

Georgia Pot Lickers 78 sells for \$10,126.05

On Nov. 12, 1930, Lowe Stokes got together with a few fellow pickers in an Atlanta studio to record some country songs for the Brunswick label. Stokes was known as a prolific fiddler who liked to record under different group names, including The Georgia Organ Grinders, The Pot Lickers, and The Swamp Rooters, among others. On that particular day he and his bands recorded eight songs.

"They recorded 'Kitty And The Baby'/'Prohibition Is A Failure' [Brunswick 491] and 'Rocking My Sugar Lump'/'Four Cent Cotton' [Brunswick 549] as Lowe Stokes And The Pot Lickers, 'Swamp Cat Rag'/'Citaco' [Brunswick 556] as The Swamp Rooters, and 'Chicken Don't Roost Too High'/'Up Jumped The Rabbit' [Brunswick 595] as The Georgia Pot Lickers," said Joe Bussard, whose 78 rpm archive contains more than 25,000 records and who was the subject of a documentary on his massive collection, *Desperate Man Blues*.

However, the songs, which were released in 1932, didn't sell well. "It was during the Depression, and nobody had 75¢ for a record," said Frank Mare, a fellow country music 78 rpm collector from Covington, Ga., with a collection of more than 7,000. Although both men had managed to put their hands on three of the records, no one had ever acquired the entire set of recordings made that day in 1930.

On Aug. 26, 2005, the missing record, "Chicken Don't Roost Too High"/'Up Jumped The Rabbit" surfaced on eBay. The country record was miscategorized in the auction as jazz and had a starting bid of \$9.99, by an auction broker in Omaha, Neb. "The owner got this record and others from a junk dealer mixed in with other records," said the seller, who didn't want to be identified. "I was told prior to the listing it was rare and probably the only one to ever surface."

"As far as I know none of the leading collectors of early country music had the record itself or have even heard a tape copy of it," said Tom Morrison, who runs the 78 rpm collectors site, juneberry78s.com. "I have not yet heard the two sides, but I'd guess that the 'Up Jumped The Rabbit' side is probably the same tune as 'Up Jumped The Devil.' The other side is a well-known minstrel tune."

The record went three days without receiving an offer, and then the miniscule opening bid began quietly escalating. "I bid about \$300 [\$367.38], but I knew that wasn't going to be enough," said Mare, who wasn't the only one eyeballing the sale.

"How I found out about it was a friend of mine from Alabama called me and told me to get on eBay," said Bussard. "I don't



even own a computer, so I had my son-in-law pull it up. I said, 'Oh my God, that's going to go for 10 grand.' Bussard went ahead and put in a bid of \$999.

With two hours left the bidding shot up to \$2,710, but no one, except Bussard, pegged the outcome. With literally seconds left, the bidding jumped almost \$8,000 to top out at \$10,126.05 by a Chicago collector who didn't want to be interviewed for this story. "He [the buyer] called me up to tell me that he bought it," said Bussard. "He wanted to know if he paid too much. I mean, it's a \$10,000 record, what can I say. It's a store copy that's never been played."

"I think it's amazing that they were able to get that for a country record," said 78 rpm collector Jack Spence. The Atlanta collector owns close to 1,300 country 78 rpm discs and watched the outcome from the sidelines. "I'll pay a few hundred bucks for a record, but this is insane... but who can say how much is too much for this?"

While collectors of what Mare affectionately referred to as "old-time mountain music," have been quietly building their collections over the last number of decades, the interest in the genre soared after the 2000 movie *O Brother, Where Art Thou*, and its multiplatinum soundtrack. New enthusiasts, many unsatisfied with the current state of Top 40 country, saturated record shows hunting for anything and everything related to the songs they heard. "1922-1955 is it as far as country goes, for me," said Bussard, "starting with M.J. Bonner in 1922 and ending with Jimmy Murphy in 1955. After Murphy there was nothing that came close to anything country."

Have you found a long-lost recording on an online auction site? Whether you paid \$10 or \$10,000 I would love to hear from you. Drop me a line via my Web site, www.isleofwrite.com.

— Lisa Wheeler

Web sites of interest

Joe Bussard's Vintage 78s

www.vintage78.com

Tom Morrison

www.juneberry78s.com