

## Careless Love

Written by bluesever

Tuesday, 22 March 2011 13:05 - Last Updated Tuesday, 17 March 2015 15:19

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## Careless Love

**Careless Love** is a traditional song based on a folk melody of obscure origin, and the numerous versions of its lyrics usually feature abandoned love and heartbreak or tragic death.

What is known for certain about the song's early history is that by 1900 it was a standard in the repertory of **Buddy Bolden** and his band in New Orleans. Bolden, a cornetist who played music "by ear," adapted music he heard to create his own blend of rag-time, black sacred music, marching-band music and rural blues. Though no known recordings of his band survive and he was not the first musician to play the music that came to be called jazz, he is credited with being the first musician to popularize it and to provide a base from which it could grow.



## Buddy Bolden Band 1905

However, it would fall to another cornetist, **William Christopher "W.C." Handy**, to ensure the survival of **Careless Love**.

In his autobiography,  
*Father of the Blues*,

W.C. Handy wrote that he first played the melody of "Careless Love" in 1892, as a young musician in his native state of Alabama. He didn't say where he first heard the melody, only that it had come to be popular all over the South.

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A few years later, when he was working in a brass band that was performing in Henderson, Kentucky, he heard one version of the lyrics for "Careless Love." He recalled, *"In Henderson I was told that the words of "Careless Love" were based on a tragedy in a local family, and one night a gentleman of that city's tobacco-planter aristocracy requested our band to play and sing this folk melody, using the following words:*

*You see what Careless Love has done,  
You see what Careless Love has done,  
You see what Careless Love has done,  
It killed the Governor's only son.*

*We did our best with these lines and then went into the second stanza:*

*Poor Archie didn't mean no harm,  
Poor Archie didn't mean no harm,  
Poor Archie didn't mean no harm –*

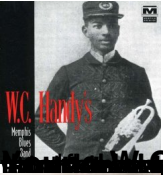
*But there the song ended. The police stepped in and stopped us. The song, they said, was a reflection on two prominent families. "Careless Love" had too beautiful a melody to be lost or neglected, however, and I was determined to preserve it."*

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W.C. Handy's "Careless Love" is a classic blues song that has been covered by many artists over the years. The song is a simple, catchy tune that has become a staple of the blues repertoire.

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**Over the Years Blues Lyrics**

**Over the Years (Billie Holiday Version)**