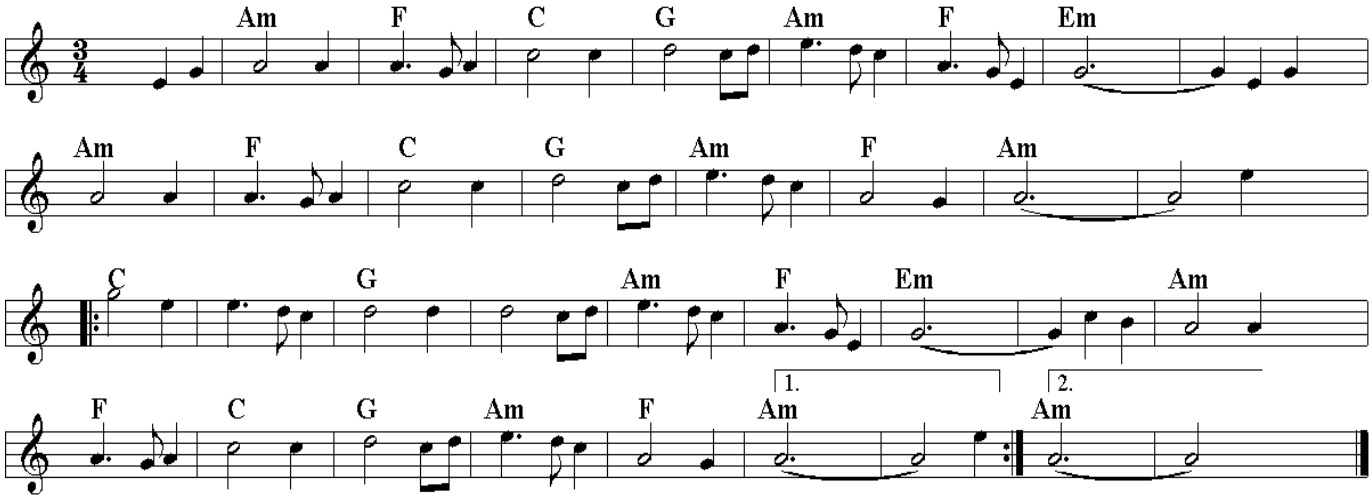
The Living Tradition

a non-profit organization working for the preservation of traditional music and dance

"Star of the County Down" is an aire, originally known as "Dives and Lazarus", published as early as 1707. The melody is often, but by no means always, played as a waltz. Ralph Vaughn Williams used the theme in his orchestral suite "Five Variants on Dives and Lazarus." The 20th century lyrics, by Cathal McGarvey, speak of a man's instant infatuation with a "Sweet Colleen" that passes him on the road. He gives up both smoke and work "'til a smiling bride by my own fireside sits the star of the County Down."

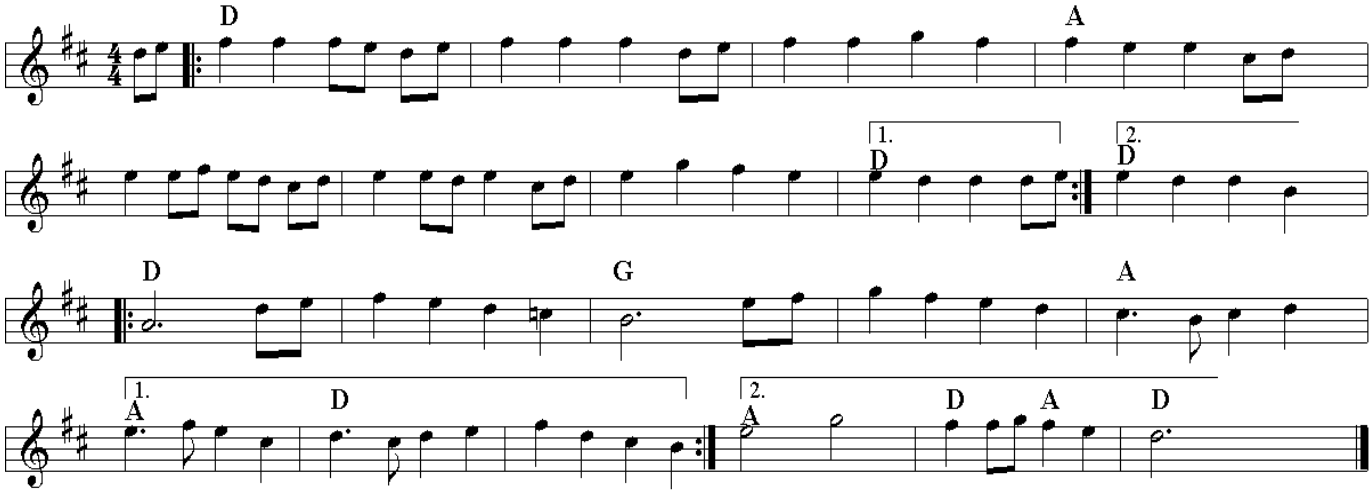
Star of the County Down



"O, Dem Golden Slippers" was written in 1879 by James A. Bland, who is considered the greatest of the black minstrels. He composed over 700 hundred songs, including "Carry Me Back to Ole Virginny." Bland was the first to add the fifth string to the banjo, which became known as the Bland Banjo.

O, Dem Golden Slippers

James A. Bland



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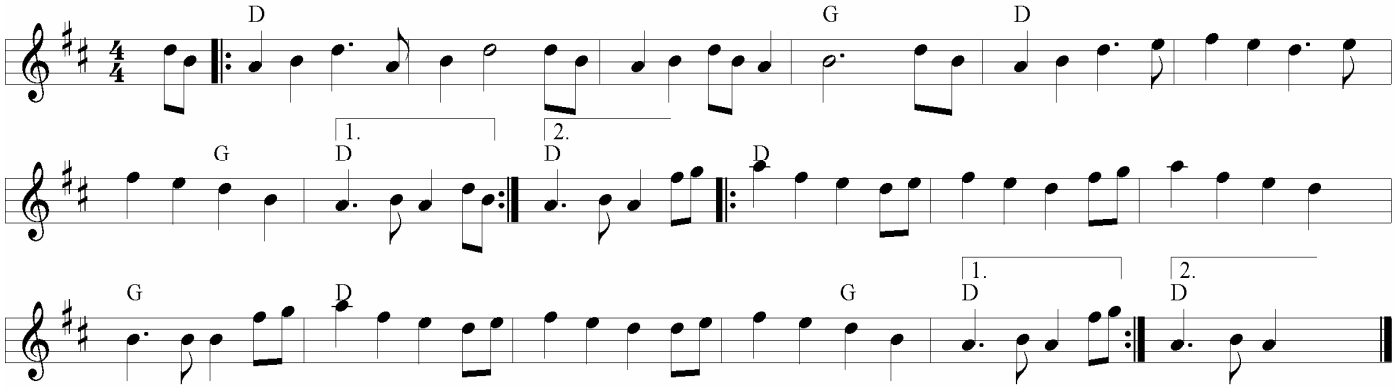
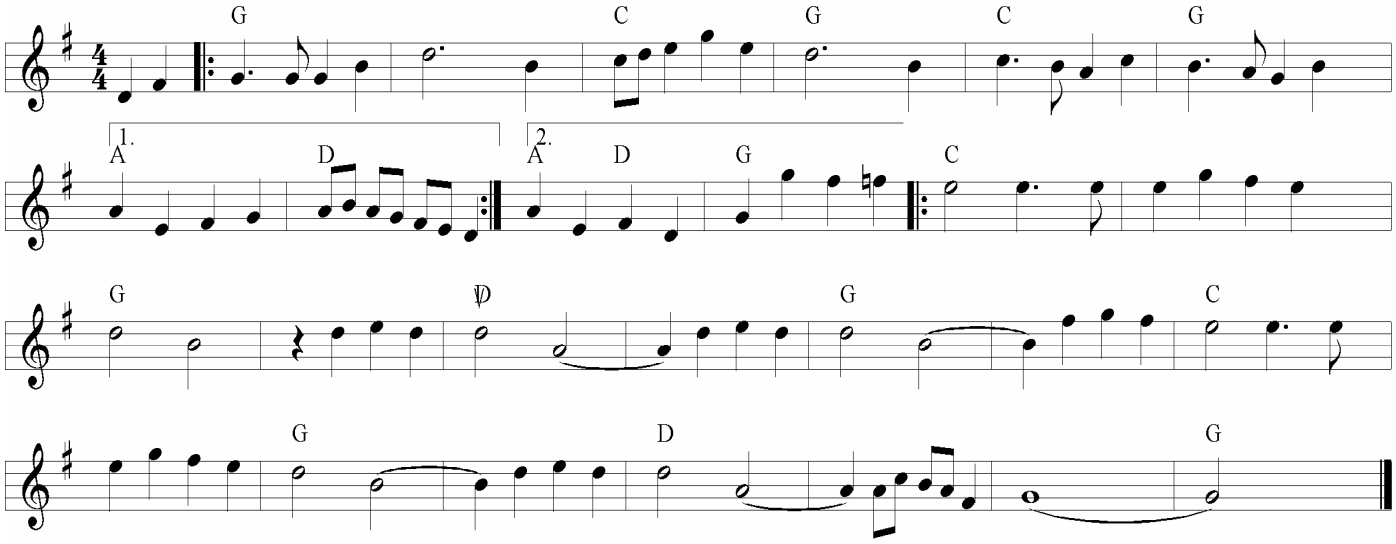
Angeline the Baker is a metamorphosis of Stephen Foster's "Angelina Baker", written in 1850. After evolving new words and being combined with other old-time melodies, it no longer resembles Foster's original words and tune. "Angelina Baker" expresses a slave's heartache when his love is sold away. Angeline the Baker, on the other hand, makes her own, sometimes odd, choices.

Angeline the Baker



"Red Wing" was published in 1907 by ex-university music professor turned Tin-Pan Alley publisher, Kerry Mills. Mills adapted the melody of Robert Schumann's "Der Fröliche Landmann" to lyrics written by Thurland Chatterly, and created a sheet-music best-seller.

Red Wing