

Ken Burns: The Bawdy Songs of Lowery & Lowell

By

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KEN BURNS SEX SONGS

SFX: Ragtime piano music.

ANNOUNCER

It was the roaring twenties. The height of immorality and decadence in the early 20th century. It was the age of Jazz, flappers, bathtub gin and loose morals. And if anyone could be chosen as spokesmen for the era of "anything goes", it was the bawdy songwriting team of Jacob Lowery and Hiram Lowell. With such popular hits as *Twinkle Titties*, *Squat Butt Mama*, *Slippery Slide* and *Big Gulp Glenda*, the team of Lowery & Lowell defined America's first sexual revolution.

LOWERY

(as an old man.)

Well I was working as an assistant whalebone bender at Savetski's Corset Factory over on south 43rd street. I had a knack for songwriting, always had a tune in my head...but I needed some lyrics. That's when I met Hiram.

LOWELL

(also as an old man.)

I had just started in laces and grommets at Savetski's. I had written naughty poetry for a few years, *there once was a gal from Nantucket*, that sort of thing, but I couldn't find a publisher.

ANNOUNCER

Then, one day, on a lunch break at the factory, the two men shared a table and talked over their fried pickle and knockwurst sandwiches. One thing led to another, and the idea for their first song was born. Borrowing money from relatives and scraping together their meager savings from selling their hair and donating blood, they managed to make their first wax Victrola recording at a small, basement studio in Queens.

SFX: Ragtime sex song.

A white-faced, costumed RAGTIME SINGER appears on a vaudeville stage. He sings to camera.

RAGTIME SINGER

(singing)

Well her name is Doris

She smells like Lavoris

*But she's got one humongous
clitoris*

Doris with huge clitoris

The most popular gal around

When she goes strollin

*Or duck pin bowlin, her clit hangs
down to the ground.*

*Doris with the enormous clitoris
The most popular gal around.*

Oh yeah...

ANNOUNCER

The song was an enormous hit. *Doris And Her Clitoris* was sung, hummed and whistled by every man, woman and child from Syracuse to San Francisco. The public demanded more, and a thrifty businessman and investor was right there to help.

LOWERY

We were approached by a Mr. Edwin Finelli, who said he wanted to invest in our songwriting careers.

LOWELL

Since we were so poor we were ready to pan-fry our own fecal matter for dinner, we said yes.

ANNOUNCER

Edwin Finelli was the self-proclamed Creasote King of the Eastern Seaboard. Recognizing their talent for popular, bawdy, naughty songs, Finelli bankrolled the duo.

(MORE)

ANNOUNCER

Their next song was an even bigger success.

SFX: Ragtime sex song.

RAGTIME SINGER

(singing.)

Well you better inspect him

And don't deflect him

*He likes to stick big, strange
things in his rectum*

*Myron with the well-oiled rectum
The most popular guy around.*

*Shoes and bottles and shovels and
pastries*

They all go right up his mound

*Myron with the well-oiled rectum
The most popular guy around.*

Oh yeah...

ANNOUNCER

The song turned them into superstars overnight. They toured the national circuit; playing burlesque halls, opera houses and world's fairs. An early talkie newsreel was even filmed and shown in theatres worldwide.

SFX: Scratchy soundtrack noise.

A black & white, scratchy film of people from the Twenties being interviewed on the street.

MAN #1

Speaking as a devout sado-masochist, I think Lowery & Lowell are the bees knees. It's like a dream come true. Somebody punch me!

WOMAN #1

The songs of Lowery & Lowell make me want to pull my petticoats clear up over my ankles. My nether hole is more lubricated than ever.

MAN #2

I can say, without fear of contradiction, that the songs of Lowery & Lowell have given my testis abundantly more ejaculant.

ANNOUNCER

The men were riding a crest of fame that never seemed to end. And the hits kept on coming.

SFX: Ragtime sex song.

RAGTIME SINGER

(singing.)

Well have you seen Venus

With the hook-shaped penis

She defies all species and genus

*Venus with the hooked shaped penis
The most popular gal around*

When she goes swimmin'

*With all the other women Her dick
gets hard and unwound*

*Venus with the hooked-shaped penis
The most popular gal around*

Oh yeah...

ANNOUNCER

The popular song writers were even invited to the White House.

LOWERY

Well, it was well known that Woodrow Wilson had a hook-shaped phallus himself. So he identified.

LOWELL

He even invited us into the Lincoln Bedroom to show it to us.

LOWERY

As big as a toddler's arm with a shepherd's hook at the end.

LOWELL

Tasted like pickled herring and chlorine.

ANNOUNCER

But just as it seemed the success of Lowery & Lowell would never end, their wave of fame and fortune crashed on rocky shores.

LOWERY

Well everybody, it seemed, jumped on the bawdy song bandwagon. You had *Hey Nonny Nonny* and *Minnie the Moocher*. The market was over-saturated.

LOWELL

We altered our style a little to stand out. We wrote more romantic tunes like; *Let's Try Three Fingers Sweetheart*, *Both Sets Of Lips...*

LOWERY

...You're Just As Beautiful Upside-Down.

LOWELL

We even tried writing for the more selective sexual markets.

SFX: Ragtime sex song.

RAGTIME SINGER

(singing.)

Well when you meet Heather

Better keep it together

She's quite fond of whips and leather

*Heather with her whips and leather
The most dangerous gal around*

When she get's spankin'

Your dick you'll be yankin

And the jizz shoots out by the pound.

*Heather with her whips and leather
The most popular gal around*

Oh yeah...

ANNOUNCER

But it was no use. The six and a half weeks of fame and success for Lowery & Lowell came to a screeching halt. And although other acts that followed like Uncle Reamer, The Reach-Around Brothers and Nasty Natalie And Her Cockatoos get more notoriety in the history books, they owe it all to the originators of bawdy songs and backroom ballads; the legendary songwriting team of Lowery & Lowell.

THE END