

Cotton-Eyed Joe

Pre-1861

TablEdited by Burt I Kahn

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The origins of this song are unclear, although it pre-dates the 1861–1865 American Civil War. American folklorist Dorothy Scarborough (1878–1935) noted in her 1925 book *On the Trail of Negro Folk-songs*, that several people remember hearing the song before the war. Scarborough's account of the song came from her sister, Mrs. George Scarborough.

Lyrics by Dorothy Scarborough

Don't you remember, don't you know,
Don't you remember Cotton-eyed Joe?
Cotton-eyed Joe, Cotton-eyed Joe,
What did make you treat me so?
I'd 'a' been married forty year ago
Ef it had n't a-been for Cotton-eyed Joe!

Cotton-eyed Joe, Cotton-eyed Joe,
He was de nig dat sarved me so, —
Tuck my gal away fum me,
Carried her off to Tennessee.
I'd 'a' been married forty year ago
If it had n't a-been for Cotton-eyed Joe.

Hi's teeth was out an' his nose was flat,
His eyes was crossed, — but she did n't mind dat.
Kase he was tall, and berry slim,
An' so my gal she follered him.
I'd 'a' been married forty year ago
Ef it had n't a-been for Cotton-eyed Joe.

She was de prettiest gal to be found
Anywhar in de country round;
Her lips was red an' her eyes was bright,
Her skin was black but her teeth was white.
I'd 'a' been married forty year ago
Ef it had n't a-been for Cotton-eyed Joe.

Dat gal, she sho' had all my love,
An swore fum ne she'd never move,
But Joe hoodooed her, don't you see,
An' she run off wid him to Tennessee,
I'd 'a' been married forty years ago,
Ef it hadn't a-been for Cotton-eyed Joe."