

## 4-H Volunteer Leaders' Series

# Arkansas Traveler

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### The Legend of the Arkansas Traveler

The Traveler was exasperated. Lost in the woods with night coming on, needing food and shelter for himself and his horse, he had learned exactly nothing in a half-hour's conversation with a sassy Squatter who seemed interested only in endlessly fiddling a single tune.

"What are you playing that tune over so often for?" demanded the Traveler. "Only heard it yisterday. 'Fraid I'll forget it." "Why don't you play the second part of it?" "It ain't got no second part." "Give me the fiddle," the Traveler ordered. He tuned it for a moment, then swung into the second part. The Squatter leaped up and began to dance, the sleeping hound awoke and thumped his tail, the children hopped up and down, and even the "old woman" came through the door with a smile twisting unaccustomed muscles on her face.

"Come in, stranger," roared the delighted Squatter. "Take a half a dozen cheers and sot down. Sall, stir yourself round like a six-horse team in a mud hole. Go round in the holler, whar I killed that buck this mornin',

cut off some of the best pieces and fotch it and cook it for me and this gentleman directly. Raise up the board under the head of the bed and git the old black jug. Dick, carry the gentleman's hoss around under the shed, give him some fodder and corn, as much as he kin eat. Stranger, ef you can't stay as long as you please, and I'll give you plenty to eat and drink. Play away, stranger, you kin sleep on the dry spot tonight!"

So goes part of the dialogue that accompanies one of the nation's best-known fiddle tunes, "The Arkansas Traveler." The state's historians are generally agreed that both the story (which is narrated, not sung) and the melody were composed by Colonel Sandford C. Faulkner (1803-74). Faulkner, a prominent planter, is supposed to have been inspired by a conversation with a backwoodsman in 1840. A few folklore students have credited the authorship to an Ohio Valley fiddler named Jose Tasso, but Faulkner's claim was so fully recognized during his lifetime that the manager of the old St. Charles Hotel in New Orleans is said to have lettered "The Arkansas Traveler" in gilt above the door of a room reserved for him.



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# THE ARKANSAS TRAVELER

1. On a lone - ly road quite long a - go A  
2. Man - y years have passed, the trav' - lers gay Re -

trav' - ler trod with fid - dle and a bow; While  
peat the tune a - long the high - way; And

ram - bling thru the coun - try rich and grand, He  
ev - 'ry voice that sings the glad re - frain Re -

quick - ly sensed the mag - ic and the beau - ty of the land.  
ech - oes from the moun - tains to the fields of grow - ing grain.

REFRAIN

For the Won - der State we'll sing a song, And

lift our voic - es loud and long. For the Won - der State we'll

shout Hur - rah! And praise the op - por - tu - ni - ties we find in AR - KAN - SAS.

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