



A Dictionary and Catalog of African American Folklife of the South

Alan B. Johns, Sherman E. Pyatt

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African Americans of the South have long had a rich tradition of folklore and customs, many of which predate the Civil War. Some of these beliefs originated in the South, while others have their roots in voodoo and African religions. But with the end of the Civil War and the decline of segregation, the folklife of Southern African Americans has been disappearing. Many African American children were taught to forget all reminders of the long hard years of slavery, and many African Americans continue to be unaware of their people's cultural contributions in song, dance, art, and literature. While folklore has always been an intrinsic part of African American society, it was not until the early 1940s that African American folklore was a subject of research.

As a reference work, this volume preserves the folklife of Southern African Americans and refers readers to additional sources of information. The first part includes alphabetically arranged entries for a wide range of topics from Southern African American folklife, such as critter stew, death customs, evil spirits, High John the Conqueror, peach tree leaves, persimmon beer, quilts, ragtime, and snakes. Information for these entries was drawn from interviews and from scholarly works. The entries include cross-references to entries in the second part of the volume, which is an extensive catalog of books, articles, and other sources of information. These works are arranged in topical chapters to facilitate research.

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