



Joe Denim ~ aka James Cotton

Fun Facts About Helena

Spring 2000

James (Jimmy) Cotton was born in 1935 on a farm in Tunica, Mississippi. His father was a preacher, and Cotton sang in the local church choir. He began playing the harmonica at the age of seven after hearing famed blues artist, Sonny Boy Williamson (Rice Miller), on the radio. By the age of nine, Cotton was working at **juke joints** for money, and by 12, was working with Williamson and occasionally appearing on the *KING BISCUIT TIME* program aired on KFFA radio station in Helena.¹ Cotton toured with Williamson's band throughout Mississippi, Arkansas, and Tennessee, and by the early 1950s, was playing with blues musicians Howlin' Wolf and Willie Nix.



James Cotton, 1935-Present

When he was 19, he and Nix appeared on the BROADWAY FURNITURE STORE SHOW, on KWEM radio station in West Memphis, Arkansas and subsequently recorded on the Sun music label out of Memphis. His career was launched. From 1954 to 1966, Cotton toured with the Muddy Waters Band, performing with them at Carnegie Hall in New York City in 1959, appearing in the film *The Subterranean*, and touring with the band throughout Europe. Cotton and the group had a recording deal with Columbia Records at the time. Cotton was also listed as a blues entertainer at the Newport Jazz Festival in Newport, Rhode Island.

Cotton also plays the drums and guitar. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, James Cotton played and recorded in cities all over the United States and Canada. His more popular songs include *All Walks of Life*, *Caldonia*, *Cotton Crop Blues*, *The Creeper*, *The Creeper Creeps Again*, *Down at your Buryin'*, *Fatuation*, *Feelin' Good*, *Hold Me in Your Arms*, and *How Long Can a Fool Go Wrong?*

¹ A **juke joint** is a nightclub where people gathered to dance and hear live music.



The Department of
Arkansas Heritage

The Delta Cultural Center is an agency of the
Department of Arkansas Heritage.
This project is funded in part by the
Arkansas Natural and Cultural Resources Council.

