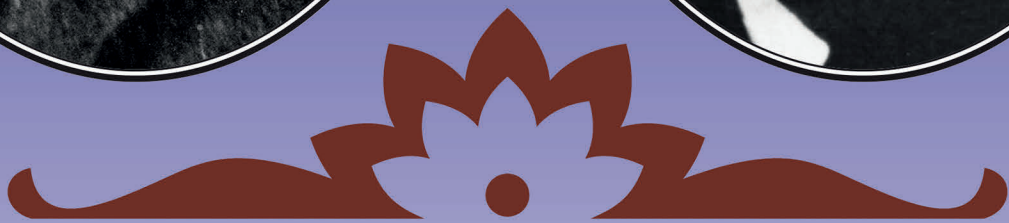
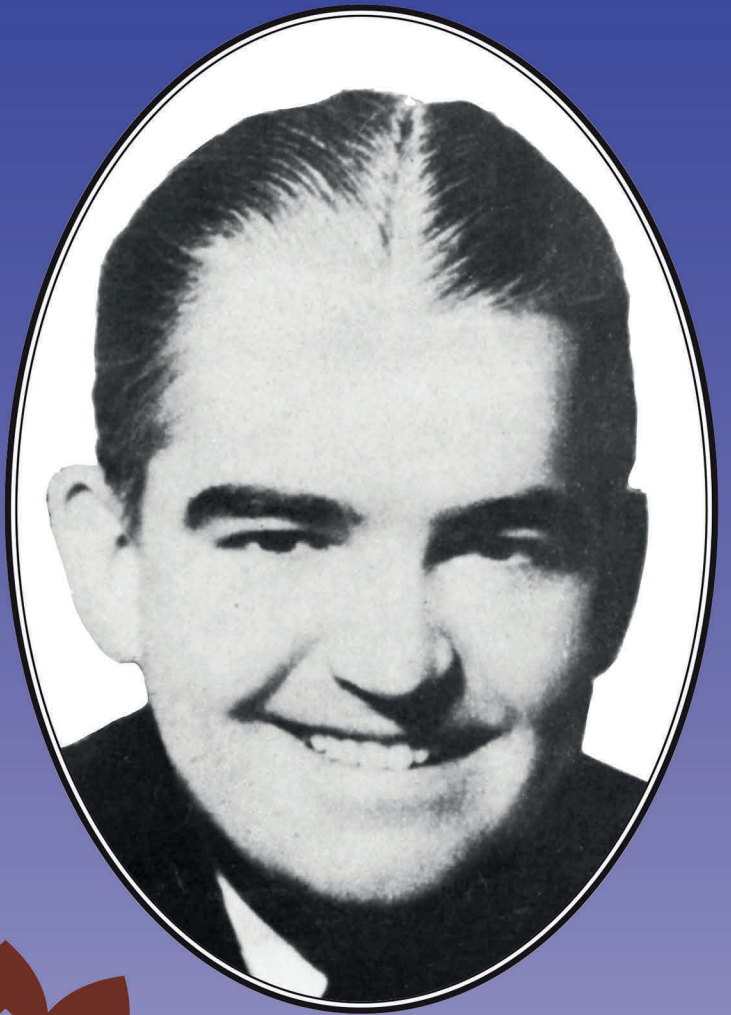
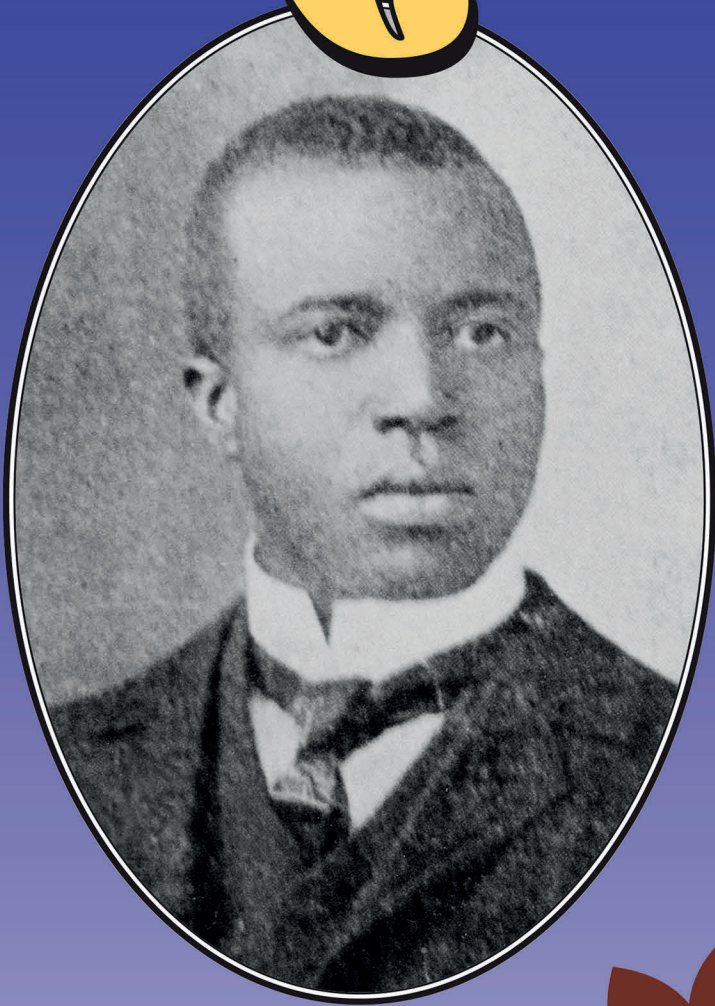


An Encyclopedia, Discography, and Sheetography

# RAGTIME



DAVID A. JASEN

**RAGTIME**



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DAVID A. JASEN

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# Dedication

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To my favorite (and only) grandson,

Alex Jasen

With the hope that this book will encourage a lifelong interest in this subject.



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# Ragtime: An Overview

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For a little more than 100 years since ragtime was created and burst on the scene in the United States, it has become the basis for dramatic change in the popular music landscape and has infused its sparkling rhythms onto every aspect of our musical culture. During this time, we have seen ragtime undergo several transformations: from its beginning in 1896, when the word was first printed to indicate a special ingredient in musical accompaniment, or later applied to a type of song or dance or an entire musical composition or style of playing, to when it wasn't even called *ragtime* or *rag* — as in its last phase during the 1920s when the special Novelty rags had such titles as “Kitten on the Keys,” “Knice and Knifty,” “Doll Dance,” and the Stride rags were called “Carolina Shout” and “Handful of Keys” — to the first full-scale revival in the 1940s and 1950s. Though the revival started in San Francisco in the early forties by Lu Watters's Yerba Buena Jazz Band and its pianist, Wally Rose, featuring rags nightly, it was in 1950 that Capitol Records, a major record company with worldwide distribution, turned Lou Busch, one of its artist-and-repertoire men, into the recording artist Joe “Fingers” Carr. He was a brilliant composer of rags; an arranger and pianist who recorded more rags than anyone during the decade of the fifties.

Gone were the coon songs, the simple pop songs, syncopated or not, with the word *rag* or *ragtime* in its title. Gone were the syncopated dances (except for the same three or four cakewalks) and other tunes not in the 2/4 rhythm, which were all called ragtime. Gone was the honky-tonk style of playing pop songs called ragtime, which were incorporated into the general popular music repertoire during the mid-teens for a decade, mostly found on piano rolls and in dance and jazz bands. What remained to be recorded in this first revival period, performed in festivals and concerts, studied, researched, and written about, were the body of piano rags composed and published across this country from 1897 to roughly 1927. This, then, was what was called now and forevermore, ragtime — a musical composition for the piano comprising three or four sections containing sixteen measures each, which combines a syncopated melody accompanied by an even, steady duple rhythm.

When the second revival took place in the seventies, with its use of Scott Joplin's rags in the movie *The Sting* in 1974, classical piano players “discovered” the rags of Joplin and tried to superimpose a classical sound to ragtime. At the same time, original turn-of-the-twentieth-century orchestrations were found and classically trained instrumentalists replaced the Dixieland bands (who had replaced the military bands during the ragtime years) and called themselves Ragtime Orchestras. For these past thirty or so years now, ragtime has evolved into being performed by trained musicians with a great mix of sensibilities to give ragtime a wide variety of performance sounds. Contemporary ragtime composers, along with adding fifty years' worth of harmonies and taking inspiration from a host of extra-ragtime sources, have even extended the sixteen measure melodies to reflect today's view of ragtime.

1897–1927: Ragtime's original heyday; thirty years of growth and development.

1928–1940: Ragtime's decline and absorption into mainstream popular music; twelve years of oblivion.

1941–1971: Ragtime’s first revival as nostalgic good-time music; thirty years of research and redefinition.

1972–present: Ragtime’s second revival as a classical and contemporary music; thirty years of technical skill and experimentation, broadening its scope.

Selections from the discography and rollography have been chosen for your listening pleasure in the individual listings of the major rags.

# Categories of Ragtime

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Through the years, the sounds of ragtime varied considerably, as did its publications in printed form. When studying the scores, it becomes obvious that several distinct groupings can be distinguished, especially among major composers who spent considerable time developing their works. For the convenience of studying the larger picture of the development of ragtime composition, ragtime has been divided into several categories of rags, each with its own history, overall sound, major compositional influences, and outstanding performers. For the most part, these groups have definite time periods and geographic locations:

Early ragtime (1897–1905). The Folk rag came from the Midwest and South, which took local and regional floating strains and unusual rhythms in unorthodox patterns.

The Joplin tradition or Classic ragtime. This used the formula devised by Scott Joplin to combine the Instrumental folk music of the Midwest with the formal European tradition of the classical music of the nineteenth century.

Popular ragtime (1906–1912). Reducing the ragtime approach where simple syncopated melodies were turned out by professional pop composers in Tin Pan Alley during ragtime's heyday.

Advanced ragtime (1913–1917). This brought about a renewed creativity in expanding the harmonies to give a richer sound for the composer–performer.

Novelty ragtime (1918–1928). This brought forth highly complex rhythms and harmonies derived in part from the French Impressionists and piano roll arranging techniques.

Stride ragtime (1918–1929). This came mainly from the black composers who settled in New York City and performed in vaudeville, saloons, and bawdy houses.

Jelly Roll Morton's ragtime. This reflected his unique and varied approaches to ragtime as a performance art, as captured in print and especially on record.



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# A

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## Advanced Ragtime, 1913–1917

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After ragtime's popularity peaked around 1912, there was not the sudden dismissal that occurs with musical fads of today. Ragtime in 1913 still had a powerful draw, not only in the United States but in England and Europe as well. Tin Pan Alley was continuing to grind out large quantities of songs with the magic word *rag* in their titles. But other things were also happening to ragtime.

Composers were starting to experiment with the Popular rag, not in form but in content—creating new musical ideas within the same structure. Now that the pressure to create popular hits was removed, other composer-performers were attracted to ragtime as a composed music. Unusual harmonies were initially used by Georgia-born Malvin Franklin when he came to New York City and published “Hot Chocolate Rag.” As New York-born Harry Jentes entered the field with “California Sunshine,” and later “Bantam Step,” people noticed a decided difference in the rags. There were colorations and new dissonances to be used later in jazz: Blues elements and the blues form integrated with traditional ragtime writing to tantalize the by now jaded listener. But it was not all confined to New York City: Sydney K. Russell in Berkeley was turning out imaginative rags like “Too Much Raspberry”; Irwin P. Leclere in New Orleans with the inventive “Triangle Jazz Blues”; and Fred Heltman in Cleveland with “Fred Heltman’s Rag.” And the cradle of ragtime, St. Louis, was maintaining its creativity with the widest variety of musical ideas incorporated into the ragtime form as demonstrated by Artie Matthews and his five diverse “Pastime Rags,” Rob Hampton’s “Cataract Rag” and “Agitation Rag,” Lucien P. Gibson’s “Jinx Rag” and “Cactus Rag,” and, finally, Charles Thompson’s unassuming but highly exciting ragtime compositions, “The Lily Rag” and “Delmar Rag.”

The black ragtime pianist-composers from the East Coast started being heard from. Luckey Roberts from Philadelphia was the first of this crowd to be published and to record. Unfortunately, his earliest recordings, which were made for Columbia, were not issued at the time and have since disappeared, presumably destroyed. At the time they were recorded in 1916 only Mike Bernard and Englishman-turned-Canadian Harry Thomas had made ragtime piano discs of major consequence, but they were soon to be joined by the

touring vaudeville favorite, Roy Spangler, who can be heard on “Piano Ragtime of the Teens, Twenties and Thirties,” (Herwin 402), performing songwriter–publisher Abe Olman’s “Red Onion Rag.” The “Pride of Baltimore,” Eubie Blake, followed Luckey in publishing rags, but his numbers fell between the pop song and the rag tradition. Finally, New Jersey-born James P. Johnson composed several rags that, like Luckey’s and Eubie’s, had a pronounced lyrical quality seldom found in the rags of the time. It is not surprising, then, that a few years later all three would make significant contributions to the world of popular music by writing beautiful ballads, memorable dances, and sparkling, foot-tapping music. Their creativity easily matched their counterparts in St. Louis, but their originality took on a completely different character.

One of the oldest show business devices is to take a classical composition and syncopate it. The ragging of the classics suddenly blossomed forth in this era with great skill and cleverness. Julius Lenzberg led the pack with “Operatic Rag” and “Hungarian Rag,” whereas Edward Claypoole from Baltimore published the widely copied and wildly successful “Ragging the Scale.” Paul Pratt contributed “Springtime Rag,” which was given twenties dance band treatment in an unusual recording by Vic Meyers and his orchestra. George L. Cobb created the masterpiece “Russian Rag,” from Sergei Rachmaninoff’s Prelude, op. 3, no. 2, which was so successful that a few years later he was forced to write another one called “The New Russian Rag.”

Throughout these imaginative years, Folk rags were still being written and published in small towns, and the Joplin school was well represented by James Scott and Joseph Lamb. The Advanced rag writers were no longer writing for the at-home amateur pianist, as were the Popular rag composers, but were writing for themselves and for other professional performers. Consequently, the Advanced rag was not only harmonically advanced but was also more difficult to play than the preceding Popular rag.

A revolution in producing player piano rolls took place around 1913. This was the advent of hand-played rolls. Before then all rolls were created by technicians who read music scores and punched out the notes they wanted on a continuous sheet of paper placed on a table with the piano keyboard marked. In many cases the rolls exactly reproduced the sheet music score. One firm, however, hired a brilliant arranger to enrich the plain, unadorned sound. When pumping alone in a living room or parlor, a full, rich series of sounds would make the pumping seem worthwhile. U.S. Music Rolls employed Mary “Mae” Brown, the most gifted arranger of mechanically cut popular rolls.

Two outstanding player–artists in these years created certain rags that are found only on rolls. These rags were never published or recorded on disc, and many were never even copyrighted. The men were Imperial Industries manager Charley Straight and QRS’s eventual owner, Max Kortlander.

## “African Pas” (Maurice Kirwin)

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**December 29, 1902, John Stark & Son, St. Louis**

*Pas*’ means *step* in the sense of African dance. This is the rag Stark advertised for aspiring ragtime pianists as “easy and brilliant—good to catch the ragtime swing.” Section A, marked *pianissimo*, gets the rag rolling gently and interestingly uses the lowered sixth chord (E flat, in the key of G).

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## **"African Ripples" (Thomas Waller)**

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**April 20, 1931, Joe Davis, Inc., New York**

A section is the same as the A section of "Gladys."

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## ***African Suite* ("Mississippi Shivers," "High Hattin'," "Kinda Careless") (Zez Confrey)**

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**July 16, 1924, Jack Mills, Inc., New York**

The suite consists of three Novelty rags, only the first of which has been recorded. It is also the most versatile, as it incorporates the blues with an early Romantic period flavor and a popular ballad into the Novelty rag framework.

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## **"Agitation Rag" (Robert Hampton)**

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**January 10, 1915, Stark Music Co., St. Louis**

The D section has a treble figure that became a favorite later in Stride ragtime.

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## **"Alaskan Rag" (Joseph Lamb)**

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***They All Played Ragtime*, 3d ed., 1966, Oak Publications, New York**

An extension of his great complex rags of the teens and a beautiful addition to the Classic rag repertoire. It is certainly Lamb's most intricate and detailed conception. His final breakthrough in Classic rag composition, he begins the A section with rests in both hands.

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## **"Amazon Rag" (Teddy Hahn)**

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**February 11, 1904, John Arnold & Co., Cincinnati**

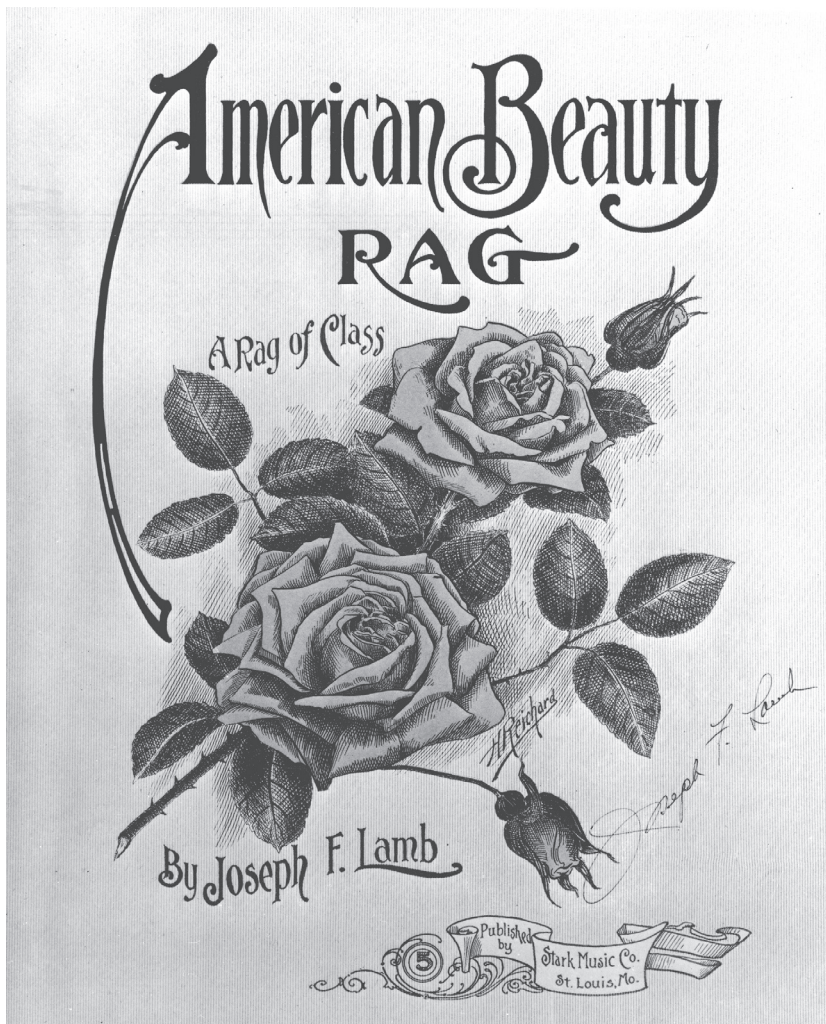
The most advanced of the rags published by this firm, noted for their adventurous rags. Section A is the most pianistic with a descending broken chord C minor pattern much like later Novelty rags. B is an unexpected

interlude in G minor, C has a startling harmonic change, and D is a dramatic through-composed section in the manner of Lamb's "Dynamite Rag."

## "American Beauty Rag" (Joseph Lamb)

December 27, 1913, Stark Music Co., St. Louis

One of the greatest rags of all and a splendid example of the best of the Classic rags, it simply must be heard to be appreciated. It reveals the depth of Lamb's conceptions, his bold originality, and his use of unusual harmonies. The melodic lines alternate between long, sweeping phrases and short, skipping melodies. While section B compliments the A section, the tour de force comes with the short introduction into the C section and throughout C leading to section D with its powerful development into the finale. These sections are more rhythmic than melodic. Austere yet elegant in its sweeping beauty, it is an astonishing yet fitting rag in the development following the "Excelsior Rag."



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## “Angel Food” (Al F. Marzian)

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**December 16, 1911, Forster Music Publisher, Chicago**

A string bass player from Louisville, who published several rags of others, this is his only rag and is an absolute joy. The interlude in minor recalls the *Dance of the Seven Veils* and provides a wonderful contrast to the rest of the piece.

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## “Applejack, Some Rag” (Charles L. Johnson)

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**April 7, 1909, Vandersloot Music  
Publishing Co., Williamsport, PA**

An inspired A section leads to a most lyrical B section, a high point in his rags.

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## “Arctic Sunset” (Joseph Lamb)

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***Ragtime Treasures*, Mills Music, Inc., New York, 1964**

A section begins with a Novelty rag influence and proceeds to an ambitiously syncopated B section crossing the bar lines. C, however, brings an almost Joplinesque change of mood with a brief serenade marked to be played slow. The final section again designates a tempo change, marked *allegretto*. Such a format is rare with Lamb.

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## Donald Ashwander

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**(b. July 17, 1929, Birmingham, Alabama;  
d. October 26, 1994, New York City)**

A most unusual man, whose southern heritage is very much a part of his musical life, Ashwander worked for NBC-TV, was a seaman, and composed ballet music and music for advertisements. For twenty-five years he was the musical director, performer, composer, and actor with The Paper Bag Players, a most creative children's theater, with costumes and scenery made from paper bags. His contemporary rags, mostly written between 1965 and 1970, extended the scope of ragtime. His performing style was unique, and his particular bounciness attracted other contemporary players. He was a thoughtful, sensitive musician with great technique and charm.



Donald Ashwander.

### Ragtime Compositions

"Astor Place Rag Waltz," 1977, *The Ragtime Current*, Edward B. Marks Music, New York

"Business in Town," 1966, *They All Played Ragtime*, 3d ed., Oak Publications, New York

"Cascade Plunge," not copyrighted or published

"Empty Porches," not copyrighted or published

"Friday Night," 1966, *They All Played Ragtime*, 3d ed., Oak Publications, New York

"Harlem River Houseboat Rag," not copyrighted or published

"Late Hours Rag," not copyrighted or published

"Mobile Carnival Rag Tango," not copyrighted or published

"Moon Walk," not copyrighted or published

"Peacock Colors," not copyrighted or published

"The Ragtime Pierrot," not copyrighted or published

"Sea Oats," not copyrighted or published

"Upstairs Rag," not copyrighted or published

"Voices, Voices," not copyrighted or published

"Waterloo Rag," not copyrighted or published

"Winter Fields," not copyrighted or published

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## May Frances Aufderheide

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**(b. May 21, 1888, Indianapolis, Indiana;  
d. September 1, 1972, Pasadena, California)**



A popular pianist whose first rag was a hit. The large sale of “Dusty Rag” impressed her father, John H. Aufderheide, enough to start his own music publishing company. Located in the Lemcke Building, the firm was managed by Paul Pratt who, along with May’s friends Julia Niebergall and Gladys Yelvington, also contributed three rags to the catalog. May married Thomas M. Kaufman, who worked for her father in his Commonwealth Loan Company and permanently left the music business. They had one son.

### Ragtime Compositions

“Dusty Rag,” February 6, 1908,  
Duane Crabb Co., Indianapolis  
“Richmond Rag,” December 12, 1908,  
J. H. Aufderheide, Indianapolis  
“Buzzer Rag,” September 4, 1909,  
J. H. Aufderheide, Indianapolis  
“The Thriller,” September 4, 1909,  
J. H. Aufderheide, Indianapolis

“A Totally Different Rag,” July 16, 1910,  
J. H. Aufderheide, Indianapolis  
“Blue Ribbon Rag,” October 3, 1910,  
J. H. Aufderheide, Indianapolis  
“Novelty Rag,” April 11, 1911,  
J. H. Aufderheide, Indianapolis



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# B

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## **“Back to Life” (Charles Hunter)**

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**November 18, 1905, Charles K. Harris, New York**

One of the most curious rags ever published. Though the form appears typical enough for a Folk rag, the use of keys is not. The rag begins on a G minor chord, which is the II chord, the supertonic, of the A section's tonic, F. The B section moves abruptly to D flat, after which A is repeated. C is also in the key of F. D moves up a fourth to B flat. Finally, A returns to end the rag. Without section B, the tune is fairly orthodox, but as it is it has the overall effect of a medley, with the A strain barely holding it together.

## **“The Baltimore Blues” (Henry Lodge)**

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**June 20, 1917, Jerome H. Remick & Co., New York**

A weird tonal plan for a blues concept. It begins in the key of D major, modulates to C and then onto F, and finishes with a repeat of the first section. A touch of true blues feeling occurs at the start of the C section, where a very pianistic bass run in triplets ends on a minor seventh.

## **Banjo Ragtime**

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The banjo, like ragtime, is an American product. Joe Sweeney, of Appomattox, Virginia, is credited with designing its four long gut strings and one short one with a rim and wooden resonator for backing. Banjoists would pick the strings with their fingers using three basic motions with their right hand while fingering the frets on the neck with their left hand.

The history of recorded ragtime banjo music started with the first commercially made flat discs. All these recordings were made acoustically. The recording studios were crude affairs with six or seven horns lined up in racks. The disc made from the one in the center usually had the best sound to it. As there were no duplicating facilities, every disc was an original recording.

The pioneer recording banjoists were Cullen and Collins from Washington, D.C., Ruby Brooks of the vaudeville team of Brooks and Denton, Olly Oakley in London, and the Banjo King, Vess L. Ossman.

Although ragtime was composed primarily for the piano, the earliest recordings featured military concert bands and five-string banjoists. The banjo soloists were usually backed by the military bands or, perhaps, by a piano. Recording virtuosi were made famous by their records, went into vaudeville, and toured around the country, some touring in England and Europe.

The two greatest five-string banjoists during ragtime’s first two decades were Ossman (1868–1923) and Fred Van Eps (1878–1960). Both were pioneers, first recording on cylinders and then on flat discs. Though they each made many recordings of diverse musical genres, it is on their ragtime recordings that they fully demonstrate their remarkable techniques and musicianship. They did their own arranging, showing off their incredible skills.

Approaching the 1920s, the five-stringed banjo gave way to the four-string tenor and plectrum banjos, both of which were used mainly as rhythm backing in the jazz and dance orchestras. The absolute ruler of the four-string tenor banjo was Harry Reser (1896–1965), who was the first to show that the tenor was capable of being a solo instrument. He was not only the acknowledged leader among solo banjoists, but he also composed rags for the banjo that compared favorably to the Novelty piano rags being composed at the same time. What started out to herald the new instrumental popular music remained to champion it and to create additional pieces in the repertoire.

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## **“Bantam Step” (Harry Jentes)**

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**February 21, 1916, Shapiro, Bernstein & Co., New York**

One of the most singular Advanced rags. Section A’s unusual harmonies achieve a haunting quality, unlike most late rags. His piano-roll performance is important because it illustrates how he altered some of the harmonies of the score in performance and is especially enjoyable because of his great broken bass octave figures that are at variance from the printed score.

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## **“Barber Shop Rag” (Brun Campbell)**

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**Not copyrighted or published**

The C strain is an asymmetrical fifteen and one-half measures. The most striking, however, is the eight-measure B section, which is identical to the first half of “Muskrat Ramble.” Perhaps this was a floating folk strain, as it is very pianistic.

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## Roy Fredrick Bargy

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**(b. July 31, 1894, Newaygo, Michigan;  
d. January 16, 1974, Vista, California)**



Bargy grew up in Toledo, Ohio, where at the age of five he started piano lessons. He wanted to be a concert pianist but realized at seventeen that unless he studied in Europe there would be no opportunity for such a career in this country. He hung around the district in Toledo listening to such black pianists as Johnny Walters and Luckey Roberts, started making good money playing piano and organ for silent movies, and formed his own dance orchestra. Through a friend who did artwork for Imperial Player Rolls, he auditioned for Charley Straight in 1919 and in September of that year worked at Imperial full time for more than a year. His main job at Imperial was to edit the popular song rolls. Occasionally he was asked to arrange and play some himself as well as to compose and record one Novelty rag a month. He collaborated on two with Charley Straight, who introduced him to booking agent Edgar Benson. Benson formed a band to record for the Victor Talking Machine Company and hired Bargy as pianist, arranger, and director. “Ma” (Victor 18819) and “Say It While Dancing” (Victor 18938) feature him at the piano and serve to illustrate his fine abilities as arranger. He joined Isham Jones and his orchestra in the same capacity and toured the country with them for two years. During this time, the band recorded for Brunswick, and “The Original Charleston” offers a superb piano solo by Bargy (Brunswick 2970, also available on *The Dancing Twenties*, Folkways RBF-27). Bargy began a twelve-year stint with Paul Whiteman, who had the greatest dance orchestra of all, in February 1928 as solo pianist, arranger, and assistant conductor. He went into radio as conductor–arranger for the Lanny Ross Show and in 1943 became musical director for Jimmy Durante, an association that lasted twenty years, until both of them retired.

A distinctive Bargy device was the extensive use of the *break*—a musical interruption of the melody—incorporating it as part of his melodic line. Famous ragtime artist–composer–pianist Jelly Roll Morton

specifically pointed out the advantages of using breaks as a performance device. Bargy uses it as a compositional device, integrating it as part of the melodic conception. For freshness, he always used new and rhythmically different breaks throughout his rags, never boring the listener by using the same breaks over and over.

### Ragtime Compositions

"Rufenreddy" (with Charley Straight), November 14, 1921, Sam Fox, Cleveland

"Slipova," November 14, 1921, Sam Fox, Cleveland

"Knice and Knifty" (with Charley Straight), February 7, 1922, Sam Fox, Cleveland

"Sunshine Capers," February 7, 1922, Sam Fox, Cleveland

"Behave Yourself," June 27, 1922, Sam Fox, Cleveland

"Jim Jams," June 27, 1922, Sam Fox, Cleveland

"Justin-Tyme," June 27, 1922, Sam Fox, Cleveland

"Pianoflage," June 27, 1922, Sam Fox, Cleveland

"Sweet and Tender," April 17, 1923, Will Rossiter, Chicago

"A Blue Streak," 1921, Forster Music, Chicago

"Ditto," not copyrighted or published

"Omeomy," not copyrighted or published

## "Bee Hive" (Joseph Lamb)

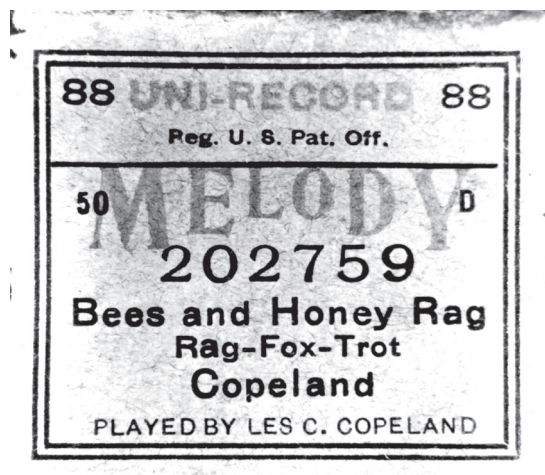
**March 27, 1959, unpublished**

Of all the unavailable Lamb rags, this is most like his hard-to-play classics. The trio is one of his most monumental creations, with frequent chord changes occurring in rapid succession in a heavy texture of diminished chords that seems to be Lamb's answer to the trio of his favorite Joplin rag, "Gladiolus."

## "Bees and Honey Rag" (Les Copeland)

**Not copyrighted or published**

This is one of several that stay in one key, recalling the Turpin approach. However, the three-over-four device in the A section is an accretion of Popular rag writing that betrays its later date. His last four rags were done exclusively as piano-roll performances and were never written down.



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## Theron Catlen Bennett

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**(b. July 9, 1879, Pierce City, Missouri;  
d. April 6, 1937, Los Angeles)**



Local pianist who went to work for the Victor Kremer Co., Bennett later became a music publisher, purchasing W. C. Handy's first success, "Memphis Blues." Afterward, he owned a chain of music stores in New York City, Chicago, Omaha, St. Louis, Memphis, and Denver. Finally, he settled in Denver, where he operated the famous Dutch Mill Cafe, rendezvous for musicians and artists. His big hit was "Around Her Neck She Wore a Yellow Ribbon."

### Ragtime Compositions

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|---|--|
| "Pickaninny Capers," March 16, 1903, Cornelius J. Shea, Springfield, MO               | "Pudnin' Tame," March 25, 1909, Jerome H. Remick & Co., New York       |
| "Satisfied," January 2, 1904, Victor Kremer Co., Chicago                              | "Sycamore Saplin," April 9, 1910, Jerome H. Remick & Co., New York     |
| "St. Louis Tickle" (as Barney & Seymore), August 20, 1904, Victor Kremer Co., Chicago | "Chills and Fever," August 27, 1912, Sam Fox, Cleveland                |
| "Sweet Pickles" (as George E. Florence), October 23, 1907, Victor Kremer Co., Chicago | "Some Blues, for You All," January 8, 1916, Joe Morris Music, New York |
| "Pork and Beans," January 26, 1909, Victor Kremer Co., Chicago                        |  |

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## Mike Bernard

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**(b. March 17, 1881, New York;  
d. June 27, 1936, New York)**



The most famous of the music hall or variety pianists was Mike Bernard (the pseudonym of Mike Barnett), who accompanied the greatest artists in vaudeville while he was resident pianist at Tony Pastor's Music Hall, the most famous variety hall in the United States. Playing or otherwise performing at Tony Pastor's was what performing at the Palace Theatre in New York City was to a later generation of show business folk: the highest accolade a performer could have. Only headliners played at Pastor's, and Mike Bernard, often a show by himself, manned the keyboard. The greatest display of his pianism is amply demonstrated on the recording "Blaze Away" (Columbia A-2577) which illustrates his whirlwind approach to ragtime and reaffirms his title of "Rag Time King of the World," a title and diamond-studded medal so stated when he won the National Ragtime Piano Contest at Tammany Hall on January 23, 1900, sponsored by the *Police Gazette*. His performance of an earlier rag, "Tantalizing Tingles" (Columbia A-1386), supports the theory that for ragtime to mean anything to its audience, the performer must incorporate his own individualized style within the rendition. Bernard was a crowd pleaser for many years.

## "Bert Williams" (Jelly Roll Morton)

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**June 29, 1948, unpublished**

This was originally titled "Pacific Rag," but when the great comedian expressed appreciation, it was changed to honor him.

## **"Billiken Rag" (E. J. Stark)**

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**February 21, 1913, Stark Music Co., St. Louis**

Named after the St. Louis University basketball team, which had been named after a coach who bore a marked resemblance to the traditional good luck doll *Billiken*, used by Stark on the cover. Section A features an unusual chromatic descent that lasts for three measures.

## **"Bird-Brain Rag" (Joseph Lamb)**

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***Ragtime Treasures*, 1964, Mills Music, Inc., New York**

Expansive later style with thinner texture to allow for ranging melodic line. In sections C and D, tenths are in the bass instead of the conventional octaves.

## **"Black and White Rag" (George Botsford)**

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**Not copyrighted, published 1908, Jerome H. Remick & Co., New York**

This was an early ragtime hit—the third million-selling rag in sheet music—and the biggest success of Botsford's seventeen rags. Vaudeville virtuoso pianist Albert Benzler, also an expert percussionist and marimba soloist, probably made the first piano recording of a rag when U.S. Everlasting issued his version on their cylinder (#380) in early 1910. Benzler performs this rag at a fairly fast clip, and his virtuosity is apparent. He appears not to deviate from the printed score and is content to deliver the happy sounds as they were written. This rare cylinder first appeared on LP in the historical reissue series on the Herwin label (Herwin 405).

Because of its immediate popularity, it is incredible that this rag was not copyrighted initially. Not until November 13, 1924, did Botsford have it copyrighted in a revised arrangement. Its most appealing feature was the three-over-four device in the A section. The C section comes from Max Hoffman's rag of 1904, "Yankee Land." Later that same year, Cy Seymour (pseudonym of William C. Polla) used it for his trio in "The Black Laugh."

## **"A Black Bawl" (Harry C. Thompson)**

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**June 16, 1905, W. C. Polla Co., Chicago**

Sections C and D bear a strong resemblance to parts of McFadden's medley, "Rags to Burn" (see also Brun Campbell).

## "A Black Smoke" (Charles L. Johnson)

**Not copyrighted, published 1902, Carl Hoffman, Kansas City, MO**

An imaginative Folk Rag essay all in one key, but one that achieves surprising variety. The introduction and vamp are extended ideas leaving no doubt that the home key is G. Section A has syncopation crossing the bar line, a rarity in early rags, and has a rather complex stop-time ending. B, by contrast, uses a different syncopation and shorter phrasing. C is a buck dance executed with careful dynamics in the call-and-response pattern. D has the cleverest harmonies, bringing in the relative minor.

## "Black Wasp Rag" (H. A. Fischler)

**February 21, 1911, Vandersloot Music Publishing Co., Williamsport, PA**

One of a half-dozen or so rags published by Vandersloot, which specialized in easy-to-play rags, mostly scored in single-note melody lines and phrased with rather busy, relentless syncopations that vary greatly in inventiveness.

## James Hubert (Eubie) Blake

**(b. February 7, 1887, Baltimore;  
d. February 12, 1983, Brooklyn)**

From early lessons on the organ (at age six) and piano (at age seven) to the sporting houses where he learned the latest rags as an adolescent, Blake began to compose rags ("Charleston Rag," 1899), ballads, and waltzes with equal facility and invention. He studied with Margaret Marshall and later with Llewellyn Wilson and became a star attraction in cafes, first in Baltimore and then in Atlantic City. He began his professional career on July 4, 1901, as a dancer and accompanist in a medicine show. Blake met singer and lyricist Noble Sissie on May 15, 1915, at the River View Park in Baltimore. This was the start of a lasting partnership until Sissie died December 17, 1975. They immediately became a songwriting team, the Dixie Duo, and headliners in vaudeville. On May 23, 1921, the team's first Broadway musical, *Shuffle Along*, was produced at the 63rd Street Theatre. The success of this show gave other black songwriters a chance to write for Broadway. Throughout the twenties and early thirties Blake wrote for many such shows, both in New York and in London. During World War II he toured with the U.S.O. With the ragtime revival, starting in 1951, Blake came out of retirement to record and to perform at ragtime and jazz festivals around the world. He frequently appeared on radio and television, composed a number of new rags, and formed a record company in 1971, Eubie Blake Music, which produced both albums and sheet-music folios. Robert Kimball and William Bolcom compiled an excellent pictorial book on Blake's life, *Reminiscing with Sissie and Blake* (Viking Press, 1973). Standard popular songs include "I'm Just Wild about Harry," "Memories of You," and "You're Lucky to Me."



Eubie Blake and Noble Sissie.



Eubie Blake at 90.



David Alan Jansen and Eubie Blake.

## Ragtime Compositions

- “The Chevy Chase,” October 28, 1914, Jos. W. Stern & Co., New York
- “Fizz Water,” October 28, 1914, Jos. W. Stern & Co., New York
- “Bugle Call Rag” (with Carey Morgan), January 27, 1916, Jos. W. Stern & Co., New York
- “Charleston Rag” (a.k.a. “Sounds of Africa”), August 8, 1917, unpublished until *Sincerely, Eubie Blake*, Eubie Blake Music (1975), New York
- “Baltimore Todalo,” October 29, 1962, *Sincerely, Eubie Blake*, Eubie Blake Music (1975), New York
- “Brittwood Rag,” September 11, 1962, *Sincerely, Eubie Blake*, Eubie Blake Music (1975), New York
- “Dicty’s on Seventh Avenue,” July 24, 1962, *Giants of Ragtime*, Edward B. Marks Music (1971), New York
- “Kitchen Tom,” October 20, 1962, *Sincerely, Eubie Blake*, Eubie Blake Music (1975), New York
- “Melodic Rag,” January 3, 1972, not published
- “Novelty Rag,” January 3, 1972, not published
- “Poor Jimmy Green,” October 13, 1969, *Sincerely, Eubie Blake*, Eubie Blake Music (1975), New York
- “Poor Katie Red (Eubie’s Slow Drag),” August 18, 1960, *Sincerely, Eubie Blake*, Eubie Blake Music (1975), New York
- “Rhapsody in Ragtime,” March 6, 1973, *Sincerely, Eubie Blake*, Eubie Blake Music (1975), New York
- “Tricky Fingers,” October 14, 1959, *Giants of Ragtime*, Edward B. Marks Music (1971), New York
- “Troublesome Ivories” (a.k.a. “Ragtime Rag”), May 14, 1971, *Giants of Ragtime*, Edward B. Marks Music (1971), New York

## “Blame It on the Blues” (Charles L. Cooke)

**March 3, 1914, Jerome H. Remick & Co., New York**

One of the most inspired and original of these later rags, without the composer’s resorting to odd harmonies or dissonances. Cooke became famous during the twenties when he recorded as Doc Cook & His Dreamland Orchestra. He was one of the few black musicians who obtained a doctor of music degree. He graduated from the Chicago Musical College.

## Rudi Blesh

**(b. January 21, 1899, Guthrie, Oklahoma;  
d. August 25, 1985, Gilmanton, New Hampshire)**

Rudi Blesh, coauthor with Harriet Janis, wrote the first history of ragtime, *They All Played Ragtime* (Alfred A. Knopf, 1950). The idea came from Janis, who persuaded Blesh to help her research and write it. He was reluctant, as he had just finished researching, writing, and publishing a controversial book on the history of jazz called *Shining Trumpets* (Knopf, 1946). He was finally committed to this ragtime project after they went to the Library of Congress and the copyright office where they were given a tip to visit Harlem journalist Bucklin Moon. Moon helped them locate New York musicians and told them to look up black pioneer publisher and songwriter Shep Edmonds at his home in Columbus, Ohio. Edmonds gave them names and addresses of other ragtime composers and performers and the best advice for finding others by going to any city and asking the local undertakers for their addresses. Their research was conducted throughout 1949 and within the year of its publication, more than half of those Blesh and Janis interviewed were dead. The book set the stage for giving prominence to Scott Joplin and told ragtime’s story with Joplin center stage along with his followers James Scott, Arthur Marshall, and Joseph Lamb. The book provided further impetus to the

ragtime revival by telling ragtime’s important musical history and by inspiring many new fans to collect and play the music. It also encouraged a few ragtimers to continue researching ragtime’s interesting past. Blesh continued to inspire young ragtimers by speaking at ragtime festivals and major concerts, writing record liner notes, teaching courses at New York City universities as an adjunct professor, and giving his support to other ragtime scholars and enthusiasts.

## **“Blooie-Blooie” (Edythe Baker)**

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**Not copyrighted or published**

She was one of the most creative piano-roll artists. This work features a striking key change from G to D flat at the trio.

## **Rube Bloom**

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**(b. April 24, 1902, New York; d. March 30, 1976, New York)**



Bloom went to public school in Brooklyn, New York, which he left at age seventeen to become an accompanist for vaudeville stars. He was entirely self-taught, composed directly at the piano, then memorized it and got someone else to write it down for publication. An extraordinarily fine pianist, he was in great demand for recording work, as a soloist, accompanist (especially for Jane Gray on Harmony), and in dance and

jazz bands. Over the years he recorded with Bix Beiderbecke, Miff Mole, Frankie Trumbauer, the Dorsey Brothers, Red Nichols, Ethel Waters, and Noble Sissle. His own group was called Rube Bloom and His Bayou Boys. In 1928 he won first prize of \$5,000 in the Victor Talking Machine Company's contest for his composition "Song of the Bayou." His songwriting career included such hits as "Give Me the Simple Life," "Penthouse Serenade," "Big Man from the South," "Truckin!," "Stay on the Right Side, Sister," and "Fools Rush In." Although he never studied counterpoint, harmony, or composition, he wrote several piano method books and was a much sought-after arranger of hit songs for various publishers.

### **Ragtime Compositions**

"That Futuristic Rag," April 9, 1923, Jack Mills, Inc., New York

"Spring Fever," June 21, 1926, Triangle Music, New York

"Soliloquy," June 21, 1926, Triangle Music, New York

"Silhouette," May 9, 1927, Triangle Music, New York

"Jumping Jack" (with Bernie Seaman & Marvin Smolev), July 3, 1928, ABC Standard, New York

"Aunt Jemima's Birthday," May 15, 1931, Robbins Music, New York

"One Finger Joe," May 15, 1931, Robbins Music, New York

"Southern Charms," May 15, 1931, Robbins Music, New York

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### **"Blue Clover Man" (Max Kortlander)**

This Novelty rag was copyrighted on June 18, 1920, and only exists on a hand-played piano roll performed by the composer (QRS 100879). This piano-roll performance is the most sophisticated ever produced. Kortlander's use of exotic harmonies and totally different rhythms within the same ragtime composition was unique for its time.

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### **"Blue Goose Rag" (as Raymond Birch)**

**January 3, 1916, Forster Music Publisher, Chicago**

Unusual C section not written in syncopation.

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### **"Blue Grass Rag" (Joseph Lamb)**

***Ragtime Treasures, Mills Music, Inc., New York, 1964***

One of Lamb's very best. It remained unfinished until during the 1950s when he finally wrote its trio. The bass is varied in section B and the rousing D section is capped by a Novelty rag break.

## "Blue Rag" (Brun Campbell)

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### **Not copyrighted or published**

The blue quality is the melodic flavor. Structurally, it has three sections of sixteen, eight, and thirty-two measures, respectively.

## "A Blue Streak" (Roy Barge)

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### **1921, Forster Music Publisher, Chicago**

One of Barge's masterpieces of 1921, the published sheet music was taken from Barge's roll (Imperial 513600). The A section is an amazing blend of the blues with the Novelty rag and features an ascending walking bass consisting of a bottom tonic note walking with the dominant and tonic together leading to an exciting tremolo in the right hand.

## "Bohemia" (Joseph Lamb)

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### **February 17, 1919, Stark Music Co., St. Louis**

Most advanced use of tonality by Lamb, with the key in section A not sure until the twelfth measure. A most unusual beginning, starting in the minor mode and ending up in the major. The grace and charm of the B section is achieved by the subtle use of passing tones and syncopation crossing the bar lines, which enhances the delicate quality. This section also has an alternate "ad lib" bass in octaves at its start. The high spirits of the C section give way to an interesting but unusual device for a Classic rag: the twelve-measure interlude leading to a repeat of the C section, which is a throwback to an old cakewalk pattern, much as Joplin did in "Eugenia." The repeat marks indicate that the interlude is to be included in the last repeat. A thoroughly delightful rag.

## **William Elden Bolcom**

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### **(b. May 26, 1938, Seattle)**

Bolcom studied composition and piano beginning at age five. He entered the University of Washington at age eleven and continued the study of classical music until he received a doctor of musical arts degree from Stanford University. With Arnold Weinstein in 1963 he wrote an award-winning opera for actors called *Dynamite Tonight*. He became interested in ragtime in 1967 and started composing it. Recordings followed in 1971. He married singer Joan Morris, with whom he gives concerts and makes records.

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## Ragtime Compositions

"Brass Knuckles" (with William Albright), not copyrighted or published	"Glad Rag," May 24, 1971, not published
"California Porcupine—Grand Rag Fantasy," May 24, 1971, not published	"Graceful Ghost," May 24, 1971, Edward B. Marks Music, New York
"Garden of Eden: Rag Suite," May 24, 1971, not published	"Seabiscuits Rag," May 24, 1971, Edward B. Marks Music, New York

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### **"Bolo Rag" (Albert Gumble)**

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**November 11, 1908, Jerome H. Remick & Co., New York**

A fine rag climaxed by a sweeping descent of sixteenth notes in the trio. Instructions read to be played "slowly but surely."

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### **"Bombshell Rag" (Thomas R. Confare and Morris Silver)**

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**Not copyrighted, published 1909,  
Charles I. Davis Music Pub., Cleveland**

An important recent discovery indicating that Confare, who arranged the famous "Cannon Ball," might have had a heavier hand in the rag than the so-called composer, Jos. Northup. This is in the same style but is a more complex work.

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### **"Bon Ton" (Luckey Roberts)**

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**May 7, 1915, G. Ricordi & Co., New York**

An inverted version of "Junk Man Rag."

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### **"Bone Head Blues" (Leo Gordon)**

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**Not copyrighted, published 1917, Walter Jacobs, Boston**

Some of the silent movie music issued by Jacobs includes excellent original rags with frequently daring and involved harmonies. This one begins section A with a startling dissonance of augmented chords cleverly worked out over a standard dominant seventh in the bass.

## George Botsford

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**(b. February 24, 1874, Sioux Falls, South Dakota;  
d. February 11, 1949, New York)**



Although born in South Dakota and raised in Iowa, Botsford spent his professional life as a composer–conductor in New York City. His second rag was a smash hit and established him as a professional. His “Grizzly Bear Rag” was also a tremendous hit and became an even greater seller when Irving Berlin wrote words for it. “Sailing down the Chesapeake Bay” was another enormous success, and with its proceeds he started his own publishing firm, experimenting with miniature opera to be sung by only three or four people. The idea did not catch on, so he went to work for Remick Music Corporation as arranger and chief of their harmony and quartet department. He arranged music for amateur minstrel shows and became director of the New York Police Department’s Glee Club.

Though overall the Botsford rags are a fine group, he was more dependent on the three-over-four formula than other writers for major companies. Half of his rags have the following pattern: A BB A CC B. In general, he preferred not to repeat A before stating the B section and moved directly to the trio after the second A.

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## Ragtime Compositions

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| "Klondike Rag," January 23, 1908, William R. Haskins Co., New York                       | "Royal Flush," March 27, 1911, Jerome H. Remick & Co., Detroit             |
| "Black and White Rag," not copyrighted, published 1908, Jerome H. Remick & Co., New York | "Hyacinth," December 11, 1911, Jerome H. Remick & Co., New York            |
| "Old Crow Rag," April 13, 1909, Jerome H. Remick & Co., New York                         | "Honeysuckle Rag," December 19, 1911, Jerome H. Remick & Co., New York     |
| "Pianophiends Rag," May 11, 1909, William R. Haskins Co., New York                       | "Universal Rag," February 14, 1913, George Botsford, New York              |
| "Texas Steer," October 15, 1909, Jerome H. Remick & Co., New York                        | "Rag, Baby Mine," March 28, 1913, Jerome H. Remick & Co., New York         |
| "Wiggle Rag," October 15, 1909, Jerome H. Remick & Co., New York                         | "The Buck-Eye Rag," June 11, 1913, George Botsford, New York               |
| "Grizzly Bear Rag," April 18, 1910, Ted Snyder Co., New York                             | "The Incandescent Rag," October 21, 1913, Jerome H. Remick & Co., New York |
| "Lovey-Dovey Rag," May 19, 1910, Ted Snyder Co., New York                                | "Boomerang Rag," June 21, 1916, Jerome H. Remick & Co., New York           |
| "Chatterbox Rag," October 4, 1910, Jerome H. Remick & Co., Detroit                       |  |

## "The Bounding Buck" (Henry Lodge)

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**March 1, 1918, M. Witmark & Sons, New York**

One of his most lyrical, yet certainly his most advanced rag. The A section is masterful: After establishing the tonality of E flat, he introduces a sequence that suggests the key of E natural. The eighth measure ends on a B<sub>7</sub>, which has the feeling of the lowered sixth chord because it is followed by a return to the first four measures, which reestablishes E flat. The B strain is one of the composer's most beautiful, enhanced by his clever use of minors. C extends the mood of B and is the most melodic of the three.

## "Bowery Buck" (Tom Turpin)

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**March 6, 1899, Robt. De Yong & Co., St. Louis**

A typical folk rag, especially in form and use of tonality, sometimes described as linear or additive. Such a rag simply states a section, repeats it, and moves onto the next. It also stays in the same key throughout. Here the repeats of B and C are written out, with added treble notes in the B repeat, filling out the texture. This became a standard scoring device much later in the popular rags. As with "Harlem Rag," the A section is a busy one with a syncopated single-note line with an emphasis on a flatted ninth. Section B breaks away in strutting fashion, but the highlight is C. According to St. Louis ragtime pianist Charles Thompson, Turpin adapted it from a street-organ melody heard often in Chestnut Valley. Sparked by a triplet rip in the bass, it is an unusual concept that avoids the oompah bass and causes a brief but very notable suspension in which the

beat must be inferred—quite a sophisticated device for such an early rag. De Yong sold this piece the same year to Will Rossiter, who at first used the original plates but later made a new set to conform to the familiar Rossiter style. The music is identical in all editions, with the addition of an “ff” in the final Rossiter one. All editions were “Dedicated to my friend, E. J. Morgan,” but the interesting “N. B., ‘The Most Original Rag-Time Two Step Ever Written’” was not on the original De Yong issue.

## **Euday Louis Bowman**

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**(b. November 9, 1887, Fort Worth; d. May 26, 1949, New York)**

Composer of the most famous and biggest-selling rag in sheet music and recordings, Bowman has a life that is surprisingly shrouded in obscurity. From the turn of this century through the depression he was an itinerant pianist, typical of his time, wandering throughout the Midwest and South. After Pee Wee Hunt made his sensationally best-selling recording of “12th Street Rag”—with over three million copies sold—Bowman decided to cash in on that popularity by recording it on his own label, using the piano on which he originally wrote it. He came to New York City to promote the sale of his record and died there three days later. A product of the districts, his ragtime compositions reflect this atmosphere. The numbered streets, 6th through 12th, cut across Calhoun Street in Fort Worth, which was the heart of the district, whereas Petticoat Lane was in the red light district in Kansas City, where his major publisher was located. Of his other compositions, mostly blues numbers, “Kansas City Blues,” “Colorado Blues,” “Fort Worth Blues,” and “Tipperary Blues” are the most idiomatic midwestern blues ever scored—real blues tunes with ragtime flavor in the traditional soulful style.

### **Ragtime Compositions**

<p>“Twelfth Street Rag,” January 30, 1914, August 24, 1914, January 2, 1915, Euday L. Bowman, Fort Worth</p> <p>“Sixth Street Rag,” November 11, 1914, unpublished</p> <p>“Tenth Street Rag,” November 11, 1914, unpublished</p> <p>“Petticoat Lane,” June 1, 1915, unpublished, August 14, 1915, Copyright transferred to J. W. Jenkins’ Sons, Kansas City, MO, who then published it</p>	<p>“Shamrock Rag,” January 21, 1916, Euday L. Bowman, Fort Worth</p> <p>“Eleventh Street Rag,” November 16, 1917, unpublished, July 15, 1918, Ward &amp; Bowman, Gary, IN</p> <p>“Chromatic Chords,” February 12, 1926, unpublished</p>
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## **“Brain-Storm Rag” (Bud Manchester)**

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**June 3, 1907, Stark Music Co., New York**

Manchester was an alias used by E. J. Stark. Section D is only eight measures long.

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## **“A Breeze from Alabama” (Scott Joplin)**

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**December 29, 1902, John Stark & Son, St. Louis**

Advertised by Stark as “a story in transitions,” this is an ambitious experiment in tonality, far ahead of any other rag writer of the day. After two sections in the key of C, the composer begins the C section abruptly in the key of A flat; this is a favorite harmonic change in folk ragtime, but more thoroughly explored here. Within this C section, Joplin modulates to E natural, and back again to A flat, telescoping the effect of the previous C–A flat change. Then he moves to F and finally ends in the key of C.

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## **“Bric-a-Brac Rag” (Maurice Porcelain)**

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**Not copyrighted, published 1906, Vinton Music Co., Boston**

Rambling, ebullient rag that appears to consist of a series of improvisations. The interlude has a written break on board, or in front of the keys. The cover illustrates a broken willowware plate, once the most popular chinaware in America.

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## **“The Buffalo Rag” (Tom Turpin)**

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**November 2, 1904, Will Rossiter, Chicago**

This is a Turpin rag with no indicated arranger, and its idiosyncrasies may give the best clues as to how he sounded as a performer. It is all in one key in a linear format, closing with the introduction as coda. Of all his rags, this one seems to be the most folk rooted in flavor: there are banjoistic ideas as the ascending figure in B and in the quick 32nd-note bass descents in D. The entire composition has a capricious air: The treble texture is punctuated with quick chords and abrupt phrasing, contrasted with longer, lyrical single-note melody lines. The Turpin flair for contrast, surprise, and creativity was never better displayed, as C evolves beautifully from B. The title may reflect Turpin’s hunting days and his western adventures but most probably refers to the Benevolent Order of Buffaloes, a St. Louis lodge in which he was very active.

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## **Louis Ferdinand Busch**

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**(b. July 18, 1910, Louisville;  
d. September 18, 1979, Camarillo, California)**

The family name was Bush, but he added the *c* because he thought it looked good. He took private piano lessons, starting at the age of nine, and left high school and home at sixteen to tour with Clyde McCoy and



Joe "Fingers" Carr.

other local bands. With no formal training, he became an arranger as well as pianist for Henry Busse, Leo Reisman, Horace Heidt, Vincent Lopez, George Olsen, and Hal Kemp. He married vocalist Janet Blair and settled in Los Angeles. In December 1941 he was Lena Horne's accompanist. He joined the army in 1942 and served for the duration of the war. He went to work for Capitol Transcription Service in 1946 and became musical director for Peter Lind Hayes and Mary Healy. From May 1949, he was an artist and repertoire executive for Capitol Records. He and his second wife, singer Margaret Whiting, have one daughter. Busch created the ragtime pseudonym Joe "Fingers" Carr in April 1950 and became the best-known ragtime pianist worldwide through his more than thirty-six singles and fourteen albums. He created an atmosphere for ragtime that highlighted the ebullient, rollicking aspects of this happy music. His carefully thought-out arrangements and inspired performances encouraged many of the leading ragtimers of today. In 1958 he went to Warner Bros. Records as producer-artist, where he made five albums as Joe "Fingers" Carr. In 1960 he went to Dot Records where he performed on three albums. He became Allan Sherman's musical director, arranger, composer, and conductor. Among his compositions are "Roller Coaster," used as the closing theme in television's long-running panel show, "What's My Line"; "Ivory Rag," which became the first segment in the ragtime medley, "The Crazy Otto"; and Allan Sherman's big hit, "Hello Mudduh, Hello Fadduh." As Lou Busch, he made a lovely mood album called "Lazy Rhapsody" (Capitol T-1072), in which he was arranger, conductor, and featured pianist. Not only did he create memorable arrangements of 1920s hits and a body of clever rags, but he recorded more published rags than anyone else, and of them many were recorded for the first time. He was a major rediscoverer of ragtime at a time when no one else was looking.



## Ragtime Compositions

- "Baked Alaska," November 23, 1959, not published  
 "Barky Roll Stomp," December 12, 1955, unpublished  
 "Boogie Woogie Rag," September 2, 1952, unpublished  
 "Carr's Hop," March 5, 1952, Chatsworth Music, New York  
 "Doo Wacky Rag," May 31, 1956, unpublished  
 "Fingers Medley," not copyrighted or published  
 "Finicky Fingers," March 5, 1952, Chatsworth Music, New York  
 "Fourth Man Rag" (by Dick Hamilton & Jill Leland), not copyrighted or published  
 "Hook and Ladder Rag," May 31, 1956, unpublished  
 "Hot Potatoes," February 27, 1958, unpublished  
 "Ironfingers Rag" (with Alvino Rey), June 20, 1960, unpublished  
 "Looney Louie," February 27, 1958, unpublished  
 "Piano Picker Rag," October 24, 1966, unpublished  
 "Piccadilly Rag," May 31, 1956, unpublished  
 "Raggedy-Ann Rag," March 5, 1952, Chatsworth Music, New York  
 "Rapscaillon Rag," March 5, 1952, Chatsworth Music, New York  
 "Rattlesnake Rag" (with Eddie Hanson), December 29, 1952, Chatsworth Music, New York  
 "Tin Pan Rag," March 5, 1952, Chatsworth Music, New York  
 "Two Dollar Rag," not copyrighted or published  
 "Waltz in Ragtime," March 5, 1952, Chatsworth Music, New York



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# C

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## Cakewalk

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This dance sensation, along with the jaunty music written for it, first appeared in music halls and theaters in the mid 1890s. Its popularity was based on tuneful, lightly syncopated music written for high-strutting, prancing dance steps. It was composer–publisher Kerry (Frederick Allen) Mills who started the rage for this



Kerry Mills.

dance music with his first publication, “Rastus on Parade” (1895). The tune had the distinction of establishing what soon became a harmonic cliché of cakewalks by beginning in a minor key and moving to the relative major, a construction that later writers followed with a subdominant trio section. Another Mills cakewalk, however, “At a Georgia Camp Meeting” (1897), became the standard against which all other cakewalks were measured. Although a highly singable and danceable number, it was rejected by all major publishers of the day. Their costly mistake firmly set up the house of F. A. Mills for the next twenty years. His 1899 hit “Whistling Rufus” successfully competed with E. T. McGrath’s “A Breeze from Blackville,” Bernard Franklin’s “Blackville Society,” Arthur Pryor’s “A Coon Band Contest,” Jean Schwartz’s “Dusky Dudes,” George Rosey’s “A Rag-Time Skedaddle,” and Abe Holzmann’s “Smokey Mokes”—all winners in the glorious year of the cakewalk. The following year, J. Bodewalt Lampe published “Creole Belles” in his hometown of Buffalo, New York. Not until Whitney-Warner purchased it the following year did it become a million seller. Although Mills went on to compose several lovely Tin Pan Alley songs, such as “Meet Me in St. Louis, Louis” and “Red Wing,” which became standards, he occasionally harked back to his cakewalk roots, with “Kerry Mills Ragtime Dance” (1909) and “Kerry Mills’ Cake Walk” (1915).

In their Tin Pan Alley form, cakewalks were 2/4 instrumentals, with occasional vocal trios, founded on a simple march framework and using simple syncopation in a single rhythm pattern. Compositionally, they were unpianistic pieces involving single note, easily remembered melody lines that one could sketch out on a piano with one finger without disturbing their harmony. Though cakewalks were often arranged for piano (as were marches), their sheet music covers typically displayed other instruments, usually trombones and banjos, and they were often performed by marching or circus bands, as well as by string bands consisting of violin, banjo, and string bass. The earliest cakewalk hits were popularized by the premier concert band of John Philip Sousa, who was responsible for the cakewalk’s European popularity. Sousa detested the cakewalk but clearly perceived its commercial possibilities. He had his solo trombonist, Arthur Pryor, make the arrangements and conduct the Sousa band when it recorded cakewalks.

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## **“California Sunshine” (Harry Jentes)**

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**November 29, 1913, Theron C. Bennett Co., New York**

Only last section is in ragtime.

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## **“Calliope Rag” (James Scott)**

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***They All Played Ragtime*, 3d ed., 1966, Oak Publications,  
New York, arranged and edited by Donald Ashwander**

An enchanting work discovered by Robert Darch, who obtained the manuscript from one of Scott’s sisters, with the information that Scott played it on the steam calliope at Lakeside Park, located between Carthage and Joplin, Missouri. Probably written prior to 1910.

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## Sanford Brunson Campbell

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**(b. March 26, 1884, Oberlin, Kansas;  
d. November 23, 1952, Venice, California)**



Born with a natural interest in music, Campbell was given piano lessons at ten, ran away from home to Oklahoma City when he was fifteen to attend a celebration, and earned pocket money playing at the Armstrong-Byrd Music Company where Joplin's friend and colleague Otis Saunders asked Campbell to play from the manuscript of the "Maple Leaf Rag." Shortly thereafter he went to Sedalia where he then met Joplin, who taught him his four earliest rags. As he wrote,

Joplin was playing a version of "Maple Leaf Rag" as early as 1889, that is, at least the years before it was actually published. Joplin himself told me. As you know, I was Scott Joplin's only white pupil in 1898 Sedalia, and I learned to play "Maple Leaf" from the original hand-notated pen-and-ink manuscript. Today (1950), I can still play the trio part which Joplin used in the 1880's before his pal Otis Saunders helped him arrange it as it appears in the present day piano copy. When Saunders lent a hand, he re-wrote the last half of the trio. However, when I made my record I used Scott's original trio, not the later one, in order to do a really authentic job. I became a kid ragtime pianist, and met almost all of the early Negro pianists and composers of ragtime in the 1890's, such great musicians as Tom Turpin, Scott Joplin, Otis Saunders, Scott Hayden, James Scott, Arthur Marshall, Louis Chauvin, Tony Williams, Tony Jackson, Melford Alexander, Jelly Roll Morton, Ida Hastings (a Negress), and "Ink" Howard. I am very proud of the fact that I could call these Negro musicians my friends.

He traveled over the Midwest and South, playing in honky tonks, barrelhouses, pool halls, roadhouses, confectionery stores, theaters, hotels, steamboats, nautch houses, restaurants, and saloons. He retired from active playing in 1908 when he married and became a barber. His writings about ragtime and recordings date from the mid 1940s and early 1950s.

Unlike most composers, especially the classic rag pioneers, Campbell does not use secondary-chord relationships such as relative minor or minor of the dominant but instead sticks close to the basic I-IV-V harmony, with heavy use of the basic circle of fifths. In folk ragtime, the minor tonality is touched on lightly, usually as a regular II chord or brief use of the relative minor. It is rarely prolonged, as in some Joplin rags, except where it is a carryover from the A section cakewalk tradition of beginning in a minor key—descriptive of an exotic setting of dancers preparing for the competition. Campbell’s avoidance of minors and especially his recurring use of the circle of fifths is reminiscent of Charles Hunter’s rags, however, Hunter did make skillful use of minor keys, briefly, for a change of color, and early country string band music. Campbell’s playing is in the typical Folk rag style of the earliest ragtime performers, placing strains of diverse or similar feelings in a random fashion. In several of his works a blues–rag mixture of slurs, flatted thirds, and sevenths can be heard in a twelve-measure form. There is a great deal of improvisation in his playing: part of the transformation of syncopating folk tunes, marches, popular songs, and classical material. It is most dramatically demonstrated on his two different recordings of “Essay in Ragtime.” The patchwork of using floating folk music within an original conception is evident in his playing. Some of the idiosyncrasies of the earliest scoring of folk rags appear in these performances, such as adding extra beats to a measure (“Barber Shop Rag”) and placing harmonic changes in unexpected places (“Campbell Cakewalk”).

### **Ragtime Compositions (not copyrighted or published)**

“Barber Shop Rag”	“Ginger Snap Rag”
“Blue Rag”	“Grandpa Stomps”
“Campbell Cakewalk”	“Rendezvous Rag”
“Chestnut Street in the 90s”	“Tent Show Rag”
“Essay in Ragtime”	

## **“Campbell Cakewalk” (Brun Campbell)**

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### **Not copyrighted or published**

This is his most eccentric, unorthodox solo. Only the B and C sections contain sixteen measures. A has twenty-eight (in a form of twenty plus eight), whereas D is almost formless—fourteen and one-half measures with chords and harmonies changing at unexpected places. Folk ragtime in the rough.

## **“Can Ragtime Be Surpressed?”**

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**By Axel W. Christensen**

(Reprinted from the May, 1918 issue of Melody Magazine. Christensen was the foremost ragtime instructor of the day, having a nationwide chain of ragtime schools.)

"Almost three years ago some college students in one of our smaller cities, perhaps for the want of something else to do, organized a 'Society for the suppression of Ragtime Music in America'.

"They have not been seen or heard of since.

"No doubt they were sincere in their convictions, as there are some people who do not like ragtime, but I feel that they were just a little bit selfish in trying to take it away from people who do like it. Fortunately, however, the people who like ragtime are in such great majority that the Society for the Suppression of Ragtime found it harder than they expected to sweep the country with their movement.

"Nearly every true red-blooded American citizen likes real snappy ragtime, and he asks for it and gets it wherever he is, whether it is at the restaurant, at the theatre, at the dance or at home—and if he cannot play it himself he will have Mike Bernard, John Philip Sousa and others play it for him through the phonograph.

"Believe me, the Society for the Suppression of Ragtime in America had some job on its hands, and it's no wonder they were doomed to disappointment.

"Having spent several years on the vaudeville stage, during which time I have had the opportunity of studying audiences in every part of the country, I have always noticed that no matter how dormant or listless people might seem at the opening of the performance, they instantly come to life when the orchestra played a good ragtime number, and the performer on the stage who used ragtime in his or her act was sure of the heartiest appreciation. And when an audience applauded a ragtime act, it was not the desultory applause that marks the spots in the average vaudeville act where the audience is kindly supposed to applaud; it was spontaneous, electrical, unanimous—applause that filled the house from the orchestra pit to the uttermost hidden regions in the gallery.

"I have seen grand opera quartets that possessed wonderful merit—artists who had spent years in hard, painstaking training—fall flat and leave the stage at the end of their act with barely enough applause to take them to the entrance (in fact, I have seen them run to get to the entrance before the applause died out). On the other hand, I have seen a slip of a girl go out on the stage and deliver a half dozen snappy songs and simply 'stop the show' the continued applause making it practically impossible for the next act to go on. When it came to art, she was not to be compared with the grand opera quartet—she had never spent any time in musical training—but when she sang her syncopated songs she struck the responsive chord that is to be found in the soul of every American man or woman, and so she was successful.

"Some time ago the London Times discussed ragtime at great length in its columns. The London Times is of the opinion that ragtime is the typical American music, the true music of the hustler, and that it is filled with the spirit and bustle of American life.

"Some ragtime is easy to play, and there is some that is quite hard to master. We have our 'classic' ragtime that would baffle many a music teacher who has never played anything but the orthodox music—and if the truth were known, many of the persons who are crying 'Down with Ragtime' could not play ragtime as it ought to be played if their lives depended on it. I am willing to admit that ragtime in the hands of some musicians (who would play a song like 'Some Sunday Morning' with the same ponderous dignity that they would render 'Asleep In The Deep') should be suppressed.

"Sasanoff, the eminent Russian orchestra leader, became so enthusiastic on hearing an American orchestra play some real ragtime that he decided he would have it scored to be reproduced by his own orchestra in Russia. In his opinion, ragtime is to America what the folk songs are to Norway, Sweden, Italy or other foreign lands.

"Many writers have endeavored to trace ragtime down to its origin, but there are almost as many opinions as to where ragtime had its source as there are writers on the subject. Ever since there has been such a thing as ragtime, there have been people who would tell you that ragtime was on the decline, and that it would soon be a thing of the past. Twelve or thirteen years ago a well-known music publisher told me in all seriousness to devote my efforts to something besides ragtime, because the knell of ragtime had been

sounded; it had run itself to death and the publishers would soon stop printing it altogether. He sagely told me that if I had only gone into business a few years previous I might have made something out of it, but there was no longer any hope. That was twelve years ago, and ragtime is now stronger than ever. The ragtime of today, however, is not the same as that written twenty years ago. Such rags as the 'Mississippi Rag,' 'The Georgia Camp Meeting,' etc., depended mostly upon plain syncopation, while today it is not a matter of mere syncopation, because in addition to the syncopated rhythm there is the peculiar and pleasing breaking up and grouping of the chords.

"Many millions of dollars are spent annually in America for popular sheet music, and in the greater portion of it you will find the ragtime rhythm somewhere. I would recommend that the 'Society for the Suppression of Ragtime in America' devote its efforts to helping suppress the war in Europe, as something that might be accomplished with greater ease."

## **"Canadian Capers"** (Henry Cohen, Gus Chandler, and Bert White)

**March 26, 1915, Roger Graham, Chicago**

An interesting rag, it is part of a much larger work by San Franciscan pianist Sid Le Protti. Cohen happened to hear Le Protti doing his specialty in a saloon, requested him to play it over many times during the next few weeks, and tipped him a couple of dollars each time it was requested. Cohen wrote out that portion of the piece he wanted and got Chandler and White to write the lyrics. It has become one of the ragtime favorites of this period.



## **"Cannon Ball" (Jos. C. Northrup)**

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**April 17, 1905, Victor Kremer Co., Chicago**

One of the most popular of the early rags written by a still unknown—not to be confused with Theo. Northrup—and arranged by Thomas R. Confare, who collaborated on a follow-up titled "Bombshell Rag." Section A is a floating folk theme, as it appears in Chas E. Mullen's "Levee Rag" (1902) and in A. H. Tour-nade's "Easy Money" (1904). B is blazingly pianistic and starts with a dramatic circle of fifths and climaxes in a fast, downward run of treble triads.

## **"Caprice Rag" (James P. Johnson)**

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**Not copyrighted or published**

Johnson preferred a busy single-note melody line in many of his rags, especially his first two, "Caprice" and "Daintiness." This one is spiced with quick triplets with the traditional octave-chord ragtime bass.

## **"Car-Barlick-Acid Rag-Time" (Clarence C. Wiley)**

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**August 9, 1901, C. C. Wiley, Oskaloosa, IA**

Though copyrighted in 1901, the earliest known copies bear a 1903 copyright date published by the composer. Sold to Giles Bros. in 1904 and then to Jerome H. Remick & Co. in 1907, the cover states, "Something new in Rag-time...an excellent piano piece for rag-time lovers." Indeed, for once the blurb is right; it is one of the most rollicking Folk rags ever written.

## **"Carolina FoxTrot" (Will H. Vodery)**

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**July 7, 1914, Jos. W. Stern & Co., New York**

Vodery was an accomplished composer and arranger who knew Scott Joplin in New York City. This tune is one of the first published in the Stride style and has the same feeling as found in the earliest of Luckey Roberts's rags. The A section is remarkably similar to the corresponding section of James P. Johnson's "Carolina Shout."