

## Recorded and Printed Song and Tune Sources

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6. Mississippi John Hurt: *1928 Sessions*, Yazoo Records, 1065.
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# THE NEW HOLLAND HONEY EATERS

present

## “Got More Trouble Than I Can Stand”

## The Story of Ragtime



## Introduction

*Ragtime* dominated American popular music during the nation's "Progressive Era" - from about 1896 to 1920. Its sounds are entrenched in the nation's psyche as a soundtrack to the broad-ranging social reforms of the times, and have endured as a part of the fabric of the nation's music to this day.

But ragtime's journey began with folk music, and with the cultural syncretism (when aspects of two different cultures blend together to make something new) that saw West African musical practice combine with Anglo-American musical preferences and instruments.

Long before the "ragtime craze" of the 1890s, White musicians heard Black folk music played and sung, with its syncopations and polyrhythms, and borrowed what suited them. At the same time, Black musicians became expert at playing European instruments like the fiddle, mandolin and guitar, and a unique American folk genre began to appear. White musicians also appropriated the music of Black slaves to create the "minstrel show", complete with negative cultural stereotyping.

After the Civil War, the musical interchange continued in mines and in railroad and logging camps, as Black and White musicians became the muscle behind the America's exploding economic growth.

In the 1890s, the rise of the vaudeville stage and the refinement and affordability of pianos for the home, combined to create a market for songs and sheet music; "Tin Pan Alley" music publishing houses fed that market with ragtime compositions. At the same time, skilled composers like Scott Joplin, Joe Lamb and James Scott were doing their best to elevate ragtime to the level of a national art music.

Popular music moved on to jazz, but ragtime persisted in the rural folk music of the South and Midwest of its origins. So, ultimately, rural folk musicians reabsorbed some of what came from the concert stages and travelling shows of the ragtime era and kept the genre alive.

Today, we'll take a look at this remarkable journey and set it against the fortunes of its originators, as Black Americans moved along the road from slavery, to the hope that came with emancipation, through the descent into segregation.

Stan Gottschalk  
20 October, 2022

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