

# The Maple Leaf Club

by Con Chapman

Grandpa Ollie took me downtown,  
me in short pants, him I seem to  
recall in a short-sleeved white shirt  
and long grey slacks in the summertime.  
I hoped to get a toy out of it.



We walked all the way to Main Street,  
then took a right. He wanted to see  
something, and we stopped in front  
of a building and peered in.



It looked like it had been a restaurant to me, now it was about to collapse. The place hadn't been painted in years, the wood was all grey and brown.



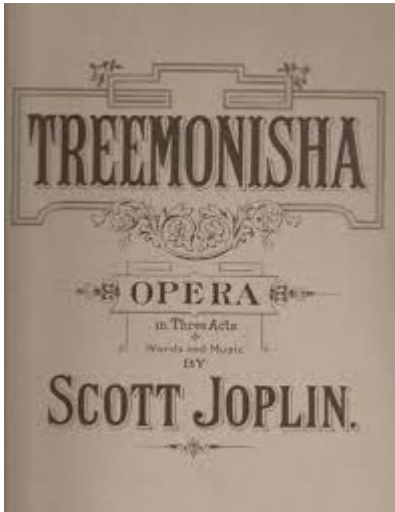
"I guess that's where he played," Grandpa said. I asked him who, and he said "That fella they make so much about, Scott Joplin. Place is pretty run down now."



I didn't know then what I learned later; that Joplin was writing opera at the same time he was playing nights for drunken cowboys in from the Chisholm Trail, a whorehouse piano player.



One was a failure, the score to the other was confiscated when he couldn't pay a hotel bill. He ended up in a mental home, demented from syphilis.



We walked back towards home, and  
Grandpa said I could get something.  
I remember I picked out an Army rocket kit.  
I botched it like every model I tried to make.

The Maple Leaf Club is gone now.  
Last time I saw Grandpa alive he was  
watching a baseball game on TV,  
complaining about all the attention  
nigra ballplayers were getting these days.

