

## **Hattie Addison Traditional Gospel Musician and Easter Rock Ritual**

Easter Rock is a little-known ritual tradition that has been passed down in a few African-American families in the Winnsboro area for many generations. Seemingly unknown outside of northeast Louisiana, the service is performed on the Saturday evening before Easter Sunday in a rural Winnsboro church called the Original True Light Church. Two or three long tables sit in the middle of the church's wooden floor. As the lights dim, participants dressed in white enter, singing a hymn, and carrying a homemade banner with streamers. As they move counter clockwise around the table, they place twelve decorated cakes representing the twelve apostles and twelve lighted lamps upon the table.

As the singers sing the traditional song, "Oh David," they begin to rock, dancing a rhythmic rocking step that makes the church's wooden floor reverberate.

The rock is performed at least once more during the service and other members of the congregation are invited to join the rockers. At the end of the service, the homemade cakes are cut and served to the congregation. In the past, the Easter Rock service traditionally lasted until midnight, but today it often ends before 11:00 p.m. because members attend a sunrise church service on Easter morning.

Hattie Addison is currently carrying on the Easter Rock tradition in her own community and occasionally sharing it with a wider audience. Born in 1953, she learned the tradition in about 1967 from her mother Ellen Fountain Addison and her grandmother. With a group of church members from Winnsboro, she has demonstrated the tradition at the Louisiana Folklife Festival in Monroe, the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival, and at the Natchitoches- NSU Folk Festival. Hattie Addison was inducted into the Louisiana Folklife's Center's Hall of Master Folk Artists in 2015.

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