

# **GREAT BIG YAM POTATOES OLD-TIME GATHERING & FIDDLE CONTEST**

**SAT., MAY 14th, 2016 at HISTORIC JEFFERSON COLLEGE  
16 Old North St., Washington, MS 39190**

[www.bigyampotatoes.com](http://www.bigyampotatoes.com)

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## FIDDLE CONTEST RULES & REGULATIONS

PLEASE READ CAREFULLY! FAILURE TO DO SO MAY RESULT IN DISQUALIFICATION.

### A. GENERAL REGULATIONS

#### Registration Rules

1. There is a five dollar registration fee for all contestants.
2. Lots will be drawn at the registration table to determine the contestant playing order. No exceptions will be made.
3. Registration closes at the time the first number for each category is called.
4. No contestants will be permitted to register after his or her category has started.

#### Contest Rules

1. No sheet music allowed.
2. No medleys/song sets will be played.
3. No electrical instruments or drums allowed.
4. No more than two accompanists allowed.
5. Tunes must be in the Old-Time style. *Texas, bluegrass & classical styles will not be judged.*
6. No licensed music. All music played should be original or part of the public domain.
7. Contestants must be present at the time their number is called to compete. Late arrivals or no-shows will be eliminated.
8. Competition tune must be at least 1 ½ minutes long, but no longer than 4 minutes.
9. For all age divisions, in the event of a tie, a fiddle-off will be held consisting of a **Dance Tune** (*see Fiddle Tune Specifications*). A new tune must be played.
10. For **Dance Tune** selections, crooked tunes (uneven measures) are not allowed and will result in disqualification (*see Fiddle Tune Specifications*).
11. Any protest must be submitted in writing to the contest chairman and signed by no less than three contestants of the contest involved, within three hours of the protest occurrence.
12. The judge's decisions will be final.
13. Judges may not compete.

### B. FIDDLE CONTEST CATEGORIES

1. **Pee-Wee Division (ages 1 - 11)** – Contestants in the Pee-wee Division will play one **Tune of Choice** (*see Fiddle Tune Specifications*).
2. **Junior Division (ages 12 - 17)** – Contestants in the Junior Division will play two tunes, a **Dance Tune** and a **Waltz** (*see Fiddle Tune Specifications*).

3. **Senior Division (ages 18 & over)** – The Senior Division contest rules have changed for 2015. This year's contest will consist of two rounds: In the first round, contestants will play a **Dance Tune**, and a **Waltz** (see *Fiddle Tune Specifications*). Contestants may choose which to play first. For the second round, a **Tune of Choice** will be played (see *Fiddle Tune Specifications*). Contestants must play in both rounds to be judged. Scores will be combined from the First and Second Rounds. Cash prizes will be awarded to the top three Senior fiddlers as decided by the judges.

## C. FIDDLE TUNE SPECIFICATIONS

### Dance Tune

1. Fiddle must be tuned to G-D-A-E (standard tuning).
2. Tunes must have even measures (16 to 32 bars).
3. Tune must be in 4/4 time.
4. Crooked tunes (uneven measures) not allowed and will result in disqualification.

### Waltz

1. Fiddle must be tuned to G-D-A-E (standard tuning).
2. Tunes must have even measures (16 to 32 bars).
3. Tune must be in 3/4 time.
4. Crooked tunes (uneven measures) not allowed and will result in disqualification.

### Tune of Choice

1. Tunes of Choice may include: Waltz, Reel, Crooked Tune, Cross Tune, Hornpipe, Jig, Blues, Strathspey, Swing, Breakdown, Air (slow piece) or March.

## D. JUDGE'S CRITERIA

1. Rhythm and Timing (Dragging, rushing, jerking and unevenness). 25 pts.
2. Expression (Danceability, feeling, swing, interpretation). 25 pts.
3. Execution (Tone, command, intonation and bowing). 25 pts.
4. Authentic Style (Difficulty, lack of style, inappropriate licks, inappropriate style). 25 pts.

## E. THINGS TO CONSIDER

1. Do not play too close or too far from the microphone.
2. Make sure your instrument is tuned before your performance. (Points will be deducted for excessive tuning.)

Fiddle contest registration is from 8:00 a.m. until 10:00 a.m., May 14th in the Main Building West Wing of Historic Jefferson College. If you have any questions about the fiddle contest, you can reach Robert Gray at [wurzburg58@gmail.com](mailto:wurzburg58@gmail.com), or call him at 601-506-6561.

# GREAT BIG YAM POTATOES OLD-TIME GATHERING & FIDDLE CONTEST

## REGISTRATION FORM

*Registration fee is five dollars.*

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Category (choose one only):

Pee Wee (ages 1-11)      Tune of Choice\* \_\_\_\_\_

Junior (ages 12-17)      Dance Tune \_\_\_\_\_  
Waltz \_\_\_\_\_

Senior (ages 18 & up)      Dance Tune \_\_\_\_\_  
Waltz \_\_\_\_\_  
Tune of Choice\* \_\_\_\_\_

\* For Tune of Choice, list fiddle tuning if non-standard (G-D-A-E).

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## INFORMATION FOR FIRST-TIME FIDDLE CONTEST ENTRANTS

We invite and encourage fiddlers of all backgrounds, ages and skill levels to enter the fiddle contest -- especially young players. If you've never played in a fiddle contest before or are new to Old-Time music, you'll find the contest atmosphere relaxed, and the audience very appreciative and supportive.

As stated in the rules, the Big Yam contest focuses solely on "Old-Time" music, the fiddle-based acoustic music played at dances and on porches in the southern U.S. from the earliest days of the Republic until the advent of radio and popular music in the 1920's and 1930's.

Most Old-Time tunes are dances (breakdowns) or waltzes composed in two parts, A and B. Each part is usually played twice, then the sequence is repeated (AA, BB, AA, BB...). In an Old-Time fiddle contest, the sequence is played three to four times through with the fiddler varying his or her performance of the tune each time by adding small improvisations. Generally, Old-Time tunes are in the keys of G, A, A minor, C or D. For some examples of Old-Time contest tunes go to [page six](#) of this handbook.

In preparing for the contest, please read the contest rules thoroughly. All age levels should have an extra tune ready for performance in the event of a tie. If you have any questions or need more information email Robert Gray, contest chairman, at [wurzburg58@gmail.com](mailto:wurzburg58@gmail.com) or call him at 601-984-1210 or 601-506-6561.

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

**What is Great Big Yam Potatoes Old-Time Gathering and Fiddle Contest?** A celebration of Old-Time Music organized by the Mississippi Fiddlers' Association. In it's ninth year, the event has steadily grown in popularity. Through the fiddle contest and live performances, we hope to expose more people to Old-Time music and the fun of playing it. Also, we want to insure that this music, particularly Mississippi's unique fiddle and string band tradition, lives on in a new generation of musicians.

**Why the funny (and long) name?** In 1939, the WPA assigned Herbert Halpert to travel to Mississippi in order to make field recordings of folk songs for the Library of Congress. During his recording trip, Halpert captured performances by several fiddlers, in some cases preserving songs that would otherwise have been lost to time. A selection of these recordings was eventually released by the Mississippi Department of Archives and History as an LP in 1985. That album was named "Great Big Yam Potatoes," after one of the featured tunes. The gathering and fiddle contest is named after that influential album which is now out of print.

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (CONT'D.)

**What time does the fiddle contest start?** Registration begins at 9:00 a.m., Saturday, May 14th in the West Wing of Historic Jefferson College. You can bring the registration form included in this handbook or fill one out then. The Pee Wee Contest starts at 10 a.m. followed by the Juniors. The Seniors compete at 1 p.m. after a lunch break. Cash awards will be presented to the top three winners in each age group as soon as possible after the judges' results are tallied.

**Where is Historic Jefferson College?** **Historic Jefferson College**, the site of the Great Big Yam Potatoes Fiddle Contest, is located in **Washington, MS** about 6.5 miles northeast of Natchez on Highway 61.

**What else is there to do at Big Yam?** Besides the fiddle contest, there will be performances on the outdoor stage by some of Mississippi and the region's best Old-Time musicians. Featured acts include Old-Time swing band, The Canegrinders; gourd banjo player, Jason Smith; clawhammer banjo player and multi-instrumentalist Johnny Rawls; early Americana duo Hal and Connie Jeannes; finger picking blues guitarist Reeves Jones; Old-Time/Cajun band Mississippi Cajun; and more.

There will also be Old-Time jam sessions in the campground behind the college buildings throughout the day. These jams are open to all musicians of any playing level, and are a great way to meet other players and learn new tunes.

**Will there be food or refreshments for sale?** There will be canned soft drinks and bottled water for sale at Big Yam. At lunchtime, a Natchez-area food vendor will sell hot lunch plates. You are also more than welcome to bring your own drinks, snacks, picnic baskets and ice chests. By Mississippi law, alcohol possession or consumption is not permitted on the grounds of Historic Jefferson College.

**I plan on staying overnight. What are my options?** Information on Natchez-area lodging can be found at the **Natchez Visitors Center** website. Cabins, RV sites and campsites are available 8 miles from the fiddle contest at **Natchez State Park**. Primitive camping is available on the grounds of Historic Jefferson College Friday, May 13th through Sunday, May 15th.

**What else should I bring?** The fiddle contest is inside, but definitely bring a folding chair or quilt for watching musicians on the outdoor stage. Sunscreen and bug spray are suggested, though the 200-year-old oaks on the college grounds provide plenty of shade. Expect sun and warm temperatures, but prepare for rain. A set of extra strings never hurts either.

**Need more information?** The official schedule of events will be posted on the Big Yam Facebook page a few weeks prior to May 14th. If you have any other questions or need more information about the Great Big Yam Potatoes fiddle contest, email Robert Gray, contest chairman, at [wurzburg58@gmail.com](mailto:wurzburg58@gmail.com) or call him at 601-506-6561. For questions about Historic Jefferson College, call the staff at 601-442-2901.

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## OLD-TIME FIDDLE TUNES

This is not an exhaustive or restrictive list. There are hundreds, if not thousands, of Old-Time tunes. You're welcome choose one from this list or hunt down your own. The internet is a great source for sheet music and performance videos to help in your search.

### G Tunes

Around the Horn  
Barlow Knife  
Bear Creek's Up  
Blackberry Blossom  
Big Scioto  
Carroll County Bluees  
Chattanooga  
Colored Aristocracy  
Cumberland Gap  
Did you Ever See the Devil  
    Uncle Joe?  
Going Up to Hamburg  
Girl I Left Behind Me  
Great Big Taters  
Happy Hollow  
Nail the Catfish to a Tree  
Ootpick Waltz  
Possum on a Rail  
Sail Away Ladies  
Seneca Square Dance  
Shaking Down the Acorns  
Shove That Pig's Foot A Little  
    Further in the Fire  
Shortnin' Bread  
Temperance Reel  
Tombigbee Waltz  
Waynesboro  
Westphalia Waltz

### A Tunes

Bill Cheatum  
Boatman  
Buffalo Gals

Cindy  
Chilly Winds (modal)  
Cluck Old Hen (modal)  
Cold Frosty Morning (modal)  
Crow Little Rooster  
Falls of Richmond (modal)  
Grub Springs  
Greasy Strings  
Hangman's Reel  
John Brown's March  
June Apple  
Kitchen Girl  
Liza Jane  
Mike in the Wilderness  
Old Bunch of Keys  
Old Joe Clark  
Red-Haired Boy  
Sally in the Garden (modal)  
Sourwood Mountain  
Waterbound  
Yearlings in the Cane  
    Break (modal)

### C Tunes

Billy in the Lowland  
Old Liza Jane  
Sugar Hill

### D Tunes

Angelina Baker  
Avalon Quickstep  
Black-eyed Suzie  
Boatman  
Bonaparte Crossing the Rhine

Bonaparte's Retreat  
Briarpicker Brown  
Cherokee Shuffle  
Cindy  
Confederate March  
Ducks on the Millpond  
Eighth of January  
Flop-Eared Mule  
Forked Deer  
Grasshopper Sittin' on a Sweet  
    Potato Vine  
Julianne Johnson  
Joke on the Puppy  
Liberty  
Midnight on the Water  
Mississippi Sawyer  
Morpeth Rant  
Needle Case  
Over the Waterfall  
Peek-a-boo Waltz  
Puncheon Floor  
Quince Dillon's High D  
Rock the Cradle Joe  
Sarah Armstrong's Tune  
Soldier's Joy  
Spotted Pony  
Saint Anne's Reel  
Sullivan's Hollow  
Tishomingo County Blues  
Valley Forge  
Westfork Gals  
Whiskey Before Breakfast  
Winder's Slide  
Year of Jubilo

# GREAT BIG YAM POTATOES OLD-TIME FIDDLE CONTEST

## PEE WEE SCORE SHEET

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Category: \_\_\_\_\_

Contestant's #: \_\_\_\_\_

Contestant's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Tune Title: \_\_\_\_\_

### FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY

RHYTHM & TIMING (25 points total) \_\_\_\_\_

EXPRESSION (25 points total) \_\_\_\_\_

EXECUTION (25 points total) \_\_\_\_\_

STYLE (25 points total) \_\_\_\_\_

TOTAL: \_\_\_\_\_

Judge's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_



# GREAT BIG YAM POTATOES OLD-TIME FIDDLE CONTEST

## JUNIOR SCORE SHEET

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Category: \_\_\_\_\_

Contestant's #: \_\_\_\_\_

Contestant's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

### FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY

**TUNE #1** \_\_\_\_\_

RHYTHM & TIMING (25 points total) \_\_\_\_\_

EXPRESSION (25 points total) \_\_\_\_\_

EXECUTION (25 points total) \_\_\_\_\_

STYLE (25 points total) \_\_\_\_\_

TOTAL: \_\_\_\_\_

**TUNE #1** \_\_\_\_\_

RHYTHM & TIMING (25 points total) \_\_\_\_\_

EXPRESSION (25 points total) \_\_\_\_\_

EXECUTION (25 points total) \_\_\_\_\_

STYLE (25 points total) \_\_\_\_\_

TOTAL: \_\_\_\_\_

Judge's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

# GREAT BIG YAM POTATOES OLD-TIME FIDDLE CONTEST

## SENIOR DANCE TUNE SCORE SHEET

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Category: \_\_\_\_\_

Contestant's #: \_\_\_\_\_

Contestant's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Tune Title: \_\_\_\_\_

### **FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY**

RHYTHM & TIMING (25 points total) \_\_\_\_\_

EXPRESSION (25 points total) \_\_\_\_\_

EXECUTION (25 points total) \_\_\_\_\_

STYLE (25 points total) \_\_\_\_\_

TOTAL: \_\_\_\_\_

Judge's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

# GREAT BIG YAM POTATOES OLD-TIME FIDDLE CONTEST

## SENIOR WALTZ SCORE SHEET

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Category: \_\_\_\_\_

Contestant's #: \_\_\_\_\_

Contestant's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Tune Title: \_\_\_\_\_

### FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY

RHYTHM & TIMING (25 points total) \_\_\_\_\_

EXPRESSION (25 points total) \_\_\_\_\_

EXECUTION (25 points total) \_\_\_\_\_

STYLE (25 points total) \_\_\_\_\_

TOTAL: \_\_\_\_\_

Judge's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

# GREAT BIG YAM POTATOES OLD-TIME FIDDLE CONTEST

## SENIOR TUNE OF CHOICE SCORE SHEET

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Category: \_\_\_\_\_

Contestant's #: \_\_\_\_\_

Contestant's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Tune Title: \_\_\_\_\_

### **FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY**

RHYTHM & TIMING (25 points total) \_\_\_\_\_

EXPRESSION (25 points total) \_\_\_\_\_

EXECUTION (25 points total) \_\_\_\_\_

STYLE (25 points total) \_\_\_\_\_

TOTAL: \_\_\_\_\_

Judge's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

# GREAT BIG YAM POTATOES OLD-TIME FIDDLE CONTEST

## BACK-UP PLAYER SCORE SHEET

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Category: \_\_\_\_\_

Contestant's #: \_\_\_\_\_

Back-up Musician's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Back-up Musician's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Tune Title: \_\_\_\_\_

### **FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY**

EXPRESSION (25 points total) \_\_\_\_\_

INTONATION (25 points total) \_\_\_\_\_

CHORD PLACEMENT (25 points total) \_\_\_\_\_

TEMPO (25 points total) \_\_\_\_\_

TOTAL: \_\_\_\_\_

Judge's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_