

The Country Blues

THE COUNTRY BLUES: VOLUME TWO

Compiled and Edited by Samuel Charters

SIDE ONE

- Band 1. LEVEE CAMP MOAN
Texas Alexander
- Band 2. TISHAMINGO BLUES
Peg Leg Howell
- Band 3. MISTREATED BLUES
Henry Townsend
- Band 4. POOLE COUNTY BLUES
Eddie Kelly's Washboard Band
- Band 5. PAPA'S LAWDY LAWDY BLUES
Papa Charlie Jackson
- Band 6. SCAREY DAY BLUES
"Georgia Bill"
- Band 7. CHURCH BELLS BLUES
Luke Jordan

SIDE TWO

- Band 1. I'M AN OLD BUMBLE BEE
Bo Carter
- Band 2. JEALOUS HEARTED BLUES
Charlie Lincoln
- Band 3. STRANGE PLACE BLUES
Bukka White
- Band 4. BYE BYE BABY BLUES
Blind Boy Fuller with Sonny Terry
- Band 5. LET ME SQUEEZE YOUR LEMON
Charlie Pickett
- Band 6. WEARY WORRIED BLUES
Brownsville Son Bonds
- Band 7. MACEO'S 32-20
Big Maceo with Tampa Red

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A Note

Samuel Charters

Sometimes, driving along a Mississippi Road in 1956 to ask people on a run down plantation if they'd ever heard of Tommy McClennan, or standing around a neighborhood barber shop in San Antonio in 1954 and asking if there was anybody who might remember a singer called Robert Johnson, it seemed as though the country blues would always be one of the least known of all the styles of American Negro music. The early singers had been, as the delta singer J. D. Short described them, "good time men." They were mostly young, hard drinking, hard living, working as entertainers in juke joints and road houses, or in noisy cabarets in the slums of cities like St. Louis or Birmingham or Nashville. Some of them, the blind singers, spent most of their years singing on the streets. Blind Willie Johnson would drift into a little cotton town like Hearn, Texas, during the cotton picking season, and he'd stand out in front of the stores playing in the evening darkness for the field hands in town to do some shopping or to have some fun. Blind Boy Fuller hung around outside cigaret factories in Winston-Salem playing for the workers who were going home on pay nights. Even if one of them did have a big record, like Jim Jackson's Kansas City Blues, the Depression ended the market for the purest styles of the country blues, and there was no time for the singers to get settled and get known outside of their small neighborhood. They didn't leave much trace as they wandered through the little towns of the South or from rooming house to rooming house in one of the cities.

In 1959, when the book *The Country Blues* was published and the record *The Country Blues*, was released, there was still little known about many of the singers, but since then there have been determined efforts made to find the singers, or to at least find out something about them, and now there are only a few of the men who are still only names on a phonograph record. Some of the singers who have been found have been near legendary men like Mississippi John Hurt, Bukka White, and Sleepy John Estes. Others, like J. D. Short, Robert Wilkins, Black Bottom McPhail, and Pink Anderson were less well known, but all of them had something to say about the blues.

Many of the names on this second collection of country blues were unfamiliar only a few years ago, but now some of them have been found and have begun singing again, often after thirty years of near silence. Texas Alexander, who sings the freely rhythmic work song blues, *LEVEE CAMP MOAN*, is known to have died several years ago in Texas, but his accompanist is Lonnie Johnson, who was found in Philadelphia and has returned to his singing and performing career. Peg Leg Howell has been found in Atlanta by George Mitchell of Decatur, Georgia, seventy five years old now and singing with great difficulty, although there is still a little of the plaintiveness that were in his older blues like *TISHAMINGO BLUES*. Henry Townsend, whose *MISTREATED BLUES* is a distinctively personal blues in both the voice and guitar style, is living in St. Louis, where he has been working as an insurance collector for a number of years. He was still in his teens when he made his first records, and although he continued to play and to record with men like Roosevelt Sykes during the 1930's it was not under his own name, and he dropped out of sight for many years after the second World War. Eddie Kelly's Washboard Band, with their *POOLE COUNTY BLUES*, is still only a name.

PAPA'S LAWDY LAWDY BLUES, by the older six string banjo player and singer Papa Charlie Jackson, is one of the earliest country blues recordings to be released, which helps explain the dimness of sound of the acoustical recording process. A record by Ed Andrews seems to be the first blues record, followed a "Daddy Stovepipe" recording; then this *PAPA'S LAWDY LAWDY BLUES* a few weeks later, in August, 1924. Since this was still during the height of the city blues popularity - Ma Rainey had started recording only seven months before - the record company advertised that Papa Charlie was the,

"Only man living who sings, self-accompanied, for Blues records . . . Be convinced that this man Charlie can sing and play the Blues even better than a woman can."

"Georgia Bill" is, of course, Blind Willie McTell, recording for another company in violation of one of his exclusive recording contracts. It seems definite now that McTell has died in Atlanta, but a last session that he had done in 1956 was found by Jan Cox in Atlanta, and the man who had recorded the session, Ed Rhodes, had asked him some questions about his life and backgrounds and had photographed him as well. The singing on the session had little of the plaintiveness of Willie's early *SCAREY DAY BLUES*, although Willie never lost his assured guitar style

and clear voice. Luke Jordan, whose **CHURCH BELLS BLUES** is, like the singing of Henry Townsend, in a very personal style, was one of the few Virginia singers. Dick Spottswood, who has been responsible for the return of Mississippi John Hurt to the musical scene, learned that Luke died in Lynchburg, Virginia, sometime in the 1940's.

Bo Carter, whose **I'M AN OLD BUMBLE BEE** is his first record, is living across the alley from Will Shade in Memphis, but he is now blind and almost helpless. He still talks wistfully of the days when he was recording, but there is little chance that he will sing again. Charlie Lincoln is still one of the obscure names, but as his records become more widely known his reputation becomes more and more secure. The **JEALOUS HEARTED BLUES** is a typical Charlie Lincoln blues, with its almost halting rhythms and spoken interjections, the accompaniment on the twelve-string guitar sketchy and incomplete but somehow affecting and musical. Bukke White, who often wrote blues with the brooding sadness of **STRANGE PLACE BLUES**, was found by John Fahey in Memphis, and has been singing for several months in coffee house on the West Coast. Blind Boy Fuller, through his association with Brownie McGhee and Sonny Terry, is a well known blues figure, who until his death in 1941, had considerable success with songs like the **BYE BYE BABY BLUES** with Sonny Terry.

Usually a singer has known of other singers, even though they've lost track of each other over the years, and Sleepy John Estes said that Charlie Pickett was a Brownsville boy who was working as John's second guitarist when he made his solo records, among them the **LET ME SQUEEZE YOUR LEMON**. John thinks that Pickett is still living in St. Louis; although he has become a minister and no longer performs the blues. Brownsville Son Bonds, who recorded his **WEARY WORRIED BLUES** in 1934, was also one of John's accompanists, and the harmonica player on **WEARY WORRIED BLUES** is John's cousin, Hammie Nickerson. Big Maceo, who died in the early 1950's, was associated with Tampa Red for many years, and although his southside Chicago version of **MACEO'S 32-20** is more related to, than part of, the country blues it is a vigorous reworking of one of the oldest of the piano blues.

As the years pass, and more and more of the older singers die, it will be less possible to learn much about the lives of the singers who are still unknown, but with so much added to the knowledge of the blues in only a few years it will perhaps be only a short time before the country blues will become one of the best known, instead of the least known of the rich musical styles that the Negro has created in America.

Well Sir! Here He Is! at Last! Papa Charlie Jackson



—the famous Blues-singing-Guitar-playing Man.
Only man living who sings, self-accompanied, for Blues records.

PAPA Charlie Jackson is chirpin' and playin' his famous Original Lawdy, Lawdy Blues for Paramount Records. Just step into your nearest Paramount dealer's and ask for Paramount No. 12219. Be convinced that this man Charlie can sing and play the Blues even better than a woman can.

Get these Red-Hot Blues and Inspiring Spirituals

<p>12218—Original Lawdy, Lawdy Blues and Airy Blue Blues, song by Papa Charlie Jackson. Accompanied by himself and guitar.</p> <p>12219—Jolly Ball's First Canteen and Pleading Blues, Hothead, Jazz Quartet.</p> <p>12221—Fright, Trade Blues and Don't Shake It No More, Trade Blues and Her Devo Blues Quartet.</p> <p>12222—How Ah'll Hushin' Else But and Last Time Blues, 1st Cnt. Arr. by Lewis Austin and Her Blues Swindlers.</p> <p>12223—Cool Kind Daddy Blues and George Ben Blues, Anna Lee Chalmers.</p> <p>12224—Tall 'n' Short Me (When You Reach Tennessee) and You'll Hear Me When You're Long Gone, Ethel Waters, Revere Blue Blues Duo</p>	<p>These Two Records are Going Big— Everybody Likes Them!</p> <p>12226—Fly in the Mountain Blues and Tumbled in Mind Blues, song by Tanya La Youth—exclusive Paramount! Great hit-making from New Orleans. Arr. by Richard Jones at the piano.</p> <p>12228—Last Wanderin' Blues and Dream Blues—sensational, never-seen record by Madame "Ma" Rainey. Her guitar right at the record! Be sure to get this exciting, new, sensational—1 great song and a great singer's piano. Same price.</p>	<p>12216—Three Days of Blues (Cornfield Blues) and Lady Red Blues, Madame "Ma" Rainey, Jolly Ball Quartet.</p> <p>12219—Thirty-20s Street Blues and Mammoth, Jolly Ball Quartet.</p> <p>Every Blues Should Have These Sensational Spirituals</p> <p>12220—My Lord's Gonna Move This Wicked Race and Father, Prepare Me, Harriet Jackson Quartet.</p> <p>12225—When All the Saints Come Marching In and The Old Time Religion, Paramount Jubilee Singers.</p> <p>12217—Bukked 'n' De Wheel and Crying Holy Like the Lord, Harriet Jackson Quartet.</p>
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The first Papa Charlie Jackson advertisement.

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