



Country Fiddler

Preston Steadman, a lifelong resident of Natchitoches Parish, has been playing the fiddle since he was a young man. He was taught to play by his mother, an old-time fiddler, and an uncle who lived to be over 100 years old.

Born in 1922, Preston spent years as a butcher for local companies. For a time he was involved in a Northwestern State University program teaching people how to make a living butchering.

Sometime during 1980, Preston formed a close friendship with David and Johnny Jones. They were musicians from Kentucky who had moved into the Natchitoches area to work for the Tennessee Gas Company. With David and Johnny and occasionally with other musicians, Preston performed for many years at the Natchitoches-NSU Folk Festival. He competed in various fiddle contests and served several times as a judge.

Steadman's repertoire contains all of the standard American fiddle tunes such as "Over the Waves," "Rubber Dolly," and "The Orange Blossom Special." He is especially proud of a tune he composed during World War II as he served in the Navy. The tune is called "Pacific Waltz," and he plays it at least once during all of his performances, which today includes festivals throughout the northern part of Louisiana as well as nursing homes, parties, and benefits. Besides the fiddle for which he is best known, Mr. Steadman also plays the mandolin and guitar.

Mr. Steadman joins in numerous jam sessions with the large number of bluegrass and country musicians in the Natchitoches area. In 1981, Steadman was honored by his selection to the Louisiana Hall of Master Folk Artists and was inducted at the Natchitoches- NSU Folk Festival.