

# Folk Song: Arkansas Traveler

"The Arkansas Traveler" is an old American folk song dating back to the 1800s. Its origins and author are unknown- some credit it to Sandford C. Faulkner, who began performing a version around 1850, but many believe he may have simply performed his version of a song he had heard sung by others. Regardless of where it came from, the tune has been well-loved by the American people for many years. Different versions of it have been performed by various singers and fiddlers, and it has been referenced and used in many forms of media, from *The Little House on the Prairie* to *Looney Tunes*!

The lyrics tell the humorous story of a traveler running into an old man happily playing his fiddle despite his cabin filling up with rain. When he advises the man to patch up his roof, the old man scoffs that he can't because it's raining. When the traveler instead recommends that he patch it up when it's sunny, the man exclaims "My cabin never leaks when it doesn't rain."

Arkansas made it their official state song from 1949-1963, and in 1987, it was named a historic state song. There is even an award in Arkansas called "The Arkansas Traveler!" Every year it is presented to a person who has made outstanding contributions to Arkansas and its people. The song remains popular in American culture today, passed on through the years as a lively tune that honors our history. With its amusing lyrics and catchy tune, it's no wonder that the song has been loved by audiences of all ages throughout many generations!

# Folk Song: Arkansas Traveler Lyrics

Once upon a time in Arkansas  
An old man sat at his little cabin door  
And he fiddled at a tune that he liked to hear  
A jolly old tune that he played by ear  
It was raining hard but the fiddler didn't care  
He sawed away at the popular air  
And his roof leaked like a waterfall  
But it didn't seem to bother the man at all.

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

The traveler replied, "That's all quite true,  
But this, I think, is the thing to do;  
Get busy on a day that is fair and bright,  
Then patch the old roof till it's good and tight."  
But the old man kept on a-playing at his reel,  
And tapped the ground with his leathery heel.  
"Get along," said he, "for you give me a pain;  
My cabin never leaks when it doesn't rain."

# Arkansas Traveler 1

Bluegrass

D G D A

4 D G D

7 D G 1. A D 2. A D

10 D G D A D A

13 D A D G D A

16 D G 1. A D 2. A D