The Great Awakening (1740s): The general revival of evangelical religion in the American colonies. Preachers travel from town to town.

Revival Meetings (early 1800s): Rural whites and blacks attend Camp Meetings lasting several days to become sanctified and sing the praises of the Lord with hymns and "spiritual songs." A loosening of attitudes allows more popular forms of music to be incorporated into religious singing. Sometimes referred to as "revival meetings" or "tent revivals."

Camp Revival Meetings (late 1800s): Rural whites and blacks attend Camp Meetings lasting several days to become sanctified and sing the praises of the Lord with hymns and "spiritual songs." A loosening of attitudes allows more popular forms of music to be incorporated into religious singing. Sometimes referred to as "revival meetings" or "tent revivals."

1660-1800: In the most stupendously creative act in American cultural history, the "Black and unknown barns" of slavery created the Spirituals and the foundations of the blues and American dance. Everything that followed—Broadway, the Grammys, Gershwin, the Cakewalk, the Moonwalk, the Electric Slide—is an elaboration on the original. (Ebeney, June, 2000)

Field Hollers: Plantation slaves employ African 'tone bending,' an important element of Blues and Jazz.

Work Songs: Plantation slaves employ African 'call and response,' an important element of Blues, Jazz, and Gospel.

Congo Square (from late 1600s): African black slaves in New Orleans keep in touch with their roots with African tribal dances, rhythms and instruments.

Slavery Legalized (1641-1663): Slavery is first legalized for the tobacco plantations, and then for the rice, sugar and cotton fields. By 1710 Africans begin to outnumber Europeans in the colonies. Fearing insurrection, slave owners impose more discipline, including cruelty and instruments of torture.

Revolt (1739): Slaves revolt in South Carolina and attempt an escape to Spanish Florida. Colonial legislators respond with laws that outlaw slave mobility, and right of assembly.

After much debate, plantation owners allow black slaves to become Christians as a method of controlling them.

Oppressed blacks relate to hymns such as "That Awful Day Will Surely Come" and "Must Jesus Bear the Cross Alone." Christianity offers freedom in the hope of a better tomorrow.

Religious music gives black slaves the freedom to connect with their spiritual roots. This will become a re-occurring theme in the development of black music in America.

Sorrow Songs and Jubilees: It's probable that black slaves express their spiritual feelings through the music forms they know at the time—hymns and work songs. Sad songs are called "sorrow songs" and happy songs are called "jubilees."

Creoles: A black caste system develops with the lighter-skinned Creoles of French blood receiving special privileges, including musical instruction in the European classics.

The musical sophistication of the Creoles will figure predominantly in the development of instrument-based Ragtime and Jazz, with such French names as Alphonse Picou, Sidney Bechet, Barney Bigard, Buddy Petit, and Ferdinand Joseph La Menthe (Jelly Roll Morton).

The Banjo: Plantation slaves replicate African 'banja' by stretching sheepskin over half a gourd. The banjo will become a key instrument in early Jazz, Dixieland, Hillbilly, Stringband and Bluegrass music.

Plantation slaves start improvising European reels and jigs on banjos and fiddles.

Slaves are not allowed to make or use drums as owners feel they may become instruments of insurrection.

America's purchase of vast French territory between Mississippi River and Rockies increases demand for slaves in the southern cotton fields.

1807: The slave trade is officially abolished, but the southern states don't comply, resulting in an increased value on slaves.

The expansion of cotton production in the south leads to an internal slave trade that splits up families and sends 'coffles' of chained prisoners on long and arduous journeys to new regions.

Minstrel Shows (1820 - 1900): Touring variety shows entertain white America with "blackface" humour, and foreign acts. The minstrel show is a melting pot for white and black musical ideas, and becomes the vehicle for promoting "popular" songs.

The Cakewalk: While "blackface" humour denigrates blacks, the cakewalk, a plantation slave dance, plays a fun at pommous manners.

January 1, 1863: Originally the Civil War was to prevent the secession of the southern states but, when Abraham Lincoln signs the Emancipation Proclamation, it's clear that the issue is slavery.

Black barbershop quartets in the South harmonize religious and secular songs, often with guitar from the (1870s).

Fisk Jubilee Singers (from 1871): Touring black university choir popularizes black spirituals in concert halls across America and abroad.

Although the music is said by some to have inspired plantation life, as did Stephen Foster, attention is drawn to black music.

Singing Preachers: With their impassioned singing and revival meeting theatrics, sanctified preachers learn how to hold an audience. Their showmanship will endure to influence the pioneers of Rock & Roll.

Vaudeville (1880s - 1930s): The variety show, now established in bustling cities, brings the world to Americans—and becomes the new showcase for promoting pop tunes.

Rags (late 1880s): "White Music Played Black." "Syncopated" (tagged, to white ears) banjo and fiddle music develops into "Rags"—popular European melodies played on the piano with a syncopated rhythm.

Coon Songs: Up and through the 1890s, all black music is disparagingly referred to as "coon songs." White songwriters write their versions of coon songs that ridicule blacks and their off-beat (syncopated) music.

During the 1890s, when Tin Pan Alley is about to embark on its mission to provide America with its "popular" music, the destiny of black music is about to unfold. The various elements of black music - call and response, hollers, tone bending, blue notes, syncopation, back beats, improvisation - have been worked for decades in the jook joints, dancehalls, and church meetings of black America. These elements are about to coalesce into different styles, with labels such as Ragtime, Jazz, Blues and Gospel.

New Orleans Jazz (mid 1890s): Buddy Bolden and others syncopate and improve white songs with small brass bands, using instruments from marching bands.

Rags Elevated (late 1890s): Scott Joplin refines the Rag on paper in an attempt to elevate the form to classic status.

Rags Debased (1900 - 1917): Tin Pan Alley reduces the Rag to its lowest common denominator to sell sheet music to average pianists.

1917: "Jim Crow" (1828): White actor Thomas Rice parodies a black man, Jim Crow, and delights white audiences, which leads to the development of "blackface" minstrel troupes. The expression "Jim Crow" will come to mean "anti-black" and "segregation" in terms such as Jim Crow legislation and Jim Crow states.

Stephen Foster (1826-1864): A America's first great popular songwriter is criticized by elitist peers for the simplicity of his "Ethiopian Songs" popularized in minstrel shows.

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Yodelling is incorporated into Country music after Swiss entertainers tour with minstrel shows.

Vaudeville: The term dates from the 15th century and is supposed to refer to the valley of Vire (Middle French vau de Vire) in France. The reputed origin of a type of satirical or humorous drinking song. By the 18th century the name had been corrupted to voix de ville ("street voices"), and such songs were frequently inserted in spoken or pantomimed dramas. In the 19th century the term vaudeville came to refer to stage entertainment made up of several individual "acts" or presentations by a single entertainer or group of entertainers. In the early years, Vaudeville incorporated blackface minstrelsy.

Among the attractions at Vaudeville shows was Hawaiian music and culture. The Hawaiian slide-guitar technique will evolve into the "bottleneck" style of Blues and the steel guitar technique of Country music.

New dissident sects break away from the Methodists and Baptists to establish Holiness, Sanctified and Pentecostal churches. Their religious fervor is expressed through ecstatic singing and the use of musical instruments. The "gospel songs" sung in these churches will form the bedrock of "Gospel" music in the 1920s.
AFM Ragtime Ban (1901): American Federation of Musicians bans members from playing Ragtime in favour of classical European music.

Jelly Roll Morton (1904): A great Ragtime pianist, he also went beyond Ragtime with early Jazz phrasing.

W.C. Handy, "Father of the Blues" (1912): Up until now, Blues has been an oral tradition with much irregularity in form. Seeing a market for Blues, W.C. Handy publishes sheet music of his "Memphis Blues" and standardizes a 12 bar format for the genre.

Great Migration (from 1914): The reduction of immigrant workers means job openings in Northern factories. Blacks migrate north. In the 1890s about 20% of black Americans lived in the North. By 1920 it will be 35%.

 Dixieland (1917): New Orleans Jazz travels north to Chicago and, when it's recorded by a white band called the Dixieland Jass Band in New York, goes mainstream. The music becomes known as "Dixieland."

Race Music (1920): Mamie Smith records "Crazy Blues" and opens door to "sopita" market. Black music is dubbed "race" music - a label that will stick until 1948.

Chicago Style (1920s): The counterculture of Dixieland yields to solo performances, and the saxophone comes into its own as a Chicago-style Dixieland develops. Future Swing greats listen and take notes.

Classic Blues (from 1922): The Blues settles on the classic 12 bar form with its first practitioners being vaudeville women, most notably Bessie Smith.

Gospel Music (1920s & 30s): New Black urban migrants redefine church music, giving it a rhythm and passion that Thomas Dorsey, the "Father of Gospel Music," put down on paper and Sallie Martin and, later, Mahalia Jackson sang. Black music expert Eileen Southern said, "in addition to inventing a name for the new sacred music of black Americans, organizing its first choirs, its first annual convention, and founding its first publishing house, [Dorsey] is credited with establishing the tradition of the gospel music concert." (Ebony)

Gospel Quartets (from 1920s): Travelling Gospel groups, predominately male quartets, sing black and white gospel songs and sell songbooks. Eventually, they end up on "Race" records.

Swing (1935 - mid 40s): Swing goes mainstream when Benny Goodman plays it on network radio August 21, 1935 and is crowned "King of Swing."

Elvis Presley (1957): a label that will stick until 1948.

Rock & Roll (1954 and 1955): Richard (Little Richard) Penniman recorded "Tutti Frutti," and this "walking bass" technique has been used by black pianists since the turn of the century.

Swing (early 1930s): Clever arrangements by Fletcher Henderson and Jimmy Lunceford make big bands sound spontaneous. By mid '30 Swing will become a white craze.

Urban Chicago Blues (1930s): The Blues gets tougher and louder with ciftied euphesisms.

Secular Quartets (1930s - 1940s): Gospel quartets inspire secular quartets. The commercial success of the Mills Brothers and the Ink Spots will open the door for the R&B vocal/Doo Wop groups.

Jump Blues (late 30s - late 40s): A blend of Urban Blues and Swing that will lay the groundwork for Rhythm & Blues.

Elvis Presley (1954): Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie brought their musical groups to New York's 52nd Street, inaugurating the Bebop age and changing the structure and harmonic foundations of modern jazz (Ebony). Middle America does not respond to the new Jazz, which replaces its favorite dance music.

Blues Shouters (late 30s - early 50s): Gospel-inspired R&B singers influence Pop crooners and pave the way for the emotion of the early Rockers.

Rhythm & Blues (late 40s - late 50s): Hard-driving Rhythm & Blues evolves from the shuffle boogie of Jump Blues and sets the stage for Rock & Roll.

1948 - 1957: Doo Wop introduces the 4-part harmonies of Gospel into Rock & Roll, and a chord structure that will become the basis of Rock & Roll love ballads.

Early 1950s: Disco jockey Alan Freed plays Rhythm & Blues to white teen market and calls it "Rock & Roll."

1954 and 1955: Richard (Little Richard) Penniman recorded "Tutti Frutti," and Chuck Berry recorded "Maybelline," followed by other recordings by Black artists (Big Maybelle, Wilson Pickett and others) who influenced the Beatles and Elvis Presley and played major roles in the development of rock 'n' roll. (Ebony)

1957: Sam Cooke, a well-known gospel singer, crossed over into what some called "rhythm and blues," recording "You Send Me," which marked the beginning of the transitional period leading to soul music. (Ebony)

Bill Haley and the Comets (1952): Bill Haley's fusion of Jump Blues and Western Swing opens door to Rock & Roll era.

Rock & Roll (1957 - 1959): Major labels climb onboard and dilute Rockabilly with Pop for the white teen market.


Soul (from 1959): Having lost R&B to Pop, blacks reclaim their music with a fusion of Gospel and Blues.

1960: Chuck Berry recorded "The Twist," setting off the biggest dance craze since the Charleston craze of the 1920s. The craze changed the patterns of American dance and changed, perhaps forever, the dominant patterns of men and women dancing together. (Ebony)

1979: The Sugar Hill Gang produced the first rap hit, "Rapper's Delight," introducing the world of rap and hip-hop with implications that are still reverberating in the music world. (Ebony)

Hank Williams (late 40s - early 50s): Hank Williams, under the direction of Tin Pan Alley man Fred Rose, combines Hillbilly, Blues and Pop to become the biggest influence in Country music since Jimmie Rodgers.

Hank Williams, the Father of Country Music (1927 - 1933): Rodgers' Blues-influenced style, Swiss yodel, Hawaiian guitars and cowboy songs lay the foun- dation of Country music.

Dance Bands (mid 1920s - 1935): Despite the misnomer of "the Jazz Age," society orchestras like Paul Whiteman's play ballroom music for ballroom dancing - and for a chance to be heard on network radio.

Sources: THE CHART of the development of popular music in America http://www.garywilcoxoutkast.org/onlinerootsofrock/h chart/thechart.shtml

Ebony, June, 2000: The 25 Most Important Events In Black Music History et. al.

Electrical Microphone (1925): Sensitive carbon microphones replace acoustic microphones and allow more accurate recordings. The sound of guitars can now be captured, and recordings can now be made outside the studio environment.

“White Blues” (1927): Ralph Peer travels south to record hillbilly musicians for the Victor label and discovers Jimmie Rodgers and the Carter Family to set the stage for "Country" music.

End of an Era: The big dance bands start disappear- ing after the war. Bebop marks the end of commercial Jazz on the Pop charts. Tin Pan Alley tunes lack relevance and a beat for an emerging, affluent youth market.

Swing (late '50s): Swing plays Rhythm & Blues to white teen market and calls it "Rock & Roll."

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August 25, 1998: Mix-education of Lauryn Hill educated musical pundits, and made Lauryn Hill a prophet of new musical gumbo made up of hip-hop, reggae, jazz, soul and Latin music. (Ebony)