

# REVELRY RAG

Spring 2000

OFFICIAL  
KANSAS CITY RAGTIME REVELRY, INC  
NEWSLETTER

KANSAS CITY REVELRY RAG TAKES THIS OPPORTUNITY TO THANK ITS READERS FOR THEIR LOYAL SUPPORT AND TO WISH THEM HAPPINESS AND SUCCESS IN 2000 AS WE ENTER OUR THIRD CENTURY OF RAGTIME MUSIC.



2000



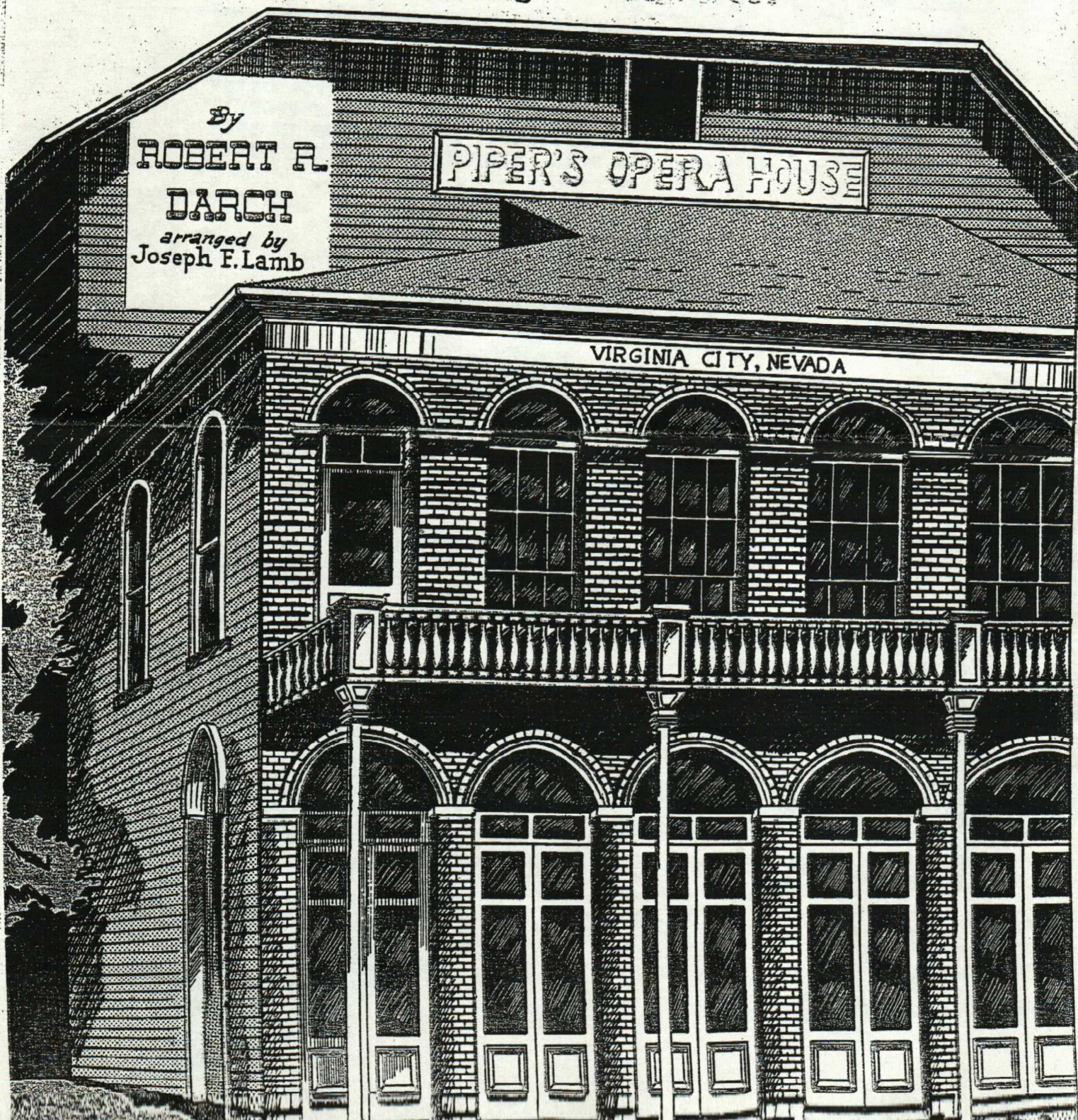
# OPERA HOUSE RAG

*A Sterling Selection*

By  
**ROBERT R.  
DARCH**  
*arranged by  
Joseph F. Lamb*

PIPER'S OPERA HOUSE

VIRGINIA CITY, NEVADA



## PIPER'S OPERA HOUSE

The great gold and silver mining camp of Virginia City, Nevada, was founded in 1859 with the discovery of the fabulous Comstock Lode and within fifteen years was second only to San Francisco as a radiant theatre town. For three decades it boasted some of the foremost impresarios of the land. It paid top salaries and it adored its favorites.

In 1863 Thomas Maguire opened the predecessor of Piper's Opera House on D Street. In addition to its opulent theatre decor it contained a spacious bar and billiard room, a gaming parlor, carpets on the floor and wonderful crystal chandeliers.

At Maguire's, part of whose foundation still remains, there appeared such nationally known figures of the time as Artemus Ward, whose monumental carouse with Mark Twain who was then a member of the staff of the Territorial Enterprise was written into Virginia City history, and Adah Isaacs Menken, then at the height of her notoriety for her performance in Mazeppa in whose climactic scene she actually wore flesh colored tights!

Although his affairs on the Comstock prospered Maguire hankered to return to San Francisco, and gradually his place was taken by John Piper, an eminent Virginia City saloon keeper and sporting man. Beginning in 1864 Piper gradually bought his way into the Maguire enterprises. With Piper's accession to the eminence thus vacated the Comstock entered its golden age of entertainment.

Piper's theatrical activities maintained considerable continuity with the pattern first set by Maguire. He continued Maguire's own resident company of permanent players who supplemented the stars and name personalities brought in from outside.

Piper's D Street opera house burned to the ground in the Great Fire of 1875, and Piper, along with most of the other property owners of the Comstock excepting the owners of the mines which were safe underground, was bankrupt. In his extremity he turned to his old friend Maguire who promptly ponied up \$50,000 and for his new playhouse Piper chose the northwest corner of B and Union Streets, the present location.

The second Piper's Opera House was ready for occupancy in the first weeks of 1878. Virginia City had by now outgrown its boom-town brashness and was celebrated as the richest per capita community in the world.

The new Piper's seated 900 patrons and boasted a stage fifty four feet wide and thirty eight feet deep which lent itself to the production of spectacular melodramas with involved scenic and mechanical effects. It had large, comfortable seats in the dress circle and excellent side-lines and four boxes which were usually in requisition for such local nabobs as

John Mackay, Jim Fair, Isaac Requa and Adolph Sutro.

In the brief five years of this opera house's life most of the great names of the English speaking stage appeared there; Robert Ingersoll, the famous agnostic, Edwin Booth, Salvini the Younger, Joe Jefferson, Buffalo Bill Cody and his troupe, and numberless minstrel shows pretty girl shows, and run of the mine lecturers and performers.

Piper's was never dark. Ole Bull and Eduard Remenyi came up on the steam cars to delight the town's music lovers; Henry Ward Beecher and Henry George alternated with Hermann the Wizard and the Faker of Bordeaux.

Late in the night of March 12, 1883, long after John Piper had retired to his quarters in the theatre itself, a saloon swamper and a night watchman spied smoke curling from under the eaves of Piper's and pulled the fire alarm. Then, knowing Piper was inside, they entered the building and rescued him just as the flames burst from the flies.

Again Piper was bankrupt, for although his gate receipts had seldom been less than \$1,000 a night all his profits had gone back into the business, most of them eaten up by the cost of importing celebrities.

But Virginia City would not let Piper down, and soon there was a dazzling series of benefit shows, testimonial dinners, and subscription dances; all the devices known to a grateful community to raise funds for a fellow citizen and have fun doing it.

So was the third and final Piper's built, the one that stands today. Because of a stringent shortage of funds the interior decor was sadly lacking in the plush, gilt, ormolu and crystal so dear to the Victorian's heart. The slanting floor of the raked stage, the only one remaining in existence anywhere, gave rise, of course, to the theater term "to upstage."

The official opening took place in March, 1885, and nearly two months later the first play in the structure was attended by a gala audience, the bill being the Atkinson Stock Company's production of "Peck's Bad Boy."

The affairs of Piper's in the final years of the nineteenth century followed the graphs of the American theatrical road and the Comstock of which it had been one of the proudest ornaments, both in the long decline toward ultimate oblivion. But Piper's is still there for a generation that never knew stock or attended a performance of "East Lynne" or "The Streets of New York" to see and admire, which it does in countless thousands every summer. No longer tenable as a playhouse, it is maintained by Ed Zimmer, whose father once played an erratic fiddle in the orchestra, as a museum of Comstock memories.

"If it weren't for Ragtime Bob Darch," said the legendary jazz and ragtime pianist and composer Eubie Blake in 1978, "you never would have heard my songs and you never would have known who I am."

Eubie Blake at age 95 as he stood on-stage at the premiere of the Broadway musical EUBIE 1979.

Bob Darch is one of Ragtime's great entertainers whose performances must be seen as well as heard.

DICK ZIMMERMAN

Bob Darch has no trouble getting people's attention with his music. One of the foremost exponents of ragtime music today, he's currently playing to packed and enthusiastic audiences.

Montie Tak CARLISLE PA SENTINEL

Bob Darch definitely does have a certain magic about him that captivates his audiences.

CATHERINE WILSON TORONTO

Under the hands of Bob Darch, ragtime becomes the sound of history, of humor, of mood, of life itself.

Jeff Jordan OMAHA WORLD HERALD

Although the first festival did not take place until 1974, Bob Darch had made many trips to Sedalia long before this, trying to build up interest in the town and one of its most famous citizens by preaching a Scott Joplin Festival. Accordingly, in 1961 the Sedalia Chamber of Commerce erected a monument on the site of the old Maple Leaf Club, honoring Scott Joplin, John Stark as publisher of the Maple Leaf Rag, and two other Sedalia rag-timers, Arthur Marshall & Scott Hayden.

Sedalia Ragtime Society

Darch offers a forthright lesson on a significant American contribution to the musical culture of the world.

Patricia Brown THE MIAMI HERALD

Bob Darch is, no doubt, one of the greatest exponents of ragtime music on the American continent.

Crichton Healy CORK, IRELAND EVENING ECHO

Robert "Ragtime Bob" Darch is partly responsible for what ragtime is today. He's just great. He's the best ragtime pianist around."

Jeffrey B. Hebert  
Agewood Resort General Manage

In recent years ragtime has experienced a renaissance and here we have a chance of listening to and meeting with one of the very best interpreters of the style. Robert Russell Darch - "Ragtime Bob" among friends - since the 1950's has been singing and playing all over the world.

TROJBOG ASSN NEWSLETTER, DENMARK

Robert Darch is an advocate, proponent and apostle of ragtime music. He is an expert in the field.  
Joel Coffee SAVANNAH JOURNAL-RECORD

Ragtime piano at its best!  
Dave Jackson

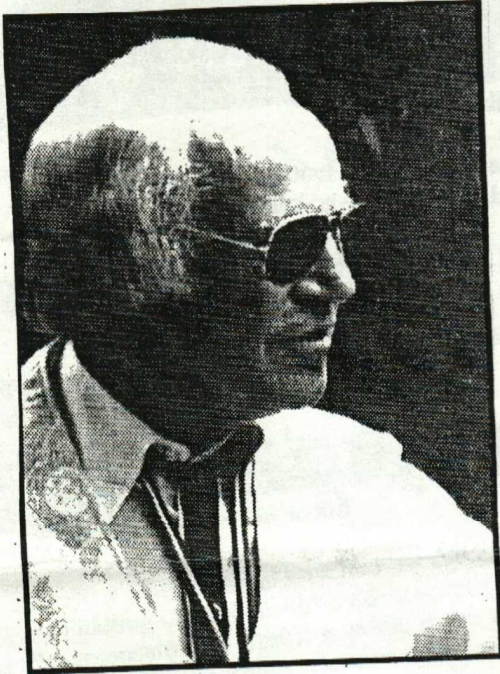
We owe so much to Bob Darch, the man responsible for bringing Eubie Blake out of retirement, and to his research into ragtime and his work with composers Joe Jordan, Joseph Lamb, Charlie Thompson and Arthur Marshall. Bob has also helped many young people get started in ragtime.

Terry Walde

Bob Darch is the world's greatest ragtime piano player and balladeer. I'm mesmerized by Ragtime Bob's repertoire and style.

Peter Worthington TORONTO SUN

# BOB DARCH TO BE HONORED



When you meet Bob Darch, you are talking to a man with over half a century of music behind him. He is, no doubt, one of the greatest exponents of ragtime music on the scene today. Piano playing and his tremendous interest and love for ragtime has earned him the label "Ragtime Bob".

Long before Scott Joplin's classic music was rediscovered by the nation in 1974 with the release of the movie, 'The Sting', Ragtime Bob was preaching the gospel of ragtime from an upright piano.

When Darch first came to American's midwest in the 1950's he visited small Missouri towns, addressing Chambers of Commerce, playing at schools - anywhere he could get exposure for the music he loves and lives. He sees himself as an historian and protector, a traveling ambassador who can entertain anywhere, teaching the history of ragtime and its place in our country's history.

Anyone who has met Bob Darch has found him unforgettable. He is the consummate entertainer. And for decades he has been one of the foremost interpreters of ragtime music, playing to packed and enthusiastic houses worldwide.

Darch's reverence for his music goes back to his teacher- Gene Turpin, nephew of the legendary black ragtime man, Tom Turpin, who wrote the first black rag published in America (Harlem Rag).

In those years in the 1920's, Gene Turpin repaid a debt to Darch's

Uncle Ralph by teaching piano to the white youngster.

But there is more to Bob Darch than performer. He is a meticulous archivist, spending hours in search of forgotten musical pieces in antique stores, carefully researching his finds. His collection consists of more than 100,000 copies of the music of that period. Darch can play for hours at a stretch without repeating himself.

He is a talented composer, with scores of original ragtime tunes to his credit. He is a recording artist and founder of many ragtime festivals which are held world-wide. And as the connection between past and present generations, he is mentor to numerous young musicians who have heard the call of the keyboard. A list of his proteges reads like a Who's Who of contemporary ragtime. It would take volumes to come close to understanding the accomplishments of this man.

Darch has received many awards during his career, among them a citation from King Olaf of Norway. He was named official piano player from Alaska, a fact read into the legislative records. Playboy magazine featured him in their annual jazz poll. In 1994 he received the prestigious Lifetime Achievement Award from the Scott Joplin Ragtime Society in Sedalia, Missouri

Mr. Chris Ware, editor and publisher dedicated the current issue of his excellent THE RAGTIME EPHEMERALIST periodical to Mr. Robert Darch.

The year 2000 will be another milestone for Darch. He will celebrate his 80th birthday on March 30th and the Savannah Tom Turpin Ragtime Festival (March 30-April 2, 2000) will dedicate the festival in his honor. This is well deserved. When they talk about the true legends of ragtime, there is little doubt that Bob Darch is at the top of the list.

Tom Turpin Ragtime Festival  
%Ann Steele Agency  
330 West 42nd Street, 18th Floor  
New York, NY 10036





Thomas Million Turpin

## TOM TURPIN'S GRAVE MARKED

It has been the dream of the Friends of Scott Joplin Society to place a headstone on the grave of St. Louis legend Tom Turpin.

Their perseverance has overcome many long-standing obstacles and now their efforts have been rewarded.

On Sunday, September 12th the monument was placed and a dedication held at St. Peter's Cemetery, 2101 Lucas and Hunt Road, St. Louis, Missouri.

Tom Turpin was an important figure in ragtime music in St. Louis. He was both a performer and composer and his "Harlem Rag", issued in 1897 was the first published rag by an African American. Turpin owned the world renowned Rosebud Saloon which was open 24 hours a day and was a magnet for some of the premier artists in the ragtime field.

In 1913 Tom Turpin and his brother Charles opened a theater on Market Street which presented leading African American entertainers of the time.

Tom Turpin died August 13, 1922. He was buried in the cemetery that was also the resting place of John Stillwell Stark.

The Friends of Scott Joplin Society dedication ceremony was preceeded by a day-long festival September 11 which featured artists St. Louis Ragtimers, Tony Caramia, Sue Keller and others. Those present heard the music of Turpin, Scott Joplin, W. C. Handy, Artie Matthews, Louis Chauvin and Joe Jordan.

Kansas City Ragtime Revelry, Inc. commends the Friends of Scott Joplin Society for their successful completion of this project.

## GERALDINE T. "GERI" CARLTON 1921-2000

The musical community was saddened by the death of Geri Carlton on January 28, 2000.

She was the beloved wife of Don "Shotgun" Carlton, leader of the New Red Onion Jazz Babies band. She leaves her husband Don, one daughter, one son and five grandchildren.

Final services were held in her home town of Chillicothe, MO on February 1, 2000. The ceremony was memorable with the New Red Onion Jazz Babies' beautiful rendition of the hymn 'Just a Closer Walk with Thee'.

Geri Carlton was a devoted wife, mother and grandmother. She will be missed by all those who knew her.

Board members of Kansas City Ragtime Revelry extend their condolences to the family.





## THE WILDERS

*Old Time & Vintage Country String Band*

# A FREE CONCERT!

Kansas City Ragtime Revelry, Inc. wants you to hear an exciting new musical group.

They are the Wilders. A string quartet with Ike Shelton on lead vocals and guitar, Nate Gowron on stand-up bass and Phil Wade playing dobro, banjo and mandolin.

Then there is Betse Ellis. Her old time fiddling earned her the Kansas State Fiddling Championship, Mid-America Old Time Fiddling Championship, and finalist standing in the Walnut Valley Old Time Fiddling Championship. Betse will steal your heart.

Fans throughout the midwest have enjoyed these talented musicians and their repertoire of delightful, toe tapping tunes. The fun this band has is bound to make you grin. They play a mixture of string band songs from early radio days with a generous sprinkling of ragtime. They will play "Pig Ankles Rag", composed in 1905 by Kansas City's own Mamie E. Williams.

Kansas City Ragtime Revelry, Inc. is presenting the free concert to introduce you to a new listening experience. The concert will be held Monday, March 6th at Californos Restaurant, 4124 Pennsylvania, Kansas City, MO. Donations are requested.

Come early and enjoy a dinner of Californos fine cuisine. Telephone 816-531-7878 for dinner reservations.

Concert time is 7:30 p.m. Kansas City Ragtime Revelry number is 816-691-8781.

For Ragtime information, call our Ragtime Revelry  
Voice Mail at 816-691-8781

# SCOTT KIRBY IS COMING!

Kansas City Ragtime Revelry will present Scott Kirby in concert April 14, 2000.

Final details are being worked out and more information will be forthcoming.

Mark your calendars for this concert featuring one of Ragtime's most talented and charismatic artists.

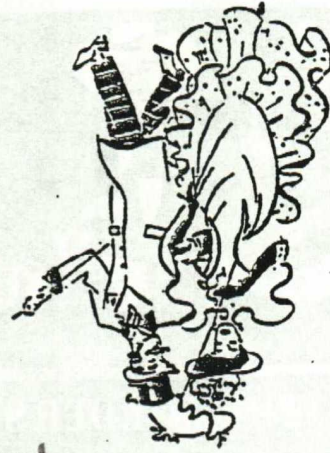


Please Join Us

Make checks payable to:  
**KANSAS CITY RAGTIME REVELRY, INC.**  
5203 West 79th Terrace  
Prairie Village, KS 66208 - 1902

NAME \_\_\_\_\_  
STREET ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_  
CITY \_\_\_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

Individual	\$20	Patron	\$30
Couple	\$25	Sponsor	\$50



To: Jim Ketter

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Kansas City Ragtime Revelry, Inc.  
5203 W. 79th Terrace  
Prairie Village, KS 66208-1902



# THE ETCETERA STRING BAND

*Their fourth release*  
**FUN ON THE LEVEE**

A collection of rags & cake-walks from towns along the Missouri river from 1895 - 1905.



## BONNE HUMEUR

Their critically acclaimed third release of folk dance music from Louisiana and the French Caribbean

Order from:  
**THE ETCETERA STRING BAND**  
P.O. BOX 9106  
KANSAS CITY, KANSAS 66112

**FUN ON THE LEVEE**  
Cassette @ \$12 \_\_\_ Copies

(Not available on CD)

**BONNE HUMEUR**  
Cassette @ \$12 \_\_\_ Copies

CD @ \$15 \_\_\_ Copies



Be sure to visit the TurpinTyme Ragsters Web Page  
<http://www.sound.net/~garyt/turpin.html> for updates on upcoming engagements.  
The TurpinTyme Ragsters CD "Trouble" is still available  
TurpinTyme Ragster CD  
4525 Cambridge  
Kansas City, KS. 66103  
\$17.95 including S & H

Also check out the home page of Kansas City Ragtime Revelry  
<http://www.sound.net/~garyt/revelry/raghome.htm>  
E-Mail address: [mikenichols@sprintmail.com](mailto:mikenichols@sprintmail.com)

