



Amédée Ardoin

Amédée Ardoin, a legendary black Creole accordionist and singer, helped lay the foundation for modern Cajun music in a series of recordings made between 1929 and 1934 with the great Cajun fiddler, Dennis McGee.

Little is known about Ardoin's life. He was born circa 1896 and his family moved to *L'Anse Rougeau* between Eunice and Mamou, Louisiana when he was a child. A popular musician in the black community, Ardoin was also revered by whites and frequently played white dances with Creole fiddlers, Alphonse LeFleur and Douglas Bellard, as well as with McGee and Cajun fiddlers, Sadie Courville and Shelby Vidrine. Ardoin and McGee started playing together around 1921 and worked throughout the Southwest prairies, playing dances in Kaplan, Bayou *Noir*, Lake Charles and many other towns. They made their first recordings together in New Orleans where they recorded six songs in December of 1929. They recorded a total of 16 more songs together in three sessions in 1930 and 1934. Ardoin's final and only solo recording sessions took place in December 1934, in New York City where he recorded a dozen tunes.

Ardoin faded into obscurity in the late 1930s and for many years the date and cause of his death were unknown. It was rumored that a jealous fiddler poisoned him. Those who knew him say that he was savagely beaten by a group of strangers one night returning home from a dance and that this led to his mental and physical decline. It is now known that he died at the Pineville State Hospital in Alexandria, Louisiana on November 4, 1941, of a common disease untreatable at that time.

A half-century after his death, Ardoin remains one of the most important musicians in the history of southwest Louisiana. Echoes of his distinctive accordion style and high

crying vocals are still heard in Cajun music. He was a major influence on Cajun musicians such as Nathan Abshire, Austin Pitre and Iry LeJeune. Many of his songs, in one form or other, remain standards in the Cajun repertoire.