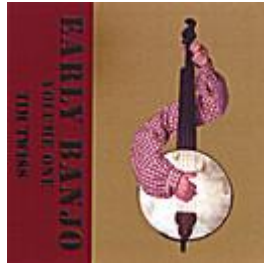


Mp3 Tim Twiss - Early Banjo Volume One



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Minstrel Banjo. 19th Century instrumental American Roots Music played on a fretless, gut string banjo. This music is so old, it sounds brand new. Soothing, yet exciting. 21 MP3 Songs FOLK: Traditional Folk, FOLK: Minstrel Details: You are listening to music as it was heard in the 19th Century on a period instrument. The banjo I am using (c.1840) is an exact replica of a Sweeney style, named for Joel Walker Sweeney, the first Great American Banjo Player. It is fretless with gut strings, a goatskin head, bent oak rim, brass tension hoops and hooks, and hand carved pegs. Banjos were originally made from a gourd, which is the type slaves would have been playing for their own enjoyment. The African-American musician is the key source of this style of music. Some blend of African and European (mostly Irish) music occurred in and around the plantations and riverboats of the early 19th Century. It made its way into the world through minstrel shows and other commercial venues. The true origins of this music remain shrouded in myth, but men like Joel Sweeney and Dan Emmett helped draw attention to it and formed what became a solid foundation of American Roots Music. This style of banjo playing sounds different also because of the manner in which it is played. It is struck DOWN by the back of the first finger and the flesh of the thumb only. This is called the STROKE STYLE and has long been forgotten. This is truly African in its origin. It is not plucked the way guitars and banjos are today. Eventually, the banjo did adopt the guitar style manner of plucking in the middle of the century. The banjo is also tuned much lower than the modern banjo of today. The source of this music comes from 6 basic books recovered from the archives of Brown University and the Library of Congress. The authors of these books were the most well known instrumentalists of their day Tom Briggs, Phil Rice, and two each from James Buckley and Frank Converse. The books were published for commercial reasons, but remain as an important record of what the banjo was doing at the time. Each book represents a collection of Jigs, Reels, Walk-Arounds,

Waltzes, Polkas, and Popular Songs and is the source from which I am playing today. Since we have no recordings from the 19th century we must rely upon these manuscripts. Experimenting, listening, studying, and talking to other musicians is the way to breath life back into this forgotten music. These songs represent my interpretation of this music, especially rhythmically. I used instruments which were commonly known at that time, which include bones, tambourine, jawbone, and triangle. I played it how I felt it. I am also using a banjo made by James North. It is similar, in that it has a skin head and gut strings, but is unique in the fact that it has a carved walnut body and the head is tacked on. The scale length is shorter, and is tuned to E, which is a whole step higher. This banjo was used on track 2, 6, 14, and 21.

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