

ANNOUNCING A NEW RALLY VENUE!

FIVE STRINGER



NUMBER 220

2022-2023

SUMMER

Bed Bugs Beat Banjoists

By Joel Hooks

Things did not go as planned with the 2021 Fall Rally. Filled with excitement, I decided to be one of the "early birds" this time and arrive on Wednesday. I was the first to arrive (or so I thought) and checked in. Standard procedure for me is to search hotel rooms thoroughly before bringing in my luggage.

Upon arrival I noticed that the Newark Garden Hotel was looking a little rough. As I entered the room, the first thing I noticed was that it appeared as if the room had been flooded. There was water damage (and perhaps signs of mold) on the bottom of the furniture. With a good flashlight in hand, I began checking out the bed. After removing the headboard, and to my horror, I found a live bed bug.

I scrambled to take photos. Then I realized that I should capture the tiny demon so that I would have evidence. Using the laminated TV channel card to scoop the bug into a styrofoam cup, I completed the prison by stacking another cup on top. I then proceeded to the front desk.

Placing the cups on the counter, I was met with the exclamation "oh, we don't like those" and given key cards to a different room.

Mark Your Calendar!

THE ABF FALL RALLY October 26, 27, 28, 2023

Best Western Palmyra Inn & Suites
955 Canandaigua Rd, Palmyra, NY
(near Rochester, NY)

Call (315) 597-8888 for reservations.



Bed Bug as found at Newark Garden Hotel



Depiction of a Bed Bug as illustrated by S. S. Stewart

By this time, Drew Frech had arrived. Showing Drew the photo, my only thought was to go to Walmart and buy trash bags to store all of my luggage and banjos while in the room. I never made it inside the store, as in the parking lot, I decided that I would not be staying at the hotel.

Back at the hotel, I greeted Marc Smith in the parking lot (Marc had reached the hotel earlier in the day but, thankfully, was not allowed to check in). Explaining the situation to him, I turned in my keys to the desk and explained that I would not be staying. A refund was promptly given.

Unable to find a suitable change in venue, the rally was officially canceled and I scrambled to try and intercept people who were planning on attending (we were expecting a good turnout).

While this was happening, Aaron Jonah Lewis arrived from Detroit. We visited in the parking lot for some time and then caravanned to a local diner for what turned out to be a fun meal with lots of catching up.

All was not a total loss, as I ended up spending a few nights with Elias and Madeleine Kaufman. Jerron Paxton and Aaron visited the Kaufman's on Thursday afternoon and we had a short mini rally.

New and Improved Venue

Program Director Drew Frech was able to secure for us a new rally venue in the same general area as before.

The Best Western Inn & Suites in Palmyra, NY, is located in upstate New York about 25 miles east of Rochester and just 5 miles north of Interstate 90. We have a nice meeting room with plenty of space for banjo activities.

The hotel, which is clean and comfortable, is near many museums and vineyards. We have since held three eventful rallies there and look forward to building off of those successes.

Spring 2023 Rally Recap

The Spring 2023 Rally was one for the ages. We had a remarkable turnout, including a few younger players new to the Fraternity who happened already to be excellent players. We were also treated to two excellent evening concerts by Aaron Jonah Lewis and Jerron Paxton. The Rally theme was "S.S. Stewart," and to that end, Joel Hooks performed a selection of compositions published by Stewart, and Joe Hornung brought a number of rare, early Stewart banjos to display.

ROUND-ROBIN FRIDAY APRIL 28, 2023

Drew Frech & Michelle Toomey: Noonan Reel (Hulse), Stewart's Minor Jig (Stewart)
 Lauren Lang: Albumblatt (Cammeyer)
 Aaron Jonah Lewis: Cute and Catchy (Lawes)
 Sam Harris: Ballad No. 1 (Cammeyer)
 Frank & Ruth Vitale: Gold Diggers (Morley), I'll Fly Away, Precious Love
 Gavin Rice: Sweet Adeline (Husch & Armstrong), Old Black Joe Theme with variation (arr. Rice)
 Doug Kiessling: Alpine Waltz (Morley)
 John Cohen: Twisted Rope Jig (Baur), Starlight Mazurka (Converse)
 Joel Hooks: Banjo Vesperines Polka and Waltz (Stewart)
 Jerron Paxton: Sunflower Breakdown (Morley), Rag Pickins (Van Eps)
 Adam Siegler: The Entertainer (Joplin), St. Louis Rag (Turpin)
 Stephen Brodine: Queen of the Burlesque (Tilley)
 Becky Schneider: Keynotes Rag (Morley)

ROUND-ROBIN SATURDAY APRIL 29, 2023

Becky Schneider & Drew Frech: A Soliloquy (Eno), Crackerjack (Morley)
 Stephen Brodine: Washington Post March (Sousa)
 Trevor Holder: St. Louis Tickle (Barney & Seymore), Uncle Dave's Beloved Solo (Macon)
 Jerron Paxton: Down Home Rag (Sweatman), Persiflage (Francis)
 Paul Draper: Andy Levitt's Jig (Buckley), Angelica Polka (Mack)
 Joel Hooks: Ol' Shepherd's Tennessee Reel (Armstrong), Louisiana Hoe Down (Armstrong)
 Doug Kiessling: Elfin Waltz (Weidt), Polka March (Ellis)
 Ruth & Frank Vitale: Diamond Cottage Reel (Folwell), In the Garden
 Frank Vitale, Aaron Jonah Lewis, & Jerron Paxton: Blue Monk (Monk)
 Sam Harris: Radio Jig (Morley), Pompadour (Morley)
 Aaron Jonah Lewis: Cubist (Griselle), What a Wonderful World (arr. Chris Sands)
 Lauren Lang: Skeleton Dance (Greenop)
 Adam Siegler: Romance in C Minor (Ellis), Russian Rag (Cobb)
 Michelle Toomey & Drew Frech: Song and Dance Air. (Hulse), Valley Green Polka (Armstrong)



This Fall: Our 75th Anniversary Rally

We are excited to announce the Fall 2023 Rally, which will mark the ABF's 75th Anniversary. We look forward to celebrating the occasion with new and old faces alike. In light of the season, the Rally theme is "Spooky Jigs," and Drew Frech will be performing in concert a selection of compositions published by S.S. Stewart.

AMERICAN BANJO FRATERNITY SPRING RALLY APRIL 2023 PALMYRA, NY



Number 220 Summer 2022-2023
THE 5 STRINGER

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**Ruth Vitale,
 New ABF Treasurer**

We would like to welcome rally regular and longtime member Ruth Vitale as the new ABF Treasurer.

Madeleine Kaufman has stepped down after doing a fantastic job for many years. Madeleine stepped in as Treasurer in 2004.

The pause on dues has been extended until further notice.

**John & Mariah Cohen,
 New ABF Editors**

We would like to welcome John and Mariah Cohen as the new Editors of the 5 Stringer.

Joel and Aurelia Perry Hooks have stepped down after having carried the torch following the resignation of longtime editors Elias and Madeleine Kaufman.

The new Editors would like to thank the Hookses for their time and effort.

Stay tuned for new features in upcoming editions of the 5 Stringer.

**NOTICE
 ABF Library Requests**

Our Librarian, Becky Schneider, has new contact information for music requests from the ABF library. Her new email address is brschneider1813@gmail.com. If possible, Becky would prefer that library requests be made by text message to 585-944-5009.

Music in This Issue

By Joel Hooks

When the idea of “banjo tricks” is brought up, most people these days think of Leroy Troy or Uncle Dave Macon.

But trick Banjo playing has a long history that dates back to the earliest professional banjoists.

In his “Reminiscences of a Banjo Player”, eighth letter (1892), *S.S. Stewart’s Banjo & Guitar Journal*, April and May, Albert Baur writes:

Before the era of banjo clubs, trick playing was the rage. With very few exceptions the trick solo was adapted from a melody composed by the late Napoleon W. Gould, called “Sangalli Dance.” I have an original copy of this piece somewhere among my collection of music. Gould was an old time teacher of the banjo and guitar, and told me not more than about fourteen years ago that he found it a difficult matter to make a living in New York City, teaching both these instruments. At that time there were not a dozen teachers in New York, now they number in the hundreds, and all of them, even the poorest, are making comfortable livings. Speaking of trick playing, there is no doubt that the day of the trick soloist has gone by. It used to be a common thing to be told that so and so was playing an engagement at a certain hall and that his playing was simply wonderful. He would throw the banjo all over the stage, and twist and turn it in every direction, all the time keeping the tune going.” While living in Pittsburgh in 1884, I met a man who wanted me to hear him play. I went with him and I

must say he was the most wonderful juggler I ever saw; his act would have done credit to a first class contortionist or india rubber man. I heard him frequently while he was in Pittsburgh, and tried to induce him to play some piece or pieces outside of his juggling act, but he assured me that he had never learned any other piece and I believe it, for I never heard him play any thing but the Sangalli Dance, which he did to perfection.

We have transposed using the “whiteout method” (digitally) two different versions of the “Sangalli Dance”.

The version with the original title was published in *Hitchcock’s Banjo Collection, 230 Easy Pieces for the Banjo* (1887) by Frank B. Converse.

“Magic Trick Solo,” as played by Thomas J. Armstrong, was published by S. S. Stewart in 1885.

“New Trick March”, also by Armstrong, is a complete solo.

While the instructions for swinging the banjo are vague and difficult to understand, I recommend searching YouTube and watching videos of Leroy Troy to try and match up many of the moves.

One of the most famous “trick” solos for the banjo was “Bell Chimes Imitation”. There were many versions of this published and, believe it or not, it is not that difficult to learn to play (using a light banjo). In this issue we present the version from Ellis’ *Thorough School for the Banjo*. (See 5 Stringer number 194 for a version by Frank Converse.)

In his fourth letter (1891), Baur writes a funny story about the “Bell Chimes”:

Frank

Converse has often told me a story of John M. Turner. Turner was practising swinging two banjos. He stood at one end of a room swinging the banjos, when all at once one of the banjos slipped from his hand and went through a mirror at the other end of the room. It cured Turner of trying that act, but he adopted another equally as bad, that of playing three banjos at one time. Happily the mania for “juggling” is passing away, and more attention is being paid to legitimate playing.

The Last Chord

We are sad to report belatedly the passing of Gail Verbridge on January 17, 2021 at the age of 84. Her

husband of 65 years, Gary, followed her just 11 days later. Together they founded and operated G&G Farms, a 650-acre apple orchard, for over 50 years. (Gail kept the farm records for 52 years.)

She was introduced to Drew by his piano accompanist Gary Webeck, who had sold her a grand piano. Gary had mentioned to Drew that Gail played cello (violin cello). When they met, she had a half-sized cello in tow from when she was young. Drew told her that a plectrum cello banjo was available, and she immediately became a player with that instrument in the Upstate String Band.

In the course of getting to know her better, Drew also learned that she had considerable skill on piano.

Gail joined the ABF and attended her first Rally in 1992 (issue number 175). At that time, she had been playing cello banjo with Drew Frech in the Upstate String Band (which was comprised entirely of fretted stringed instruments) in Rochester NY.

Shortly after joining the ABF, she learned that our piano accompanist for the rallies had recently moved away, so she started accompanying the rallies on piano as well as playing 5 string banjo (a Bacon & Day Silver Bell).

Gail and Drew toured extensively together with Gail playing piano or cello plectrum banjo. Their act was featured as headliner at many banjo gatherings.

Over the years, she became a key part of the ABF, providing piano and cello banjo accompaniments to the Round Robin group numbers as well as countless Special Programs. Her radiant smile and fast wit will be greatly missed.

Gail never went anywhere without Gary. Gary was always by her side supporting her music. She would introduce her husband by saying, “oh, he does not play banjo, nor is he a musician. He is a carrier.” Her license plate on her car read “big banjo,” and Gary was always the one carrying her instruments and setting them up. She had a beautiful singing voice and an encyclopedic memory of lyrics. And it was clear that she was always singing to Gary.

Gail is survived by a large family, including her daughter, Brenda, and her sons, Allen and Bruce. She lived her entire life in Williamson, NY.

NEW TRICK MARCH.

L. H. Left Hand.
R. H. Right Hand.

By THOMAS J. ARMSTRONG.

BASS TO D.

Moderato.

BANJO

L.H. swinging banjo.

*L.H. playing.
R.H. turning head.*

R.H. turns backward both ways L.H. playing.

L.H. swings banjo, making it go around and over hand, R.H. catches.

L.H. swings, and then R.H. turns head backward and forward.

L.H. swings banjo backward, R.H. catches.

mf

The musical score consists of ten staves of music in 2/4 time, key of D major. The first staff begins with a dynamic marking of *f*. The score includes various rhythmic patterns, including eighth and sixteenth notes, and rests. Performance instructions are provided in dashed boxes throughout the piece, detailing specific techniques for the left and right hands, such as swinging the banjo and turning the head. The piece concludes with a dynamic marking of *mf*.

Send to S. S. Stewart, No. 223 Church St. Philada. Pa., for a specimen copy of the Banjo & Guitar Journal.
Copyright 1886 by S. S. Stewart.

The musical score consists of ten staves of music in G major (one sharp). The first four staves are continuous eighth-note patterns. The fifth staff begins with the instruction "Very Quick" and "Drum Slide" above the notes, and a dynamic marking of *ff* below. The sixth staff includes the instruction "Moderato" above the notes, and "ritard." and "ad lib." below the first two measures. The seventh, eighth, and ninth staves each have a dashed box above them containing the instruction "Twirl banjo". The tenth staff features triplets of eighth notes and ends with a final chord marked with a fermata and a 0 below the staff.

MAGIC TRICK SOLO. For the Banjo.

L. H., left hand. R. H., right hand.

As performed by THO'S. J. ARMSTRONG.

The musical score consists of ten staves of music in G major (one sharp) and 6/8 time. The notation includes various rhythmic patterns, accidentals, and dynamic markings such as *p* (piano). Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1-4 and 0 (open string). The score is annotated with several performance instructions in dotted-line boxes:

- Staff 1: *Bass to D* (written above the staff); *L. H. swinging banjo.* (above the staff); *L. H. playing. R. H. turning head.* (above the staff).
- Staff 2: *L. H. swinging banjo.* (above the staff); *L. H. playing.* (above the staff).
- Staff 3: *R. H. turns head backward and forward. L. H. playing.* (above the staff); *L. H. swing, and R. H. catches in the middle and turns.* (above the staff).
- Staff 4: *L. H. swinging banjo making it go a-round and over hand. R. H. catches.* (above the staff); *L. H. swings banjo backward. R. H. catches.* (above the staff).

Additional markings include *2d Pos...* above the fifth staff and *p* below the fifth staff.

In playing with one hand, strike the open strings with the 2d finger. Play the solo with both hands first; then introduce a feature at each repetition.

THE BELL CHIMES. SOLO.

Tune fourth string to D.

HERBERT J. ELLIS.

BANJO. *Slow.*

Har.

Har.

Har.

Har.

Har.

Har.

Har.

Har.

Har.

Har.

SWINGING.

ff *Echo* *pp* *pp*

Slower.

p *pp* *pp*

NOTE. The last two lines are played while swinging the Banjo. Hold the instrument in the left hand in the usual manner, having the fingers free to stop the strings which are pulled by the right hand just below the left. The Harmonics are explained on page 49.

THE SANGALLI TRICK DANCE.

Tune 4th string to D.

The musical score is written on four staves in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The first staff begins with a treble clef, a sharp sign, and a double bar line. The second staff contains a repeat sign with a first ending bracket. The third staff includes performance instructions: 'Har. 12th.' with a wavy line, '2b', '7b', and a four-measure rest marked with a '4' and a '1'. The fourth staff concludes with a double bar line.

Copyright, 1886, by B. W. Hitchcock.

Article originally published in *The Music Trades*, October 8, 1921.

Students' Jeers Prompted Grover to Make A Real "Non-Tip" Bridge for Banjo Family

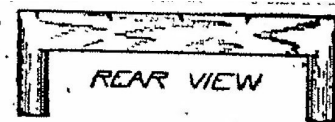
A. D. Grover, manufacturer of patented accessories for musical instruments at 180 Thirteenth Street, Long Island City, has just placed on the market new and improved models of the Non-tip bridge for banjo instruments. These new bridges are of a very attractive design, with rounded corners and wide bases which remove the possibility of injuring the head of the instrument. They are also more strongly made than the old style bridges, and will stand up under the very hard usage given by the professional and amateur players to-day without breaking or splitting between slots, as do the weaker bridges.

How the Non-tip Bridge Was Invented

At an annual concert given at Boston, several years ago, by the Boston Ideal Banjo, Mandolin and Guitar Club, Mr. Grover had an experience that strongly impressed upon him the great need for a banjo bridge that would not tip over. Previous to this time he had marketed a banjo bridge the feet of which were filled with rosin. This "Grover bridge" had been advertised in trade magazines and also in the Harvard "Lampoon," and the slogan used in connection with it was, "It Will Not Slip—It Will Not Tip." At this concert, among the audience of some 3000 people was a contingent of young men of the Harvard Glee Club who were banjo enthusiasts, and who were grouped together in the front of the orchestra. During the evening Mr. Grover played his "trick solo" which he had composed and originated shortly before that time. In this solo he would swing the banjo like a clock pendulum, juggle it in a number of ways, and also throw it fifteen or twenty feet in the air and catch it, and during all of these acrobatic stunts the banjo would, strange to say, keep on playing, much to the mystification of the audience. During the course of the rough handling that the instrument received, the bridge got out of position, and as the solo was nearly ended, it fell down on the head with a report like that of a pistol shot. Mr. Grover had to stop playing, readjust the bridge, and then tune up his instrument again, and much to his embarrassment the Harvard boys started to chant his advertised slogan, "It Will Not Slip—It Will Not Tip," over and over again until he had tuned up his banjo and started to play again. This very awkward experience made him realize how unsuited the two-legged bridge was to the banjo, and very shortly thereafter he

invented and patented a bridge with a center support which gave the bridge a four-point contact with the head of the instrument. This "Grover Non-tip Bridge" was patented and manufactured for several years, and with the advent of the mandolin-banjo and the tenor-banjo, eight and four slot bridges were made and supplied to the trade. With the increased popularity of banjo instruments during the last four or five years, the sales of Non-tip bridges have been doubled year after year. With increased manufacture many improvements have been made, and great care is taken that each bridge be perfect in every way before it leaves the factory. With the introduction of the new models a perfect bridge is offered for each of the three banjo instruments. Recently patents on improved methods of manufacture have been applied for.

The Grover Bridge.



Used and endorsed by the well-known players: G. L. Lansing, Mays and Hunter, A. A. Farland, G. W. Gregory, Brook and Denton, E. M. Hall, W. E. Stratton, A. A. Babb, Erastus Osgood, Clarence Partee.

The Grover Bridge improves the tone of any banjo twenty-five per cent. It will not tip. It will not slip.—It is made of old, well-seasoned maple and is the most highly finished bridge on the market.

PRICE, 15 CENTS.

Advertisement from Gatcomb's
Musical Gazette, June & July 1899

GROVER BRIDGE.

(Patent.)

IT WILL NOT SLIP. IT WILL NOT TIP.

Improves the tone of any Banjo
twenty-five per cent.

Avoid rubbishing imitations sold for the sake of
extra profit.

Price 1/1 post free.

Advertisement *B.M.G.*, November 1903