

Fame came to them in Boston at the World Peace Jubilee in 1872, where their strong voices carried the strain of *The Battle Hymn of the Republic* throughout the Coliseum. From then on, they became internationally known through tours throughout the States and Europe.

For the next seven years they travelled, constantly increasing the coffers of the university's treasury by over \$150,000. As a result of their tour, one contribution was the construction of Jubilee Hall which is still on Fisk's University's campus.

The singers' success, both artistically and financially, created a tradition in Black colleges that exists today-for Hampton Institute was the second college to form a singing group; and others followed suit.

The end of the war created difficulties for individual performers, both white and Black, with a few exceptions that have already been mentioned, and whose careers began during ante-bellum times. Now that peace had returned, American audiences turned to European performers for solo entertainment.

Consequently vocal ensembles, opera companies, music societies (chiefly classical), brass bands and reviews abounded after the war. Minstrel troupes continued in their popularity and became the training ground for future stars.

Unless a performer was a member of a large minstrel troupe, difficulties were experienced. Small, unknown groups had to "rough it," often doubling as stage hands, janitors, ticket sellers; find their own accommodations in off times, unfriendly towns, advertise their show with previews in the town square, provide their own costumes, and so on. Nevertheless, as is legion with aspiring performers, they were willing to endure in hopes of making it.

Only the exceptional made the "Big Time." One year before Milburn's song was first published, a son was born to free parents in Flushing, New York. He would

write music that would be familiar, one hundred years later, to millions of people who were unknowingly listening to the composition of a Black man.

JAMES BLAND (1854-1911), one of eight children, was destined to become the darling of the continent, and writer of songs that would become standards not only in the country of his birth, but in Europe as well.

His father, Allen Bland, attended Wilberforce and Oberlin College in Ohio, and received a law degree from Howard University. When James was twelve, Mr. Bland was the first Black appointed as an examiner in the United States Patent Office, so the family moved to Washington, D.C., where James attended local schools.

To the consternation of his parents, as a youth, he demonstrated a greater propensity towards the banjo than books. He composed his own tunes and could often be found downtown on street corners singing and playing for change. An elderly music teacher taught him how to transcribe his music. He composed a tune that would become a state song: *Carry Me Back To Old Virginia* while a teenager and sang and played it for a white minstrel named George Primrose, who was then appearing in Washington. This, and other tunes that he composed, Primrose played and sang in his show.

Upon graduating from high school, he attended Howard University for his parents had aspirations for a professional career for their son.

While at Howard, James became familiar with ante-bellum stories from some of the students who had been slaves, and he acquired an appreciation for Black folk music, including spirituals.

He developed a style of playing the banjo and singing that created requests for his appearance at various social events. Eventually, his reputation grew to the point where he was asked to entertain dinner guests at the Canvasback Club where President Cleveland was a member. This led to further success as an entertainer and the decision that law upheld no appeal for him. He



JAMES A. BLAND



A SALUTE TO OTIS REDDING

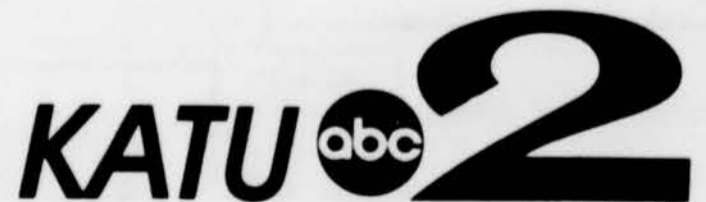
Thirteen years after his untimely death, Otis Redding's presence and influence in the world of popular music remains stronger than ever.

Stax Record's star Otis Reading helped define the "soul" sound of the 60's, his impassioned vocals and songwriting projected a sense of emotional commitment few have matched since. When he died in the icy waters of Lake Manoma in Madison, Wisconsin on Decembar 10, 1967, it was a loss to us all.

On The Rocks
15 NW 6th

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Salutes Black History Month and would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Black Community on its significant contributions and many achievements.



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