



Octa Clark

Octa Clark was born in the Judice Community on April 30, 1904. He was born into a musical family where he listened and danced to the lively accordion sounds played by his father, Adam, his three uncles, and four aunts. A self-taught musician, he started playing the accordion professionally in 1920. He claimed he “caught all those old dances” - the waltz, *valse a deux temps*, polka, mazurka, and *contredanse*, and he also heard the songs of the black people with whom he worked. He tried to save all those dances that he heard – the old style, and he made some up himself, but never recorded because he always thought that his music was worth more than was offered him, and he never really liked what it did to most players who had recorded. He said it gave too many mediocre players swelled heads and he said he wasn't like that and he didn't want to be.

As a rule, popular musicians will usually share their greatest inspirational source which helped them gain their prominence. Legendary early recording artists, Joe Falcon and Amédée Breaux, would frequent Mr. Clark's dances and record his songs, but the men turned down the opportunity to play in public accordion contests with him. Their mutual dignity and respect is expressed by Hector Duhon when he said, “Octa is just as good an accordion player as I have ever heard, and I've played with quiet a few of the best, but Octa always carries you along with a good, solid tempo, and he never missed any notes – you know, I don't remember him ever missing any notes.”

Octa added, “The more you play together, the more you play the same and instinctively know what the other is going to do. You can hardly hear the accordion – except crying (laughter) – *c'est tout pareil!*” Great music effortlessly played by the proud, yet gentle master of the Acadian accordion.

(Source - Liner notes from Arhoolie.LP 5026 "Octa Clark & Hector Duhon, OldTime Cajun Music" - by Michael L. Doucet)

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