



Harry Choates

Harry was born in Rayne, Louisiana, on December 26, 1922. He had no formal education or musical training. Even though he never owned a musical instrument, he learned to play the fiddle, rhythm and steel guitar and accordion. The fiddle music he made famous was on a borrowed fiddle.

By the late 1930s he had played music with Leo Soileau's Aces and Papa Cairo and Jimmy Foster. His first recordings as a fiddler was made with Happy Fats and the Rayne-Bo Ramblers on February 14, 1940, in Dallas, Texas.

Harry's own band played a combination of Cajun and Western Swing music. In 1946 his recording of "*Jolie Blon*," making an instant success, especially with the Cajun People along the Gulf Coast, was the first Cajun song to make the top ten hits in the nation.

Harry recorded other popular Cajun French songs such as: "*Allons A Lafayette*," "Big Mamou" and "Poor Hobo." His music was directed at the dancing audience. He even danced as he played fiddle.

In 1950, Harry's health began to fail and his aggressive temperament caused him to run afoul of the law. He ended up in jail in Austin, Texas, where he died in 1951. Inscribed on his grave marker is a tribute to his memory:

A TRIBUTE TO HARRY CHOATES
A MAN WHO PASSED ON
LONG AGO BUT LEFT US
WITH HIS CAJUN MUSIC THAT WILL
LIVE IN OUR HEARTS FOREVER