Sony Music (Perpetual Motion, Sony Classical, 1998) make him probably one of the most remarkable players of the classical banjo. If this disc has strengthened Fleck's image and demonstrated his great technical ability, it cannot be said that it was the basis of the reputation of this former student of the New York High School of Music and Art. We also know that Eric Weissberg, the performer of the soundtrack to the film *Deliverance* went to study at the Juilliard School.
Other well-known personalities who rubbed shoulders with the classic banjo on modern instruments, not in accordance with the recommendations of the American Banjo Fraternity (see below): Tony Trischka, Paul Smith, Fred Sokolow, Bill Knopf, Fred Geiger, Larry McNeely, Michael Miles... Timothy Mainland, meanwhile, is regarded as a contemporary classical composer (interpreted by G. Freed).
3. See: Henri Bouasse. *Acoustique: cordes et membranes. Instruments de musique à cordes et à membranes*. Paris: Delagrave, 1926 [a chapter of this book addresses the five-string banjo in France]; Leonardy Salvatore. *Méthode théorique et pratique pour banjo ou zither-banjo à cinq cordes*. Paris: S. Léonardy, 3^e ed., 1914. Numerous works of art by Jules Chérêt, Toulouse Lautrec, Pierre Bonnard and other artists also attest to the banjo's presence in France at the turn of the 20th century.
4. It should be noted that in the English-speaking world, we speak of *classic style* and not of *classical style*, which would imply a strictly classical repertoire.
5. Phil Gura, James Bollman. *America's Instrument: The Banjo in the Nineteenth Century*, 1999.
6. Bob Winans et al. *Banjo Roots and Branches*. University of Illinois Press, 2018.
7. Lonn Taylor, Ingrid Maar. *The American Cowboy*. Washington DC, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress, 1984, 228 p. [exhibition catalogue]
8. Bill C. Malone. *Southern Music, American Music*. Lexington KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 1979, 203 p.
9. Pete Seeger: *The Smithsonian-Folkways Collection*, Smithsonian-Folkways, 2019; Etienne Bours, Pete Seeger: un siècle en chansons. Au bord de l'eau, 2010, 212 p.
10. You will find there must-hear banjoists such as Pete Steele, Frank Proffitt, Roscoe Holcomb, Dock Boggs, Clarence Ashley, et Wade Ward, who bring us back to all sorts of social realities.
11. Peter Goldsmith. *Making People's Music: Moe Asch and Folkways Records*. Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1998, 468 p.
12. A framed drum by Tebaldo Monzani (London, late 18th century) is on display at the City of Music Museum in Paris (inv. E.995.5.1). It corresponds exactly to the initial system used by Boucher: a metal circle held by hooks and brackets.
13. Many of these techniques are clearly illustrated in two of Mike Seeger's publications: *Southern Banjo Sounds* (Smithsonian/Folkways, CD/1998) and *Southern Banjo Styles* (Homespun Tapes, VHS/2001, DVD/2006).

14. See note 24. During a whole century of publishing, the tablature, although well known for a long time for other stringed instruments, will remain marginal, pointing the finger to the non-reading musician, considering its use as a lesser evil!
15. After the American Civil War, in old-time music, many musicians played just the fiddle and the banjo. It was not until the 1900s that other string instruments were added to the ensemble: guitar, mandolin, autoharp, harmonica, double bass.
16. Anita Kermode. *Banjo tunings*: <http://zeppmusic.com/banjo/aktuning.htm>
17. Guitar and banjo manufacturer James Ashborn filed his first patent in 1850.
18. In *Story of the Banjo* (an unpublished book, later serialised in the B.M.G. magazine), A.P. Sharpe listed more than 280 titles of methods published in the United States and England between 1850 and 1963. The best known are those of S.S. Stewart, A.A. Farland, Fred Bacon, Fred Van Eps Emile Grimshaw, Joe Morley, Frank Bradbury... and more recently that of Alan Middleton. See in *A Five-String Banjo Sourcebook* (G. De Smaele, 2019).
19. This tuning has evolved over time but always retaining the same intervals between the different strings. The current gCGBD (*C notation*) and gDGBD (high bass) come from older tunings: 1 tone and half (*A notation*), and two and a half tones lower (*G notation*), or even older three and a half tones lower (*F notation*), the latter belonging to the mid-19th century style minstrel: see Elias Kaufman, *Banjo Methods in The 5-Stringer*. 174, Winter-Spring, 1993-1993 and subsequent numbers. Regarding tunings, see also: Rob MacKillop, *Early American Classics for Banjo*, Mel Bay, 2016, pp. 3-12.
20. The University of Santa Barbara has set up an entire programme to preserve and digitise this heritage: <http://cylinders.library.ucsb.edu> - See also the *Library of Congress* catalogues, as well as the site of: the *Antique Phonograph Society*: <https://www.antiquephono.org>; *The City of London Phonograph and Gramophone Society*: <https://www.clpgs.org.uk> etc.
21. See Mike Holmes' site, *Banjo Makers*: <http://www.mugwumps.com>; and 'Vintage banjo Maker': <http://www.vintagebanjomaker.com>
22. Elias Kaufman, Robert Winans. "Minstrel and Classic Banjo: American and English Connections." *American Music*, vol. XII/1, Spring 1994, pp. 1-30; and in *Banjoist Broadsheet*, 2008-2009 (8 parts).
23. Printed to an increasing number of copies from 1948 until today.
24. In the entire corpus of the classical banjo the authors mostly ignore the tablature notation, with a few exceptions: John Bogan (1873), Geo C. Dobson (1874), Frank Converse (1879), S.S. Stewart (1880), Brooks & Denton (New York, 1890)...
25. See the two versions of *Don't Let Your Deal Go Down*, one of which was inspired by the play of Fred Van Eps (De Smaele, Frémeaux & Associés, 2008).
26. Don Wayne Reno. *Bluegrass Banjo Don Reno Style*, Homespun Tapes.
27. The "BMG movement", supported by *Cadenza* magazine, edited by Peter Partee (1864-1915) was born in the United States at the end of the 19th century (American Guild of banjoists, mandolinists and guitarists) and remains active in England. The *British BMG Federation* still has many followers.
28. His parents: musicologist Charles Seeger (1886-1979) and violinist Constance Seeger (1896-1975); also, his mother-in-law, composer Ruth Crawford Seeger (1901-1953).
29. "Paul Cadwell." In *Pickin'*, November 1978; Pete Seeger, *Rainbow Quest*, Episode 36, 1966 or 1967 <https://archive.org/details/RainbowQuest36>
30. Paul Cadwell, Roger Sprung, Bill Keith were personalities at the Philadelphia Annual Festival. In passing, Bill Keith was to record brilliantly, the famous *Nola*, a bravura piece Fred Van Eps, a composition by Felix Arndt, re-recorded in 1952...
31. Peter Pardee. *Scales and Arpeggios for Five-String Banjo*. Sugar Pine CA: Harbinger Publications, 1982, 148p.
32. See infra.
33. See: Jones-Bamman, *Building New Banjos for an Old-Time World*. University of Illinois Press, 2017 288p.; and les documentary films by Craig Evans: *Conversations with North American Banjo Builders*, 2011-2013.
34. See note 17.

35. The bass, or 4th string, is generally metal-wound.
36. The specific assembly for the classical style is not limited to the use of non-metallic strings. One chooses a bridge suitable for these strings, a tailpiece often without tension, an action (height of the strings above the neck) that suits these strings. Each musician has personal preferences, adapted to the instrument played.
37. We are talking here about the five-string models of Bacon & Day, whose 4-string versions are a lot more common.
38. Instrument acquired in December 2021 by the Friends of the Royal Museums of Art and History, Brussels. Placed on permanent deposit at the MiM in 2022: inv. 2021.0108.004 (see the 'Carmentis' website):
<https://www.carmentis.be/eMP/eMuseumPlus?service=ExternalInterface&module=collection&moduleFunction=highlight&lang=en>
39. He was nicknamed the "Banjo Snob". For example, look for recordings by Alfred Cammeyer and Olly Oakley, as well as more recent ones by Derek Lillywhite, Geoff Freed and Rob MacKillop.
40. See the site *British Banjo Makers*: <https://www.tzorafolk.com/genealogy/history/articles/British%20Banjo%20Makers%20Part%201.htm>.
41. It traces Pete Seeger's affiliation in issue 10 of May 1950, a few years before the release of *The Goofing-Off Suite* at Folkways in 1955 (FA-2045).
42. <https://classic-banjo.ning.com/page/recordings>
43. In the past, many other important periodicals have existed and are still used by researchers. *S.S. Stewart's Banjo and Guitar Journal*, *The Cadenza* and *B.M.G Magazine*. The latter was founded in 1903 and continued to be published until 1976, and finally reappeared after an interruption of nearly 30 years.
44. *The Five Stringer*, # 112, 1973; *B.M.G.*, August 1973, p. 26
45. After revamping his playing technique, and wanting to take advantage of the latest technological advances, Fred Van Eps re-recorded part of his repertoire in the 1950s. As a knowledgeable technician, Van Eps had even set up his recording studio. These three 33 rpm, self-produced, represent the pinnacle of his art.
46. Below are only musicians who have released at least one album dedicated to the classical style. This list is not exhaustive. The discs are cited only as an example and we have selected only one banjoist, which is sometimes well below their production. They can often be found and heard on the internet. Names marked with an **asterisk** indicate those who have used a bluegrass banjo or metal strings; remember that this is not in line with the recommendations of the ABF. Mel Bay's publications are accompanied by notes and a collection of scores, and often tablatures. The same goes for Bill Knopf, Alan Middleton and Fred Sokolow.
47. An atypical recording in more than one respect, because Michael Miles uses a down-picking technique and plays here, against all expectations, an open back Stelling banjo, especially commissioned, and strung with nylon strings.
48. This canadian collector has passed away. See: "Louis Wayne Adams" in *The Five-Stringer*, # 209, 2013. He had entrusted me with a copy on 13 audio cassettes of his entire collection of 177 titles. For each of them he had listed on these cassettes only the name of the publisher and the year of publication. In 2017, even with the help of Mr. Kaufman, publisher of *5-Stringer*, it was not possible to physically locate the Wayne Adams Collection. Ultimately, errors may have slipped into the references provided by the collector. They are also incomplete. In the absence of the originals, we were also able to use the book by Uli Heier and Lotz Reiner (Greenwood Press, 1993), the University of Santa Barbara, the Library of Congress website, or compare these references to those already noted in other compilations, particularly as published on Ian Holloway's website ([classic-banjo.ning](https://classic-banjo.ning.com)). We found that the majority of titles have been recorded and edited several times. This set was digitised and restored by Jean Leroy in 2003. A full copy of these tapes was entrusted in 2018 to the library at the Museum of Musical Instruments in Brussels and in 2020 at the University of Santa Barbara. Wayne Adams also had recent reissues of the "old classic banjo" and among other things, a copy of Fred Van Eps' 33 rpm, released in 1952 under the Van Eps Lab label. Lucas Ross has filed a similar collection, available at the American Banjo Museum in Oklahoma City, OK.

AUDIO VISUAL EDITIONS BY GÉRARD DE SMAELE



BANJO 1901-1956

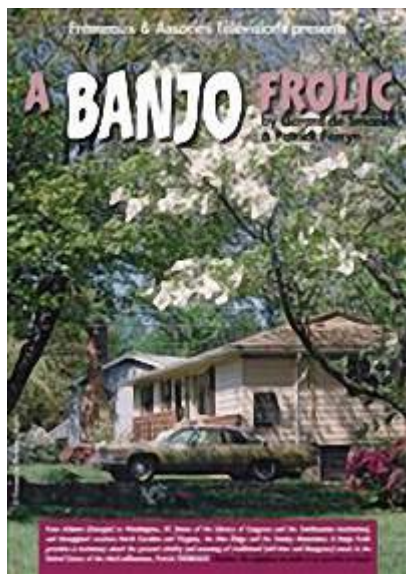
AN AMERICAN FIVE-STRING BANJO HISTORY

FA 5179 - 2 CD BOX SET

The banjo has been associated with the collective imagination of the North American world for over a century. Gérard De Smaele, a prominent European specialist of the instrument, presents its history here in 40 tracks. The adventure of the United States unfolds through these titles, which also constitute exceptional anthropological material, highlighted by a 36-page booklet. From its African or European origins to the beginning of the “folk

revival” of the 1950s, the banjo, which occupies a special place in the music of the United States, constitutes a decisive key to understanding the American culture and identity.

Patrick FRÉMEAUX



A BANJO FROLIC

FA 4020 - DVD

DOCUMENTARY FILM IN ENGLISH - NTSC

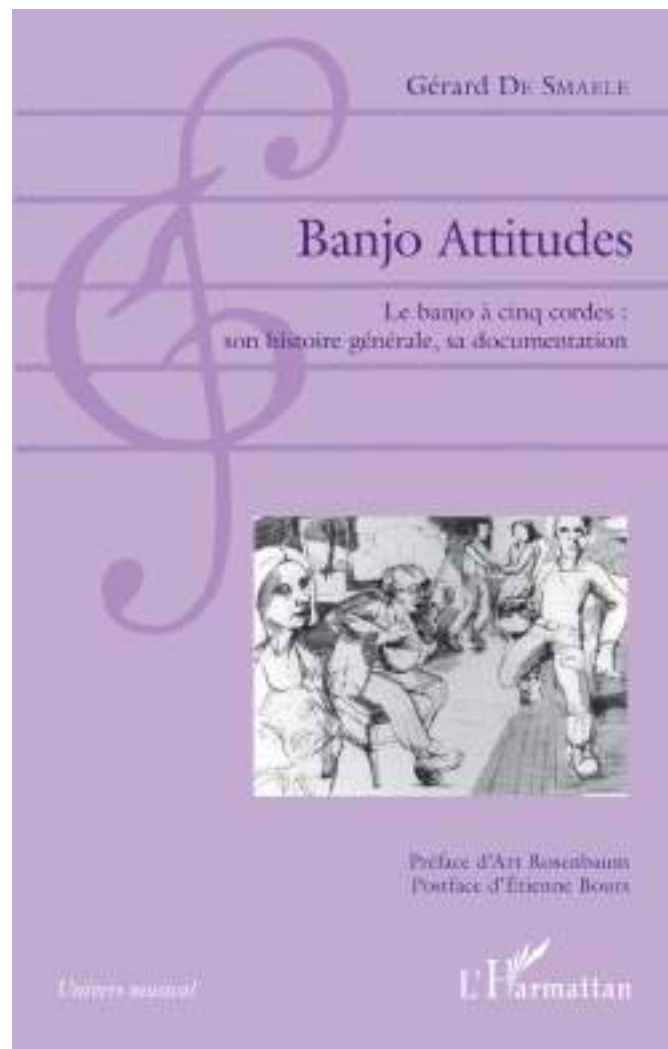
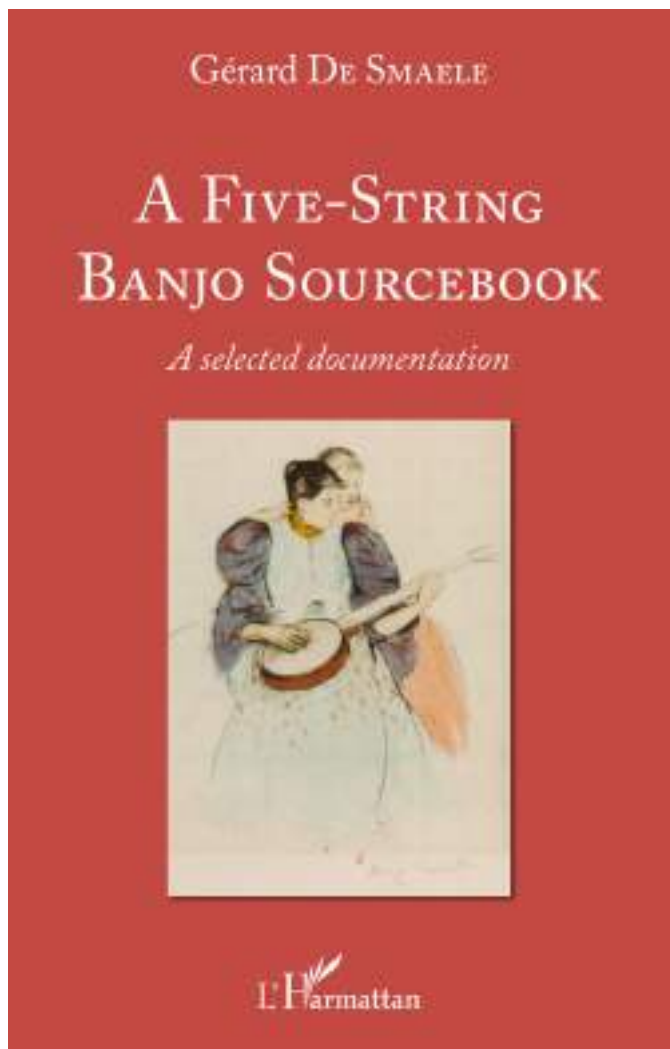
BY GÉRARD DE SMAELE & PATRICK FERRYIN

“In 2003, in order to accompany an exhibition on the banjo at the Museum of Musical Instruments in Brussels, the American Embassy financed a trip by Belgian banjoist Gérard De Smaele from Atlanta to Washington via the Appalachian Mountains and the Blue Ridge and Smoky Mountains, the birthplace of old-time music and bluegrass. He brought back this very original documentary in the form of a road movie that meets an impressive number of musicians as well as picturesque old timers, with no less than three representatives of the Seeger family, the monumental Pete, his half-sister Peggy and his half-brother Mike, who passed away in 2009. Gérard De Smaele also interviewed numerous instrument makers who tell

the story of the instrument of African origin, “reconstituted” by the first slaves and then adopted by the white population of Appalachia. Note: this documentary was shot before the recent phenomenon of the banjo’s re-appropriation by a few African-American musicians such as The Carolina Chocolate Drops or bluesman Otis Taylor (whose Recapturing the Banjo is highly recommended)”.

Jean-Pierre BRUNEAU, MONDOMIX

PUBLICATIONS BY GÉRARD DE SMAELE



US order:

<https://www.elderly.com/search?q=de+smaele&type=product>



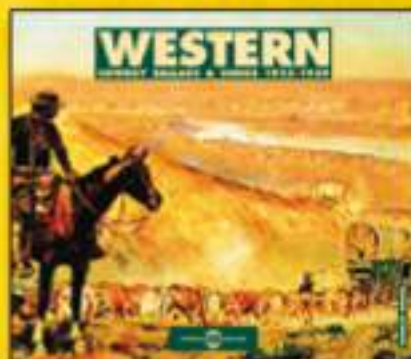
FA 047



FA 8567



FA 579



FA 034



FA 5179



FA 019



FA 585



FA 436



FA 472