

REVELRY RAG

MAY 1998

OFFICIAL
KANSAS CITY RAGTIME REVELRY, INC
NEWSLETTER

Railroads and Rags in Sedalia

"Reprinted with permission of FORD
TIMES magazine July 1974 issue"

by Robert M. Hodesh
paintings by Kermit Oliver

SITTING ON THE flatlands of Missouri some 70 miles east of Kansas City, Sedalia is a city of 25,000 surrounded by wide fields of corn and wheat. It is just as self-confident and upright as an agricultural community is supposed to be, especially one in which the state fair is held each year. Its calm and solid look conceals the fact that once upon a time, as an important railroad city, it was tough, almost lurid. It grew from a brawling lusty adolescent to a respectable citizen in about 75 years. Its present is quite a contradiction of its past.

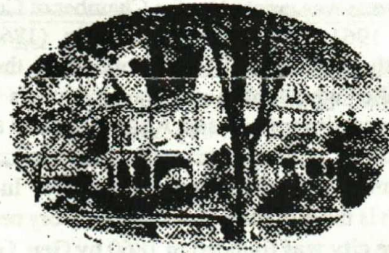
The reason for bringing Sedalia to attention now is that later this month it will be the scene of a festival of ragtime music--that beautiful, vigorous, exciting American music now in the midst of a great revival.

If any single city can claim to have nurtured ragtime.

Sedalia is it.

In its outward aspects, Sedalia may not differ from other smaller cities of the Midwest. Strolling about for a couple of hours a visitor can get the flavor of it and see what there is to see. The city is cheerful. In the face of what ought to be humdrum, its people are sprightly. It is a clean city, with much evidence of pride and boosterism. If it is troubled in any way--which appears unlikely--this is well concealed.

For the most part Sedalia is a city of homes rather than

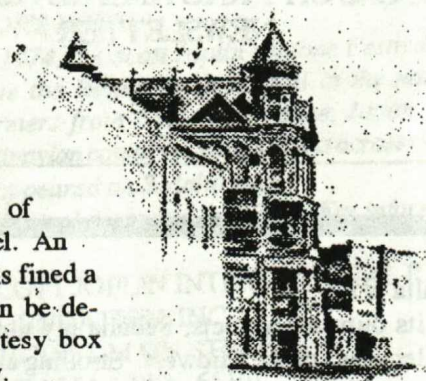


apartments. The condominium and the high rise are still unknown. One section is distinguished by opulent turn-of-the-century houses--ample wooden affairs with gables, eaves, bays and porches, the kind of houses one associates with judges and bankers. These, as well as the less lavish homes, are well tended. The effect is serenity.

A building worth visiting is Sedalia's handsome Greekstyle Carnegie library. It is a welcoming kind of establishment, with a stone fireplace and comfortable furniture, which includes leather chairs. On the landing that leads to its second floor is a charming bit of sculpture that may be made of stone but is probably plaster of Paris. It shows a young girl making lace, and under her chair is a kitten playing with string. That 19th century American sculpture of homey scenes, Roger, might have made it, but no one is sure.

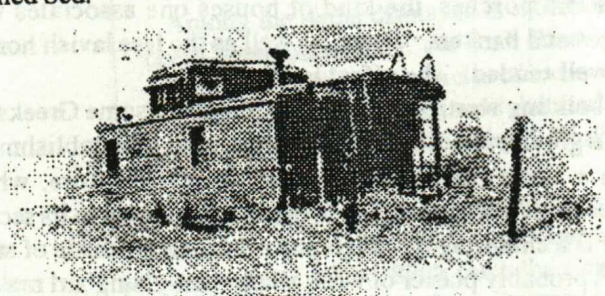
Part of the library's second floor is given over to a modest museum. Among the Sedalia memorabilia on display is a set of Royal Canton china showing Japanese figures. It was used on the occasion when President Rutherford B. Hayes and Mrs. Hayes and some members of the President's cabinet paid a visit to Sedalia in 1879. It is probably priceless.

If the residential sections of Sedalia haven't been touched very much by modern times, neither has its downtown. The shops and stores serve the needs of the residents and of the largely agricultural people who come in from surrounding areas, which means there won't be a Saks Fifth Avenue or Neiman-Marcus in the immediate future. In the way of small cities, most Sedalians have dinner at noon. What's rather quaint is that the parking meters provide two hours of parking for a nickel. An overtime violator is fined a quarter, which can be deposited in a courtesy box somewhere nearby.



A stroller looking for the oldest part of downtown Sedalia will inevitably find himself at the intersection of Lamine and Main streets, and here he comes to the heart of that significant aspect of the city's history--ragtime. One corner is a parking lot--City Lot No. 8. At the edge of the lot, near the sidewalk, is a memorial stone, about five feet high and made of red granite. On it is inscribed the information that the lot was the site of the Maple Leaf Club and that the stone was erected by the Chamber of Commerce of Sedalia in 1961 in tribute to Scott Joplin (1868-1917), composer of the "Maple Leaf Rag"; John Stark, the Sedalia music publisher who took a chance on Joplin's rag; and Sedalia's other ragtime composers Arthur Marshall and Scott Hayden.

The monument is touching in its simplicity. In order to explain why it is there, a little of Sedalia's history needs to be sketched. The city was founded in 1860 by Gen. George R. Smith, an entrepreneur who saw an opportunity in the fact that the Missouri Pacific Railroad, then growing westward from St. Louis, might be induced to pass that way. General Smith named the town for his daughter, Sarah, who was called Sed.



After a number of legal skirmishes, the railroad did reach Sedalia, and during the Civil War it went no farther. Thus Sedalia became the railhead for commerce from the Southwest--cattle, hides and furs. The city grew and was prosperous. A little more than a decade later, another railroad was built through Sedalia--the Missouri-Kansas-Texas.

The presence of two railroads and the repair shops of both

set the stage for a kind of music. Bear in mind that the final three decades of the 19th century saw America's greatest expansion westward and that the railroads were at the center of the economic action. The men who came to work on the railroads were not sissies. They lived hard and drank hard and sought other forms of diversion. At one time there were 25 saloons in Sedalia. The saloons needed music. Among the musicians who came was Scott Joplin, a black man in his twenties from Texarkana, Texas. He studied music at George R. Smith College in Sedalia and played piano at the Maple Leaf Club.

Joplin gave the name of the club to one of his rags, which when it was published by Stark, sold more than a million copies. The "Maple Leaf Rag" symbolizes the hold that ragtime took on the American public. New composers appeared, not only in Sedalia but in St. Louis, Kansas City and Chicago, and hundreds of rags were written. For a while ragtime was the most popular of American popular music.

By the time of World War I, this musical form had played itself out. Its popularity faded. Jazz was coming in and superseding it. Some of the ragtime composers died, some gave up their composing because they couldn't make a living at it. Except for a few diehard pianists who kept playing to dwindling audiences, ragtime was all but gone.

Even in Sedalia, up to 15 years ago, few people had ever heard of Scott Joplin and even fewer would have put him in the pantheon of Sedalia's greats. Asked about famous sons of Sedalia, residents (at least those over the age of 30) might have mentioned Jack Oakie the comedian or Bernarr McFadden the physical culturist or Dale Carnegie the self helper, all of whom were born there. Joplin was only the dimmest of names.

But there is often a sort of historical justice that sets things right. In the early 1960s a musical historian named Rudi Blesh wrote a book called "They All Played Ragtime." This at least got the facts down for the first time. One after another, modern pianists found out about this unique American music. Rags have now actually found their way to the serious concert stage, amateur pianists by the score are playing them and Joplin's music is the sound track of an Academy Award movie called "The Sting." All of a sudden, ragtime is back, not so much a fad as music for a growing and solid audience which recognizes its true worth. And now Scott Joplin is commemorated in stone.

Sedalia being the settled and solid community it is, its citizens are sometimes amused when a ragtime lover--usually a young person--shows up expecting to find the streets lined with saloons and ragtime pouring from every one of them. The pilgrim, having journeyed a distance by car or even hitchhiked in with a backpack, is chagrined to find that Joplin and Marshall and Scott Hayden are only memories and that Sedalians are more aware of their sedate present than their rowdy past.

For a brief time in late July this year, however, the visitor who loves ragtime will not be disappointed. Many of today's finest ragtime pianists--Max Morath, Eubie Blake, Bill Bolcom, Bill Albright, Bob Darch and others--will be on

hand. To be sure, the rags will be heard in settings more socially acceptable than saloons, but the music will be the real thing, and for three days Sedalia will relive the time when it played a central role in creating one of the most interesting chapters in the history of American music. □

EDITOR'S NOTE:

Since 1974, the Scott Joplin ragtime Festival has grown to become the largest such festival in the nation. Ragtime performers from England, France, Japan, Australia, the Scandinavian countries, Canada and across the United States have appeared on Sedalia stages.

1998 festival dates are June 3-7. For information contact:

SCOTT JOPLIN INTERNATIONAL RAGTIME
FOUNDATION, INC.
116 EAST MAIN STREET
SEDALIA, MO 65301
660-826-2271



SEDALIA'S HIDDEN TREASURE

Often overlooked by Sedalia ragtime fans is the Maple Leaf Room, of the Learning Resources Center at State Fair Community College Library, 1900 Clarendon Road.

In 1978 the Sedalia Ragtime Archives Association was formed, and with the help of a grant from the Missouri Committee for the Humanities, Inc., ragtime memorabilia found a permanent home.

Illustrating the regional background which influenced Scott Joplin and other ragtime artists, this is indeed a valuable collection.

Among the items displayed is a first edition of Joplin's opera *Treemonisha*; a gift of Rudi Blesh.

The Maple Leaf Club articles of incorporation, a copy of the contract between Joplin and John Stark and examples of Sedalia composers published by A.W. Perry music company are also displayed.

Sheet music of composers Arthur Marshall, James Scott, Percy Wenrich, Blind Boone and dime song books which were popular in the 1880's catch the viewers interest.

George Thomas Ireland was brought to Sedalia in an ox cart when he was two years old. Tom grew up to play solo clarinet in the Queen City Concert Band. He worked for the Sedalia Democrat for fifty years. He was a familiar figure, riding his bicycle through the streets of Sedalia at eighty-five years of age. The Maple Leaf Room contains his clarinet and his scrapbook, covering much early material.

Scott Joplin and Arthur Marshall attended George R.

Smith College in Sedalia. The cornerstone of the college, was laid in 1893 and now can be seen in the Maple Leaf Room.

Also to be seen are a portion of Bar presumably from the Maple Leaf Club on East Main Street and a stained glass window from the Wood's Opera House where Joplin's Rag-time Dance was performed in 1899.



Photographs, news items, reviews of early ragtime festivals and interviews -- the Maple Leaf Room is a treasure trove of exhibits dear to any ragtimer's heart.

For a day back into history, visit the Maple Leaf Room and join others from throughout the country who come to Sedalia, the cradle of Central Missouri ragtime, searching for a part of the past.

Museum hours:

MTWTH 7:30 A.M. to 8:00 P.M.

FRIDAY 7:30 A.M. to 4:00 P.M.

Telephone: 600-530-5800

COMING SOON

Kansas City Ragtime Revelry, Inc. will present MIMI BLAIS in Concert Wednesday, May 27th at Californos Restaurant, 4124 Pennsylvania Ave. Kansas City, Missouri. Seating is limited. Call Voice Mail 816-691-8781 for reservations. Dine on Californos fine food before the concert. Call 816-531-7878.

The Scott Joplin Foundation will hold their fourth annual pre-festival concert in the greater Kansas City area on Tuesday, June 2nd. Yardley Hall, campus of Johnson County Community College in Overland Park, Kansas. Morten Gunnar Larsen, John Arpin, Bo Grumpus, Dan Levinson & Terry Waldo. Box office number is 913-469-4445.

Thursday July 23 and Friday July 24 Scott Kirby and Morten Gunnar Larsen will appear at Jenkins Music Company, 7316 West 119th Street, Overland Park, Kansas. Sponsored by Kansas City Ragtime Revelry. Call Voice Mail 816-691-8781 for reservations.

BRAM TAKES NEW YORK

by Alan Karlin



Carnegie Hall is synonymous with superior talent, and on Monday, April 6th that is exactly what thousands of people experienced. Bram Wijnands was a featured performer during a tribute to the Nicholas brothers.

They were being honored for their early tap dancing performances from vaudeville to picture movies.

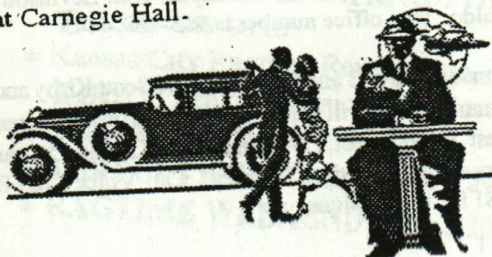
Bram sang and played "Dinah" during the second half. His performance was lighthearted and fun addition to a varied program of dance,

movie clips, vocal styling, and memories by Lena Horne and Maurice Hines. This show may have fulfilled a childhood dream, but it is most definitely the beginning of new dreams and greater goals for this Dutch stride pianist.

Bram Wijnands was accompanied by his beautiful wife Lisa on this trip to New York. They were beaming with excitement and energy among the crowd in front of the hall previous to the show. Bram, with funny faces galore, wore his tuxedo and signature vintage spats. Lisa in her black evening gown and glowing smile was his only rival for attention.

Darrel Wingo and I were privileged to attend and sit box seats at the perfect level to see and hear the entire program. Of course we were both anxious as Bill Cosby introduced Bram. Any fears we had were quickly dismissed as he began to play. The concert grand piano and recital hall acoustics really accentuated Bram's vocal and technical talent. We thought the performance was spectacular and obviously the audience agreed by interrupting the song with applause! Apparently Bram was happy with how his performance went since he skipped off the stage after shaking hands with the Nicholas brothers.

The sold out crowd of course wanted more from every artist but the three hour show ended after eleven o'clock. By New York standards that was early, and many went out afterwards. In that spirit we joined Lisa and Bram across the street for a cocktail to bask in the joy and excitement of his first performance at Carnegie Hall.



NEW RED ONION JAZZ BABIES IN CONCERT

by Smiley Wallace

Californo's Restaurant is located in a picturesque former barn in the historic Westport section of Kansas City, MO.

It was here that ragtime fans gathered on April 20th to hear the premier jazz band of Kansas City, the New Red Onion Jazz Babies, play a benefit performance.

This was all-request night and the audience made their choices from the vast repertoire of the Jazz Babies. The band was in top form, with members taking instrumental solos and meshing perfectly on such old favorites as "Cake Walkin' Babies from Home", "Wolverine Blues" and "Fidgety Feet".

Ragtime enthusiasts also were treated to the seldom-heard "Tin Roof Blues", "Skit-dat-de-dat" and the rousing "March Zacatecas".

Each musical number was followed by cheers, applause and laughter. The audience knew they were witnessing a bit of America's musical heritage, played by an outstanding group of dedicated, highly talented musicians.

Local fans never hear enough of this group, and all agreed it was an evening we will not forget. □



Editors Note: Good news to music lovers: Beginning May 10th, the New Red Onion Jazz Babies will play each Sunday from 5:00 to 9:00 P.M. at Jules Restaurant, 4740 Jefferson Street, Kansas City, MO. Tel:816-561-4004.

A STUDY IN MUSICAL DICHOTOMY

Scott Kirby's new CD, "Grace & Beauty"
reviewed by Mike Nichols

Grace & Beauty / Top Liner Rag / Charleston Rag / Evergreen Rag / Kinklets / American Beauty / The Pippin / Dream Rag / Broadway Rag / Cottontail Rag / Hilarity Rag / Alaskan Rag / The Stars & Stripes Forever / Bird-Brain Rag / Ragtime Oriole / Ragtime Nightingale

There can be little doubt that one of the qualities that gives ragtime music its unique charm is the unexpected yet pleasing juxtaposition of opposites. This is inherent in the musical for itself, confronting the staid harmonics of European musical tradition with the invigorating rhythms of African percussion. In practically every measure, the steady tempo of the bass line is contrasted with the jaunty syncopations of the right hand. Even the emotional response to ragtime often seems double-edged, the celebratory happiness of the good-time music being tinged with a bittersweet sadness for a sound that seems fleeting and fragile.

It is no wonder then that Scott Kirby is the perfect choice to perform this music. Listening to any of Scott's recordings, and this CD in particular, one cannot help being struck by a most profound dichotomy that runs through every selection. On the one hand, Scott's execution boasts a firmness and assuredness that immediately puts the listener at ease. There will be no mis-steps anywhere here. In another performer, this confidence might result in a kind of heavy-handedness. But with Scott, exactly the opposite is obtained, a delicacy of touch that is pure joy to the ear. It is precisely his total mastery of the music that enables such a deft touch.

Nor could Scott have picked a better selection of rags to showcase his amazing talent. Many reviewers have agreed that Scott Kirby is the leading performer of "classic" rags today, and here he gives us no less than five rags by James Scott, six by Joseph Lamb, and two by Arthur Marshall. Rounding out the 16 selections (almost 60 minutes of music) are one by Jesse Pickett, one by Eubie Blake, and one by John Philip Sousa by way of Eubie Blake. Lest you are wondering about the absence of Scott Joplin, the King of Ragtime Composers, rest assured that Scott is currently involved in a project to record all of Joplin's rags of which Volume 1 is already released. This will actually be Kirby's second pass at recording the complete Joplin. In point of fact, quite a few of the tunes on this CD have been recorded by Scott before, four of them on "More Damn Good Ragtime" and three other elsewhere. But I would venture to cite these as the definitive performances.

And with the performances so uniformly solid, there is little else to do but add a few comments about favorites. The title CD, "Grace & Beauty" by James Scott, may well be my favorite here, though his "Ragtime Oriole" is a close second. Indeed, one might wish for a Kirby-based "complete James

Scott" collection, since the Scott rags are recorded far too seldom, and these four make a great start. Kirby is completely at home with the sophisticated elegance of the Joseph Lamb rags, and the inclusion of his rarely heard "Bird-Brain Rag" is a treat. Two other seldom-heard or recorded rags are Jesse Pickett's "Dream Rag" (via Eubie Blake's arrangement), and Arthur Marshall's "The Pippin". And we finally get Kirby's arrangement of Sousa's "Stars & Stripes Forever" on CD, always a favorite in live performances for showcasing his range of performance techniques.

If you are looking for a ragtime CD as a gift for someone who is a novice to this genre, this would be a great pick. And if you are collector of ragtime CDs yourself, put this in the "must have" column. It can be ordered for \$15 + \$2.00 postage and handling from Viridiana Productions, L.L.C., P.O. Box 56763, New Orleans, Louisiana 70156-6763. Or check out Scott Kirby's home page on the Internet at <http://members.aol.com/ragtimers/viridiana.html> for more information.

INTERNATIONAL RAGS

Scott Kirby and Morten Gunnar Larsen will appear in concert at Jenkins Music Company in Overland Park Kansas on Thursday July 23rd and Friday July 24th at 7:30 P.M. each night.

Kirby is no stranger to Kansas City audiences. Local concerts held by this foremost ragtime pianist have been highly acclaimed.

Those who were unable to see Kirby and Larsen at the Scott Joplin Festival in Sedalia will welcome this opportunity to hear them in concert.

Morten Gunnar Larsen comes to us from Norway. He is a graduate of the Norwegian Music Academy, where he studied classical piano. He was awarded the "Spellmannsprisen", which is the Norwegian equivalent of the Grammy, for his first solo album. In 1978, he performed at the New Orleans Jazz Festival. He stayed in the United States to serve as pianist and musical director for the international hit musical ONE MO' TIME, performing with that show Off-Broadway at the Village Gate, in New Orleans, Philadelphia, Houston and Washington, D.C. as well as tours to Brazil and Sweden. He also performed and supplied arrangements for a Fats Waller show. Morten Gunnar Larsen has also put together several programs, including MEMORIES OF EUBIE, excerpts from Scott Joplin's TREEMONISHA for choir and soloists.

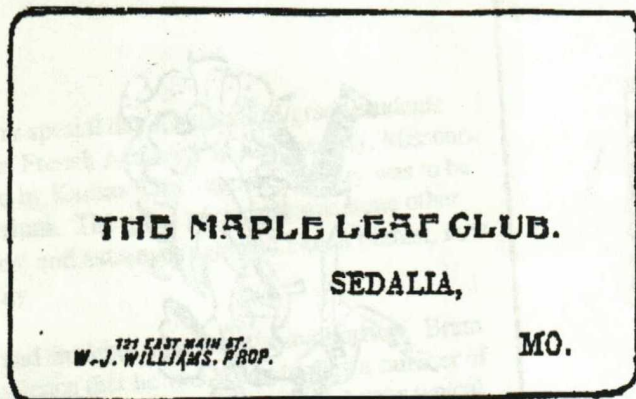
In 1997 he was musical director and appeared in the Off-Broadway play JELLY ROLL with Vemel Bagneris. This play won the OBIE award.

More recently, Larsen presented a program at the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. where he performed the works of Jelly Roll Morten on the piano which Jelly Roll used when he recorded for the Library of Congress in 1938.

These two outstanding performers, Scott Kirby and Morten Gunnar Larsen, will combine their creative skills to bring us a fascinating program of ragtime in July.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR! UPCOMING EVENTS

- MAY 24 ≈ **NEW RED ONION JAZZ BABIES** Every Sunday night 5:00 - 9:00 P.M. Jules Restaurant 440 Jefferson, Kansas City, Mo Jazz Babies - Tel: 816-781-2633
- MAY 27 ≈ Kansas City Ragtime Revelry, Inc. presents **MIMI BLAIS** in concert Californos Restaurant, Kansas City Mo Tel:816-531-7878
- JUNE 1-2 ≈ **SCOTT KIRBY & FRANK FRENCH** Philbrook Museum Tulsa, OK
Tel: 918-749-3184
- JUNE 1-2 ≈ **MIMI BLAIS, GLENN JENKS, DAVID REFFKIN, JEFF BARNHART, MIKE SCHWIMMER** Royal Theater, Versialle, Mo Tel:573-378-6226
- JUNE 2 ≈ **JOHN ARPIN, MORTEN GUNNAR LARSEN, BO GRUMPUS, TERRY WALDO AND DAN LEVINSON** Johnson County Community College, Overland Park, Kansas.
Yardley Hall Tel:913-469-4445
- JUNE 3-7 ≈ Scott Joplin Ragtime Festival **FILLED WITH STARS** Sedalia, Mo Formal Concerts,
Informal Sets Tel:660-826-2271
- JUNE 8 ≈ **SCOTT KIRBY - MORTEN GUNNAR LARSEN** Columbia, Mo Campus of Stephens
College Seminar 2:00 P.M. Concert 7:30 P.M. Tel:573-874-5676
- JUNE 13 ≈ **NEW RED ONION JAZZ BABIES** Sunfest Gardner, KS 7:30 P.M.
- JUNE 17 ≈ **TURPIN TYME RAGSTERS** Clock Tower, 80th & Santa Fe, Overland Park, KS
11:00 A.M. Tel:816-432-2851
- JUNE 19 ≈ **TURPIN TYME RAGSTERS** Macken Park North Kansas City, Mo 11:30 A.M.
Tel:816-432-2851
- JUNE 19 ≈ **TURPIN TYME RAGSTERS** America Park, Downtown Omaha, NE 8:00 - 10:00 P.M.
Tel:816-432-2851
- JUNE 24 ≈ **NEW RED ONION JAZZ BABIES** Vavra Park 6040 Slater, Merriam, KS 7:00 P.M.
Tel:816-781-2633
- JUNE 26-28 ≈ **RICHARD ZIMMERMAN, JEFF BARNHART, SUE KELLER, BOB DARCH, THE ELITE SYNCOPATER, ETCETERA STRING BAND, others.** Woodstock, IL
Tel:916-273-4585
- JULY 4 ≈ **TURPIN TYME RAGSTERS** Prairie Village City Hall, Prairie Village, KS
7:00 - 9:00 P.M. Tel:816-432-2851
- JULY 16-20 ≈ **SCOTT KIRBY, MORTEN GUNNAR LARSEN, ETCETERA STRING BAND, JACK RUMMEL, SEA BISCUITS, DAVID THOMAS ROBERTS, GALE FOEHNER, ALEX HASSAN, BRIAN KEENAN, FRANK FRENCH AND MONT ALTO RAGTIME & TANGO ORCHESTRA** Rocky Mountain Ragtime Festival
Tel: 303-449-9118
- JULY 23-24 ≈ Kansas City Ragtime Revelry, Inc., presents **MORTEN GUNNAR LARSEN and SCOTT KIRBY**, Jenkins Music 7316 West 119th Street, Overland Park, KS 7:30 P.M.
Tel:913-648-2591
- AUGUST 12 ≈ **TURPIN TYME RAGSTERS** Vavra Park 6040 Slater, Merriam, KS 7:00 P.M.
- AUGUST 21-23 ≈ **RAGTIME WEEKEND**, Indianapolis, IN



Pictured above is a front and back copy of the business card for the original Maple Leaf Club of Sedalia, Missouri. Scott Joplin worked here in 1899 when he composed his famous rag and named it after the club.

The Maple Leaf Club was a social center of sorts with a fairly large room where various political meetings were held and where Scott Joplin rehearsed the Queen City Concert Band, in which he played second cornet. Another room was the saloon where piano players played for tips and "Ladies of the Evening" picked up their clientele.



Farewell

It was with regret that Kansas City Ragtime Revelry, Inc. accepted the resignation of Nannette Rod as editor of the Revelry Rag newsletter.

Her dedication to excellence and her unique artistic contributions were greatly appreciated by her readers.

Kansas City Ragtime Revelry, Inc. wishes Nannette the best. She will be missed.

New co-editors are Helen and Smiley Wallace.



Ragtime Revelry Officers

- President: Darrel Wingo
- Vice President: Bram Wijnands
- Secretary: Diane Capps
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Smiley Wallace

For the latest information regarding concerts, festivals and other Ragtime happenings, remember to call Kansas City Ragtime Revelry Voice Mail at 816-691-8781