**<https://www.southernfoodways.org/interview/hot-tamales-the-mississippi-delta/>**

**About Tamales – really good…**

**http://www.songlyrics.com/robert-johnson/they-re-red-hot-lyrics/**

**History behind the tamale: http://www.theaustintimes.com/2010/01/the-history-behind-tamales/**

**HOT TAMALES – connection to Robert Johnson**

Hot tamales and they're red hot, yes she got'em for sale  
Hot tamales and they're red hot, yes she got'em for sale  
I got a girl, say she long and tall  
She sleeps in the kitchen with her feets in the hall  
Hot tamales and they're red hot, yes she got'em for sale, I mean  
Yes, she got'em for sale, yeah  
  
Hot tamales and they're red hot, yes she got'em for sale  
Hot tamales and they're red hot, yes she got'em for sale  
She got two for a nickel, got four for a dime  
Would sell you more, but they ain't none of mine  
Hot tamales and they're red hot, yes she got'em for sale, I mean  
Yes, she got'em for sale, yes, yeah  
  
Hot tamales and they're red hot, yes she got'em for sale  
Hot tamales and they're red hot, yes she got'em for sale  
I got a letter from a girl in the room  
Now she got something good she got to bring home soon, now  
It's hot tamales and they're red hot, yes she got em for sale, I mean  
Yes, she got'em for sale, yeah  
  
Hot tamales and they're red hot, yes she got em for sale  
Hot tamales and they're red hot, yes she got em for sale (they're too hot boy)  
The billy got back in a bumble bee nest  
Ever since that he can't take his rest, yeah  
Hot tamales and they're red hot, yes you got'em for sale, I mean  
Yes, she got'em for sale  
  
Hot tamales and they're red hot, yes she got'em for sale  
Man don't mess around em hot tamales now 'cause they too black bad,  
If you mess around 'em hot tamales  
I'm gonna upset your backbone, put your kidneys to sleep  
I'll due to break away your liver and dare your heart to beat 'bout my  
Hot tamales 'cause they red hot, yes they got em for sale, I mean  
Yes, she got em for sale, yeah  
  
Hot tamales and they're red hot, yes she got'em for sale  
Hot tamales and they're red hot, yes she got'em for sale  
You know grandma loves them and grandpa too  
Well I wonder what in the world we children gonna do now  
Hot tamales and they're red hot, yes she got'em for sale, I mean  
Yes she got'em for sale  
  
Hot tamales and they're red hot, yes she got'em for sale  
Hot tamales and they're red hot, yes she got'em for sale  
Me and my babe bought a V-8 Ford  
Well we wind that thing all on the runnin' board, yes  
Hot tamales and they're red hot, yes she got'em for sale, I mean  
Yes she got'em for sale, yeah  
  
Hot tamales and they're red hot, yes she got'em for sale (they're too hot boy!)  
Hot tamales and they're red hot, yes, now she got em for sale  
You know the monkey, now the baboon playin' in the grass  
Well the monkey stuck his finger in that old 'Good Gulf Gas', now  
Hot tamales and they're red hot, yes she got'em for sale, I mean  
Yes she got'em for sale, yeah  
  
Hot tamales and they're red hot, yes she got'em for sale  
Hot tamales and they're red hot, yes she got'em for sale  
I got a girl, say she long and tall  
Sleeps in the kitchen with her feets in the hall, yes  
Hot tamales and they're red hot, yes she got'em for sale, I mean  
Yes she got'em for sale, yeah

[**https://www.pbs.org/theblues/roadtrip/deltahist.html**](https://www.pbs.org/theblues/roadtrip/deltahist.html)**:**

About slavery and religion – important

The Mississippi Delta is generally considered to be the birthplace of the blues, with the new musical form emerging around the turn of the 19th century. But the story of the blues dates back before the Civil War and to the West coast of Africa where countless men, women and children were captured by slave traders and shipped across the Atlantic for forced labor on Southern plantations.

Slaves from many African countries carried the songs and music of their respective homelands to America. There, amidst the hard work, fear and oppression, the slaves found a temporary escape in music and expressed both hope and despair in their songs. The musical traditions of numerous African cultures blended as the slaves worked side by side in the steamy fields of the south. Field hollers and work songs were a means of expression and communication — which were often not otherwise allowed by the plantation overseers. With few instruments and little or no money, the slaves used their own voices and clapped percussion as musical tools. Their original methods of creating music became significant elements in the creation of the raw Delta Blues style.

As slaves — and then freed slaves — became more integrated into American culture, the church became a regular part of their Sundays. While the white churchgoers sang formal hymns, the black Southerners brought their passionate vocals, clapping, stomping, and call-and-response methods of singing into their own churches. By the 1870s the resulting style of song, called the Negro Spiritual, became an integral part of music in the south and was a major influence in the evolution of the blues.

But it wasn't until 1903, when bandleader W.C. Handy — the self-proclaimed "Father of the Blues" — "discovered" the blues on a train platform in Tutwiler, Mississippi in the unusual guitar licks of a passing traveler. Handy's composition "Memphis Blues", published in 1912, was the first to include "blues" in a song title. Handy's "discovery" and promotion of the new style eventually led to acceptance of the blues as a viable musical form and launched it into the mainstream and beyond black folk culture, forever changing the face of American music.

Dusty juke joints were the main stage for early blues musicians and often the only local source of entertainment for rural blacks. Blues musicians also traveled as part of Vaudeville or Medicine shows and enthusiasm for the blues spread as the shows commanded huge audiences across the south.

The Mississippi Delta was fertile ground for the roots of the blues. With its history of slavery, racial oppression, the Ku Klux Klan, and Jim Crow laws, plus baking heat, rampant illiteracy and poverty, the Delta was a cruel place for many African Americans well into the middle of the 20th century. The blues documented the experience of southern blacks better than any other form of cultural expression.

The songs and music of the early Delta blues were passed down orally, in written form, and later preserved in field recordings made by traveling ethno-musicologists such as the father and son team of John and Alan Lomax in the early 1940s. The earliest blues records were made in the 1920s, but very little recording took place in the Mississippi Delta area. Delta blues musicians like Charley Patton and Skip James headed to northern cities for recording sessions then returned to their homes in the Delta to continue playing juke joints, country dances, and fish fries.

In the 1920s and '30s Delta bluesmen Charley Patton, Son House, and Robert Johnson influenced the next generation of Mississippi born blues greats like Muddy Waters, who took the music north as they joined the mass exodus of blacks from the rural south in the '40s and '50s. The acoustic sound of the Delta blues was amplified and electrified in Memphis and Chicago to accommodate the tastes of the newly urban black population, and, with the growth of its recording industry, Chicago eventually eclipsed the Delta as the center of the blues.

The Delta area has produced the largest number of influential and important blues artists and, though never a major center of the music business, it is still the emotional heart of the blues for musicians, fans, travelers, and historians.

**About Robert Johnson:**

A young Robert Johnson hung around the Saturday night dances in the Delta watching Son House, Willie Brown and Charley Patton play and, to their amusement, trying to play guitar during the breaks. Years later Johnson ran into House and Brown, and Johnson's skill on the instrument stunned them. He had acquired his skill in such a short time that it inspired a rumor that became legend — Johnson must have sold his soul to the devil. His tortured voice and emotional intensity seemed to give credence to the legend, although it is more likely that his own determination and inherent talent, as well as his exposure to the great Delta bluesmen, deserve the credit for his genius. In addition to being a gifted lyricist and composer and innovative guitarist, Johnson transferred "boogie woogie" from the piano to the guitar, playing the bottom guitar strings to accompany himself with a bass line, a technique that has become standard in blues composition. His influence on blues, from Muddy Waters and Eric Clapton to the Rolling Stones and Led Zeppelin, is legendary.  
  
Essential listening: "Walkin' Blues," "Love in Vain Blues," "Come on in My Kitchen," "Terraplane Blues," "Crossroad Blues"

<http://xroads.virginia.edu/~MUSIC/blues/rjhome3.html>

On November23, 1936, Robert Johnson recorded his songs for the first time in San Antonio,Texas. This first of two sessions was unceremoniously squeezed betweenW.Lee O'Daniel & His Hillbilly Boys the day before, and Hermanas Barazacon guitarras the day after. Yet out of this modest recording session,after which Robert Johnson collected his money and disappeared again intothe wilds of the Mississippi Delta, came a powerful and unique sound whichforever changed music in America.

The vitality of Robert Johnson's musichas been reaffirmed by the many remakes of his songs, from such diverseartists as Lee Roy Parnell to Eric Clapton to the Red Hot Chili Peppers.Moreover, his music influenced artists such as Muddy Waters, who in turnadvanced the birth of rock'n'roll. But it is not just Johnson's incredibleguitar playing or fantastically expressive singing which deserves homage.His lyrics, which are commonly considered as only context to his music,are actually rich, tightly wrought poems worthy of intense literary examination.

This is the objective of Victor Cabas'ENTC 385 class, *Mississippi in Story and Songs*, at the [University of Virginia](http://www.virginia.edu/). Mr. Cabas created the class "as an excuse to teachRobert Johnson," and the class's papers which come out of a periodof listening to and recording observations in a literary notebook on Johnson'ssongs are often the best that he gets for the entire session. The studentsanalyze Johnson's songs for devices such as alliteration, assonance, metaphor,simile, and even scan a stanza to get a feeling for each song's uniquemeter.

This web site is designed to be not justa resource for material on Robert Johnson, for there are several of thoseon the WWW already. Instead, this site highlights the power of Robert Johnson'swords which are still resonant in contemporary America.

**Hellhound on My Trail**

I got to keep movin'

I got to keep movin'  
blues fallin' down like hail  
blues fallin' down like hail

Umm mmm mmm mmm

blues fallin' down like hail  
blues fallin' down like hail

And the days keeps on worryin' me

there's a hellhound on my trail  
hellhound on my trail  
hellhound on my trail

If today was Christmas Eve

If today was Christmas Eve  
and tomorrow was Christmas Day

If today was Christmas Eve

and tomorrow was Christmas Day  
spoken: Aow, wouldn't we have a time, baby?

All I would need my little sweet rider just

to pass the time away, huh huh  
to pass the time away

You sprinkled hot foot powder, mmm

mmm, around my door  
all around my door

You sprinkled hot foot powder

all around your daddy's door, hmm hmm hmm

It keep me with ramblin' mind, rider

every old place I go  
every old place I go

I can tell the wind is risin'

the leaves tremblin' on the tree  
Tremblin' on the tree

I can tell the wind is risin'

leaves tremblin' on the tree  
hmm hmm hmm mmm

All I need's my little sweet woman

and to keep my company, hey hey hey hey  
my company

http://www.robertjohnsonbluesfoundation.org/biography/

One hundred years ago, a boy-child was born in Mississippi – a dirt-poor, African-American who would grow up, learn to sing and play the blues, and eventually achieve worldwide renown. In the decades after his death, he has become known as the King of the Delta Blues Singers, his music expanding in influence to the point that rock stars of the greatest magnitude – the Rolling Stones, Bob Dylan, Eric Clapton, the Allman Brothers – all sing his praise and have recorded his songs.

That boy-child was Robert Johnson, an itinerant blues singer and guitarist who lived from 1911 to 1938. He recorded 29 songs between 1936 and ‘37 for the American Record Corporation, which released eleven 78rpm records on their Vocalion label during Johnson¹s lifetime, and one after his death.

Most of these tunes have attained canonical status, and are now considered enduring anthems of the genre: “Cross Road Blues,” “Love In Vain,” “Hellhound On My Trail,” “I Believe I¹ll Dust My Broom,” “Walking Blues,” “Sweet Home Chicago.”

Like many bluesmen of his day, Johnson plied his craft on street corners and in jook joints, ever rambling and ever lonely – and writing songs that romanticized that existence. But Johnson accomplished this with such an unprecedented intensity, marrying his starkly expressive vocals with a guitar mastery, that his music has endured long after the heyday of country blues and his own short life.

Never had the hardships of the world been transformed into such a poetic height; never had the blues plumbed such an emotional depth. Johnson took the intense loneliness, terrors and tortuous lifestyle that came with being an African-American in the South during the Great Depression, and transformed that specific and very personal experience into music of universal relevance and global reach. “You want to know how good the blues can get?” Keith Richards once asked, answering his own question: “Well, this is it.” Eric Clapton put it more plainly: “I have never found anything more deeply soulful than Robert Johnson.”

The power of Johnson’s music has been amplified over the years by the fact that so little about him is known and what little biographical information we now have only revealed itself at an almost glacial pace. Myths surrounding his life took over: that he was a country boy turned ladies’ man; that he only achieved his uncanny musical mastery after selling his soul to the devil. Even the tragedy of his death seemed to grow to mythic proportion: being poisoned by a jealous boyfriend then taking three days to expire, even as the legendary talent scout John Hammond was searching him out to perform at Carnegie Hall in New York City.

In 1990, Sony Legacy produced and released the 2-CD box set Robert Johnson: The Complete Recordings to widespread critical acclaim and, for a country blues reissue, unprecedented sales. The Complete Recordings proved the existence of a potential market for music from the deepest reaches of Sony¹s catalog, especially if buoyed by a strong story with mainstream appeal. Johnson¹s legend continues to attract an ever-widening audience, with no sign of abating. If, in today¹s world of hip-hop and heavy metal, a person knows of only one country blues artist, odds are it is Robert Johnson.

**http://www.biography.com/people/robert-johnson-9356324#!:**

Musician Robert Johnson was born on May 8, 1911, in Hazlehurst, Mississippi. A singer and guitarist, Johnson is considered to be one of the greatest blues performers of all time. But this recognition came to him largely after his death.

During his brief career, Johnson traveled around, playing wherever he could. The acclaim for Johnson's work is based on the 29 songs that he wrote and recorded in Dallas and San Antonio from 1936 to 1937. These include "I Believe I'll Dust My Broom" and "Sweet Home Chicago," which has become a blues standard. His songs have been recorded by Muddy Waters, Elmore James, the Rolling Stones and Eric Clapton.

## Mass Appeal

Johnson came to the attention of many musicians and won over new fans with a reissue of his work in the 1960s. Another retrospective collection of his recordings released in the 1990s sold millions of copies.

But much of Johnson's life is shrouded in mystery. Part of the lasting mythology around him is a story of how he gained his musical talents by making a bargain with the devil: Son House, a famed blues musician and a contemporary of Johnson, claimed after Johnson achieved fame that the musician had previously been a decent harmonica player, but a terrible guitarist—that is, until Johnson disappeared for a few weeks in Clarksdale, Mississippi. Legend has it that Johnson took his guitar to the crossroads of Highways 49 and 61, where he made a deal with the devil, who retuned his guitar in exchange for his soul.

**Robert Johnson**

One hundred years ago, a boy-child was born in Mississippi – a dirt-poor, African-American who would grow up, learn to sing and play the blues, and eventually achieve worldwide renown. In the decades after his death, he has become known as the King of the Delta Blues Singers, his music expanding in influence to the point that rock stars of the greatest magnitude – the Rolling Stones, Bob Dylan, Eric Clapton, the Allman Brothers – all sing his praise and have recorded his songs.

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https://www.thoughtco.com/blues-styles-mississippi-delta-blues-404120:

**Delta Blues**

Perhaps the most influential of the many styles of blues music, Mississippi Delta blues, also called Delta blues, rose out of the fertile agricultural triangle located between Vicksburg, Mississippi, to the south and Memphis, Tennessee, to the north, and bordered by the Mississippi River to the west and the Yazoo River to the east. In this region, where cotton was the primary cash crop, much of the property was owned by white plantation owners and worked by black sharecroppers.

Poverty was rife throughout the Delta, and working conditions were harsh.

### **Delta Blues Tradition**

Traditional blues songs were handed down by word-of-mouth from one performer to another, and artists would often add new lyrics to an old song and make it their own. The guitar and the harmonica were the primary tools of the Delta bluesman, mostly because of the ease of carrying them around. Many of the musicians of the early blues era (1910-1950) were sharecroppers or worked on one of the many plantations that dotted the Mississippi Delta.

The Delta blues are typically identified by the music's highly rhythmic structure, sometimes featuring clashing rhythms, accompanied by strong vocals. Although the lyrics of Delta blues are often simple, with repeated lines a trademark of the style, they also tend to be highly personal and reflective of the hard life of the African-American farmer in the South.

An [acoustic guitar](https://www.thoughtco.com/parts-of-an-acoustic-guitar-4123026) is the instrument of choice for playing Delta blues, although several artists adopted the National resonator guitar for its louder sound. The National company eventually merged with Dobro, maker of a well-known resonator, and many of these resonators are also called Dobros. The harmonica is also widely used, albeit as a secondary instrument.

Delta blues is one of the many forms of what is called "[country blues](https://www.thoughtco.com/blues-styles-country-blues-404119)."

### **Mississippi Delta Blues Artists**

Charley Patton is generally considered to be the first Delta blues star, and he traveled widely throughout the Delta region, often with fellow bluesman Son House. Ishman Bracey, Tommy Johnson, Willie Brown, Tommy McClennan and [Skip James](https://www.thoughtco.com/blues-styles-country-blues-404119) are generally considered to be the most creative and influential of the Delta blues artists.

Although best-known for their work in Chicago or Detroit, [Muddy Waters](https://www.thoughtco.com/blues-styles-chicago-blues-404118), [Howlin' Wolf](https://www.thoughtco.com/six-essential-modern-blues-artists-405122) and [John Lee Hooker](https://www.thoughtco.com/six-essential-modern-blues-artists-405122) all came out of the Mississippi Delta.

Delta blues enjoyed a brief commercial run during the 1920s but came to an abrupt end when the Depression derailed many artists' opportunities to record. Robert Johnson, who recorded during the 1930s, is widely considered to be the last of the original Delta blues artists. Mississippi Delta blues artists would prove to be a major influence on the British blues-rock boom of the 1960s, especially on The Rolling Stones and Eric Clapton, including his bands The Yardbirds and Cream.

### **Recommended Albums**

 Although Charley Patton's currently available recordings were copied from inferior-quality 78s, "King of the Delta Blues" offers beginners a solid collection of two-dozen tracks of varying sound quality.

**Lyrics**

**"Honeymoon Blues" 1937**

Betty Mae, Betty Mae, you shall be my wife someday  
Betty Mae, Betty Mae, you shall be my wife someday  
I wants a little sweet girl, that will do anything, that I say  
  
Betty Mae, you is my heartstring, you is my destiny  
Betty Mae, you is my heartstring, you is my destiny  
And you rolls across my mind, baby, each and every day  
  
Lil' girl, lil' girl, my life seem so misery  
Hmm hmm, little girl, my life seem so misery  
Baby, I guess it must be love, now, hoo mm, Lord that's takin' effect on me  
  
Some day I will return, with the1 marriage license in my hand  
Some day I will return, hoohoo, with a marriage license in my hand  
I'm gon' take you for a honeymoon, in some long, long distant land