

Bonaparte Crossing The Rocky Mountains

Traditional

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Chord symbols: Gm (see notes) B \flat F Gm

Chord symbols: F Gm (see notes) B \flat F Gm F

Chord symbols: Gm F Gm (see notes) B \flat F

Chord symbols: Gm F 1. Gm 2. Gm

Another old-time tune with Bonaparte in its title, one of three that I have heard of, all of which are represented in this collection. Bonaparte was a controversial figure within public opinion in the young United States, as in Europe- some thought him a hero, some a villain. It is easy to forget that the Battle of Waterloo, in the Spring of 1814, was just a few months after the Battle of New Orleans.

Though basically in Dorian mode, there is still a bit of modal ambiguity in this tune; note the reversion to the major third in measures 12 and 14, in the B part of the tune. The same ambiguity can be found in Abe's Retreat, Texas, and other old-time modal tunes. In practice, in the hands of pioneer musicians playing on unfretted instruments, these were probably tendencies rather than distinct major thirds, with the actual note found somewhere around the quartertone between the major and minor third (in this case, between B \flat and B). I often use a semi-fretless banjo to try to accomplish that effect.

This setting is in the GDGAD tuning, which I use for most of my G modal arrangements, as well as some major scale tunes. I usually use the lowered second string to take advantage of an open string hammer between the second and third note of the scale, but here it is employed more for the possibilities for melodic style phrasing, starting with the opening notes.

The fourth string hammer found in measures 3, 7, and 16 is a hammer of a string which has not been picked by the right hand, at least not since the beginning of the measure. It will have to be hammered especially hard to be heard. In order for the hammer to be played in the MIDI playback, I had to place a ghost note in front of the hammer, but that open ghost note should be ignored.