

OVER THE WATERFALL

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Over the Waterfall is associated with Virginia fiddler Henry Reed (1884 - 1968) who believed he heard it from a calliope at a circus or medicine show when he was 5 or 6 years old.¹ Reed taught it to folklorist and fiddler, Alan Jabbour (1942 – 2017), who recorded it with the Hollow Rock String Band in 1967.² This tune is believed to have roots in Ireland with its similarities with the song, Eggs and Marrowbones, and tune, The Dark Girl Dressed in Blue, but this is difficult to prove.³

Alan Jabbour is from Jacksonville, FL and was originally trained in classical violin, even playing with the Jacksonville Symphony.⁴ While in graduate school he became interested in fiddling, collecting Old Time tunes in the Upper South (North Carolina, Virginia, and West Virginia) with this collection now in the Archive of Folk Culture at the Library of Congress. His research eventually led him to head the Archive of Folk Song (now the Archive of Folk Culture) in 1969, working for the National Endowment for the Arts in 1974, and perhaps what he is best known for, becoming the founding director of the American Folklife Center in the Library of Congress in 1974.⁵ It is hard to overstate the influence Alan Jabbour has had on the advocacy and endorsement of modern American Ethnomusicology.

—Kitty Steetle

¹https://tunearch.org/wiki/Annotation:Over_the_Waterfall

²<https://www.earlyblurs.com/hrsb.htm>

³tunearch.org, *op. cit.* A similar tune to Over the Waterfall can be heard in this recording of Eggs and Marrowbones (https://youtu.be/_veDpbB71pY), but I think that The Dark Girl Dressed in Blue ([https://tunearch.org/wiki/Dark_Girl_Dressed_in_Blue_\(2\)_\(The\)](https://tunearch.org/wiki/Dark_Girl_Dressed_in_Blue_(2)_(The))) is much more similar to Over the Waterfall. These tunes are also called Old Woman from Wexford, Old Woman in Dover, and The Fellow that Looks Like Me.

⁴I lived in Jacksonville, FL during high school. It was a nice town.

⁵https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alan_Jabbour