

WHIRLED PEAS

ACOUSTICAL MUSICIANS

Whirled Peas is a group of musicians that come together on a regular basis to share our love of blues, bluegrass and folk music.

Our musical journey includes rock, oldies and show tunes based on the audience's support and enthusiasm.

The core of our group focuses on guitar, harmonica, banjo and more. We often are complemented by an array of talented **guest** musicians.

November 16, 2009 Vol. 2, No. 46

W. C. HANDY FATHER OF THE BLUES

According to many the blues is considered the most distinctive American music. Because William Christopher Handy took this genre from the not very well-known regional music to becoming a dominant force in America, he is credited as the **Father of the Blues**. And, for this achievement, we name him this week's **HONORARY PEA**.

Handy was born November 16, 1873 in Florence, Alabama. He was reared in the same the log cabin his grandfather William Wise Handy built after the emancipation and after he became an African Methodist Episcopal minister. His father Charles Bernard also was a minister.

Throughout his life, Handy retained the religious fervor inculcated in him by his parents. He sang in the church choir and cites the sounds of nature as engendering in him his fascination and inspiration with and

for music: "whippoorwills, bats and hoot owls and their outlandish noises, the sounds of Cypress Creek washing on the fringes of the woodland and the music of every songbird and all the symphonies of their unpremeditated art."

As a youth, Handy spotted a guitar in a local store and secretly picked berries to earn the money to purchase it. His father made him return this "instrument of satan" and quickly enrolled him in organ lessons,



which were short lived, and was replaced by the cornet.

With that instrument, Handy conceal from his parents his joining a local band. He also took a job at McNabb's furnace on the "shovel brigade," where he found music made by the workers "as they beat their shovels, altering their tone while thrusting and withdrawing the metal part against the iron buggies to pass the time while waiting for the overfilled furnace to digest its ore...with a dozen men participating, the effect was sometimes remarkable..."



Handy in center, holding a trumpet

At 19, he traveled to Birmingham where he took a teaching exam which he passed easily but refused a position because teaching paid so poorly. He found employment at a pipe works plant near Bessemer, and, organized a small string orchestra, the Lauzetta Quartet, teaching the musicians to read notes. The quartet read about the upcoming World's Fair in Chicago and decided to attend; once they arrived they learned that the Fair was postponed.

They sought gigs in Chicago and headed for St. Louis. Work was hard to get so they disbanded but Handy stayed in the area.

While in Evansville, Indiana he joined a successful band and while on tour he met his future bride, Elizabeth Price. They married July 19, 1896 and started their musical odyssey playing where ever there was work and where Handy could learn the music of the region particularly the deep south. His memory was impeccable and he was able to recall and transcribe the music he heard in his travels.

After years of journeying from the midwest to the southwest and all of the deep south, Florida and Cuba, Handy grew weary of 'life on the road.' He and his wife decided to stay with relatives near his hometown of Florence where they gave birth the to first of their 6 children.

Handy was invited by the president of Alabama Agricultural and Mechanical College for Negroes to teach courses in music. He accepted and remained there for 2 years; he resigned for several reason: 1. he felt he could make more money touring but more importantly, he was disheartened that the school cast aside American music as inferior especially to the European classical.

So Handy was back on the road, performing and studying musical

techniques everywhere from sitting in a bus station to listening to 'blind singers and footloose

bards.'

In 1909, he moved to Memphis and established a presence on Beale Street. The genesis of his famous *Memphis Blues* originated



there. Originally, it was written as *Mr. Crump*, a campaign tune for the successful mayoral candidate, Edward Crump. In 1912 *Memphis Blues* introduced his style of 12-bar blues and inspired the foxtrot. The song was sold for \$100 thereby asserting Handy's musical style and increasing his popularity. He followed up *Memphis Blues* with *St. Louis Blues*, considered by many to be his masterpiece while others claim it is the "jazzman's *Hamlet*."

Handy was among the first blacks who successfully published his own works. He was a prolific songwriter writing successful blues tunes, marches and orchestral music.

He published his autobiography followed by 5 more books, all revealing, crediting and



acknowledging Handy, age 75, with Billy Rose those who revered the music he so loved ... **THE BLUES.**

He died March 28, 1958; more than 25,000 attended his funeral in Harlem's Abyssinian Baptist Church while more than 150,000 people gathered in the streets near the church to pay their respects.

PETER, PAUL AND MARY QUIZ...





The answers were:

1. **The Cruel War** for the lyrics: *I'll tie back my hair, men's clothing I'll put on.*
2. **Bob Denver** was NOT mentioned in the song, *I Love Rock and Roll.*
3. **Stewball** was the racehorse.
4. **Puff the Magic Dragon** lived **by the sea.**
5. *This land is your land, this land is my land from California to the **New York Island.***
6. *How many years can some people exist before **they're allowed to be free.***
7. The above lyric was from **Blowin' in the Wind** written by **Bob Dylan.**
8. In the song, *Big Blue Frog*, frog in the last line is spelled **Phrog.**
9. *It's the hammer of justice, it's the **bell of freedom...***
10. **Don't Think Twice** contains the lyric: *I'm a wishin' and a hopin all the way down the road...*

AND THE PEA STANDS ALONE

Solo gigs... so you can mark your calendar: **John Frink's** new CD, *Cabin Fever*, has been released. (see: www.crocodiletunes.com)

Fritz Horisk can be heard online at www.realcountrywsig.com. weekdays from 10 til 1 and Saturdays from 10-3. He hosts *Real Country Classic Café* from noon til 1. Requests taken 540-432-1128.

November 2009						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 1st Daylight Savings	2	3	4	5	6	7
						
8	9	10	11 Veterans Day	12	13	14
						
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
						
22	23	24	25	26 Thanksgiving	27	28
						
29	30					

WHEN AND WHERE

The *Whirled Peas* perform at the (BSG) Bourbon Street Grille. The highlighted dates listed above indicate when; they start about 7:30 and play until 10.

BSG, formerly the Coachhouse, is located at 2605 Philadelphia Pike in Claymont. If you go **north** on Philadelphia Pike, it's on the left just before the Wawa at Harvey Road. If you are coming **east** on Harvey Road, turn right when you get to Philadelphia Pike. Go past the Wawa and BSG is on the right. There is no problem with parking.

PEAS PONDERINGS...

Life is like a trumpet – if you don't put anything into it, you don't get anything out of it.

*My big ears indicated a talent for music.
This thrilled me.*

The blues – the sound of a sinner on revival day.

According to William
Christopher Handy

