

So, now you have a second version of A.T. that is considerably more melodic than our first version, but still only uses the basic strum. It should be noted that as we progress through these “layers” there are more and more possibilities available. That is, to my ear, the most logical way of playing this tune, the way I hear it. Don’t stop there though, there are lots of other combinations of hammer-ons, pull-offs, slides, and “split basic strums” that you could put together and still have a recognizable version of A.T....come to think of it, before you move on to the next step, you should make another version of this tune, using the same parameters. Remember, you’re not re-inventing the wheel here, just do something a little different. Maybe put a slide where there used to be a hammer-on, or vice versa. Learning to play variations freely starts with making minor changes. Also, always remember that taking something out, is just as valid (and often more effective) than trying to cram more in.

### Step 3. - Adding your drop thumb, and double thumb

Now we will allow ourselves the luxury of double thumbing and drop thumbing. If you don’t know what I mean by double thumbing and drop thumbing, maybe refer back to my hand out called “Elements of Clawhammer Banjo”. Because clawhammer is a folk style of playing, the nomenclature for all these techniques is a bit wishy washy and regional.

In the first version of the tune, using just the basic strum, we only had the melody note that fell on beat 1 available to us. In the second version, by adding our left hand ornaments, we were able to add melody notes on beat 2. We also learned “split basic strum”, which allowed us a bit of melody on beat 3 (although in the form of a strum as opposed to a clear single note).

When we add double thumbing, we are able to get clear melody notes on both beats 1 and 3. This is especially handy at the beginning of the B part of A.T.. By adding the drop thumb we are able to get clear melody notes on beats 2 and 4. Until you can drop thumb, you can never get a melody note on beat 4. This is really handy on the very first phrase of the the A part of A.T..

So finally, here is a version with everything thrown in. You now have what you need to play this tune a dozen different ways...but of all the ways to play Arkansas Traveler, this is definitely one of them. You should try this with a dozen tunes. Don’t skip any steps.

#### A PART

\* Version 3 (all dressed)

#### X2 B PART