

As the Years Go Passing By

Written by bluesever
Monday, 13 October 2014 22:51 -

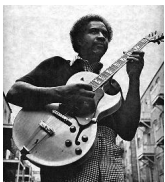
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Eric Clapton created some of the greatest guitar riffs in rock, but he was stuck when he came to 'Layla'. When Clapton told Allman of his dilemma, Duane went to work, soon coming up with the seven-note phrase that is now one of the best-known guitar licks in the history of rock. It was exactly what 'Layla' needed. It would be some time before Clapton would find out that Allman's brilliant line wasn't entirely original. Duane had simply taken the first phrase from a blues ballad called '**As The Years Go Passing By**'.

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In point of fact, the true composer of 'As the Years Go Passing By' is open to debate. The song is credited to Deadric Malone – a pseudonym frequently used by Don Robey, owner of Duke and Peacock records label, upon having purchased a composition from a writer for a flat fee (see note: [I Smell Trouble blues](#)).

As the Years Go Passing By was first cut in 1959 by blues singer-guitarist **Fenton Robinson** (the composer of 'Loan Me a Dime'). According to blues expert Jim O'Neill, Robinson always claimed that the true author of 'As the Years Go Passing By' was another blues singer Peppermint Harris.



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Fenton Robinson

Harrison D. Nelson Jr. known as **Peppermint Harris** was born on July 17, 1925, in Texarkana, Texas. He kicked around the Texas music scene for a number of years before settling down in the city of Houston in 1943. By the time he was in his early twenties, Harrison Nelson, Jr. was lucky enough to have found a mentor and friend on the Houston blues front: Lightnin' Hopkins took an interest in the young man's musical development. When Harris was deemed ready, Lightnin' accompanied him to Houston's Gold Star Records. Nothing came of that jaunt, but Harris eventually recorded his debut 78 for the company in 1948 (as Peppermint Nelson).



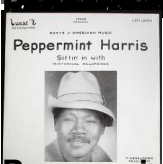
Peppermint Harris

By 1949 he had an opportunity to record again, this time for Bobby Shad's Sittin In With label. He recorded with a quintet fronted by sax players Ed Wiley and Henry Hayes. The initial offering was 'Raining In My Heart' and 'The Blues Moved And Rolled Away'. It was at this time as legend would have it that Bob Shad momentarily forgetting his blues man's last name, quickly wrote down Peppermint "Harris" on outgoing orders. When the record began to gain hit status, Peppermint Harris it was for the rest of Nelson's career. "Raining" was a hit in Los Angeles and in Harris home town of Houston, and soon started to sell well in Atlanta and Jacksonville. The success of his initial record for Sittin In With led to good name recognition and club dates and road tours came his way.

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Peppermint Harris in Sittin In With records