



# Oh What a Beautiful City : A Tribute to the Reverend Gary Davis (1896-1972)

Robert Tilling



British journalist and writer Robert Tilling lovingly compiled this touching tribute to the great American guitar genius Reverend Gary Davis. His enthusiasm for the Reverend's powerful music started after seeing him on his first UK concert tour in 1964. Reverend Gary Davis, Blind Gary Davis, born April 30, 1896 was an African American blues and gospel singer and guitarist. His fingerpicking style was extremely influential his students in New York City in the 1960s included Stefan Grossman, Roy Bookbinder, Woody Mann, and Ernie Hawkins. He was born in South Carolina and became blind soon after birth. He took to the guitar and assumed a unique multivoice style, playing not only ragtime and blues tunes, but traditional and original tunes in four part harmony. His ordination as a Baptist minister inhibited his blues playing (blues being the Devils music) and his preference was clearly for inspirational gospel. He migrated to New York City in the 1940s and by the 1960s he had become known as the Harlem Street Singer, and the person to see if you wanted to learn how to play guitar. He achieved serious recognition during the folk revival of the 1960s, with an appearance at the Newport Folk Festival and the recording by Peter, Paul and Mary of his original, Samson & Delilah, also known as If I Had My Way. His musical influence extends throughout modern American music from the Grateful Dead and Bob Dylan to Keb Mo and Olabelle. Chapters in this revised and updated edition include a detailed Chronology, Discography, Concert and Record Reviews, quotations, contributions from musicians and admirers as well as over 100 photographs. \*This book contains no music, it is a biography.

- [Ohio, the Buckeye State](#)
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