Bully of the Town

Traditional

Banjo Tuning: gCGCD

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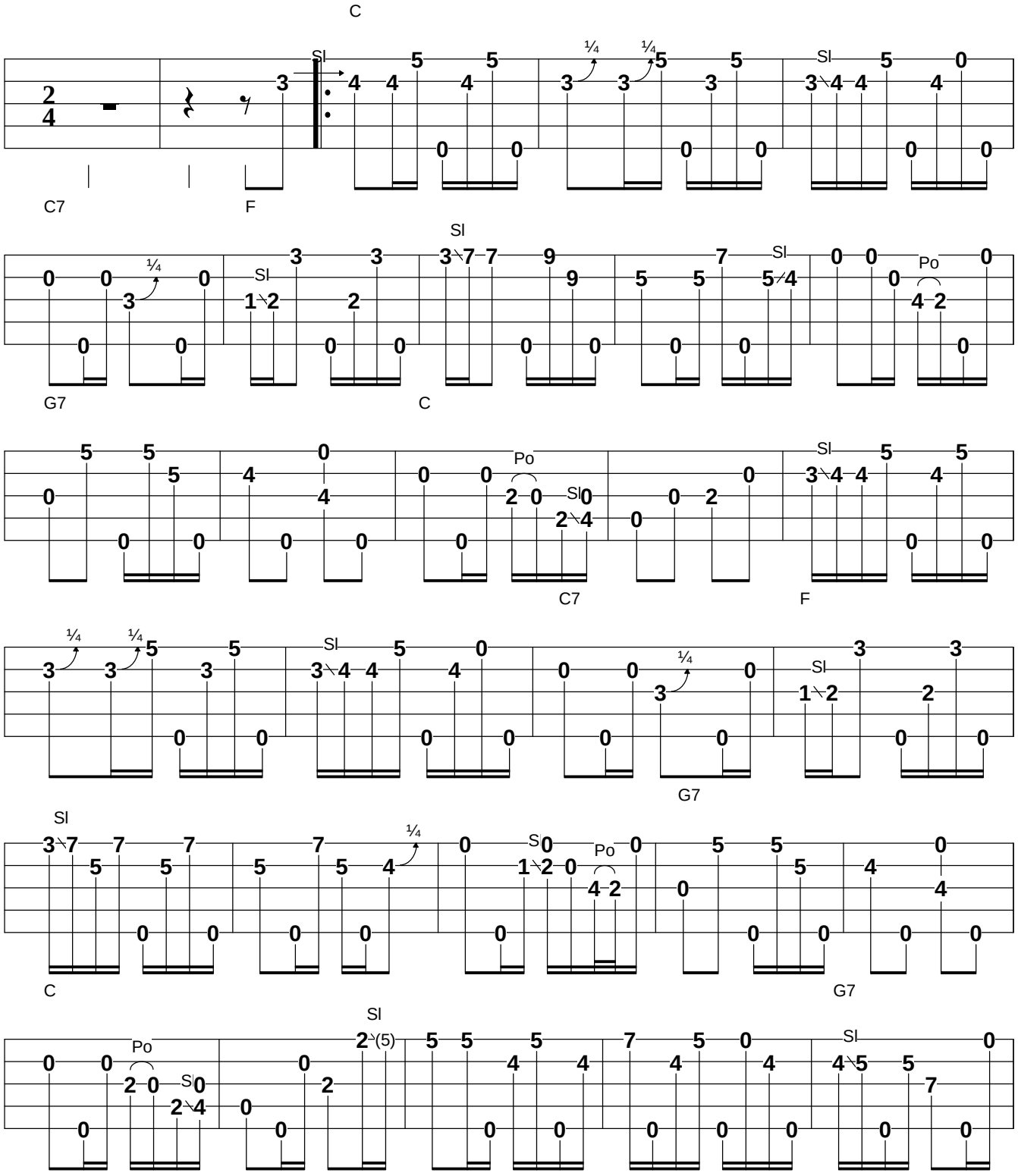

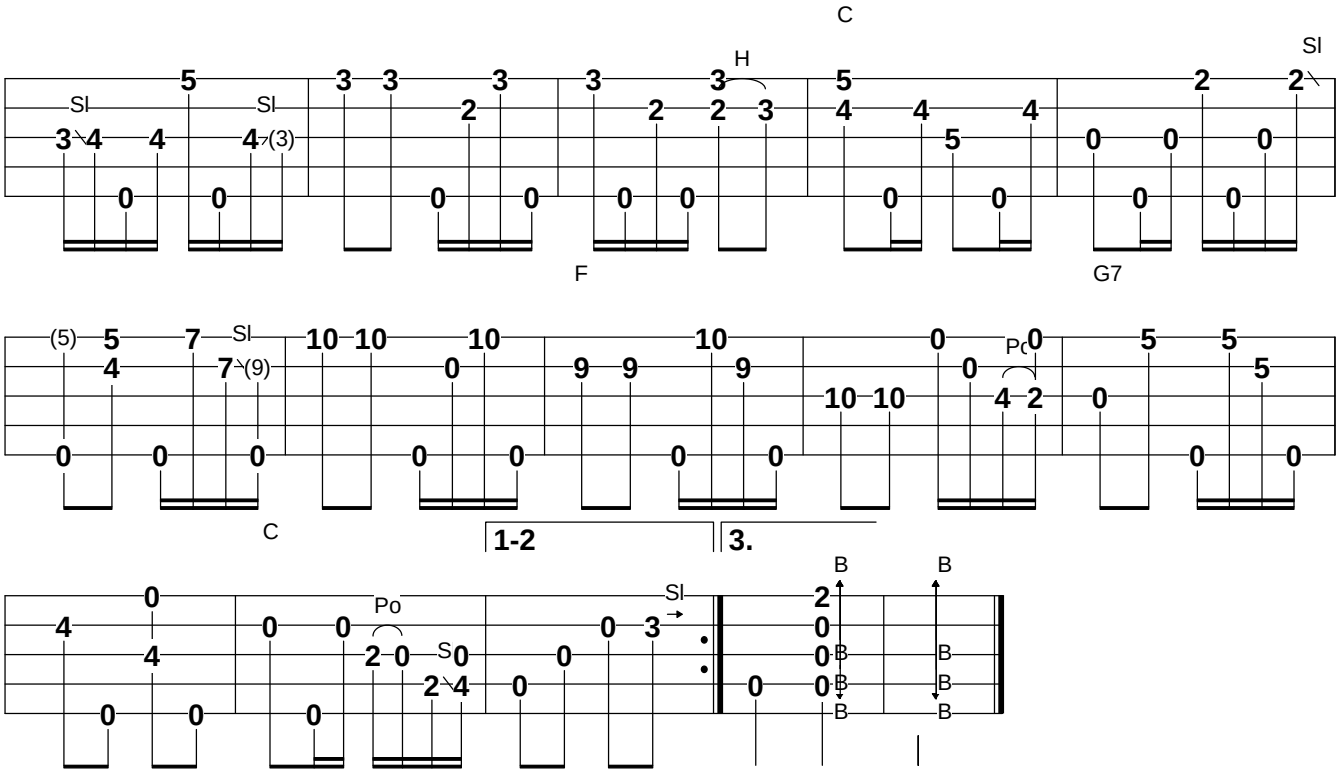

Bully of the Town is a 19th century African American folksong that was in the repertoire of a large number of performers who recorded in the mid '20s, including the Memphis Jug Fand, Fiddlin' John carson, and Ernest Stoneman. Etta Baker, the exemplary African American finger style guitarist from Caldwell County, North Carolina played an often imitated version. It would enter the bluegrass repertoire via banjo legend Don Reno, who would record an instrumental version with Red Smiley for King Records in 1961. This arrangement is based on the version recorded by Gid Tanner and the Skillet Lickers for Columbia Records in 1926, and I have tried to incorporate some of the unique phrasing and syncopation that Tanner and his fiddling bandmate, Clayton McMichen, put into their rendition. One important deviation- the Skillet Lickers routinely drop a beat between the A and B parts of the tune, but I have never heard that done at a jam session, so this setting puts that missing beat back in, straightening out the tune.