

EIGHTH OF JANUARY

Traditional Fiddle Tune

On January 8, 1815, Major General Andrew Jackson led a small, poorly-equipped army to victory against eight thousand British troops at the Battle of New Orleans. The victory was a morale boost for the nation and made Jackson a national hero. The military significance was minimal, as it was fought after the signing of the Treaty of Ghent, which officially ended the war, as that news had not reached the armies in the field. The anniversary of the Battle of New Orleans was widely celebrated with parties and dances. It is this tune that was most often used to commemorating the event and became known as "*Eighth of January*" aka "*Jackson's Victory*".

James Corbitt Morris was born on June 20, 1907, near Mountain View, Arkansas. His father, Neil Morris, was a folk singer, and taught young Jimmy to play guitar made by his grandfather. The guitar neck was made from a fence rail, the sides from an old ox yoke, and the head and bottom from the headboard of his grandmother's bed. After 8th grade graduation he passed the county teacher's exam and was hired for to teach that summer. After his contract ended, he decided to make a living as a folk musician. He changed his professional name to Jimmy Driftwood and hitchhiked around the southwest. Life on the road was difficult, and after about 10 years, he returned to Arkansas, got married, started a family, and resumed his teaching career. Although not performing, he did write hundreds of songs, many of which he used to teach his students about history. One of these was "*The Battle of New Orleans*", which he set to this tune, "*Eighth of January*".

In the 1950's, Jimmy decided to audition for and was signed to a record deal with a Nashville song publisher. His first album, "*Newly Discovered American Folk Songs*", included his song "*Battle of New Orleans*". After Singer Johnny Horton heard the song, he got permission, and made a recording. It won the 1960 Grammy 'Song of the Year'. That success fueled Driftwood's own career. He performed at major American folk festivals and became a regular on live radio shows of the day, such as the Grand Old Opry and Louisiana Hayride. He was also invited to do concerts at Carnegie Hall.

In music and friendship,

~ *Tull*