



The Merry Blacksmith

Traditional
Arr. by Tom Morley

♩ = 130

Chords: D, Em, A, G, A, D

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Learn more about Chief Francis O'Neill

You would think that the first large collection of Irish Traditional music came from Ireland. But actually, it originated in Chicago, Illinois.

Francis O'Neill (1848–1936), who was born in County Cork, Ireland, and immigrated to America, led a very interesting life but is best remembered as a collector of Irish Traditional music. He was a cabin boy on a merchant vessel (once shipwrecked on an island), a schoolteacher, a railroad worker, and a lumberjack. When he moved to Chicago, he joined the police force and quickly rose through the ranks to serve as Chief of Police from 1901 to 1905.

During his time as chief, he recruited many traditional Irish musicians into the police force and collected jigs, reels, hornpipes, and other tunes from them and other Irish musicians then living in Chicago. He published his collections, including *O'Neill's Music of Ireland* (1903), with 1,850 pieces of music and, after he retired from the police force, he published *The Dance Music of Ireland* (1907), sometimes called, *O'Neill's 1001*, because of the number of tunes included.

Irish Trad musicians often refer to these books as the “bibles” of Irish music. Many of the tunes we love to play today might have been lost forever if not for the efforts of Chief O'Neill.