

Cooley's Reel

Traditional *

Em D Bm

Em D 1. Bm Em 2. Bm Em

Em D Bm

Em D 1. Bm Em 2. Bm Em

arr. Peter McLaren

Composite setting based on several print and recorded sources.

* From 'The Fiddler's Companion' website:

'The tune is associated with the renowned button accordion player Joe Cooley (1924-1973), originally from Peterswell, County Galway, near the northern boundary of the Sliabh Aughty mountains. Cooley spent much of his later life in an itinerant lifestyle in various cities in America, and back and forth to Ireland. He was a member for a time of the famous Tulla Céilí Band in Ireland...

'There are several stories circulating regarding the origins of this extremely popular session tune. According to David Taylor (1992) the reel was the composition of Co. Mayo and New York fiddler John McGrath (1900-1955). Philippe Varlet maintains it was the invention of accordion player Joe Mills of the Aughrim Slopes Céilí Band, who originally entitled it "Lutrell Pass." Charlie Piggott, writing in his book co-authored with Fintan Vallely, 'Blooming Meadows' (1998), has yet another version, related to him by Joe's brother Séamus. Its origins date to the 1940's when the teenaged brothers attended a house session in the neighboring county of Clare. There they listened to an old man with a battered concertina playing in front of an open fire... and one tune in particular caught their attention. On returning home the brothers tried their best to remember what the old man had played, staying up through the night working and worrying the remembered fragments until finally the reel took shape. Séamus credits Joe with the first part of their refashioned piece, while himself taking credit for the turn.'



Joe Cooley c. 1970s [photo: Eric Thompson - <https://joecooley.com>]