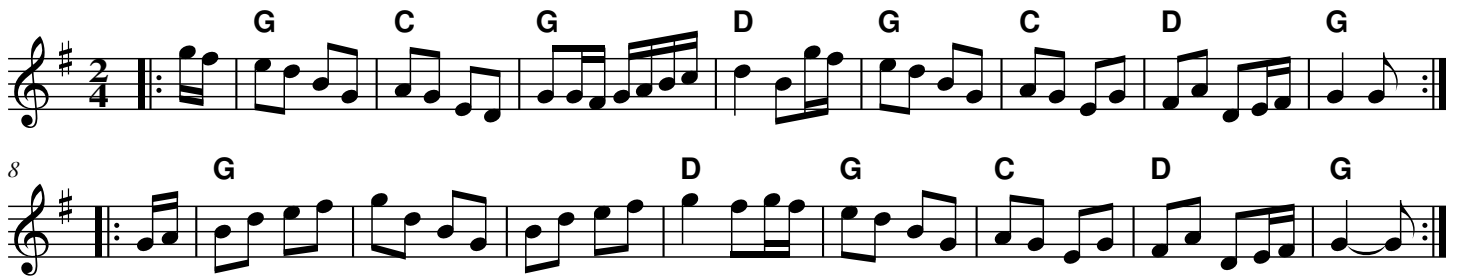


THE GIRL I LEFT BEHIND ME



Both England and Ireland claim to have originated The Girl I Left Behind Me. The tune appears as The Spailpin Fanach (The Rambling Laborer) in Dublin in 1791 although some claim it was around much earlier. In England, the tune was a marching air from around the beginning of the 19th century. Edward Bunting included in a letter in 1840, “It is a pretty tune, and has been played for the last fifty years, to my knowledge, by the fifes and drums, and bands of different regiments, on their leaving the towns for new quarters.”¹

John Bell, a Northumbrian (North East England) musician, poet, and writer, includes the below lyric for Blyth Camps (or The Girl I Left Behind Me) in his collection, **Rhymes of the Northern Bards** (Newcastle upon Tyne, 1812).²

*I'm lonesome since I left Blyth Camps,
And o'er the moor that's sedgy;
With heavy thoughts my mind is fill'd
Since I parted with my Betsy,
Whene'er I turn to view the place
The tears fall down and blind me
When I think on the charming grace
Of her I left behind me. —*

In America, legend has it that it was overheard being sung by a British prisoner of war during the War of 1812 and caught on among the American infantries. It was played by both the Union and Confederacy armies during the American Civil War and was a favorite tune of General George Custer.³

Eloise Hubbard Linscott includes a The Girl I Left Behind Me contradance in her collection, **Folk Songs of Old New England** (Hamden [CT], 1939).⁴

Circle eight hands around	8 bars
First couple lead to the right halfway round	4 bars
Pass right through between the two	4 bars
Swing the girl behind you	8 bars
Ladies grand chain	8 bars
All promenade with the dear little maid, that girl you left behind you	8 bars

—Kitty Steetle

¹[https://tunearch.org/wiki/Annotation:Gir1_I_Left_Behind_Me_\(1\)_\(The\)](https://tunearch.org/wiki/Annotation:Gir1_I_Left_Behind_Me_(1)_(The))

²*Loc. cit.*

³*Loc. cit.*

⁴Linscott. **Folk Songs of Old New England**, 1939, p 79.