Bonaparte's Retreat

Traditional

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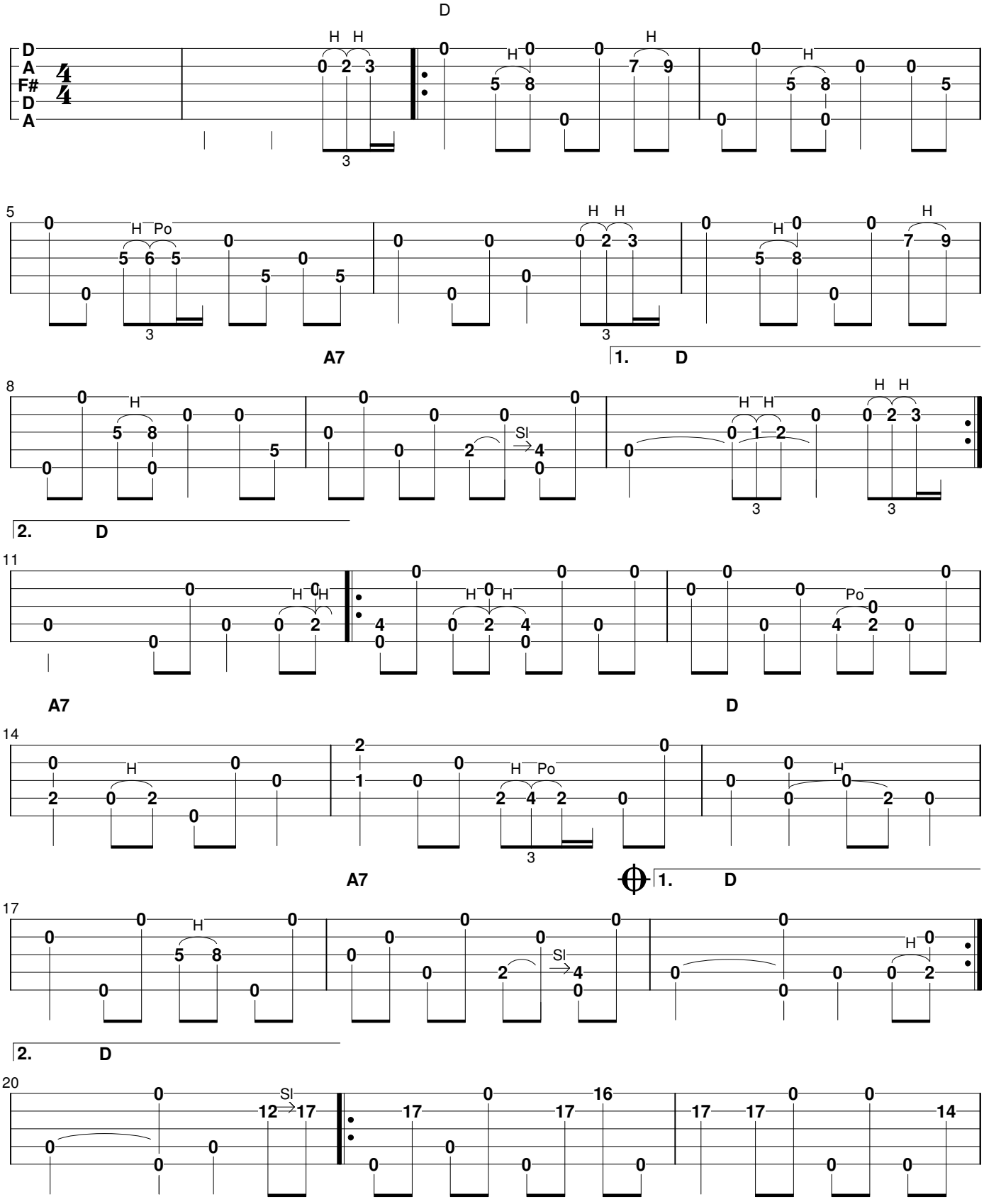

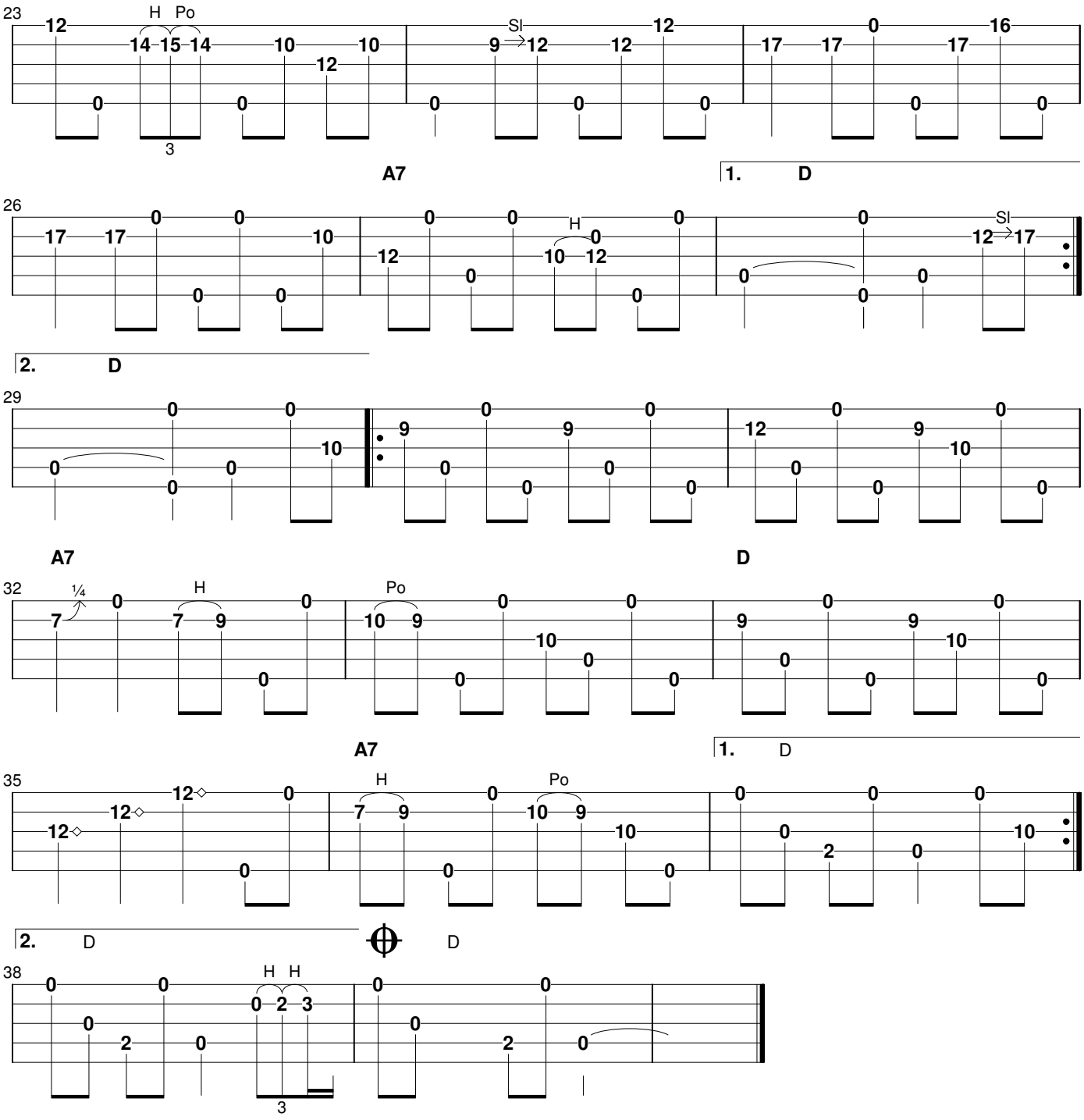

I used to play a more generic version of this tune, complete with the "Little Egypt" third part. Recently, though, I ran across a website devoted to the music of the late West Virginia fiddler Henry Reed, which had interviews, field recordings and transcriptions from the Library of Congress, collected by folkorist and fiddler Alan Jabour around 1967 (http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/hrhtml/hrhome.html). This is part of the Library's American Memory project, which is full of great material. Reed played a fine, archaic version of Bonaparte's Retreat, which sounded much more ancient than the pop country tune I was playing. Listening to Reed is like looking through a window and catching a glimpse deep into the past. I sat down right away and worked up this version.

I wrote this up in 4/4 time; it doesn't need to move too fast. Note the repetitive fourth string drone in the third part. Make sure to allow those to ring as long as possible.