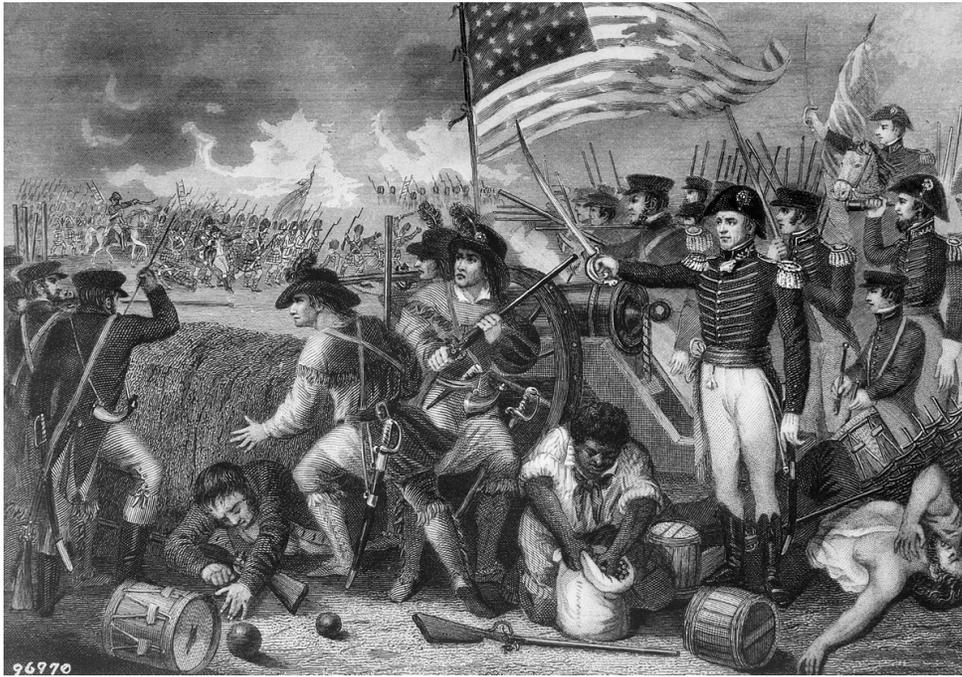


Battle of New Orleans



The Battle of New Orleans by William Mombberger, 1829 -, artist; Henry Bryan Hall, 1808-1884, engraver



Battle Of New Orleans By Kurz and Allison Wall
Color lithograph, circa 1890

BRIDGE

G

Yeah, they ran through the briars and they ran through the brambles,

G

D

G

And they ran through the bushes where a rabbit couldn't go.

G

They ran so fast that the hounds couldn't catch 'em;

G

D

G

Down the Mississippi to the Gulf of Mexico.

We fired our cannon 'til the barrel melted down.

So we grabbed an alligator and we fought another round.

We filled his head with cannon balls, and powdered his behind,

And when we touched the powder off, the gator lost his mind.

CHORUS

BRIDGE

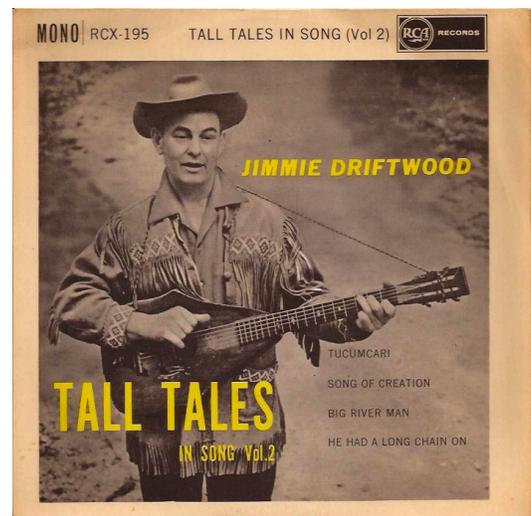
History

Jimmie Driftwood, aka James Corbitt Morris (June 20, 1907 - July 12, 1998) was a prolific folk singer / songwriter who wrote over 6,000 songs. He gained national fame in 1959 when Johnny Horton recorded Driftwood's song, "**The Battle of New Orleans.**" Even after Driftwood had risen to fame, he continued living in rural Stone County, spending most of his time promoting and preserving the music and heritage of the Ozark Mountains.

Driftwood was born in West Richwoods, AR. He was given the name Driftwood as the result of a joke his grandfather had played on his grandmother. When the two went to visit their new grandson, Driftwood's grandfather arrived first and wrapped a bundle of old sticks in a blanket. When Driftwood's grandmother arrived, she was handed the bundle and remarked, "Why, it ain't nothing but driftwood."

Music played a large role in Driftwood's life from his earliest years. His father, a farmer by trade, was also an accomplished folk singer, and it was through him and other local musicians that Driftwood was first exposed to the songs of the Ozark's. While still a small child, Driftwood

learned to play the guitar his grandfather had made from a piece of a rail fence and other salvaged



materials. He would continue to play this unusual-looking instrument throughout his career; it became his trademark and is currently on display in the Arkansas Entertainers Hall of Fame in Pine Bluff.

Driftwood was a good student during his eight school terms in the one-room school at Richwoods. Although he had not attended high school, he passed the Arkansas Teachers Exam when he was sixteen. He spent the next few years teaching in one-room schoolhouses in Prim, Roasting Ear Creek, Timbo, and Fifty-six, while attending high school in Mountain View. Graduating in 1928, he attended Arkansas State Teachers College, before eventually attending John Brown College in Siloam Springs. In addition to teaching, Driftwood played the fiddle at local dances and other venues to earn money for college.

Driftwood left college before receiving a degree and rambled for a while, eventually ending up in Arizona. While in Phoenix, he won a local talent show, which led to weekly performances on a local radio station. He left Phoenix in 1935 and returned to Stone County to teach in Timbo. Although he had been writing songs and poetry for years, it was at Timbo that Driftwood began teaching his students history through song. It was also there that he fell in love with a former student, Cleda Johnson. They were married on November 26, 1936. The couple had three sons.

In 1947, the couple was able to purchase the 150-acre farm where they would live the rest of their lives. After years of taking summer and night classes, Driftwood finally received his BSE degree from Arkansas State Teachers College on May 29, 1949, and, with it, became principal of the school in Snowball.

In the early 1950s, he submitted songs he had written to several record companies, including Blasco Music Company and Shelter Music in Kansas City, Missouri. Both Shelter and Blasco recorded some of Driftwood's material, but with little commercial success. In 1957, Driftwood went to Nashville, and auditioned for RCA record executive Don Warden, who signed him to a contract. Driftwood, under the guidance of RCA's Chet Atkins, recorded his first album, titled *Jimmy Driftwood Sings Newly Discovered American Folk Songs*, in less than three hours. It was released in 1958 and saw limited success. The album featured "The Battle of New Orleans," a song Driftwood had composed in 1936 to help his students differentiate between the War of 1812 and the Revolutionary War. The song was a hit among those who heard it, but the strict broadcast standards of the day virtually excluded it from the airways because of the words "hell" and "damn" in the lyrics. After the release of Driftwood's album, he quit his job as principal of Snowball School and began making regular appearances at such popular country music venues. He met Johnny Horton at the Louisiana Hayride in Shreveport, Louisiana, who expressed an interest in recording "The Battle of New Orleans." Driftwood revamped the song's lyrics to make them acceptable for radio.

Horton's recording of "The Battle of New Orleans" stayed on top of the country singles chart for ten weeks in 1959 and also held the top spot on the pop charts for six weeks. Partially because of the popularity of this song, Driftwood was asked to perform his traditional American music for Soviet premier Nikita Khrushchev during his visit to the United Nations in 1959. Driftwood and Horton took Song of the Year honors at the second Grammy awards ceremony in 1959. Driftwood's "Wilderness Road" also received a Grammy nomination for Best Folk Performance of the Year in 1959, and the same year, Eddie Arnold received a Grammy nomination in both country and folk categories for his version of Driftwood's most-recorded song, "Tennessee Stud."

See the Encyclopedia of Arkansas History and Culture for more: <http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/>