

A Short History of Fiddling  
and of the California State Old-Time Fiddlers' Association

By  
Kenneth Leivers  
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Traditional fiddling had its reportorial and stylistic roots in the British Isles in the eighteenth century. The cultural milieu of that era generated a new type of instrumental tune based on British folk melodies and the new musical influence of the Baroque violin. Thousands of tunes built on these models continued to be played in the twentieth century by folk fiddlers (Jabbour 1971:1).

There are only scattered references to fiddle playing in early American history. Thomas Jefferson played the fiddle. Davy Crockett, in his autobiography, mentions that he enjoyed fiddling. Andrew Jackson, when he was President, frequently had fiddlers play for dances in the White House. Southern plantation owners had their slaves learn fiddling to play for white dances. The Lewis and Clark Expedition (1804-06) included three fiddlers: Lewis' slave, a Frenchman, and an American trapper (Calkins n.d.:3). The westward movement of settlers in the 1700s and 1800s spread fiddling outward from the Appalachians (Burman-Hall 1973:8-13; Calkins n.d.:12-14).

The pioneer fiddler by himself or with his fiddling friends played for a wide variety of community activities: "Barn raisings, husking bees, weddings, entertainments, shivarees, wakes, and almost every other social function required

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the presence of the fiddler and his beloved instrument” (DeRyke 1964:181). A day’s work over, “there was usually a meal for the workers, eventually followed by dancing accompanied on the fiddle, with singing and merry-making continuing frequently until dawn” (Burman-Hall 1973:22). Perhaps the Friday or Saturday night dance is the best remembered of all rural social events.

In southwestern Saskatchewan, the dance was held in the old schoolhouse, beginning about 8:30 P.M. and interrupted at midnight by a brief lunch. Desks were piled in tiers along the wall to clear the floor for dancing and the teacher’s desk often served as the fiddler’s stage. Coal oil lanterns illuminated the schoolhouse as dancers swirled to the music. A fiddler might be hired for the night at \$2.00 but anyone who could play would take a turn at the fiddle. The floor manager called out the dancers and called the changes in the square dances. The whole family attended the schoolhouse dance and children were laid on desktops when they fell asleep. It was morning before most of the dancers went home (Horner n.d.:1). The foregoing was typical not only of Saskatchewan, but of most early American country dances from the “fair dodos” of Cajun Louisiana to the “house parties” of Texas and Missouri (Burman-Hall 1973:15).

A second type of communal event was the fiddlers’ convention or contest. Shelton and Goldblatt (1966:25) said that “fiddling conventions and contests have been an institution in this country since the 1880s.” Bascom (1909:238), with feigned insensitivity, describes a turn of the century “Fiddlers’ Convention” as follows:

The convention is essentially an affair of the people, and is usually held in a stuffy little schoolhouse, lighted by one or two evil-smelling lamps, and provided with a rude, temporary stage. On this the fifteen fiddlers and “follers of banjo pickin” sit, their coats and hats hung conveniently on pegs above their heads, their faces inscrutable. To all appearances they do not care to whom the prize is awarded, for the winner will undoubtedly treat. Also, they are not bothered by the note taking of

zealous judges, as these gentlemen are not appointed until after each contestant has finished his allotted “three pieces.”

To one unused to the mountain tunes, the business of selecting the best player would be not unlike telling which snail has eaten the rhododendron leaf, for execution and techniques differ little with the individual performers, and the same tune, no matter what it may be called, always sounds the same. It is composed of practically two bars, which are repeated over and over again until the fiddler or banjo picker, as the case may be, stops abruptly from sheer fatigue. The first effect is like one of the strange tom tidi tom noises heard on a midway, but after a few unprejudiced moments of attention, melody, stirring, full of pathos, rich with suggestion, emerges from the monotonous din. Strangely enough, no matter how sad the words and music may be, they are always rendered as rapidly as is compatible with the skill of the musician, and without inflection. The tunes are played at all of the dances, whistled and sung by the men and boys everywhere.

Fiddlers’ conventions or contests like the one described above, dated ca. 1909, were widely popular in such traditional centers as Knoxville, Tennessee, and Atlanta, Georgia. The Atlanta Fiddlers’ Convention was one of the oldest of these events. Although held sporadically from 1885, it did not achieve official status until 1913. Conducted much the same as the convention described above, the 1914 Atlanta convention was highlighted by Fiddling John Carson of Blue Ridge, Georgia. His recordings ten years later served as the catalyst that began the country music business (Meade 1969:27-30). Burman-Hall (1973:16-17) mentions that “one can imagine the popularity of this event, which drew fiddlers of all ages from an eighty-mile radius to compete in a single division which included straw-beating, clog, and square dance accompanying fiddle tunes.”

By the end of the nineteenth century, regional fiddling styles had developed in various parts of the country. Cohen (1964:12) says that “although a matter of personal preference and background, a good case can be made for the existence of regional fiddle styles.” Burman-Hall (1973:232-233) found that “the most

important variables for style differentiation are those connected with bowings: the combinations of bowing patterns or phrasings, bowing style (Plain, Harmonic, or Drone), occasional special effects and accents, and note rhythms within the bow strokes, all create the regional performance idiom.” She found four geographically-related styles within the southern American folk fiddling tradition: “Blue Ridge Style, a complex of related sub-styles in which all examples follow a line parallel to and east of the Appalachian mountains; Southern Appalachian Style, with examples from West Virginia to Mississippi along the line of the mountain range and west; Ozark Style; and Western Style, principally the tradition of Texas and Oklahoma” (Burman-Hall 1973:233). Elsewhere in North America, one could hear other distinct styles of fiddling. The Cajun style of fiddling in Louisiana owes much to French dance tunes as does the French Canadian style. The New England or Northeastern fiddle players have blended Irish and Scottish dance melodies. In Wisconsin one can hear a Scandinavian influence and in Pennsylvania, a German flavor can be found (Calkins n.d.:7,12,14). All of the above fiddle styles fall under the category of “old-time fiddling” in the sense that up to the end of the nineteenth century, fiddle music for dancing was played unaccompanied.

The Western or Texas style of fiddling has become more individualistic than any of the others. The tune is viewed as raw material, to be changed until it is your own. Thus in modern Texas fiddling, the fiddler develops his own variations on each tune. In other areas of the country, fiddlers play their traditional tunes in one regional style, i.e., all the fiddlers in each area have about the same bowing techniques.

By 1900, two new instruments had found their way into the Southern mountains: the banjo and the guitar. Cohen (1964:13) says that some musicologists have placed the date of the banjo’s introduction as early as 1880. Seeger points out that:

In the latter half of the nineteenth century, the banjo, along with Negro minstrel music, changed American ballads and instrumental music. The ballads became more Negroid (lyrically, melodically, and rhythmically) because of the banjo, and the fiddle tunes went through similar changes. The beginnings of a mountain string band style could be seen (Seeger 1964:23).

Lester Flatt has said, “It used to be that a band was just a fiddle and a banjo.” In the memory of old mountain people, this combination was the main source of dance music. The banjo would often play the melody along with the fiddle, using either picking or frailing. It was especially admired if the instruments could sound as one (Cohen 1964:17).

According to Cohen (1964:16), “most mountain people say that there were no guitars around before 1910.” An informant from Oklahoma said that there were no guitars there or in Arkansas until about 1914. The guitar became popular in the mountains due to African-American influences, Guitar and Mandolin Societies, and mail-order houses. With the guitar, fiddle, and banjo, the instrumentation of the early string band was complete (Seeger 1964:23).

The introduction of string-band music necessitated some changes in fiddling. With the use of guitars, the emphasis shifted from dance music to the accompaniment of popular and sentimental songs. Cohen (1964:12) points out that “in many instances where the fiddle was used as lead instrument in an old-time string band, the fiddle part flattened out as the melodies were simplified and set by popular tunes from Broadway, and the decorative textures then came from the accompanying banjo and guitar instead.” The guitar then took over the bass, but more importantly, also kept the major rhythms. As such, the accompaniment to songs became chord oriented rather than linear in ornamentation, as was true of old-time fiddling. The “string-band” style of “old-timey” music marked the first important departure from traditional old-time fiddling.

In the early 1900s, Fiddling Bob Haines recorded “Arkansas Traveler” on an Edison cylinder, fiddlers’ contests were being held in the South and in Idaho, and string-band music was evolving in Appalachia. However, as Shelton and Goldblatt (1966:26-27) point out, it was not until the birth of radio in 1920 and the development of disk recordings in 1921, that the music of the country fiddler received more than local recognition. In 1922, while attending a Confederate Soldiers’ Reunion in Atlanta, Eck Robertson decided to go to New York City and audition for RCA-Victor. According to Seeger (1964:25), Robertson recorded what is still an “unbeatable Sally Goodin.” As a result of his recordings, Robertson gained a large following of fiddlers. Several old fiddlers have commented that Robertson’s music was of great influence on their own.

The 1920s saw the birth of almost all the variations in country and Western music that have now developed into the multi-million dollar industry in Nashville today. WSB in Atlanta, Georgia, was the first major Southern radio station. By 1922, there were 90 radio stations in the South. This same year, Frank Walker, a “collector” or A&R man for Columbia records, went into the South to record rural musicians. He made his first recordings of a fiddler in an old schoolhouse near Atlanta, Georgia. At first, Columbia did not know what to do with the music. Finally, they released these recordings in a special “15,000 Series” for distribution largely in the South. A year later, Ralph Peer, an A&R man for Okeh records, recorded Fiddling John Carson. This fiddler’s record was one of the first played on WSB, Atlanta (Shelton and Goldblatt 1966:26-28,34-42; Seeger 1964:26-27).

In 1924, the WLS radio station in Chicago started a weekly barn dance broadcast that became the National Barn Dance in 1926. Also in 1924, the first singing cowboy, Carl T. Sprague, recorded for Victor. This same year, Otto Gray formed the first cowboy string band, the Oklahoma Cowboys (Shelton and Goldblatt 1966:42,152-156).

In 1925, Union Grove, North Carolina, held its first traditional music contest. This contest for fiddlers and other country musicians has continued annually to the present. Somewhat later, another fiddlers' contest or festival began in Galax, Virginia, and is still being held there annually. Another event in 1925 of major importance was the beginning of the Grand Ole Opry in Nashville, Tennessee. George D. Hay, who got his start with the WLS National Barn Dance in Chicago, directed the Opry. On the opening night, Uncle Jimmy Thompson played the fiddle over the radio. Entertainment on the Opry and the WLS Barn Dance was a mixed affair in those early days. Fiddle tunes, songs played by family string-band groups, skits of country humorists, gospel and religious songs, and banjo music were all popular with the rural radio audience (Shelton and Goldblatt 1966:103-123).

Henry Ford sponsored a series of fiddlers' contests in 1926:

Mr. Ford loved this kind of music and desired to hear it played by the best and most authentic old-time fiddlers available. In order to attain this desire, he requested all his Ford dealers throughout the East and Midwest to hold local, state and regional contests, to determine who would go to Detroit, Michigan, to play in the finals. "Uncle Bunt Stephens" from Tennessee was the winner in the finals. His masterpiece was "Old Hen Cackled." This was for the world championship. Mr. Ford gave him a new Lincoln car, \$1,000 in money, a broadcloth suit of clothes, paid for having his teeth repaired, and entertained him as a house guest for a week (Butler 1973:2).

In 1927, Ralph Peer met and recorded (probably on the same day) Jimmy Rogers and the Carter Family in Bristol, Tennessee. During the few short years until his death of tuberculosis in 1933, Jimmy Rogers, "the singing brakeman," left a musical legacy that continues today. His "down and out" music reflected the ethos of a country people soon to be in the throes of the Great Depression. With Jimmy Rogers, the solitary "star" in rural music was born (Shelton and Goldblatt 1966:55-69).

The Carter Family from Blue Ridge County, Virginia, had developed smooth harmonies in their singing and used guitars and Autoharp as backup. They followed the string-band tradition of writing new words and using them with old tunes from the mountains (Shelton and Goldblatt 1966:73; Cohen 1964:21). In the music of the Carter Family and Jimmy Rogers, the fiddle is usually absent. Fiddling could still be heard on the radio, but it had clearly taken a secondary place to vocalists by the late 1920s. Then in 1928, Gene Autry (who patterned himself after Roy Rogers) recorded cowboy songs for Victor. A year later, Tex Ritter started the vogue for cowboy songs in New York City. Also in the late 1920s, Bob Wills, a fiddler from Texas, organized his Western swing band. Thus by the 1930s, country music, whose first regional home was in the Southeast, was beginning to be influenced by Western music via Jimmy Rogers. Texas, Oklahoma, and Louisiana were fulcrums for the development of kindred, but different kinds of country music: the singing cowboy and Western swing (Shelton and Goldblatt 1966:145,156-158,165,172).

During the Great Depression, the singing cowboy star followed one line of development, fiddle music another. Since country people had no money, record sales fell off drastically and the sale of string-band music recordings came to a close (Seeger 1964:29). Several informants reported that in Oklahoma, the Ozarks, and North Dakota, fiddling for dances was still popular during the 1930s. After the repeal of Prohibition in 1933, the sale of 3.2 percent beer was voted in and taverns were started in Oklahoma and elsewhere. Fiddling and square dances moved from schoolrooms and houses into these taverns, where they remained until electricity and the jukebox superseded them in the late 1940s.

Western swing, a new development in fiddling, became popular in the late 1930s. As early as 1927, the Serenaders of East Texas had recorded for Columbia. They played mostly popular songs of the time, that is, the swing music or big-band

sound, on traditional stringed instruments. They and the other Western swing bands played for all types of rural gatherings, but their main habitat was the dance hall. By 1932, Bob Wills and his Doughboys had recorded for Victor. Wills' instrument was the fiddle, so this was featured and it gave Western swing its distinctive sound. Wills remained popular until after the Second World War (Shelton and Goldblatt 1966:168-175). A number of fiddlers still prefer this music, with its ragtime and jazz influences, to the string-band and old-time types of fiddling.

With no money to buy records, the rural people relied upon radios during the Great Depression. In 1933, the World's Original WWVA Jamboree in Wheeling, West Virginia, began. Other barn dances, patterned after this one and the others in Chicago and Tennessee, sprang up all over the South. However, almost the only music played over the radio was Western or Texas swing and the singing of the cowboy stars (Shelton and Goldblatt 1966:50-53).

A picture (photograph) of a fiddlers' contest at the Pocahontas County Fair, West Virginia, ca. 1935, appears in Neely (1967:232), *The Agricultural Fair*. This picture is similar to Bascom's description of a fiddlers' convention quoted earlier. Seven fiddlers are seated in a semi-circle, legs crossed and all appear to be playing music. Some 30 people are standing behind them, listening. In the background is a large circus tent. Neely (1967:232) says that local theater productions, art exhibits, and "music by local musical organizations" were important parts of the recreational attractions at fairs in the mid-1930s.

In 1935, under the aegis of U.S. government agencies such as the Resettlement Administration, a number of city-raised musicologists collected songs in the South. Pete Seeger accompanied his father, Charles Seeger, on a field trip to North Carolina and first heard the mountain music that year (Seeger 1972:13). John and Alan Lomax subsequently collected songs throughout the Southeast during the late

1930s. Most of the music recorded went to the Library of Congress (Seeger 1964:24). One of the by-products of this collecting was the folk music revival emanating from New York City. Pete Seeger, Woody Guthrie, and – later in the 1940s – Lee Hays, Ronnie Gilbert, and Fred Hellerman (the Almanac Singers) began singing for city audiences. Their music was based on the mountain string-band music with modern, slick-harmony singing. Banjo and guitar were the main instruments. When the folk music craze hit in the late 1950s and early 1960s, the fiddle was absent. Only when Mike Seeger formed the New Lost City Ramblers (with John Cohen and Tom Paley) did the fiddle, in the string-band tradition, began to be played by the “city” folk musicians (Seeger 1972:13-21).

The beginning of the current series of fiddlers’ contests at Weiser, Idaho, was another by-product of folk music collecting in the Southern states. Blaine Stubblefield, raised on fiddling in the Wallowa Valley in Idaho, worked in Washington, D.C., before settling in Weiser in 1948. Part of his stay in the Washington, D.C., area was spent in Appalachia recording folk music (Weiser Chamber of Commerce 1973:3).

In 1940, Pee Wee King and his band were the first to use an electric guitar on the Grand Ole Opry. Greater electrification of instruments in country music quickly followed. Swing fiddling was still popular, but the old-time fiddling for dances all but died out, particularly when people began to migrate to the cities and westward to work in the shipyards at the onset of the Second World War (Shelton and Goldblatt 1966:125,128,172-175). Fiddlers’ contests, however, were still being held during the early 1940s. Bayard (1944:xviii) said that “fiddlers are fond of holding contests; in some southwestern Pennsylvania communities, for example, they have held them almost annually, with non-competing traditional players as judges.”

In 1944, Bill Monroe and his Bluegrass Boys developed a new string-band format, with unamplified string instruments. Seeger (1964:25) says of Bluegrass that:

It made old-time mountain music and the 5-string banjo once more a serious thing, and was still dynamic within the established tradition (at least, in the beginning). People began looking to the Blue Grass area, as they had once to old-time music, for the breakdowns and mountain songs (now based on fiddle, mandolin, and banjo patterns, and with a greater emphasis on singing). (The old-time musical emphasis was on fiddle, sometimes banjo, but singing style did not always get much emphasis in a string band). In a way, Blue Grass also merged the vocal tradition (the older unaccompanied singing) with the instrumental.

In Bluegrass music, the 5-string banjo is the lead instrument, with solos from mandolin or fiddle, and guitar. The Bluegrass fiddler has developed a stock repertoire of blues and slurred syncopated jazz sounds in his playing (Cohen 1964:12). Trills, changing keys while playing, and special riffs are among the techniques used in Bluegrass fiddling. They can be added to any melody to spice it up. Bluegrass music also has a stepped-up tempo, impossible to dance to. Thus, there is a big difference between Bluegrass and old-time fiddling styles.

By the early 1950s, Western or Texas swing was fading from the country music scene. Bluegrass music was only moderately popular in rural areas. Old-time fiddling was next to impossible to find. Square dance clubs were being formed, but dancing was done only to records. Hank Snow and Hank Williams were the big country and Western stars (Shelton and Goldblatt 1966:90,127). Still in the mid-1950s, a few fiddlers' contests were being held in conjunction with livestock shows in southern California.

In January 1953, Blaine Stubblefield, Secretary of the Weiser Chamber of Commerce since 1948, inaugurated the first fiddlers' contest held there since the First World War. The contest, billed as the Northwest Mountain Fiddlers' Contest,

was held during the intermissions of the Fifth Annual Weiser Square Dance Festival. Each succeeding year, the contest grew larger. In 1959, a separate division for Junior (under 18 years of age) fiddlers was introduced. The Senior (over 70 years old) division was begun in 1960. Ladies, Top Accompanist, and other divisions were added later. In 1963, in conjunction with Idaho's Territorial Centennial Celebration, the name of the Weiser contest was changed to the (present) National Oldtime Fiddlers' Contest and Festival, held annually during the third week in June. Stubblefield's purpose in starting this contest was that "he saw that Bluegrass fiddling was taking over and realized that mountain fiddling would vanish unless efforts were made to interest young people in what he called 'God's Music'" (Weiser Chamber of Commerce 1973:3).

In 1963, Idaho fiddlers formed a statewide association (Weiser Chamber of Commerce 1973:3). In June of the same year, Grant Spangenberg, an 80-year-old fiddler residing in California, attended the contest at Weiser. He won fourth place in the Senior division and decided to start a regional contest in California. With a group of friends and from his home in Oroville, this project was begun, though because of ill health, Spangenberg moved to nearby Paradise, California, the following year.

Before what eventually became known as the California State Old-Time Fiddlers' Association was formally organized in February 1966, there were at least eight families in California interested in fiddling and in preserving it. Redella Calkins and her grandfather Grant Spangenberg in Paradise were friends with another fiddling family in Oroville headed by Floyd Chilton. From Sacramento, Frank Gunn and his friend Delbert McGrath had both attended Weiser in the early 1960s. Kelley Kirksey from Santa Rosa was a regular follower of fiddle music and went to Weiser annually. Cy Widener, originally from the Weiser, Idaho, area, lived in Fresno. Jay Belt, who later moved from the El Sobrante-Pleasant Hill area

to Fresno, and Widener participated each June at Weiser. Charlie Waer, the Knott's Berry Farm fiddler, also made it a point to make a regular visit to the National Finals. Thus prior to 1966, the above fiddlers, with the exception of Floyd Chilton, had met one another at Weiser. It was from these families and others added later, that the California State Association was formed.

## 1966

Grant Spangenberg (the "founder"), Redella Calkins (the organizer), and their set of Paradise-Oroville friends began the California State Old-Time Fiddlers' Association in 1966. They were a small friendship group that had been meeting now and then in each other's homes to fiddle. Redella Calkins was appointed president of the Association and also chairman of the Board of Directors, which included V.F. Royer, Grant Spangenberg, Dudley Whitlock, George Smith, Harvey Menzelaar, Floyd Chilton, Mr. Chapman, and Bud Halstead. Floyd Chilton, originally from Missouri, was considered a foremost authority on old-time fiddling by other California fiddlers because of the number of old tunes that he knew. Arlene Lommen, who lived in Chico, was the Association's first secretary.

Redella Calkins wrote to Weiser for information about their association and its contest judging. In February of 1966, she drew up the bylaws of the "California Old Time Fiddlers and Folk Music Association of the National Old Time Fiddlers and Folk Music Certification and Advisory Board in Weiser, Idaho." Three purposes of the California Association were listed: 1) to promote and administer the program for the National Old Time Fiddlers' Advisory Board in Weiser, 2) to promote interest throughout California in fiddling, and 3) to provide a Regional Old Time Fiddlers' Contest in California. The winner of this contest was to be sent to compete in the National Contest at Weiser. In addition, the California Association was "to provide adequate finances to support the program and

otherwise to promote the welfare of the National Old Time Fiddlers and Folk Music Association and to insure the permanence of the program within the certified territory.”

An annual meeting to elect the Board of Directors, officers, and the nominating committee was to be held in January. Monthly meetings, held by districts of the California Association, were to be announced by mail. The nominating committee was to serve for one year and prepare the single slate of members for election at the annual meeting. The Board of Directors was to be composed of not less than ten or more than twenty members, serving for a three year term. This board was to have no less than ten monthly regular meetings a year. The board was to act for the California Association between the Association’s meetings. It was responsible for submitting to the National Old Time Fiddlers’ Advisory Board, any material required for certification by that board. Also, the California Board of Directors had the authority to remove from office any officer or other member of the board. The officers of the California Association were to be the president, vice-president, secretary, and treasurer. The president, with the approval of the board, was to appoint annually from the membership of the board, a chairman for each of these committees: finance, selection of judges, membership, public relations, personnel, program, and refreshments. The members of these standing committees were to be appointed by the chairman of each committee.

Delegates to the National headquarters in Weiser as well as the winner of the annual California State Old-Time Fiddle Contest were to be sent there at the expense of the California Association. These bylaws could be amended at any regular or special meeting by the majority vote of the voting members (i.e., adults) present. Regular meetings were to be held the fourth Monday of each month, at the Paradise Recreation Center.

The foregoing bylaws were accepted at the February 1966 regular meeting in Paradise. In March, California Governor Edmund G. Brown accepted the Honorary Chairmanship of the California State Fiddlers' Association. Redella Calkins and her friends, in the first few months of 1966, had been actively promoting a drive for new members as well as a Nationally Certified Contest to be held in April in Paradise. From her living room, she sent out news releases, both about the upcoming contest to be held in conjunction with the Gold Nugget Days Festival and about the need for sponsors for this contest. Business people throughout Butte County were contacted. In return for a sponsoring donation, businesses got an ad included in the souvenir program sent out to advertise the contest. Real estate offices, motels, restaurants, and bars (split up about evenly) accounted for most of the sponsors, primarily from Oroville and Paradise.

On April 23rd, there was a jam session and Miners Stew for the fiddlers after they had participated in the Gold Nugget Days afternoon parade. The next day, the California State Contest preliminaries and finals were held in the Paradise Recreation Center. The contest was limited to fiddlers 18 years and older. The rules were the same as those at Weiser since the contest had been certified by them: contestants were required to play a hoedown, a waltz, and a tune of their choice (other than a hoedown or waltz) at each appearance; no tune was to be repeated by a contestant in the contest; and all tunes played in the contest had to be at least 50 years old. At this California State Contest, however, the tune of choice was to be played first instead of last. The five judges were Mrs. Harold Weatherman, Sam Phipps, Bill Jacoby, Harold Waltman, and Arnold Lommen. The Sacramento Fiddlers came up to take part in the contest, including Frank Gunn and Delbert McGrath. Floyd Chilton of Oroville won first place (\$100, a trophy, \$100 towards a trip to the National Finals in Weiser, and his picture in the Hall of Fame), Dudley Whitlock of Oroville won second (\$50 and a trophy), Frank Gunn

of Sacramento took third (\$25 and a trophy), and Raymond Krogstead of Castro Valley took fourth place. George Smith and Grant Spangenberg were also in this contest.

In May, the Sacramento Fiddlers put on their first fiddlers' contest at Fair Oaks during the Fair Oaks Fiesta Days celebration. Jay Belt then of El Sobrante won first place, Frank Gunn of Fair Oaks took second, and Andy Jaborski of Gold Run was third. The Sacramento Fiddlers by this time included Delbert McGrath, Jim Hall, Jess Hall, Roscoe Keithley, and Frank Gunn, together with their families. The O'Neals were also active in this group. As far back as 1964, the Sacramento Fiddlers had organized a club and appointed Delbert McGrath as president.

June is the month that fiddlers head for Weiser, Idaho. In 1966, California was the host state at the National Contest. Cy Widener of Fresno, a former Idahoan, was appointed chairman of the California host group. Emblems signifying membership in the California State Association were available to those who went. California fiddlers who attended included Floyd Chilton, Charlie Waer, Delbert McGrath, Grant Spangenberg, Del Baker, Frank Knight, Frank Gunn, Dean Trammel, and others.

In July, John Ardans organized a small contest at Little Joe's Tavern near Ukiah, California. The emphasis was on entertainment rather than on authentic old-time fiddle playing. Raymond Krogstead won first place. New at this "fun" contest was a "No Holds Barred" division for trick and fancy fiddling. One local fiddler knew only one tune ("Raggedy Ann") and he played it three times for his three tunes. Later, in August, the California State Old-Time Fiddlers' Association had a potluck style picnic followed by a variety show with fiddlers and folk musicians in the afternoon. Afterward, there was a dance in the Memorial Hall next to the Paradise Recreation Center. Those who drove farthest to attend were Cy Widener,

Raymond Krogstead, Frank Gunn, and Bob Riley. Arnold Lommen was the Master of Ceremonies.

By September, the California State Association had decided that Board of Directors meetings would be held at Redella Calkins' house in Paradise on the first Monday of each month, and the jam sessions on the fourth Monday of each month at the Paradise Recreation Center. Kelley Kirksey, a retired Los Angeles policeman and ex-fiddler who was now blind and lived in Santa Rosa, began to put together a fiddlers' contest judges' organization. He wanted to standardize all old-time fiddlers' contest judging.

On September 3, 1966, in conjunction with Paul Bunyan Days, a fiddlers' contest was held at Fort Bragg. The Sacramento Fiddlers put it on together with an old-time dress contest. Frank Gunn won first, Delbert McGrath second and John Ardans third in the fiddling. Mrs. McGrath's sister won the dress contest. Also at the contest were Frank Knight from Paradise and the Lommens.

Early in November, an old-fashioned box supper was held at the Paradise Recreation Center. The individual box suppers were auctioned off and a jam session was held afterwards. This jam session was held Weiser style in which each fiddler plays three tunes, and then it is the next person's turn. This enabled more musicians to take part. A few days later, the first regular Board of Directors meeting of the California State Association was held in Redella Calkins' living room. On the 19th, Kelley Kirksey was in charge of the judges at a fiddlers' contest held at the Great Western Exposition and Livestock Show in Los Angeles.

## 1967

Redella Calkins continued to serve as president of the California State Old-Time Fiddlers' Association during 1967 and Arlene Lommen served as secretary. The Board of Directors for 1967 included Doug Ward, Grant Spangenberg, Dudley

Whitlock, Ray McGlone, Jim Midworth, Elsie Peterson, Arnold Lommen, Jody Waltman, Harold Waltman, Frank Knight, and Olaf Lee.

In January, members from both Paradise-Oroville and the Sacramento Fiddlers were active in planning for the April fiddlers' contest in Paradise. At the first monthly meeting, it was decided to have a No Holds Barred division and to award a new Kelley Kirksey trophy for "Best Liked Fiddler" at the contest. A system of scoring was established wherein of the scores of the five judges, the high score and low score were to be eliminated when figuring the overall score of the contestant. Ray McGlone was appointed as one of the Masters of Ceremonies for the upcoming contest. A vacant Safeway store in Paradise was selected as the site of the "hospitality house." Sue Gunn and Ferrel McGrath were the hostesses and the Ridge Runners Square Dance group from Paradise was to man the hospitality house. Tumbleweed Turner from Bakersfield agreed to do a recording of the contest for a record and promote its sales. The next day after the meeting, the Directors of the California State Association decided that the coming State Finals in April would be named the California Open State Finals. The contest would thus be open to contestants from all states and a California Resident Champion could be chosen from the top scores of Californians competing.

During the last part of January, Redella Calkins had been in contact with 'Fiddling De' DeRyke, president of both the Nebraska Old-Time Fiddlers Association and the American Old-Time Fiddlers Association. The Nebraska Association had been organized in November 1964 in Lincoln. (Kelley Kirksey was vice-president of the American Old-Time Fiddlers Association.) By letter, Calkins and DeRyke discussed the California State Association's announcement of its affiliation with the American Association. This would give the California State Association both affiliation with the American and certification by the National Association.

The second annual California Open State Old-Time Fiddlers' Contest held in conjunction with the Paradise Gold Nugget Days celebration in April, took two days – the preliminary rounds on Friday and the finals on Saturday. Judges for the contest included Cy Widener, J.H. Geers, Ray Giles, Cliff Baker, and Kelley Kirksey. The judging was done “Weiser style” by “remote control” with the judges in a different room than the contestants, thus the judges could hear a fiddler play, but not be influenced by a fiddler’s stage personality or ability as an entertainer. Folk singers and musicians provided entertainment between the rounds of fiddling. In spite of inclement weather, over 100 musicians and 50 fiddlers attended. Forty trophies and \$1,300 in cash prizes were awarded in the Senior, Junior, Ladies, and Open State Finals divisions. The title of Open State Champion went to Harold Allen from Oregon. Runners up were Lloyd Wanzer from Idaho, second; Bill Yohey from Oregon, third; Dwayne Youngblood from Idaho, fourth; Delbert McGrath, fifth; Jay Belt, sixth; Jimmy Miller from Oregon, seventh; Rusty Modrell from Oregon, eighth; Gerald Prock, ninth; and L.D. Moshier, tenth. The title of California State Resident Champion was awarded to Delbert McGrath and he would represent California at Weiser in June. In the Senior division, Charles Johnson took first, Lue Berline was second, Charlie Waer third, and Frank Knight and George Smith tied for fourth. Dwayne Youngblood and his son took first in the No Holds Barred contest. Kirksey’s trophy for Best Liked Fiddler went to Lue Berline. Tumbleweed Turner, the other Master of Ceremonies at this contest, recorded the top fiddlers for a long-playing record afterward.

Due to the growth in membership, the California State Association decided in the spring, to continue the regular monthly meetings in Paradise and to hold four larger meetings each year to bring together statewide members. Besides the Board of Directors, there were also to be representatives to the Board appointed from other parts of the state.

Fiddlers from Bakersfield held a small contest in Kernville in February. During the summer, the Sacramento Fiddlers sponsored small contests in Fiddletown, Shingle Springs, and Fair Oaks. Fiddlers living in Paradise and Oroville were active in putting on fiddling shows in a wide variety of settings including a Grange picnic, a barbeque and rodeo, and a box social. Sacramento, Paradise, and Oroville fiddlers did a television show for KXTV, Sacramento in May. At Weiser in June, virtually the entire California State Association membership was present for the festival. The idea of creating districts of fiddlers in California probably developed in Weiser, for it was discussed at the July general meeting of the California State Association. Members in Bakersfield (with L.D. Moshier and Tumbleweed Turner) and Los Angeles (with the Moores) were active as each area had a growing group of fiddlers. At the July meeting, the California State Association was restructured to include a semi-annual general statewide meeting, quarterly Board meetings, and monthly district meetings. An Advisory Council was established to meet twice monthly to consider the subject of districting.

The Bakersfield contest is the last event in 1967 for which data was available. The planning for this large contest began in May and was finalized in June. First prize in the Open division was \$1,000. Besides normal draw at the gate, the Kern County Fair officials anticipated that 150 fiddlers would pay \$25 each to compete in the Champion division and that these revenues would support the cost of the contest. However, fewer than 50 fiddlers entered the competition in all divisions. Comparable to the Paradise contest earlier in the year, the big money went out of state. Winners in the Open division were: first place, Harold Allen from Oregon; second, Jay Belt; third, Ron Hughey; fourth, Dwayne Youngblood from Idaho; and fifth, C.G. Johnson. In the Senior division, first place went to James Turner, second to Van Cunningham, third to Charlie Waer, and fourth to Frank Knight. Marilyn Cunningham took first in the Junior division and Timothy Rued (Kirksey's

grandson) was second. Lloyd Wanzer from Idaho won first in the No Holds Barred division. Delbert McGrath was second in this division. Nellie O'Neal of the Sacramento Fiddlers won first prize as an accompanist. Dwayne Youngblood also got the Kirksey Award for the Best Liked Fiddler.

At the Bakersfield contest, the large prizes apparently discouraged the average fiddler from entering, although the audience was composed of many good fiddlers who had traveled long distances to see the contest. Kelley Kirksey headed the judging. He said that it was difficult work because "the top four contestants tied for first place, and two runoffs were necessary before a final winner could be chosen." Before the runoffs, the fifth place winner was only one point below the top four contestants.

The Bakersfield contest was not a financial success. Late in 1967, the leadership of the California State Association shifted from Paradise to Oroville.

## 1968

Ray Giles, a fiddler who had played professionally during the 1930s and now lived in Yankee Hill above Oroville, was elected president of the California State Old-Time Fiddlers' Association for 1968. The other officers included Doug Ward as vice-president and also a secretary and treasurer. No Board of Directors served that year.

The May 1968 contest in Oroville was held in conjunction with the Oroville Regatta Days Celebration. This California State Championship Fiddle Contest was small compared to that in 1967. The judges were Tom Heath, Kelley Kirksey, and Arnold Lommen. Jay Belt now of Fresno, took first place, Jess Hall second, Floyd Chilton third, Earl Jennings fourth, Doug Ward fifth, and Ray Krogstead sixth. Essentially, the contest was put on by and for the Paradise-Oroville and Sacramento groups of fiddlers.

Toward the end of 1968, the fiddlers in the Sacramento area split into two groups. The McGraths, the O'Neals, Roscoe Keithley, the Gunns, and Charlie Marshall officially formed the Sacramento Fiddlers. Delbert McGrath registered this group as a private club with the State of California at the Secretary of State's Office in Sacramento. The remainder of the fiddlers in the Sacramento area realigned themselves with the California State Association (the original Paradise-Oroville group). By the end of 1968, small but active groups of fiddlers were also found in the Los Angeles area and in the Fresno area (with Ray Parks, Cy Widener, and Ron Hughey).

### 1969

In 1969, membership in the California State Old-Time Fiddlers' Association began slowly to increase again. Doug Ward, who lived in Oroville, was president and the home of the California State Association was now considered to be Oroville. A new set of bylaws was drawn up that placed the directive power of the California State Association more in the hands of the Board of Directors than with the president. The authorized number of Directors was to be five and they were to be elected at each annual meeting of the members. They included Frank Knight, Ray Giles, Robert Mitchell, James Steppe, and Ivan Gray in 1969. The officers of the California State Association were increased by one: an editor of the monthly news bulletin.

The California State Championship Old-Time Fiddlers' Contest was held in May in Oroville. The divisions were Regular, Junior, Senior, Ladies, and Exhibition Fiddling. The judges were Lloyd Wanzer, Charlie Marshall, and Kelley Kirksey; Wanzer and Marshall were members of Kirksey's Federation of Old-Time Fiddling Judges. Rules for judging were identical to those used in the 1967 Oroville and Bakersfield contests. Before the contest, the judges held a question

and answer period with the fiddlers over questions of age, style, and type of tunes to be played. Thirty-five fiddlers competed and about 450 people attended the finals. In the Regular or Champion division, Jay Belt was first, followed by Ray Krogstead and Ron Hughey. Ruby Zang won the Ladies division and Louise Allen was second. The first through third place winners in order, in the Senior division were Floyd Chilton, Van Cunningham, and Frank Knight. Scott Ward, Doug's son, came in first in the Junior division followed by Marilyn Cunningham. In Exhibition or Trick Fiddling, the top three places went to Ron Hughey, Delbert McGrath, and Marilyn Cunningham. Aaron DeCamp on guitar won Best Accompanist. This contest was open only to residents of California and was attended by fiddlers mostly from northern California.

Also in 1969, the California State Association (the Paradise-Oroville-Sacramento group) filed Articles of Incorporation with the State of California so that none of the other fiddling organizations in the state could use its name without permission. The Sacramento Fiddlers and the rapidly growing Southern California Fiddlers in Los Angeles, organized by the Moores, were not affiliated with the California State Association.

## 1970

In 1970, the California State Old-Time Fiddlers' Association elected Arlene Lommen, who now lived in Roseville (near Sacramento), president and Ray Giles, vice-president. Like Redella Calkins in 1967, Arlene Lommen put forth the personal effort necessary to make the California State Association grow. The Board of Directors included Arnold Lommen, Robert Mitchell, Ivan Gray, Jess Hall, and Jim Hall. Members of the California State Association living in the Paradise-Oroville and Sacramento areas had begun to refer to themselves as District 1. District 2 in Fresno was created in January by the fiddlers living there

with Cy Widener and Jay Belt in charge. In February, the California State Association invited both the Fresno Fiddlers and the Southern California Old-Time Fiddlers' Association in Los Angeles to affiliate with them. District 2 (the Fresno Fiddlers) now with their own elected officers and Board of Directors, accepted. In April, the Southern California Association appointed its own officers and Board of Directors and decided not to affiliate with the California State Association.

A new *National Association Newsletter* to be published quarterly appeared first in January of 1970 with Kelley Kirksey as editor. Organizations of fiddlers active elsewhere in the United States mentioned in this newsletter included: the Illinois Old-Time Fiddlers, Denver Friends of Folk Music, Kansas Fiddlers, Washington Fiddlers, Oregon Old-Time Fiddlers, the Idaho Association, Midwest Fiddlers (Missouri), Panhandle Fiddlers (Nebraska), Tennessee Valley Old-Time Fiddlers' Association, the Northeast Fiddlers' Association (Vermont), the American Old-Time Fiddlers' Association (Nebraska), and the Montana Old-Time Fiddlers.

In May, the California State Championship Contest was held in Oroville, principally organized by District 1 (the Paradise-Oroville-Sacramento group). It was open to California residents only and the three judges were Cliff Baker, Charles N. Johnson, and Pop Powers. Virgil Evans of Saratoga took first place in the Regular division and was thus the State Champion. Second was Jay Belt, followed by Dean Trammel, Delbert McGrath, and Ron Hughey. Hughey also won the Kirksey Award for the Best Liked Fiddler. Gary Krogstead won first and Scott Ward second in the Junior division. Winner of the Ladies division was Jana Grief and Ruby Zang was second. In the Senior division, Van Cunningham took first, Frank Knight of Paradise second and Dewey Jones third. Ron Hughey won first in the Trick Fiddling and Frank Knight was second. According to the monthly bulletin's editor, Hattie Hall, this contest had several surprises: a schedule was planned expecting 50 fiddlers, but only one-third of that number showed up. Also

the California State Association went the expense of the contest alone, with no support from the Oroville Jaycees. Edith Thompson, aunt to Arlene Lommen, was the Master of Ceremonies for the contest, her first experience at doing this. June Giles and Joan Foster helped in the kitchen.

In August, an Open Certified Old-Time Fiddlers' Contest was held in Modesto. From the \$5,000 budget, over \$2,000 in cash prizes and trophies were awarded. First prize in the Open division was \$400. Judging was scored along some revised guidelines laid down by Kelley Kirksey: old-time fiddling ability (40 percent), rhythm or timing (30 percent), and tone quality (30 percent). This contest was not the financial success that it might have been. Plans and sponsors were not finalized until two weeks before the contest. There was not enough time for out-of-state fiddlers to make arrangements to come, so in all divisions there were only some 30 contestants. Jay Belt won first in the Regular or Open division, Bill Yohey from Oregon took second, Ray Hatcher third, Ron Hughey fourth, and Don Gish from Oregon, fifth. Van Cunningham placed first in the Senior division followed by Frank Knight and Cork Carpenter. Ruby Zang won the Ladies division and Lois Bellamy was second. Scott Ward took the winnings in the Junior division with Gary Krogstead in second place. Ron Hughey won both the Trick Fiddling and the Best Liked Fiddler award. This Modesto contest was the idea of District 2 (the Fresno Fiddlers) and District 1 (the Paradise-Oroville-Sacramento group) helped them put it on. The Southern California Association attended and competed in it.

Elsewhere in California in 1970, the Sacramento Fiddlers put on their annual round of small contests in Fiddletown, Fort Bragg, Fair Oaks, and a new one in Guerneville. They also released a long-playing record of fiddling by Delbert McGrath and Frank Gunn. Their club took the overall top prize of \$500 for best entry at the Amateur Country and Western Music Roundup held in Auburn in September.

The Southern California Association found that they had to register all fiddlers and accompanists at their monthly jam sessions in Signal Hill (near Long Beach) because attendance was large. Otherwise not everyone got a chance to play. A March jam session drew 18 fiddlers, 14 guitarists, and 4 piano players. Amplified instruments were no longer allowed during the jam sessions. Each fiddler played three tunes when it was his turn and members were reminded that the fiddle was to remain the lead instrument.

Fiddlers from the different groups in California played for other types of shows and activities during 1970. In January, some fiddlers made a videotape for a show on Channel 40 in Sacramento. Included in this activity were the Lommens, Eldon Lowery, Ruby Zang, and the two Hall families. Later in January, eight fiddlers of the California State Association took part in a Big Brother Variety show in Sacramento. Members attending the show included Jay and Norma Belt, Ray and Gary Krogstead, Doug and Scott Ward, the Lommens, Jim and Hattie Hall, Jess and Mary Hall, and Ivan and Frances Gray. Afterward, this group went to the Lommens' for a potluck supper and a meeting. Junk sales at the Roseville Auction Yard, a fashion show at Cal Expo (the California State Fair in Sacramento), Gold Rush Days in Paradise, the Broom Brush Breakfast in North San Juan, an ice cream booth and parade at Pow Wow Days in Orangeville, a show for the blind in Yuba City, and another show at Cal Expo also were put on and attended by members of the California State Association. Potluck suppers, box socials, jam sessions, meetings in members' homes, smaller fiddling shows for local groups, and fund-raising square dances or dinners continued to be popular. Jay Belt and his son played for a legislative luncheon in Sacramento. Ivan Gray and his wife hosted the annual Christmas Party for the California State Association at the Hagginswood Clubhouse in Sacramento in December.

## 1971

In 1971, Ben Zang of Sacramento was elected president of the California State Old-Time Fiddlers' Association and Ray Giles served as vice-president. The Board of Directors was chaired by Doug Ward and also included Ray Giles, Jess Hall, Louie Smith, and Marion Mitchell.

The California State Champion Contest held in Oroville in April, was sponsored by District 1 (now just the Oroville-Sacramento group; the fiddlers in Paradise were no longer active in the California State Association, except for Frank Knight). Members of both Districts 1 and 2 (the Fresno Fiddlers) attended this contest. Kelley Kirksey, Pop Powers, and Cy Widener were the judges. Jay Belt won first in the Regular division, followed by Ron Hughey second, Ray Parks third, Tim Rued fourth, and Jana Grief fifth. Van Cunningham won the Senior division and Mac O'Neal took second. The Ladies division was won by Jana Grief with Ruby Zang in second place and Ora Spiva third. Jenny Rued won the Junior division and Van Cunningham received the Kirksey Award for Best Liked Fiddler. Ron Hughey was first in the Trick Fiddling division. This Oroville contest was considered the best one that the California State Association had yet put on, both in terms of attendance and cash income.

The Fresno-Central Valley California Fiddlers sponsored a new contest in Ceres. This fiddling group had expanded from District 2 (the Fresno Fiddlers) to include the Davises and friends from Ceres and Modesto. In the Ceres contest, a new Champion division was used for those fiddlers who had already won top honors. The Regular division, not open to past champions, gave the not-yet-as-good fiddlers a chance to win. Delbert McGrath was one of the judges at this contest and Roscoe Keithley was the Master of Ceremonies. The results of the Champion division were Ray Parks, first; Jay Belt, second; Virgil Evans, third; Vern Keathly, fourth; and Ron Hughey, fifth. Earl Collins won first in the Regular

division followed by George Davis, second; Clyde Wheat, third; Coy Daily, fourth; and Tim Rued, fifth. Gary Krogstead won the Junior division and Ruby Zang took first place in the Ladies division. Del Baker won the Trick Fiddling. Frank Knight of Paradise won first place in the Senior division.

The second annual Open Championship Fiddle Contest was held in Madera in October, directed by the California State Association (i.e., District 1, the Oroville-Sacramento group, and District 2, the Fresno Fiddlers). Winners of the Regular or Open division were Don Gish from Oregon, first place; Jay Belt, second; Kenny Hall, third; Virgil Evans, fourth; and Earl Collins, fifth. Ray Giles, Cy Widener, and Del Baker, all members of the Federation of Old-Time Fiddling Judges (organized by Kelley Kirksey), were the judges.

The Southern California Association (Los Angeles) split internally into two groups, holding different jam sessions: the old-time fiddlers, and the followers of the more modern amplified country and Western music. The Sacramento Fiddlers put on their usual round of smaller, fun contests including those at Fiddletown, Fair Oaks, and Fort Bragg. New small contests were tried out by the California State Association at Orangevale, Oakdale, and Folsom. District 2 directed a good size contest in Fresno toward the end of the year. They also issued their own monthly bulletin in 1971, similar in layout to the California State Association's bulletin.

## 1972

Bill Cummings of Roseville was elected president of the California State Old-Time Fiddlers' Association and Ray Giles served as vice-president in 1972. Evelyn Scott was editor of the monthly bulletin. Jess Hall, Ray Giles, Ben Zang, and Todd Scott served on the Board of Directors. In January, the Board decided with the concurrence of the membership, to affiliate with the National Oldtime Fiddlers'

Association in Weiser. The earlier affiliation through certification by Weiser in 1966 and 1967 had been allowed to lapse.

The idea of having at least one fiddlers' contest somewhere in California each month was beginning to be fulfilled. In January, the second annual Coloma contest (the Sacramento Fiddlers) was held with last year's winners (Frank Gunn, Ray Parks, and Delbert McGrath) as judges. The Kernville contest (California State Association and Jay Belt) took place in February. Instead of a contest in March, the California State Association held a potluck and jam session at the Hagginswood Clubhouse in Sacramento.

In April, the California State Old-Time Fiddlers' Contest was held in Oroville. The contest was certified by Weiser, with the addition of Kelley Kirksey's new rule on the date of tunes: all tunes played in the contest had to date prior to 1911, when the copyrighting of songs in America began. Prior to the contest, a discussion was held with the fiddlers on this issue plus the question of which tunes fall into which categories: hoedown, waltz, rag, polka, or schottische. There were four divisions at the contest and for the first time, women were allowed to enter the Regular division as well as their own. Outside of the Oroville Municipal Auditorium where the contest was held, younger fiddlers played Bluegrass music for the crowd of "longhairs." The judges for the contest were Don Gish, Frank Knight, Lloyd Wanzer, Van Cunningham, and Bill Yohey. Ruby Zang won first in the Ladies division followed by Frances Anderson second and Marilyn Cleary third. Gary Krogstead took first in the Junior (under 21 years of age) division with Vicki Cunningham second, and Marlin Miller third. The Senior (over 65 years old) division was won by Sherman Mason, followed by Glen Lambrigger and Cork Carpenter. The winners in the Regular division from first to twelfth place were as follows: Virgil Evans, Ray Parks, Vern Keathly, Jay Belt, Delbert McGrath, Bill

Cummings, David Garelick, Tim Rued, Ron Hughey, Earl Collins, Frances Anderson, and Doug Ward.

In May, the Sacramento Fiddlers held their annual Fiddletown and Fair Oaks contests. Virgil Evans and friends played at a Folk Music Festival held at Fresno State College that month. In June, the main events were the annual Topanga Canyon Banjo and Fiddle (i.e., Bluegrass) Contest and the National Finals at Weiser, Idaho. The annual picnic in Citrus Heights and later in July, a contest in West Point in conjunction with their Frontier Days, were directed by the California State Association. There was also a small contest in Oakdale.

In August, the Central California Old-Time Fiddlers' Association (i.e., the Fresno Fiddlers, or District 2) put on their Fiddlers' Fun Festival, in conjunction with the City of Ceres Peach Festival. At the end of August, the Warwicks in Oregon invited all California fiddlers, accompanists, and their families to campout for a week at their ranch.

In September, the California Open State Old-Time Fiddlers' Contest was held in Madera at their fairgrounds, under the auspices of the California State Association. In the Champion division, Lloyd Wanzer from Idaho, won first; Benny Thomasson from Texas, was second and Vern Keathly third. Wayne Holmes from Oregon placed first in the Regular division, followed by John Francis from Washington, second; Tim Rued, third; and Roscoe White, fourth. Billy Warwick took first place in the Junior division with Bruce Johnson in second place, and then Keith Cummings third. Frances Anderson won the Ladies division; Ruby Zang was second and Maxine Taylor third. Also in September, the annual Fort Bragg contest (California State Association) was held. The California State Association sponsored another small contest in Folsom in October. November saw the Fresno Fiddlers (i.e., District 2) directing a contest in Clovis. There was the annual Christmas Party of the California State Association in December. And

Kelley Kirksey organized a one-day judges' school at Eugene, Oregon, in the last month of 1972.

Another important event of 1972 was the organization of the Ceres District by the Davises, who were friends of Al and Nellie O'Neal, active members of the Sacramento Fiddlers. The Ceres District did not affiliate with the California State Association.

### 1973

Bill Cummings continued to serve as president of the California State Old-Time Fiddlers' Association in 1973 and Bill Pray served as vice-president. LaVerne Jansen was secretary, Mary Hall served as treasurer, Wanda Cummings was editor of the monthly bulletin with help from Burney Garelick as assistant editor, and Fred Beavers acted as publicity chairman. The Board of Directors included Todd Scott, Ben Zang, Jim Hall, Ray Parks, and Cy Widener. One of the new things this year was that the monthly bulletin finally received a name: *The Sound Post*.

The 1973 annual spring contest held in Oroville had a lower status. Formerly the California State Old-Time Fiddlers' Contest, it was now only the first annual Northern California Regional Contest. The California State Championship Contest was held in April in Madera, instead of Oroville. This change occurred because most of the now active members of the California State Association lived in the Sacramento area or south through the San Joaquin Valley.

The first annual Northern California Regional Contest in Oroville observed Weiser's rules with one change: a contestant could enter only one division. Women had to choose between entering the Ladies division or the Regular division. Roscoe Keithley was the Master of Ceremonies, and Ray Giles, Clyde Darrell, and Frank Knight were the judges. In the Regular division, Delbert McGrath won first place, followed by Ron Hughey, and Oak Gibson. Jess Alford took first in the Senior

division, Lloyd Brokaw second and Mr. May third. Nan Meheras won the Ladies division; Arlene Lommen was second and Louise Allen third. Jane Scott was first in the Junior division, with Keith Cummings second, and Jenny Rued third.

In April, the California State Championship Contest, open to California residents only, was held in Madera. Judges for the event were Delbert McGrath, Brian Baker, Ray Krogstead, Virgil Evans, and Byron Berline. First round playoffs were held on Friday evening and second round playoffs on Saturday morning. The finals were played off on Saturday evening in the four divisions. As entertainment between contest rounds and outside of the hall, Bluegrass fiddling and music also were heard at the contest. In the Regular division, Ray Parks won first place, followed by Coy Daily, second; Jay Belt, third; Vern Keathly, fourth; Ron Hughey, fifth; Dean Trammel, sixth; Glen Tarver, seventh; Gary Krogstead, eighth; Paul Shelasky, ninth; and Doc Denning, tenth. Slim Lambrigger won first place in the Senior division, with Chuck Beall in second place, Al O'Neal in third, and Sherman Mason in fourth. Jane Scott won the Junior division and Keith Cummings was second. In the Ladies division from first to fifth place were Jana Grief, Frances Anderson, Ruby Zang, Laurie Lewis, and Maxine Taylor.

The other important contest in 1973 was the Western Regional Contest in Madera in November. (This same contest was called the California Open State Old-Time Fiddlers' Contest in 1972.) There were only two divisions, a novel variation from the usual four. In the Champion division the first place prize was \$400. The judges were George Davis, Virgil Evans, and Wayne Holmes. This contest drew 31 Regular contestants and 12 Champions as entrants. The top nine Champions had to play twice before the winning order was decided, a new contest rule from Weiser. Dick Barrett from Montana won first in the Champion division, with John Francis from Washington, second; Benny Thomasson from Texas, third; Ray Parks, fourth; Vern Keathly, fifth; Don Gish from Oregon, sixth; Jay Belt,

seventh; Frank Ferrell, eighth; and Delbert McGrath, ninth. In the Regular division, Jana Grief was first, followed by Gary Krogstead, Glen Tarver, Aaron Lowe, Frances Anderson, and Clyde Wheat. Ossie White was the first place winner among the accompanists. Later in the evening, after the contest, jam sessions were held at the Madera Valley Inn. Bluegrass fiddlers played in one room and the old-time fiddlers in another.

At least one fiddlers' contest was held each month during 1973, with the exception of September when the Warwick campout in Oregon was repeated, and the December Christmas Party. In late May, over Memorial Day weekend, a number of California fiddlers went up to the Oregon State Contest. Included in the group were LaVerne Jansen, Dwan Bayer, Jack and Jan Saddler, Bill and Wanda Cummings, Mary and Jess Hall, Frances and Ivan Gray, and Arlene Lommen. A sad note in 1973 was the death of Frank Knight of a heart attack. He was the 81-year-old fiddler and bagpipe player from Paradise. In October, the contest in Folsom was well attended by many California fiddlers and their families. Included in the activities were Jack Widener, George Davis, Brian Baker, Frances Gray, Mary Hall, Arlene Lommen, LaVerne Jansen, Jean and Loren Bagley, Ruby Zang, Delbert McGrath, Ray Parks, Virgil Evans, Glen Tarver, Todd Scott, Ivan Gray, Jess Hall, Oak Gibson, Coy Daily, Jim Pinkston, and Doug Ward to name but a few.

Also in October, the Board of Directors met to officially divide the California State Association into seven districts. As a result, the Oroville District (#1) that began the California State Association was split, the Sacramento area joining the (San Francisco) Bay Area as District 5. The Oroville District was now no more important than any other district. The Fresno Fiddlers (District 2) continued to hold their monthly jam sessions. District 3 in Bakersfield was having problems organizing because of the lack of fiddlers living in the area. District 4 was

embryonic in Los Angeles. The Redding District (#6) was being organized by Frances Anderson and Jana Grief in northern California. District 7 was being organized by Jay Belt in San Diego.

At the end of 1973, four other fiddling organizations in California were not affiliated with the California State Association, including the Sacramento Fiddlers, the Ceres District, the Southern California Association (Los Angeles), and the newly formed Santa Clara Association. Two friends who knew each other before moving to California from New Hampshire formed the latter association. They preferred to hold monthly jam sessions instead of contests.

#### 1974

As of April 1974, the California State Old-Time Fiddlers' Association was holding its usual contests and jamborees. Ben Zang was president and the Board of Directors included George Davis, Ray Parks, Cy Widener, and Todd Scott. The founder of the California State Association, Grant Spangenberg, was again recognized by inclusion of his name in the letterhead of *The Sound Post*. The new districts continued their process of internal organization. A new district may be forming in the Santa Barbara area and that would bring the total to eight. The beginning of 1974 was marked by statewide representation among the officials of the California State Association, plus emphasis on district autonomy and equality among the districts of the Association.

The development of local groups of California fiddlers and their families into a statewide association in 1966-74 has been briefly summarized. The concept of a formal association and the basic mechanics of fiddlers' contests and judging were borrowed from Weiser, Idaho. Family participation both there and in California was enhanced at fiddlers' contests by using the four general divisions: Regular,

Ladies, Junior, and Senior. From the California State Association's conception, judging was supervised by one individual and his judges' federation. The California State Association's goals included having a State Contest in the spring, an Open State Contest to include out-of-state fiddlers in the fall, and a smaller contest and/or other fiddling activity each month somewhere in the state. As membership in the California State Association grew, districts were organized in different parts of the state and although the California State Association was first organized in Paradise, its subsequent leadership was to be found in Oroville and then in Sacramento.

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