

TUNE OF THE WEEK – 1/9/15

FAREWELL TRION

Farewell Trion has been one of my absolute favorite fiddle tunes ever since hearing it on “Banging and Sawing”—that seminal set of recordings with Bob Carlin’s banjo and several great fiddlers, including James Bryan of Alabama. If you’ve never listened to the tune, you’re in for a treat: video of [James Bryan with Carl Jones](#); original recording of [Farewell Trion with James Bryan fiddle, Bob Carlin banjo, Norman Blake guitar](#). It’s no wonder James is also my favorite fiddle player.



James Bryan with Carl Jones

History of the tune: One reads a short description in the [Traditional Tune Archive website](#) that James Bryan learned it from Mack Blaylock (1914 – 1987). They are from the same region near Lookout Mountain in Alabama. Mack learned it from his great-uncle, Joe Blaylock (born 1854) who had worked at the mill in Trion, Georgia but was laid off and went back home to Alabama. The original tune had two parts. James added the third part in the 1980’s. Several musicians have since recorded it, a notable one being Chris Coole with Ivan Rosenburg on a CD in 2010 named “Farewell Trion.”

I’ve long been curious about the town and the mill, and discovered that the mill, which began 170 years ago, is still very much alive today—in fact, *you* may be wearing clothing milled in Trion. [History of the mill in Trion, Georgia \(1847 - present\)](#) is a good on-line synopsis. It describes the name Trion as derived from the three (=tri) mill founders in 1850; tells of the mill’s Civil War contribution to woolen uniforms; and brags of its current use of 2,500,000 pounds of cotton each year to produce denim as Mt. Vernon Mills.

In 1845 the three partners bought property on the Chatooga River to build a dam for powering their new cotton manufacturing mill. The local Post Office name then became Trion Factory—“tri” for the three founders. The town was incorporated in 1862 and was thereafter just called Trion. In 1875 the

mill burned down—perhaps the date when Joe Blaylock was laid off and wrote Farewell Trion as he returned home to Alabama. It was quickly rebuilt and continued to grow until it became the enormous company today known as Mount Vernon Mills.

The mill currently makes denim for jeans, including the pro-rodeo jeans seen many times in my neck of the woods. The same denim is used to make \$12 jeans - \$150 designer jeans. It differs from other cloth in that the cotton rope used in the lengthwise weave is dyed before the fabric is woven, and the filling line that goes across is left white, as opposed to dyeing the entire fabric after it's been woven. Mount Vernon Mills supplies denim for Wrangler Jeans, Walmart, Dickies, and Carhartt, to name a few, and is said to be the #1 manufacturer of denim. For details see this [good 8 minute video describing the current operation of the mill](#).

Back to the tune: Here are some videos and MP3s of Farewell to Trion, and there are several more on the Banjo Hangout Jukebox:

[A younger James Bryan](#)

[Chris Coole and Ivan Rosenberg](#)

[Nick Hornbuckle picking Farewell Trion](#)

[My video with cello banjo](#)

[My version under tab for Tunes of the Week](#)

And here's a tab for 3-finger pickers from Don Borchelt: [Farewell Trion tab on banj.com](#). My tabs are located under my [TABS link](#).

Farewell Trion is in the key of C. I've enjoyed picking and clawhammering this tune, and recently arranged a simpler down-the-neck version in double C tuning. Hope you enjoy this TOTW and give it a try. Your input and comments are always appreciated.