

# *The* **Portland** COLLECTION

*Contra Dance Music  
in the  
Pacific Northwest*

**VOLUME 3**

by Susan Songer  
with Clyde Curley

This book is dedicated to all dancers, musicians, callers, and dance organizers who, in the spirit of community, exhibit a welcoming, inclusive attitude toward those who, for the first time, take hands four, pick up a fiddle, or stand behind a microphone. They are the embodiment of the best qualities of the contra dance world.

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## *Acknowledgments*

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Many Portland contra dancers, musicians, and callers offered thoughtful comments about the dance community for inclusion in these pages.

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Above all, we would like to thank the contra dance musicians who were the collective source for the initial tune suggestions that became the music included in *The Portland Collection, Vol. 3*. One group of contributing musicians was centered in the Portland, Oregon, area. Another group

stretched from Olympia north to Bellingham, Washington, where Clyde now resides. We appreciate their willingness to share tunes from their repertoires for our consideration.

It has taken a very large dance and music community to create this contra dance tune book!

### *About the Editors*

**Susan Songer** has enjoyed music as long as she can remember. In grade school, she played piano and eagerly participated in square dancing during P.E. classes. She played folk songs on guitar with informal groups during and just after college. Susan moved to Portland with her family in 1982 and set up a psychology practice shortly thereafter. She discovered contra dancing in 1986 and loved it immediately. In 1989, she took up fiddle and revisited the piano. Three years later, she was playing these instruments regularly for dances with her husband, Lanny Martin. Now, in addition to musical pursuits with Lanny, she hosts a monthly contra dance with her band Joyride and plays for dances and dance and music camps in many different settings, in many parts of the country, with many different musicians. Susan is founder and director of the Portland Megaband, an orchestra of about 75 dance musicians that plays for special contra dances at least once a year. Susan has retired from psychology and now pursues music activities full time.

**Clyde Curley** has been playing folk music on acoustic instruments since high school, but his passion for fiddle tunes was sparked by exposure to string band music in his San Francisco college days in the 1960s. After moving to Oregon in 1970 to begin his high school teaching career, he played in a number of bands that focused on a variety of musical styles. It wasn't until he arrived in Portland in 1986 and took up the mandolin with Jigsaw and the fiddle with the Rose City Aces that he pursued playing contra dances in earnest. Since then, he has appeared on stages at local dances all over the Pacific Northwest and at festivals and camps beyond. Clyde retired from teaching in 2001 and moved to Bellingham, Washington, where—musically—he devotes his energies to exploring the mysteries of old-time and Québécois fiddle styles and—literarily—constructs the mysteries confronting Detective Toussaint in a series of detective novels set in Portland. His longest musical alliance continues to be with his piano-playing wife Susan, with whom he loves to play waltzes and Swedish music.

\* \* \*

An exhaustive effort was made to determine origins and composership for each of the tunes in this collection. When a composer was identified, we made every attempt to locate and contact the copyright holder to obtain permission to print the tune. Despite our best efforts, we might have inadvertently infringed on a copyright. Such infringement is not intentional. We welcome any information which could lead to the identification of composers for the tunes that we believe to be in the public domain. We will secure permission to print the tunes and make the necessary corrections in future editions. S.S. & C.C.

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## ***About This Book***

by Susan Songer

**Why?** Clyde posed this question in 2012 when I proposed that we produce one more book of contra dance music. Did I propose it because I believed we could once and for all include every tune that we loved? If so, I was sorely mistaken! At the outset of the project, we had more than 600 tunes from which to choose—all either in our own repertoires or suggested to us by musician friends. We knew then that we were dealing with not merely an unending stream, but a swift and wide river of contra dance music. For this final book in the series, we knew we would only be able to dip our tune buckets in and set down a small portion of the music that is now available via many avenues and in diverse formats. So why did we do it? Because it is deeply satisfying to trace our chosen portion of tunes back to their sources and contexts and to share those findings, as well as the musical dots, with all of you.

**Selection of the Tunes:** The tunes in this volume come from the repertoires of Portland contra dance musicians as well as from Clyde and the musicians he plays with in the surrounds of Bellingham, Washington, where he now lives. In narrowing this collection down to 314 tunes, we aimed for a balance among genres and key signatures, and between tunes with a classic feel and those with modern-sounding melodies and rhythms, while maintaining a reasonable cross-section of the music that we play. With regret, we've omitted many wonderful tunes simply due to lack of space.

**Settings of the Tunes:** We started with either printed music or recordings of tunes, which were then formatted and notated for the book. For music under copyright with identifiable composers, we sent our notation to the composer or composer's estate for approval and then used the composer's approved version of the tune. Where there were significant differences between a composer's version and the "Portland version" of the tune, we included an alternate setting as well. When the composer or estate could not be located, we omitted "Used by Permission" in the copyright acknowledgment and treated the setting for the tune just as we did for traditional tunes. Local sources for all of the tunes are listed in "Notes on the Tunes."

The version of each traditional tune included in this collection is usually that of the musician who initially suggested the tune. This version of the tune is not meant to be an accurate transcription of any primary or secondary source. It is instead a reflection of the way the tune is played here—by one musician or band at one particular point in time. It is not a definitive statement about how the tune is "supposed to go."

**Chords:** For recently composed tunes, the chords given are those that the composers prefer. Exceptions are stated in the comments. For traditional tunes, we usually supplied the chords suggested by the musician who suggested the tune. We have, however, "standardized" some chord selections, choosing conventional chords over "inventive" chords in most cases. (In real life, we take more liberty with chords than we have printed here.) Bass line note suggestions for chords

have been included at the composer's request, and in a few places where we think the bass line is important. They are indicated like this: "D/A," with "A" indicating the bass note and "D" indicating the chord to be played. We have included alternate chords for tunes in which there is a significant difference between "our chords" and the composer's chords.

**Tempos:** These tunes are most often played between 112 and 124 beats per minute, which is "dance speed" in Portland. Many of the tunes are enjoyable off the dance floor when played at a slower tempo.

**Ornamentation:** Ornamentation is rarely included in the music. Exceptions occur at a composer's request or when we felt these features were integral to the tunes.

Rolls are indicated by:  Bowed triplets are indicated by: 

**Titles and Alphabetization:** The tune titles are the names given by the composers or the names that the tunes are known by locally. Alternate titles are provided in "Alphabetical List of Titles and Alternate Titles" and in "Notes on the Tunes." For consistency with other tune titles in the book, capitalization of French titles is Anglicized (only the first noun and proper nouns would be capitalized in the French style). The tunes are presented in alphabetical order, ignoring "reel" and "6/8" (French for "jig"). However "gigue," "marche," and "quadrille" are not ignored in alphabetization, since these terms refer to dances rather than meters. Alphabetization is "word by word" except in the case of hyphenated words, which we treat as two words.

**Copyright Acknowledgments:** We have honored requests from some composers who have asked that their copyright be acknowledged in a way that differs from the format we've chosen for the book. This has resulted in some slight variations in copyright format.

**Quotes:** The quotes scattered throughout the music were collected from contra dancers, musicians, and callers in Portland who responded to the question, "What do you like about the contra dance community?"

\* \* \*

With this third volume completed, we leave the publication of *Portland Collections*, assured that contra dance music will continue to flourish far beyond the pages of our books. We are grateful to have had the opportunity to contribute to this wonderful, ongoing flow of tunes. And we encourage you to pick up your own tune buckets and dip in—not only into this book, but also into that wide river of music that awaits. It's only a musician friend, a CD track, a mouse click, or a contra dance away. Combined, these sources will bring you unending musical fulfillment.

## *Listen Up!* by Clyde Curley

When Sue Songer and I took on this project twenty years ago, resources for discovering tune history were limited. We relied on the willingness of avid amateur tune scholars to share what they knew, gleanings from other tune books and LP and CD liner notes, and information provided by a few governmental and academic sites on the Internet. From the beginning, our mission to share tunes from the Portland contra dance community was matched by a commitment to illustrate their connections to people, places, and points in time. At root, this is simply factual information, and in that regard the World Wide Web provided us with unparalleled resources, especially as we moved into publication of *The Portland Collection, Vol 3*.

However, reading about music is one thing. Hearing a good tune played well is another.

For people wanting to learn to *play* the music, the Internet is indispensable. I'm here to ask you to listen up! I'm here to suggest, fervently, that you take advantage of that electronic device that always seems to be within arm's reach to engage your ears and your brain (and the parts of your body that pluck, toot, saw, squeeze or hammer) in pursuit of both basic music appreciation and valuable skill building. If you don't, you are missing treasures that were only available before the current era to those willing to spend a small fortune compiling a vast and unwieldy record collection. Or, a few short generations back, only to those who were able and willing to travel great distances or had the good luck to live in a neighborhood or a family that included an accomplished fiddler.

Twenty years later, it is now possible to find video clips online of players from everywhere across the past 100 years playing—badly and brilliantly—just about any tune you can think of. Also available in bewildering abundance are audio performances of almost all the grand masters of the fiddle, living or dead, be they Michael Coleman or Liz Carroll, Doc Roberts or Rayna Gellert, Joseph Allard or Lisa Ornstein, Angus Chisholm or Brenda Stubbert—all of whom are represented in *The Portland Collection, Vol. 3*. These musicians are worth your close attention. They are your “virtual” mentors. They are the family members and neighbors whose music you might have heard coming from the parlors and porches of your neighborhood when you were growing up. Field and home recordings hold special significance: one fiddle, one musical consciousness, one historical/ social/familial setting, one tune. That's where the music we now play comes from. What the Internet does now is make these performances, old and new, immediately available.

The “Notes on the Tunes” and “Appendices” sections at the back of this book could be said to comprise an outline for a course in North American Fiddle Music 101. The hope is that they will direct you to web sources rich and strange—and to ones you will discover on your own.

Thus my recommendation: When you stumble across a tune you like as you read through our book, take a look in the “Notes.” If there is an accessible audio referent for it, seek it out. If not, get on the web and find one yourself. And listen up!



# A Jig

by Andrea Katz and David A. Kaynor

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Before dancing, it was the music. I just didn't know it was contra dance music. Then it was the dancing, and I thought, I'm just here for the dancing—I don't need to get involved with any of these fine folks. Well, you can guess how long that lasted. The music and the dancing are wonderful, exciting, and utterly healing. But as time goes by, it is the immediate and lasting connections of community that sustain me long after the dance is over...



NORMAN FARRELL

## Aimé Gagnon

## Argo's Reel

by Bob McQuillen

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## Baerendans

Am C G Em

Am F G Am

Am G Am G

C G Am Em F G Am

## The Bank of Ireland

C D\* C D

C D\* C D

D A D A D A D

Am D A D

*D\* = omit the third note (F#) of the D chord.*

## *The Battle of Waterloo*

The musical score for "The Battle of Waterloo" consists of eight staves of music, each with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The time signature is common time (C). The music is written in a simple, folk-like style with a mix of eighth and quarter notes. Above each staff, guitar chords are indicated: Am, A, D, Em, G, and Am. The chords are placed above the staff lines, and the music is written below them. The score ends with a double bar line on the eighth staff.

Am A D

Am Em G Em

Am A D

Am Em Am

Am Em G Em

Am Em G Em

Am A D

Am Em Am

### *Bell Cow*

Four staves of music for the piece "Bell Cow". The key signature is D major (two sharps) and the time signature is 2/4. The first staff begins with a treble clef and a key signature of two sharps. The melody starts on A4, moves to G4, then F#4, and continues with a series of eighth and sixteenth notes. The second staff continues the melody, ending with a double bar line. The third staff begins with a repeat sign and a key signature of two sharps, featuring a series of eighth notes. The fourth staff continues the melody, ending with a double bar line. Chord symbols A, D, and G are placed above the notes.

### *The Belle of Lexington*

Four staves of music for the piece "The Belle of Lexington". The key signature is D major (two sharps) and the time signature is 2/4. The first staff begins with a treble clef and a key signature of two sharps. The melody starts on D4, moves to E4, then F#4, and continues with a series of eighth and sixteenth notes. The second staff continues the melody, ending with a double bar line. The third staff begins with a repeat sign and a key signature of two sharps, featuring a series of eighth notes. The fourth staff continues the melody, ending with a double bar line. Chord symbols D, G, and A are placed above the notes. The piece includes first and second endings, indicated by "1 D" and "2 D" above the final measures.

## *The Bird in the Bush*



*Contra dancing is my team sport. Everyone participates; there are no champions. This takes pressure off me to be a star—I can be a support person. It's the biggest team I've ever played on.*

KRISTEN FALK



## *Notes on the Tunes*

by  
Clyde Curley

**A Jig** – by Andrea Katz and David Kaynor. Portland fiddler Betsy Branch has a sunny spot in her heart for this tune. “I learned it from David Kaynor while I was visiting him in Montague, Massachusetts. He taught it to me for our twin fiddle recording, *Midnight in Montague*. We played it at the cold and rainy Seattle Northwest Folklife Festival in 2010. David and I had a concert set on Monday, and it was pouring. At the beginning of a set of jigs that included ‘A Jig,’ all the umbrellas in the audience were up. As we played, I closed my eyes and sank into the tune. By the end of the tune, the skies had cleared, the umbrellas were folded, and the rest of the day was bright and sunny. I always think of this as a tune that brings back the sun!” Of the title, co-composer Andrea Katz, of Ithaca, New York says, “It was supposed to be humorous and temporary, since it’s a jig and it’s in A major, but we liked it so much that it stuck. I always say that David wrote all the good parts, but he’ll claim the opposite.” David’s side of the story? “Andrea set her chair facing me, and one of us said, ‘Let’s make something up!’ We played musical thoughts and responses for a long, happy time, and the tune evolved. So did the factually indisputable title.”

**Aaron’s Key** – by Paul Roche. Sue Songer first heard this tune on *The Crooked Rose*, a CD by the Irish band Stockton’s Wing. “Someone told me they considered it an Irish classic. I imported the tune from the recording to the Megaband.” Composer and Stockton’s Wing flutist Paul Roche, of Lucan, Ireland, tells us, “I wrote this tune after the birth of my third son, Aaron.”

**Accidental** – by Alan Snyder. Portland fiddler and pianist Alan Snyder relates that “this tune was the result of a fortuitous accident. I started playing ‘Julia Delaney’ on the wrong string but decided to keep going, and this is what came out.” I admire your perseverance, Alan, in hearing those accidentals emerging and staying on the road until the tune reached its destination. Alan, who plays in the Portland band The Euphemists, also manages a terrific website, [www.cbfdiddle.com](http://www.cbfdiddle.com), that indexes Cape Breton recordings.

**Accordion Crimes** – by Andrew Marcus. Sue Songer got this tune directly from accordionist Andrew Marcus when he played Oregon’s Northwest Passage Dance Camp. She says, “I liked it right away and took it first to my band Calico and then to Joyride.” Virginia musicians Laura Light and George Paul—also known as the Avant Gardeners—recorded “Accordion Crimes” on their CD *Goats in the Garden*. Andrew Marcus, of Washington, D.C., makes a guest appearance on that disc on—naturally—accordion. Of the title, he says, “After my accordion was stolen out of the trunk of my car in Baltimore, I discovered that many otherwise normal people have an old accordion lying around in their basement or attic they would like me to borrow. I had just taken such an instrument, on loan to me from Carl and Diane Friedman, out of its case for the first time when this tune jumped out of it at me. The name is inspired by the title of the E. Annie Proulx novel.”

**Acorn Stomp, Part 2** – by George L. Lansing. Bellingham, Washington, fiddler Mike Schway learned this tune from the East Texas Serenaders on a County LP reissue of 78 rpm sides recorded between 1927 and 1936. This is the second tune in a medley titled “Acorn Stomp.” The Serenaders were notable for their sophisticated choice of material, mostly rags, many in the flat keys. Armin Barnett, who recorded the tune in the ’80s on a self-produced cassette tape, *Armin Barnett & Friends: Fiddle Tunes*, fills in some background on the provenance of this second part of the medley: “Before hearing the East Texas Serenaders, I remember hearing a tape of a cylinder recording of ‘Darkies’ Dream,’ played by Fred Van Eps on the classical banjo. A web search came up with that recording, and also the likely composer of the tune, one George L. Lansing. My suspicion is that lots of traditional musicians from the early 20th century were exposed to this stuff. Van Eps, Vess Ossman, Fred Bacon, and many other classical banjo players were quite popular in the last third of the 19th century.” Indeed, the original publication date of Lansing’s sheet music of the tune is 1887. Ragtime music, whose qualities are on eloquent display in this piece, grew out of America’s long and shameful—but musically and culturally rich—minstrel show history. Thus, likely, the offensive title. Fred Van Eps recorded “Darkies’ Dream” as a solo banjo piece in 1907. However, most fiddlers today know this piece simply as the back half of the “Acorn Stomp” medley.

**Across the Black River** – by Kevin Burke. Kevin, the renowned Irish fiddler who has made his home in Portland for many years, tells us, “The Black River flows past the house in Ireland my mother grew up in.” Portland fiddler Betsy Branch, who brought the tune to Portland’s contra dance stages, says, “I play this tune at contras with Mark [Douglass, that is, Betsy’s husband] on the occasions when we do duo gigs. I learned it from Kevin’s fine recording of the same title. I think that the contrast between the A part and the B part make it a great tune for dances.” Betsy refers to the CD *Across the Black River*; the first album made by Kevin with Portland guitarist Cal Scott.

**The Adirondack** – by Ethan Hazzard-Watkins. Ethan, of Brattleboro, Vermont, says he wrote this tune “beside a lovely lake in the Adirondacks.” Sue Songer’s source for “The Adirondack” is *Super Tonic*, Ethan’s recording with his band Elixir. “I probably heard them play it at Oregon’s Northwest Passage dance camp, too.”

**The Adriatic Bridge** – by Sue Songer. Sue says, “I wrote this tune to medley with [Seattle fiddler] Claude Ginsburg’s ‘Oddville Cupola.’ I was aiming for a good rhythmic and melodic match not only to ‘Oddville,’ but also to the contra dance ‘Ad Vielle’ that Portland caller Erik Weberg wrote to call with ‘Oddville.’” Sue adds, “I was on a trip on the Adriatic when I came up with the tune. The ‘Bridge’ part of the tune name refers to its function in the medley, a tune in a key that fits between the keys of Dm and A.”

**Aimé Gagnon** – George Penk, one of Portland’s premier contra dance fiddlers, says this about this tune: “One year when my son Gabriel and I attended the Northwest Passage dance camp together as participants, we went to the session with Vermont fiddler Ethan Hazzard-Watkins and learned this tune together. It has become a mainstay of our mutual repertoire. The syncopation in the



B part is so satisfying that I sometimes forget it should probably also be played in tune. It takes such a simple tune to help show one's shortcomings. I don't know why it has Aimé's name to it, but I enjoy my memories of him from the Port Townsend Festival of American Fiddle Tunes several years back and often wonder what it would sound like in his hands." Ethan tells us he learned "Aimé Gagnon" at a small session near Brattleboro eight or nine years ago "from a local fiddler whose name I can't remember. I've heard it played at other sessions over the years. It's a great contra dance tune, simple and straightforward." George refers to the late Québec fiddler honored in the title, a man whose music and manner were greatly admired by aficionados of the music of French Canada.

**Argo's Reel** – by Bob McQuillen. A legendary New Hampshire tune composer and piano and accordion player, Bob McQuillen (1924–2014) made matchless contributions to the contra world going back to the 1940s. He wrote of this tune at the time of its composition in 1989, "Warren Argo, sound man, caller, musician, indefatigable spark plug of the West Coast music and dance scene, is a great friend of the entire contra dance community. I am so glad this tune came through with your name on it, Warren!" Warren has since passed away, leaving a huge vacuum in the music and dance scene in the Pacific Northwest—and nationally as well, considering his long stint as director of Port Townsend's Festival of American Fiddle Tunes. We are happy to include this tune written in his honor. Sue Songer says, "I liked this tune the first time I heard it, before I even knew the name. It's on the *Hand It Down* recording by Bob, Laurie Andres, and Cathie Whitesides. We played this tune a lot at the Warren Memorial weekend in Olympia in 2011. Wasn't that a time!" Bob McQuillen was a musician whose life and spirit were synonymous with the life and spirit of contra dancing in New England and beyond for more than half a century. Among his many accomplishments is a huge body of tunes that, like "Argo's Reel," were named after former students (he taught high school industrial arts) and the countless friends he made in the music and dance world.

**Asturian Way** – by Brian Finnegan. Sue Songer says, "Kathleen Towers and Erik Weberg found the tune on the Flook recording *Haven*. (Erik especially likes that band since it is all flutes and backup—no fiddles). It was one of Joyride's more successful tunes. So when George Penk joined the band, we insisted that he learn it, which he did. It has driving rhythms and cool chords—there's a lot to like!" Flook band member Brian Finnegan, originally of County Armagh, Northern Ireland, tells us, "'Asturian Way' was written for the many wonderful Asturian traditional musicians Flook befriended on our travels to that proud region of northern Spain."

**The Auld Fiddler** – by Willie Mcguire. This Scottish reel made its way into the Portland community, as so many fine tunes have, by way of Massachusetts fiddler and dance caller David Kaynor, who taught it to Portland fiddler Kathleen Towers. David picked it up from upstate New York fiddler George Wilson. According to notes posted on the website [www.thesession.org](http://www.thesession.org), the tune was written by Willie Mcguire of Aberdeen, Scotland, for fiddler Bert Murray, whose name is sometimes given as an alternative title to the tune. It's been recorded by two master musicians from Scotland on their album *The Best of Aly Bain and Phil Cunningham*. Interested in improving

your fiddle chops? A close and persistent application of practice time to this tune could do wonders for you!

**Baerendans** – This is one of those tunes that redeems my admiration for and love of folk music: The melody is simplicity itself, yet it's gorgeous and full of feeling. Lanny Martin and Sue Songer picked up "Baerendans" from fiddler David Kaynor. Lanny then adopted it into his band, named, logically, The Lanny Martin Review. David adds to the mystical charm of the piece by having no firm opinion as to its provenance. He tells us, "My old friend and musical soul mate, cellist Beth Robinson, from Potsdam, New York, taught it to me sometime in the early 1990s. I recently saw a photocopy of a hand-transcribed tune called 'Bear Dance,' which is very similar to what I learned from Beth, with 'Flemish' written above the score. I've also heard Denmark, Germany, The Netherlands, and Belgium all proposed as possible origins. Who knows? Whatever the case, it's a really fun tune!"

**The Bank of Ireland** – Portland musician Alan Snyder brought this classic Irish reel into the PDX dance community. He says he learned the tune in a session in Palo Alto, California. One of my favorite recordings is the treatment given it by legendary Irish fiddler Tommy Peoples on his fine album *The High Part of the Road*. It's a fun tune to play, with few technical challenges, and maybe that's why it's one of the earliest Irish tunes I learned. It probably serves best if it comes second or third in a medley since, like some Irish tunes, the opening phrase of the A part is not on the tonic chord. But it is a dynamic tune—and it doesn't hurt that it pretty much bows itself. About those chords: Our choices may strike the ear of a player accustomed to the conventional harmonic structures of most fiddle tunes as unusual. However, some fiddle tunes simply insist on remaining unconventional! This is especially true of Irish tunes, which for most of their history were accompanied by no harmonic context at all—no pianos, guitars, or bouzoukis. We've provided what we think are reasonable chordal suggestions.

**The Bank of Turf** – If there's one tune to learn out of this book, learn this fine Irish jig. I always perk up when I hear it at a session. There's just something so elementally coherent about the melody. Also, any tune that ends on the V chord just begs to be played again...and again. Caller and flute player Erik Weberg of the band Joyride brought "Bank of Turf" to the Portland dance scene. Erik says, "When I was living in Eastern Washington in the mid-1980s and calling dances, a band called Spare Parts played that tune. I liked it and jotted down the tune as best I could and learned to play it on the whistle. Jump forward 20 years. While playing music with Kathleen Towers, I mentioned this tune. She found it on [www.thesession.org](http://www.thesession.org) (the website dedicated to Irish music), and we played it as part of a jig set."

**Barter's Hill** – by Keith Murphy. Vermonter guitarist Keith Murphy says this about the title of his tune: "I grew up in St. John's, Newfoundland, and much of that city consists of hills that eventually make their way to the harbour around which the city was built. Barter's Hill was particularly steep and hard to walk. It was also dangerous, since trucks would lose their brakes on it from time to time. When part of downtown was being rebuilt, Barter's Hill was tamed into a gently curving hill.