

FOLKWAYS RBF 38

EARLY BAND RAGTIME

COMPILED AND ANNOTATED BY DAVID A. JASEN



"IN MY MERRY OLDSMOBILE" —PHOTOGRAPH BY TOM M. PHILLIPS, 1907, COLLECTION OF THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

COVER DESIGN BY RONALD CLYNE

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SIDE ONE—Ragtime's Biggest Hits 1899-1909

1. Maple Leaf Rag—United States Marine Band
2. Dill Pickles—Pryor's Band
3. Pickles & Peppers—Pryor's Band
4. Smiler Rag—Zonophone Concert Band
5. Black & White Rag—Walter B. Rogers Orch.
6. Whitewash Man—Pryor's Band
7. Wild Cherries—Zonophone Orch.
8. Temptation Rag—Pryor's Band

SIDE TWO—Obscure Rags Rarely Recorded

1. Carpet Rags—Hager's Orch.
2. Cabaret Rag—Prince's Band
3. Southern Beauties Rag—Pryor's Band
4. Sweetmeats—Zonophone Orch.
5. Powder Rag—Black Diamonds Band
6. Ragamuffin Rag—Walter B. Rogers Orch.
7. Les Copeland's Rag—Band
8. Banana Peel Rag—Rogers Band
9. Honolulu Rag—Orch.

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SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION

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DESCRIPTIVE NOTES ARE INSIDE POCKET

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During the first decade of ragtime's emergence into the mainstream of popular music, the primary carrier of this music to its public was by way of the gramophone by means of the flat disc. The overwhelmingly popular messenger was the military concert band, comprised for recording purposes of between ten and fourteen members. They were the favorites because of the public's constant exposure to such groups, as every city and village had its own such band. Ragtime, however, was written expressly for the piano (which the recording engineers at the time did not want to record). In order for competing bands to make a good showing, it was necessary for them to arrange these rags with especial care, no smart band wanting to rely on the stock arrangements as issued by the publishers. The best of these arrangers was Arthur Pryor who not only lead a crackerjack outfit, but had the knack through performance of making the rags come alive, even with the limitations of acoustic recordings!

As a contrast, this album provides the listener on Side One with the most popular rags written during ragtime's first decade (1899-1909), and on Side Two with very obscure rags rarely recorded. One composer, Charles Leslie Johnson (1876-1950), managed to make both sides. A prolific composer who published much of his own work, Johnson was bound to succeed, having lived his life in the heart of ragtime country. With such a constant output, much was bound to be overlooked, especially as

he hid behind pseudonyms. Whether famous or little-known, all of these rags share the attributes of all good, happy music, as they bring lasting satisfaction to its audience.

SIDE ONE

MAPLE LEAF RAG by Scott Joplin, is without doubt the most famous of all rags. It is also the first rag to achieve the status of a best-seller. It is the only rag which has continuously been recorded throughout recording history, illustrating its adaptability to the various musical fads over the decades (see as well LATE BAND RAGTIME, RBF-39). The United States Marine Band, under the direction of Lieutenant William H. Santelmann, made the first recording of this most famous of rags on October 15, 1906. This version (take 3) was re-done by the band on February 18, 1909, using, of course, the same orchestration.

DILL PICKLES was Charles L. Johnson's third published rag and his first, of many, ragtime hits. The left hand in the second section suggests the trombone part in the military band which is most evident in this performance by Pryor's Band.

PICKLES AND PEPPERS was Iowa-born Adaline Shepherd's first and only hit rag. Politicians liked the rag so much, they used it for their campaigns. A lively Folk rag, the third section is filled with complex syncopations.

THE SMILER RAG is multi-hit pop song composer Percy Wenrich's best rag. Played with zest by the Zonophone Concert Band, it brings to life the glories of this marvelous rag.

BLACK AND WHITE RAG was George Botsford's entry in 1908. It followed Dill Pickles by creating a three-over-four musical pattern in its first section (three notes repeated so that a different note begins each new measure).

WHITEWASH MAN by showtune composer Jean Schwartz gives us another side to the ragtime hits of 1908. A very melodic rag, its harmonic changes are smoothly done.

WILD CHERRIES was composer-publisher Ted Snyder's hit and the third ragtime success of 1908. The first selection starts off with a descending progression which was used in such great ragtime winners as James P. Johnson's Carolina Shout, Jelly Roll Morton's Perfect Rag and Joe Sullivan's Little Rock Getaway. This was such a popular number that years later, comedian Jimmy Durante remembered playing it nightly as a pianist in Coney Island.

TEMPTATION RAG started Henry Lodge on his very successful career. It was played in vaudeville and was a favorite with military bands. Pryor's Band made this recording in mid-1910 which increased the rag's tremendous popularity. An unusual rag, each section has a different rhythm.

SIDE TWO

CARPET RAGS by Raymond W. Connor was published at the end of 1902 and this, its only recording, made in 1907. This cheerful rag is given an unusual performance with Hager's Orchestra featuring violins playing the melody. A dance-like cakewalk spirit pervades throughout the piece except for its opening section.

CABARET RAG only exists on this recording, as it was never copyrighted or published. It came from the very talented pen of showtune composer Harry Austen Tierney in 1912.

SOUTHERN BEAUTIES RAG is a quite obscure yet hauntingly beautiful rag from the one-man factory of Charles L. Johnson in 1907. A delightful Folk rag whose B section was taken by Stride ragtimer Lucky Roberts for his A section of Shy and Sly.

SWEETMEATS is another relatively unknown rag of 1907. Like The Smiler, it was written by the Missouri pop songwriter

Percy Wenrich, whose melodic invention was never stronger. In the last section of this rag, Charles L. Johnson probably wished Wenrich hadn't used his (Johnson's) melodic invention of the last section in Dill Pickles, clever though the transformation was.

POWDER RAG was published in 1908 as by "Raymond Birch." This is a well-known pseudonym for the famous Kansas City composer-publisher Charles L. Johnson. His syncopated melodic line truly sparkles with freshness and originality. He created so much that some gems were bound to have been overlooked by the public. We are fortunate that the Peerless Orchestra (recording as the Black Diamonds Band) of London momentarily rescued this brilliant work in late 1912.

RAGAMUFFIN RAG was the work of little-known Will T. Pierson in 1913. His delightful third section is quite reminiscent of May Aufderheide's great 1908 Dusty Rag. Walter B. Rogers leads his orchestra in this sprightly rendition.

LES COPELAND'S RAG as it was known in this only recording on Little Wonder (a 5" disc) is really Copeland's 38th Street Rag (copyrighted and published as such in 1913).

BANANA PEEL RAG appears in this lone recording by Rogers' Band on the rare Paroquet label. It seems to be Gus Winkler's only rag.

HONOLULU RAG was written by Chicagoan Egbert Van Alstyne, writer of several rags with strong melodies and master pop hit songwriter. As a matter of fact, this was published as a song, one of the very few really syncopated songs with an added strain to turn it into a three-sectioned rag. The added-on section is the floating folk strain found in Max Hoffman's Yankee Land, the reverse of the trio in Botsford's Black and White Rag and in Del Wood's main theme of Ragtime Melody.

Credits:

We wish to thank David A. Jasen and George Blacker for the use of their rare original recordings.

Programming and Notes: David A. Jasen

Remastering: Carl Seltzer

Documentation: RAGS AND RAGTIME, A MUSICAL HISTORY by David A. Jasen and Trebor Jay Tichenor (Seabury Press).

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SIDE 1

RBF-38-A

Ragtime's Biggest Hits 1899-1909

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RBF 38 A-1

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SIDE 2

RBF-38-B

Obscure Rags Rarely Recorded

1. CARPET RAGS—Hager's Orch.
2. CABARET RAG—Prince's Band
3. SOUTHERN BEAUTIES RAG—Pryor's Band
4. SWEETMEATS—Zonophone Orch.
5. POWDER RAG—Black Diamonds Band
6. RAGAMUFFIN RAG—Walter B. Rogers Orch.
7. LES COPELAND'S RAG—Band
8. BANANA PEEL RAG—Rogers Band
9. HONOLULU RAG—Orch.

RBF 38 B-1