



# Doo-dah!: Stephen Foster And The Rise Of American Popular Culture

*Ken Emerson*

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## **Doo-dah!: Stephen Foster And The Rise Of American Popular Culture** Ken Emerson

Stephen Foster (1826–1864) was America's first great songwriter and the first to earn his living solely through his music. He composed some 200 songs, including such classics as "Oh! Susanna," "Jeanie with the Light Brown Hair," "Old Folks at Home (Way down upon the Swanee River)," and "Camptown Races (Doo-dah! Doo-dah!)." He virtually invented popular music as we recognize it to this day, yet he died at age thirty-seven, a forgotten and nearly penniless alcoholic on the Bowery. The author reveals Foster's contradictory life while disclosing how the dynamics of nineteenth-century industrialization, westward expansion, the Gold Rush, slavery, and the Civil War infused his music, and how that music influenced popular culture.

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