James Alley Blues

Times ain't now nothing like they used to be
Oh times ain't now nothing like they used to be
And I'm tellin' you all the truth, oh take it for (from) me

I done seen better days but I'm puttin' up with these
I done seen better days but I'm puttin' up with these
I been havin' a much better time with these girls now I'm so hard to please

'Cos I was born in the country she thinks I'm easy to rule
'Cos I was born in the country she thinks I'm easy to rule
She try to hitch me to her wagon, she want to drive me like a mule

You know I bought some groceries and I paid the rent
Yes I buy some groceries and I pay the rent
She try to make me wash her clothes but I got good common sense

I said if you don't want me why don't you tell me so
You know, if you don't want me why don't you tell me so
Because it ain't like a man that ain't got nowhere to go

I've been givin' you sugar for sugar, let you get salt for salt
I'll give you sugar for sugar, let you get salt for salt
And if you can't get 'long with me well it's your own fault

How you wanted me to love you and you treat me mean
How do you want me to love you, you keep on treatin' me mean
You're my daily thought and my nightly dream

Sometimes I think that you too sweet to die
Sometimes I think that you too sweet to die
And another time I think you oughta be buried alive

Richard 'Rabbit' Brown - recorded New Orleans La 11 March 1927 Vi 20578

Source: Reissue on Various Artists 'Times Ain't Like They Used To Be:
Early American Rural Music Vol 2' Yazoo CD 2029. Alice Stuart made
a recording in which she adapted the words and turned it into a fine women's blu
es
('All the Good Times' Arhoolie LP F4002). More recently, Robin and
Linda Williams pinched some of Brown's words for the title track of their
'Sugar for Sugar' album (Sugar Hill SHCD 1052) with no credit at all given to hi
m.
This surely must be one of the greatest blues of all. The final couplet alone is worth a hundred blues. Rabbit Brown was a native of New Orleans who recorded a handful of marvellous blues in 1927. He had a gentle voice and was an excellent guitarist. He grew up in the same James Alley between Gravier Street and Parido Street where Louis Armstrong was born. Some of his blues are scattered throughout various CD compilations and his complete recordings are available on the Document label.

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