

# CAMP MEETING ON THE 4<sup>th</sup> OF JULY

Tune: Traditional; ~1800's

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*"Camp Meeting on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July"* is a traditional song that was written sometime in the late 1800's. Camp meetings were common outdoor revivals held on the American frontier during the 19th century by various Protestant denominations. These camp meetings filled an ecclesiastical and spiritual need in the unchurched settlements as the population moved west. Their origin is obscure, but historians have generally credited James McGready (c. 1760-1817), a Presbyterian, with inaugurating the first typical camp meetings in 1799-1801 in Logan county, Kentucky. Other ministers who associated with McGready subsequently spread his methods throughout the southwestern United States.

As the name implies, those who attended such meetings came prepared to camp out, gathering at the prearranged time and place from distances as great as 30 to 40 miles away. Families pitched their tents around a forest clearing where log benches and a crude preaching platform constituted an outdoor church that remained in almost constant session for three or four days. As many as 10,000 to 20,000 people were reported at some meetings. People came partly out of curiosity, partly out of a desire for social contact and festivity, but primarily out of their yearning for religious worship. Activities included preaching, prayer meetings, hymn singing, weddings, and baptisms. The theology of the preachers varied, but a sudden conversion experience was usually emphasized.

*"Camp Meeting on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July"* was originally used as a processional march at the beginning of these revival meetings. Its earliest documented use has been traced back to a series of camp meetings held in Alabama and Arkansas in the late 1800's. As a fiddle tune, its source has been traced back to an old-time fiddler named Coleman Barwick.

In music and friendship,

~Tull