

78 Quarterly



No. 7

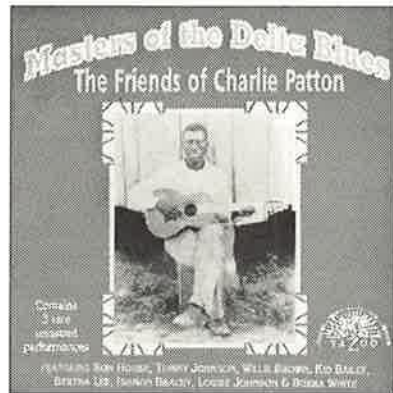
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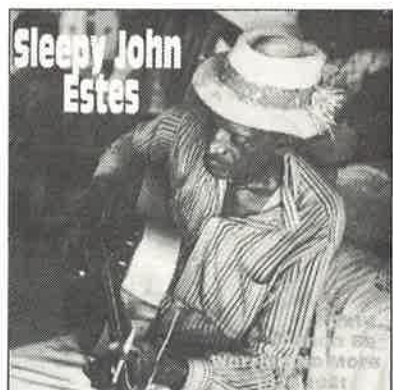
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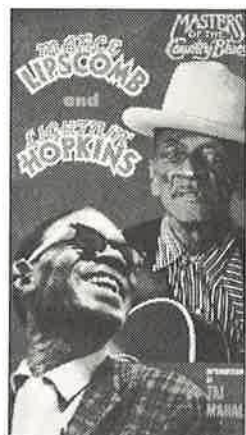


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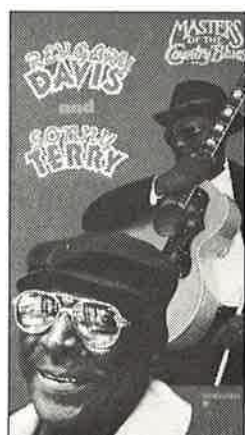
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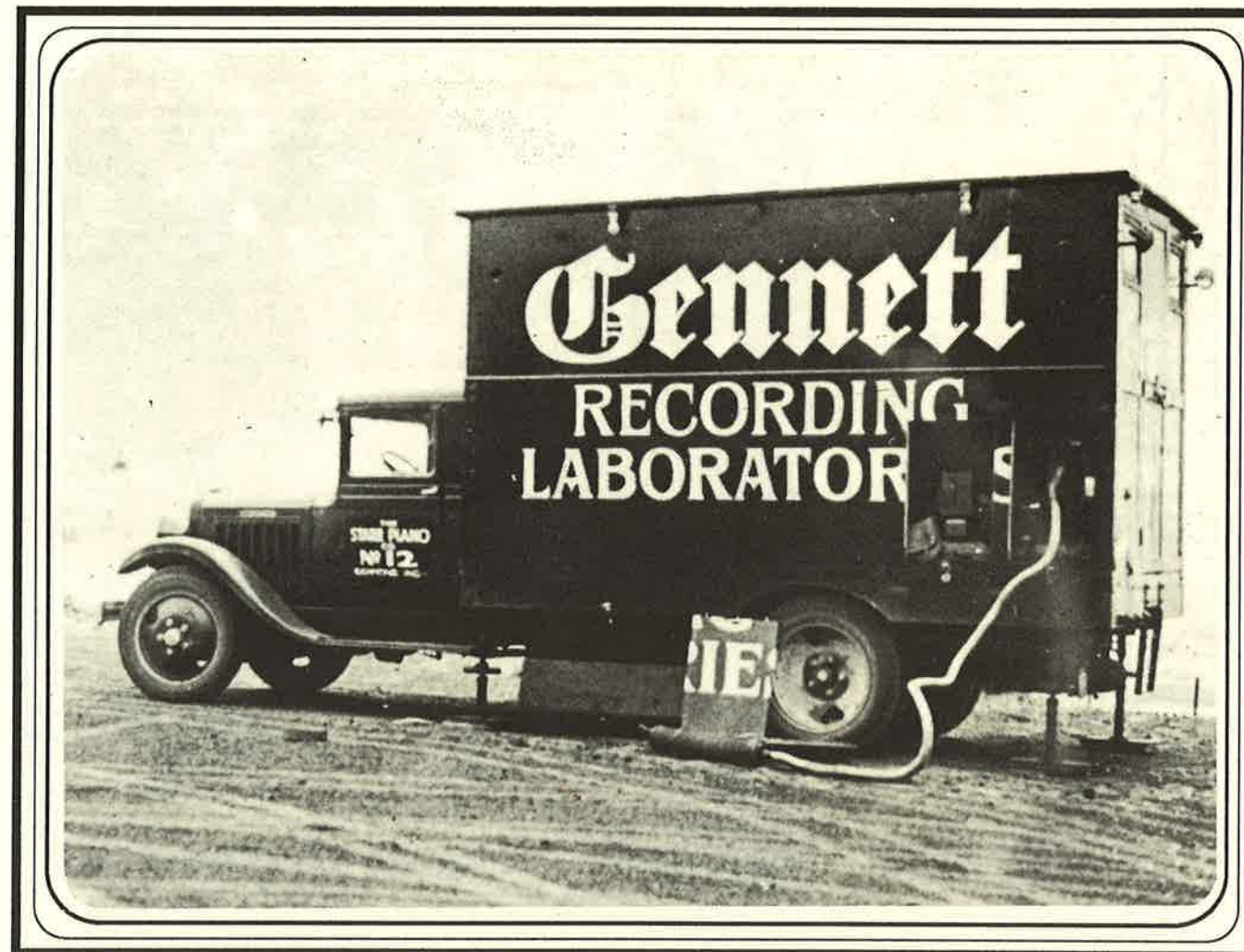


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Volume One, No. 7

1992

78 QUARTERLY



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78 QUARTERLY

VOLUME ONE, NO. 7

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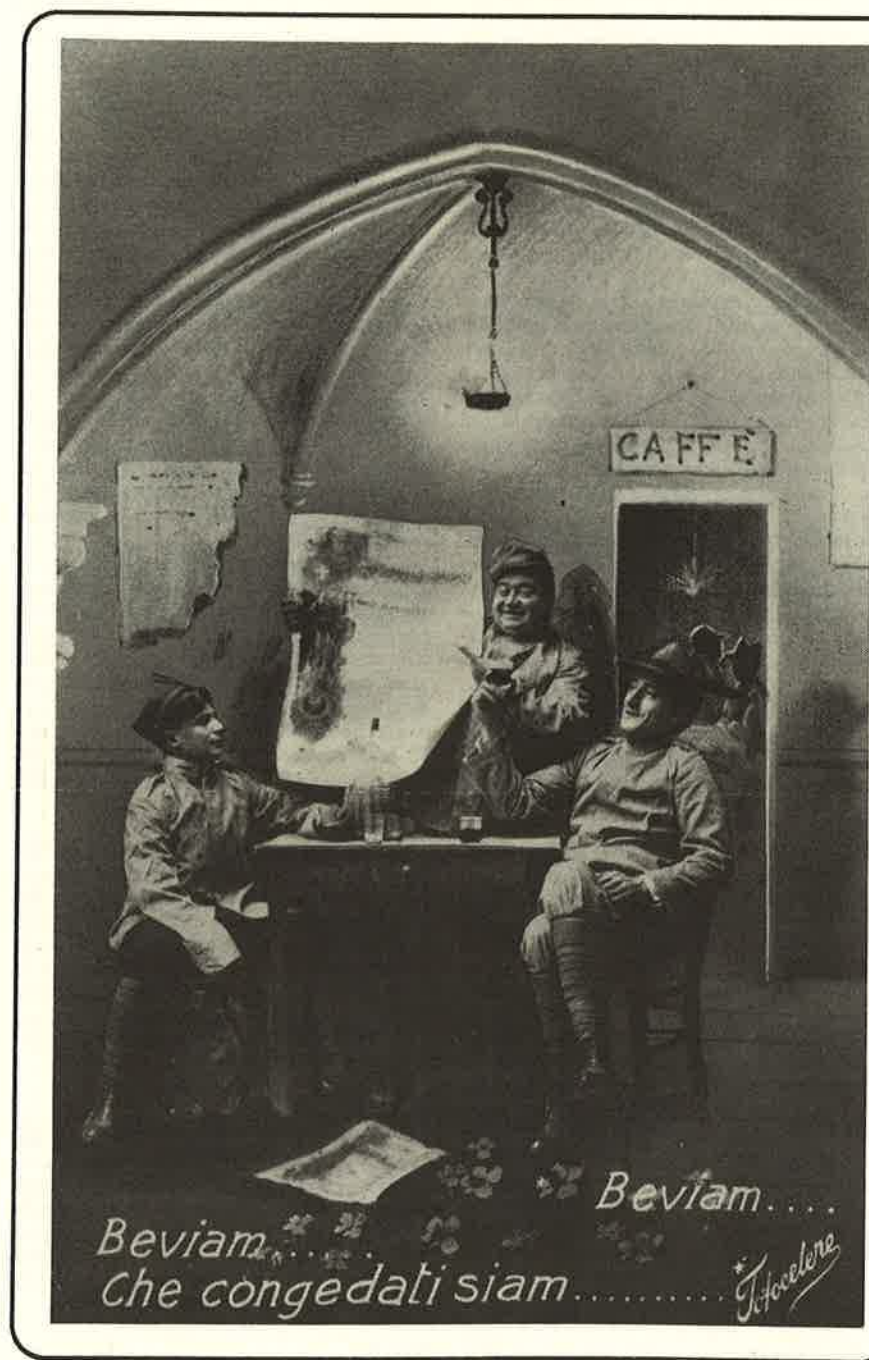
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Cover photo courtesy of Duncan P. Schiedt
Logo by Robert Grumb

\$10—a single issue (US \$12 in Canada). \$32—a subscription for 4 issues (US \$42 in Canada). Please send to 78 Quarterly, P.O. Box 283, Key West, FL 33041. Overseas subscribers—please contact KEM SMITH, RED LICK RECORDS, P.O. BOX 3, PORTHMADOG, GWYNEDD, WALES, UNITED KINGDOM.

(Printed by Key West Press, 1103 Whitehead St., Key West.)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



Letter gets chuckle from 78 Q staffers

...My one big gripe with the mag is the emphasis put on the rarest 78s section. As it stands, it should read "the rarest 78s owned by the editor and a coterie of friends with like tastes," i.e. black race labels, classic jazz and blues. The appearance of white bands in the listing are few and far between; most of them emanating from Richmond, Ind. or Grafton, Wisc. studios.

Where for instance is Earl Fuller's Famous Jazz Band on Fuller [label], or the same on vertical Gennett? Billy Arnold on English Columbia, The Happy 6 on Yerkes Dance Records, some of the Frisco Jass Band Edisons? Or what about early black bands—Blake's Jazzone Orchestra on Pathé, W.C. Handy Lyrics, Sweatman Victor and Vocalions, some of the Dabney Aeolians, the Versatile Four's HMV "Down Home Rag" (a 1916 black string band, in effect, recorded in London—I know of three copies). I think a far more accurate count would be obtained if you put in the mag, "O.K. folks, we're doing I and J next issue, crawl the shelves and let me know who has got some really rare records"—I think you'd be surprised to see just how many copies crawled out of the woodwork; however, some people may wish to remain anonymous. I'll give you a rare record to consider—Joe Kayser's Novelty Orchestra on Personal Gennett—350 copies pressed and all sold in one night (I should say given away) at a ballroom. I know of two copies in the UK—we don't just collect Al Bowley and Fred Elizalde over here (he says tongue in cheek).

What we seem to be losing is any interest in the music itself—the ODJB's "Dixieland Jass Band One-Step" sold over a million, but that intro sends shivers down my spine when I hear it (at the proper speed of 76 rpm, of course)—it's a bloody exciting record!

Well, as they say, controversy and scandal sells papers...Keep up the good work. Warmest regards—MARK BERRESFORD, Beshwood Village, Nottingham, England.

[The next letter—signed "Joe"—was sent to Mark Berresford, who forwarded it on to 78 Q.]
Dear Mark,

I received your letter the other day re the Listing for 78 Quarterly. Quite frankly, I can think of about a dozen more worthwhile ways of using my time than to assist in what, in my view, is little more than an ego-trip on the part of certain U.S. collectors. However, I suppose this guy is doing some sort of research, and there's always the chance that someone else will take it over in the future—and do it properly.

To my knowledge, there are two copies of the J.C. Johnson QRS in the UK, but I don't think it any of Mr. Whelan's business where they are—even if he does.

Re Dick Kent and his Band: the Kibblers Kollegians track also (apparently) appeared on Champion as Joe Moore's Orchestra. No copy of the Champion issue in the UK to my knowledge.

King Mutt... "probably the most coveted jazz group on Gennett"—SINCE WHEN? Hasn't this man heard of King Oliver or Bix, to name but two? I think the problem can be diagnosed as a distressingly severe attack of colour-blindness, which (sadly) extends to the colour of the Gennett label.

That's about as much as I can do on this; I regret I am not qualified to say whether or not

James, Doc Watson, and many others.

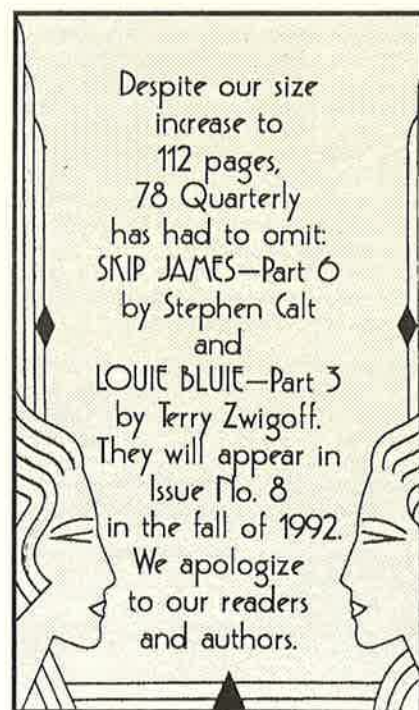
Skip liked a tune I was playing ("Sporting Life") and asked me to teach it to him. I replied: "Skip, I can't teach you a tune!"—but I did, and we played it together all week. We both sang while he played piano and I, guitar. We did a lot of playing and drinking together that week, and he asked me to perform with him at the Newport Blues Festival some weeks later. I met him at Newport, where he introduced me to Bukka White, Son House, and the others, and then invited me to play "Sporting Life" with him before I did a set of my own.

My point is that I remember Skip James as not only a magnificent, innovative talent of the greatest magnitude, but also a gracious, down-to-earth man who spoke articulately about his music and his life, and who was happy to encourage and nurture a younger musician finding his way. Sincerely, *LAWRENCE HOFFMAN, Baltimore, Maryland* ("The author is a composer and guitarist who has taught the history of the blues and the history of jazz at Johns Hopkins Evening College and the Peabody Conservatory of Music. His 'Blues for Harp, Oboe, and Violoncello' has been recorded by members of the Cleveland Orchestra.")

Dear Sir:

...does anyone have information as to the time it will take for the shellac 78s to deteriorate? This unpleasant little thought is not irrelevant; just ask a brown-wax cylinder collector. After all, 78s are made of organic materials which will eventually degrade, but when? Berliners are 95 years plus now at the oldest, so jazz and blues folks have some time left, but I wonder if any research has been done as to what's really best for long-term preservation. This might make an interesting 78 Quarterly article. Surely, some 78 collector has a biochemistry or related background qualification. Thanks. I'm looking forward to new issues. Sincerely yours, *LEANDER SMITH, Reeds Spring, Missouri*

Despite our size increase to 112 pages, 78 Quarterly has had to omit: **SKIP JAMES—Part 6** by Stephen Calt and **LOUIE BLUIE—Part 3** by Terry Zwigoff. They will appear in Issue No. 8 in the fall of 1992. We apologize to our readers and authors.




The closing date is OCT. 15

AUCTIONS & TRADES

GAYLE DEAN WARDLOW, 1426-52nd Avenue, Meridian, MS 39307 (phone—[601]-483-7223). The following Victors are in store stock sleeves and are all N-. **AUCTION** (will consider trades):

- (1) BEANS HAMBONE—Vic 23180 N- (min. \$250)
- (2) RABBIT BROWN—Vic 20578 N- (min \$250)
- (3) RABBIT BROWN/(A. & J. BAXTER)—Vic 214775 N- (min. \$250)
- (4) CANNON'S JUG STOMPERS—Vic 38593 N- (best-known-condition copy—min. \$900)
- (5) ESTES-RACHAEL—Vic 38595 N- (min. \$500)
- (6) CLIFFORD GIBSON—Vic 38562 N- (min. \$250)
- (7) TOMMY JOHNSON—Vic 38535 N- (\$1200)
- (8) LUKE JORDON—Vic 38564 N- (min \$400)
- (9) FURRY LEWIS—Vic 21664 N- (min. \$250)
- (10) MEMPHIS JUG BAND—Vic 38558 N- (min. \$300)
- (11) MEMPHIS JUG BAND—Vic 38599 N- (min. \$350)
- (12) FRANK STOKES—Vic 21272 N- (min. \$250)
- (13) FRANK STOKES—Vic 21672 N- (min. \$250)
- (14) FRANK STOKES—Vic 38512 N- (min. \$860)
- (15) JESSE THOMAS—Vic 38555 N- (min. \$350)
- (16) MINNIE WALLACE—Vic 38547 (min. \$300)

TERRY ZWIGOFF, 290 Mullen Avenue, San Francisco, CA 94110 (phone—[415]-647-5278). Condition guaranteed. **AUCTION** (trades considered, postage extra):

- (1) JELLY JAMES FEWSICIANS—Georgia Bo-Bo/Make Me Know It—Gnt 6045 E+
- (2) SAMMANNING—Lita/You Can't Get—OK 8568 EE+
- (3) SAM MANNING—Sweetie Charlie/Lt. Julian—OK 8567 EE+
- (4) LITTLE BROTHER—Chinese Man/Something Keeps Worryin' Me—Buff BB 6658 E+
- (5) V. SPIVEY—Dope Head/Blood Thirsty—OK 8531 V/V+
- (6) WALTER DAVIS—Changin' Clothes/5th Ave.—Buff BB 7021 E
- (7) WALTER DAVIS—Nightmare Blues/What Else Can I Do—BB 6971 E/E+
- (8) MEMPHIS MINNIE—Sylvester Mule Blues/When Your Asleep—DE 7084 V+
- (9) KOKOMO ARNOLD—Policy Wheel/Traveling Rambler—DE 7147 E+
- (10) KOKOMO ARNOLD—Long & Tall/Backfence Picket—DE 7306 E-
- (11) BLIND BOY FULLER—Working Man/kWalking and Looking Blues—DE 7899 E-
- (12) RICH TRICE—Trembling Bed Springs Blues/Come On Baby—DE 7701 E/E+
- (13) MCGHEE & WELLING—Feel Like Traveling On/Why Not Tonight—Gnt 6690 E-
- (14) LION & ATILLA—Modern Times/King George VI—DE 17321 (calypso) E-
- (15) VESS OSSMAN—Silver Heels/Keep On The Grass—Vic 16266 E
- (16) VAN EPS TRIO—The Original—Vic 17677 V+
- (17) VAN EPS TRIO—Ching Chong—Vic 18404 E+
- (18) VAN EPS TRIO—What Will William Tell—Vic 17799 E-
- (19) VAN EPS TRIO—Teasing The Cat/On Dixie Hwy—Vic 18226 E
- (20) VAN EPS TRIO—Razzberries—Vic 18376 E-
- (21) FRED VAN EPS—Frolic Of Coons—Vic 17369 V+

PETE WHELAN, 626 Canfield Lane, Key West, FL 33040. **(TRADE ONLY)**. Twenty-four 11-inch, one-sided, laminated ARC-Columbia tests of LEADBELLY. Conditions are E+ or better. These are "one-off master tests"; master numbers are etched on the outside rim. Recorded 1935. Most unissued. Send for list.

PARAMOUNT'S DECLINE AND FALL

(Part 5)

by
STEPHEN CALT
with GAYLE DEAN WARDLOW



(photo courtesy of GORDON SIMONS)

PARAMOUNT'S
"NEW" PRESSING
PLANT
(AT LEFT)
(DRAFTON,
EARLY OR MID-
1920s)

Even without Arthur Laibly's ample help, Paramount was virtually doomed as a major "race" label when the Artophone Company decided to abandon record distribution, in June of 1929. With the defection of Artophone, Paramount lost its largest wholesaler and ready access to its all-important Mississippi market.

"Radio killed Paramount"

According to Artophone Vice President Herb Schiele, the company made its decision on the basis of the greater appeal of the radio: "The decline started when radio come on in...about '28. You see, it (the decline of "race" sales) didn't go that fast because most of our customers of the blues were black, and didn't have money to buy radios in those days, and so it took a year or two for the record business to sort of decline." Apparently, the company gradually phased out of record distribution: by the end of 1929, it had closed its Dallas branch, and by 1930, had forsaken records altogether for Philco radios, then a little-known brand. Around the same time, Paramount's previous leading distributor, the E.E. Forbes Piano Company of Birmingham, began handling Majestic radios. J. L. Ausban, who replaced Harry Charles as its head salesman, would claim: "Radio killed Paramount and the other companies too."

The actual impact of radio on "race" record sales is problematic. Most blacks did not own radios: of nearly a thousand rural black Southern households canvassed in the mid-1930s, only 17.4% owned radios, as opposed to 27.6% with victrolas. As radio stations rarely played black music, and featured no programming aimed at black audiences, it is unlikely that radios even competed with "race" records as a black consumer item. Rather, "race" record industry figures apparently made the radio a scapegoat for declining record sales, just as the pop branch of the industry had done in the early 1920s. At the same time, the national market for radios was rapidly expanding in the late 1920s: radio sales of 1928

amounted to \$650 million, far surpassing the sale of records or phonographs. Record executives, who had originally insisted in the early 1920s that radio could never become a substitute for recorded music, were increasingly whoring after the thriving medium. By 1929 both Brunswick and Columbia had begun manufacturing radios in addition to victrolas; in January of that year Victor merged with the Radio Corporation of America, while in November, the Edison label discontinued records altogether for radio production.

Unable to diversify with radio production, Paramount was left to operate a crippled record business once it lost Artophone. The company eventually salvaged some of Artophone's business by buying its list of mail order record customers.¹ Most of the dealers Artophone had serviced, however, were all but lost to the record company: it became necessary for them to contact the company in order to purchase records.

In an apparent attempt to keep Artophone interested in Paramount's product, Laibly made a local Artophone client named Jesse Johnson (1873-1946) the label's leading source of "race" talent. Between August of 1929 and July, 1930 Johnson brought Paramount over a dozen blues discoveries, more than any other record dealer had previously sent the company.² "He was a real entrepreneur in his day," Herb Schiele said of Johnson, the leading black "race" retailer of the period. Johnson had originally come to St. Louis by way of his native Clarksdale, Tennessee to see the World's Fair of 1904, and remained in the city to work as a ballroom dancer, shipping clerk, and train caller. His *Deluxe Music Shop*, founded in 1919, stood next to the *Booker T. Washington Theater* at 23rd and Market, for which he worked as a booker.³ Johnson was also noted for his promotional ventures, which included Monday excursion cruises on the *St. Paul*, featuring assorted jazz musicians. The artists he dispatched to Paramount included his blues-singing wife Edith (who worked as his business assistant after marrying him in 1926), his piano-playing brother James ("Stump") Johnson,

who had learned his instrument in a pool hall, and himself; backed by a chorus, he recorded a two-part spiritual for the company in September of 1929.

"...They wasn't puttin' out good records...just wouldn't track right."

Perhaps because Paramount was steadily losing retail clients, Laibly was unable to find a wholesaler to replace Artophone. "Dealers cut 'em off," H.C. Speir recalled. "Quit handling their products." The reason, he said, was the label's poor sound quality: "...They wasn't puttin' out good records...(the records) just wouldn't track right. It just wasn't a quality record," he said. The advent of electrical recording, which increased volume and range, had accentuated the acoustical deficiency of the Paramount product.

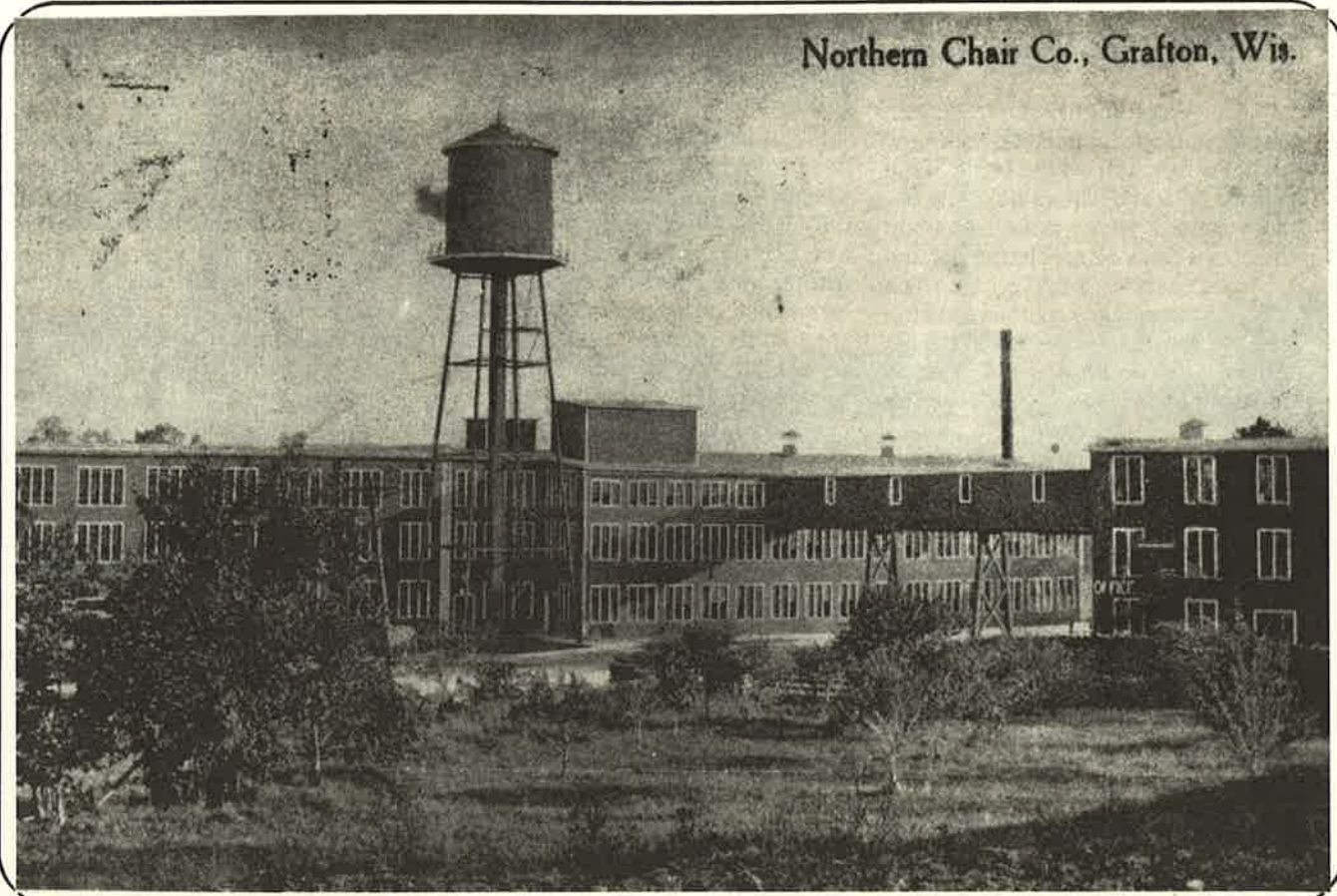
Instead of upgrading its pressing process to produce a clearer sound, Paramount was preoccupied with obtaining its own recording facilities, and thereby eliminating the expense of hiring out other studios. "We could not build and develop an electrical recording studio for the reason we did not have the know-how," Moeser recalled. Until 1929 it continued to rely on Marsh Laboratories, which had taken up electrical recording in the fall of 1926 (when the process became standard) and was now situated in the seventh floor of the Lyon & Healy Building at 64 East Jackson Avenue.⁴ The premium Paramount placed on electrical recording was reflected in its *Defender* ads of the late 1920s, which boasted:

Electrically Recorded
Paramount Records are recorded by the latest new electric method. Greater volume, amazing clear tone. Always the best music—first on Paramount!

Similarly, Paramount recordings of the late 1920s bore the prominent legend "Electrically Recorded."⁵

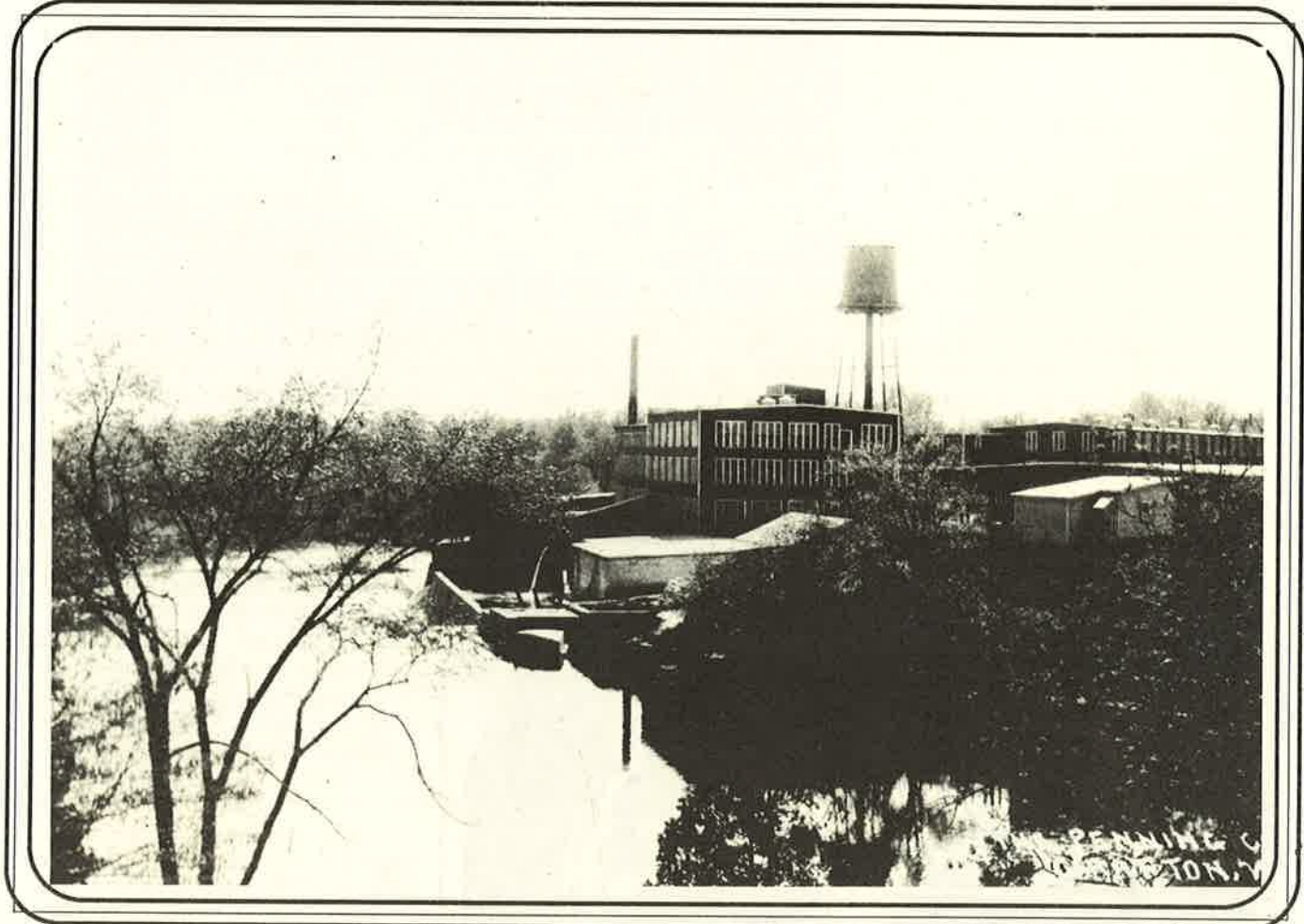
Paramount dropped the "anemic" Marsh Labs in 1929 and switched to Gennett...

Northern Chair Co., Grafton, Wis.



(courtesy of GORDON SIMONS)

FRONT VIEW:
PARAMOUNT'S
PRESSING PLANT COMPLEX
(GRAFTON, C. 1930).
RECORDING STUDIO IS ON
THE SECOND FLOOR OF
THE BUILDING AT RIGHT.
OFFICE IS ON THE GROUND
FLOOR. "WALKOVER" GOES
FROM STUDIO TO PLANT.



(courtesy of GORDON SIMONS)

RIVER VIEW:
PARAMOUNT'S
PRESSING PLANT COMPLEX
(FROM THE MILWAUKEE
RIVER DAM,
LOOKING SOUTH)

Marsh's tendency to under-record artists gave some of Paramount's vaunted electrical recordings (such as George Carter's *Ghost Woman Blues* of 1929) the anemic presence of the acoustic production. It was probably as a result of dissatisfaction with Marsh's sound that Laibly began using the studio facilities of Gennett Records in June, 1929.⁶ Between June and October of that year, Laibly conducted some 15 sessions at its main recording studios on the west side of Richmond, Indiana (where the Gennett front offices and factories were located). Other sessions involving East Coast talent were held at Gennett's New York studio at 9 East 37th Street.⁷ One of the advantages of collaboration with Gennett, which charged \$80 per wax master, was that its recording director Fred Wiggins had no designs on Paramount talent: "They weren't in the 'race' field to any extent," Laibly said of Gennett.

In the latter part of 1929, Walter Klopp, who was to become Paramount's recording engineer, succeeded in constructing an electrical recording machine. Laibly then engaged an acoustic research firm located in Madison, Wisconsin to build a studio in Grafton. Because the project was conceived as part of an acoustical experiment, Paramount was charged only the cost of materials. The work was done by an Englishman named Fertington: "He was just a fella in sound recording and making equipment," Laibly said. "What he did originally was wind transformer coils." Fertington equipped the studio with a five-foot high two-panel amplifier, recording heads, and a parabolic microphone. His equipment did not function properly, causing Laibly to temporarily revert to Marsh and a free-lance engineer in Milwaukee.⁸ All told, the project took a couple of months to

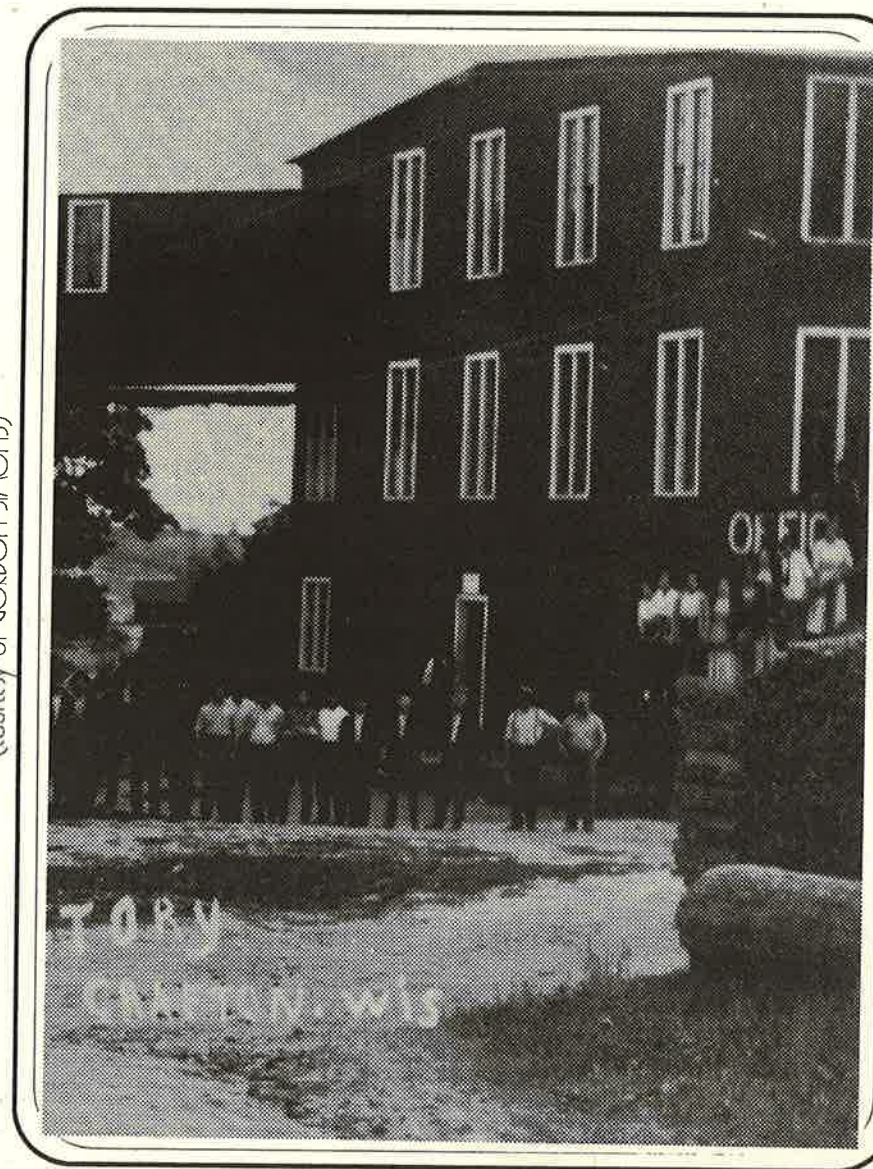
complete before it was ready for business sometime between November, 1929 and April, 1930.

Paramount had 'the most secluded studio in the country'

The Paramount studio at the southern edge of Grafton was probably the most secluded recording studio in the country. No sign or logo on the premises announced the presence of a recording studio or record company, and its construction had been given no play in the local newspapers, which preferred to print items like: "The snapping of a parlor match at the residence of Mrs. Louise Bostwick last Tuesday destroyed a pair of lace curtains and created a big scare in the household for a few moments..."

The studio stood on a private driveway, a block or two long, that veered off Falls Road and led to a dam. The main road was unpaved and rarely traveled; the only people who regularly used it besides Paramount employees were members of the Grafton fire department, which operated a pumping station near the dam. The studio itself was housed within a four-story wooden structure, painted reddish brown, that dated to the 1890s, when Grafton had been officially known as "Hamburg." Originally it had been used by the Sheboygan Knitting Company. Across the street from the studio stood the Paramount pressing plant, to which it was connected by a viaduct. The only other buildings in the vicinity were an open woodshed measuring 100 x 300 feet (used by the Wisconsin Chair Company to dry lumber), and a stone house that had been built for a chair company executive named Wilkie and was then occupied by Alfred Schultz, the pressing plant foreman.

The studio occupied the second floor of the building, the only one then in use. Once operational, it proved, in Laibly's word, "cumbersome." According to Schultz its weak wooden floor required frequent reinforcement, while unsatisfactory room acoustics led Laibly and Klopp to drape its walls with burlap in order



(courtesy of GORDON SIMONS)

Paramount's busy, but 'hidden' Grafton recording lab was completed in November, 1929. Two years later, over 1100 masters had been recorded on the second floor.

to reduce reverberation.⁹ "Their studios wasn't any too good," H. C. Speir observed. "Their studios wasn't up to par at all." He felt that its recording premises were too large, "consisting of big rooms, all square and everything... You had dampness there all the time: you can't have dampness when you're recording... that dampness, even if it wasn't but just a small degree, it'd throw the sound off a little, you see." Actually, there was nothing perceptibly wrong with Paramount's recording process, as it existed at Grafton: it was rather the grating surface noise generated by its cheap pressing materials that doomed Paramount's product to inferiority. Thus, the introduction of the studio

had the net effect of decreasing Paramount's overhead, while not enhancing the appeal of the label to the company's dwindling army of dealers.

The Grafton sessions were conducted primarily in the daytime by Laibly and Walter Klopp, who served as its studio engineer. In addition to a piano, the studio boasted of at least one company guitar.¹⁰ Partly as a result of Laibly's whimsical approach to recording, the Grafton studio proved much busier than Marsh's free-lance "laboratory" had been. In its first two years of operation it recorded as many masters (about 1100) as Marsh Laboratories had recorded

in its last three years of acoustic recording.

Those Grafton sessions were entirely 'hit or miss'

The Grafton sessions seem to have followed the informal format of the Marsh sessions conducted by Harry Charles, who recalled: "We'd just make all we could." This approach was in contrast to the sessions run by Okeh, of which Polk Brockman said: "We had a program all laid out ahead a time; we knew exactly what we're gonna do... It wasn't any hit or miss to it at all." The Grafton session, by contrast, was entirely hit or miss, running until Laibly decided to end it. The experience of Son House, who recorded in the spring of 1930, was probably typical of the Grafton artist. Sitting before the mike, he auditioned each song before recording it, prefacing his playing by announcing the title of his song. Then Laibly would listen to a single verse and decide whether or not he wished to record it.

Following the practice of Mayo Williams, who recorded two or three takes of each title at Marsh Laboratories and afterwards selected the best one for release, Laibly recorded three takes of each song. (Okeh, by contrast, customarily recorded two.) Once converted to test-pressings (a process that took about four days), the takes were divided up between Laibly, Klopp, and another executive (probably Henry Stephany) and taken home. At a conference the following morning each executive would give his impressions of the take. After a take was selected for issue, the wax disks representing the rejected takes were re-used for more recording.

At the Paramount studio Skip James composed 22-20 in 'three minutes'

Once Paramount acquired its own studio, it was possible for Laibly to solicit material without fear of incurring extra overhead. Skip James was surprised at the extent of his session, which, he recalled, ran to 26 songs over two or three days. "I did have a little collection (of songs)



February, 1929:

This George Carter Herwin—one of the last produced by Paramount for the Artophone Company—had the anemic Marsh Labs sound

mapped out...before I left to record. I figured I could afford satisfaction to a few records, but I didn't have no idea of makin' that many... There were certain songs that I composed there and didn't have but three minutes to make that song up, and put the music to it." One of his impromptu pieces was 22-20:

"Mr. Laibly, the manager of that recordin'...ask me, 'Skip, the 44 Blues is out...havin' a fast sale. Do you think you could compose us a blues about a gun that would kinda come up to that requirement? Make a pretty fast sale?"

"I said: 'I don't know, how about .38 Special?'"

"No, I got that."

"I say: 'Well, how 'bout 44.40?'"

"I got that already..."

"He say: 'How about 22-20?'"

Thus was James prompted to record a tune about a nonexistent firearm.

James' experience suggests that Laibly may have belatedly awakened to the commerciality of blues lyrics. Yet, with the exception of *How Long Blues*, which Blind Lemon Jefferson had recorded in 1928, the company did no topical "cover" versions of "race" hits. It waited over a year before putting out a disguised "cover" of the Mississippi Sheiks' *Sittin' On Top Of The World*. Moreover, after 1929 the company employed no songwriters, a likely consequence of the departure of Aletha Dickerson, whose role in company affairs seems to have ended with the construction of the Grafton studio. For his part Laibly smugly basked in the rusticity of his self-directed musicians: "None of 'em read music," he afterwards said. "I didn't want any educated musicians."

Without the assistance of Dickerson, the task of greeting and boarding incoming artists fell to Laibly. Grafton's only local hotel (the Hotel

Grafton, on Highway 57) was a white-only establishment. Alfred Schultz said: "Colored people, they had to stay in Milwaukee; in them days they couldn't stay in Grafton." A Milwaukee rooming house accommodated Ishmon Bracey and Tommy Johnson, and, probably, most of Paramount's incoming acts: "A man owned it," Bracey recalled, "...didn't 'low no womens at all stayin' at the boarding house."¹¹

Musicians customarily arrived from Milwaukee by way of the Chicago and Northwestern Railway, or from the Milwaukee Electric Railway and Light Company train that ran from Chicago. Once a singer arrived at Grafton from Milwaukee at night and knocked on Alfred Schultz's door, demanding \$20 for cab fare. After Schultz paid the fare, he called the Port Washington office to complain and was told that the sum would be deducted from the singer's royalties.

Schultz recalled that the artists did considerable drinking during their sessions: "They always found the booze; I don't know how they did it." Laibly, on the other hand, claimed: "They didn't get a drop while they were recording...I would give it to them *after* they were done with the recording. Some of them used to come (to the studio) with a reefer cigarette—I could name two of those—a girl and a fella from Chicago."

If Laibly indeed ran a dry studio, his was unique within the industry. Charles said of Marsh Labs: "We kept it (whiskey) there in the studio; give it to preachers..." He recalled coaxing a white preacher from Charlotte at Marsh studios:

"Take that drink..."

"Oh, my folks! I couldn't let my folks know I took one of them."

"Isay: 'Your folks ain't gonna know it'...I said: 'Take you a couple drinks, an' you'll really preach.'"

"He say: 'God, don't you say nothin' about that!'"

"I carried him to New York, you know, QRS, same preacher. This guy walk in the studio, say: 'Come 'ere. Gimme somethin' to get me started.' Say: 'Then you'll have to give me somethin' to stop me.'"

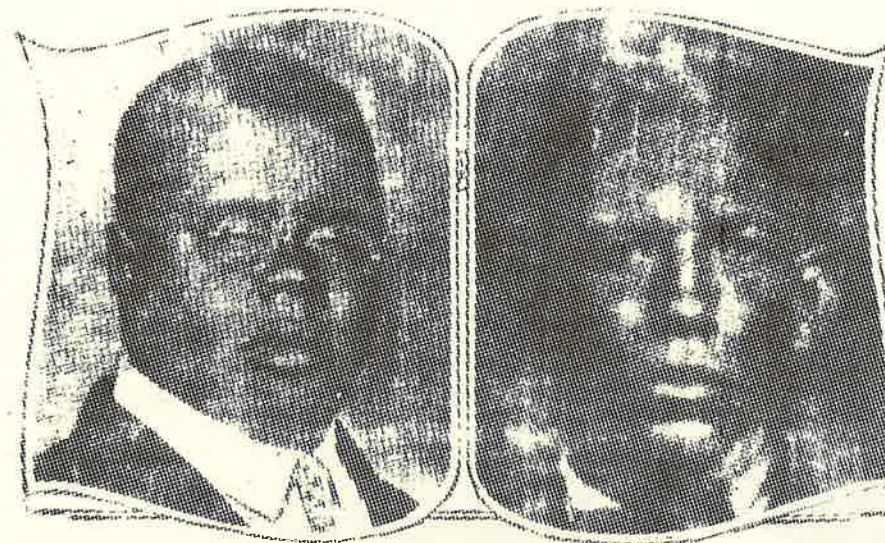
Charles said of the talent he



"38 Special? 44-40? How 'bout 22-20?"
(A song about a non-existent firearm was born in February, 1931)

New! Paramount Records

— Super Electrical Recordings —



L. JEFFERSON

C. PATTON

Everybody Enjoys These

- 12822—*Sisco Harmonica Blues*—Instrumental Blues.....Carver Boys
- Wang Wang Harmonica Blues*—Instrumental Blues.....Carver Boys
- 12821—*Ain't Goin' That Way*—Vocal—Piano—Guitar—Clarinet Acc...The Hokum Boys
- You Can't Get Enough Of That Stuff*—Vocal—Guitar—Piano Acc.
- 12819—*Black And Evil Blues*—Vocal—Piano and Trombone Acc.....Alice Moore
- Broadway St. Woman Blues*—Vocal—Piano and Guitar Acc.....Alice Moore
- 12817—*Back To The Woods Blues*—Vocal—Piano and Guitar Acc.....Charlie Spand
- Good Gal*—Vocal—Piano and Guitar Acc.....Charlie Spand
- 12816—*It Hurts So Good*—Trombone Solo—Piano Acc. Henry Brown....Ike Rodgers
- Screenin' The Blues*—Trombone Solo—Piano Acc. Henry Brown..Ike Rodgers

(courtesy of JETT IARRER)

Paramount gives equal billing to Blind Lemon Jefferson and Charlie Patton

(In 1961 Maxey Tarpley found this brochure at a black home in Augusta. He loaned it to a museum in 1982, from where it 'disappeared')

recorded: "I give 'em *all* whiskey: straight rye, straight bourbon. They were all cowards, you know... We had one woman outta St. Louis, and had her so drunk we had to put up a frame in fronta the mike for her to hold on to."

After Blind Lemon Jefferson died, Laibly depended on Charlie Patton to bolster Paramount's weak catalog

The completion of Paramount's studio nearly coincided with the advent of the Depression and the death of Blind Lemon Jefferson, who succumbed to an apparent heart attack in November or December of 1929. Laibly would blame declining Paramount sales on the former occurrence: "In '29 it stopped right quick," he said of the "race" business. Actually, two rival hits (Memphis Minnie's *Bumble Bee* on Vocalion and the Mississippi Sheiks' *Sittin' On Top Of The World* on OKeh) were recorded in

early 1930, while Laibly himself garnished a respectable seller in Charlie Patton's two-part *High Water Everywhere*, which was issued in April, 1930. Patton had acquired a rabid following in the Mississippi Delta over some two decades prior to his discovery by Speir in the spring of 1929. With his debut record *Pony Blues* he became the first notably successful new Paramount act since Laibly had replaced Mayo Williams as recording director some two years earlier. Laibly thereafter became so dependent on Patton to bolster his weak catalog that he would subsequently record 41 sides by him in a year—more than any "race" artist had produced in a comparable period. He would also record at least five other "race" acts Patton recommended or took to the Grafton studio. Despite Paramount's reputation for cheapness, Laibly was willing to pay Patton, Willie Brown, Son House, Louise Johnson, and the Delta Big Four \$50 per side for the Grafton recordings they produced in May of 1930. By that time, Paramount had

given up on its mail order business, and its executives were no longer disposed to continue the label.

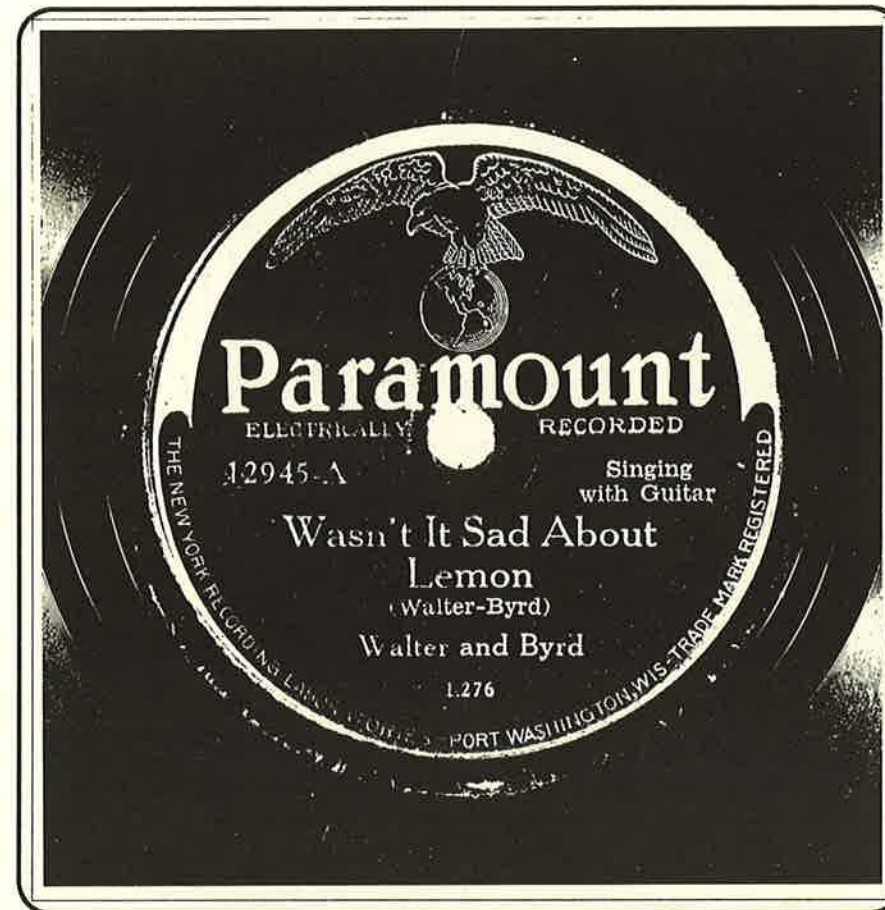
Paramount's decision to stop advertising records in the *Chicago Defender* (which ran its last company ad on April 26, 1930) was occasioned by a fall in its mail order revenues. Alfred Schultz recalled that it was common for records to languish in the post office, and for the company to have to pick up the postage to reclaim them. The unsold records were taken as an omen that the "race" record business was finished.

Its disillusionment with the "race" record business was evident when H.C. Speir arrived at Grafton in May of 1930 with three vocalists from the Delta Big Four. In a calculated sideswipe at Laibly, Otto Moeser told Speir that he "could do a whole lot better" than the employees who were running the company. Moeser than informed him that Paramount planned to liquidate because its Wisconsin location made costs prohibitive for a label whose chief business was transacted in the South. Then he offered to sell Speir the entire business for \$25,000, along with a perpetual 1-cent royalty on all subsequent sales. In the process, Speir would obtain rights to all of Paramount's masters, its record stock, its recording equipment, and the contracts of its artists.

In light of Paramount's distribution problems, the company might appear to be a dubious commodity at any price; its value rested almost completely on its recording equipment and processing machines. Even if its contracts had legal validity (as they likely did not, once the firm forfeited its corporate status in 1926), its roster of artists was virtually worthless. Ma Rainey had stopped recording in 1928, when, Laibly recalled, she retired from show business. By then, her appeal, along with that of Ida Cox, had been largely exhausted through familiarity. The popularity of Papa Charlie Jackson and Blind Blake had similarly waned. After the death of Blind Lemon Jefferson, the company issued his six remaining records. Apparently fearful of notifying dealers of his death, it waited until the final Jefferson side was being released,



Recorded at Paramount's new Grafton studio late in '29, "High Water" became a "respectable seller."



MARCH, 1930 (?): PARAMOUNT "COVERED" THE DEATH OF BLIND LEMON JEFFERSON ON BOTH SIDES OF THIS RECORD



June 14, 1929, Richmond, Indiana—Gennett recorded Charlie Patton's first Paramount session at \$40 per side. Ledgers also reveal identity of "Elder J.J. Hadley."

MASTER NO.	FROM N. Y.	MADE FOR	TITLE	DESCRIPTION	MASTER-TEST				SHELLS ORDERED	CATALOG NUMBER	REMARKS
					OUR O. K.	CUST. O. K.	TO N. Y.	TO FROM CUST.			
✓ 12-18 GE-15658	1/21	A	DOG IN A RING BLUES By Mabel Peterson Acc. Piano, Banjo	VOCAL BLUES			1/4		Paramount	Made for New York Recording Lab. Pt. Washington, Wis.	
✓ 13-18 GE-15659	1/21	A	TWO TIME SWITCHER BLUES By Mabel Peterson Acc. Piano, Mandolin	VOCAL BLUES			1/4		Paramount	" " 40.00	
✓ 15-18 GE-15660	1/21	A	BROKE DOWN ENGINE By Lonnie Clark Acc. Piano, Mandolin	VOCAL BLUES			1/4		Paramount	" " 40.00	
✓ 15-18 GE-15661	1/21	A	DOWN IN THE WESSEE By Lonnie Clark Acc. Piano, Mandolin	VOCAL BLUES			1/4		Paramount	" " 40.00	
✓ 16-18 GE-15662	1/23	A	OSCAR MYER ON PROHIBITION PART I By Oscar Myer	COMIC			1/4		Paramount	Copyright 1929 Paramount	
✓ 16-18 GE-15663	1/23	A	OSCAR MYER ON PROHIBITION PART II By Oscar Myer	COMIC			1/4		Paramount	"	
✓ 20-18 GE-15664	1/23	A	BED SPRING BLUES By Lemon Jefferson Acc. Guitar	VOCAL			1/3		Paramount	Made for New York Recording Lab. Pt. Washington, Wis.	
✓ 22-19 GE-15665	1/24	A	YO YO BLUES By Lemon Jefferson Acc. Guitar	VOCAL			1/3		Paramount	" " 40.00	
✓ 21-19 GE-15666	1/24	A	MOSQUITO MOAN By Lemon Jefferson Acc. Guitar	VOCAL			1/3		Paramount	" " 40.00	
✓ 20-18 GE-15667	1/24	A	OUT THE BACK By Lemon Jefferson	VOCAL			1/3		Paramount	" " 40.00	

September 24, 1929—Gennett recorded Blind Lemon Jefferson's last session for Paramount at \$40 per side.

MASTER NO.	FROM N. Y.	MADE FOR	TITLE	DESCRIPTION	MASTER-TEST				SHELLS ORDERED	CATALOG NUMBER	REMARKS
					OUR O. K.	CUST. O. K.	TO N. Y.	TO FROM CUST.			
✓ 12-18 GE-15217	1/14	A	BANTY ROOSTER BLUES By Charlie Patton Acc. Guitar	RACE BLUES VOCAL			1/2		Paramount	Made for New York Recording Lab. Pt. Washington, Wis.	
✓ 12-18 GE-15218	1/14	A	SNATCH IT AND GRAB IT By Buddy Boy Hawkins Acc. Guitar	"			1/2		Paramount	" " 40.00	
✓ 16-18 GE-15219	1/14	A	VOICE THROVIN' BLUES By Buddy Boy Hawkins Acc. Guitar	"			1/2		Paramount	" " 40.00	
✓ 16-18 GE-15220	1/14	A	IT WON'T BE LONG BLUES By Charlie Patton Acc. Guitar	"			1/2		Paramount	" " 40.00	
✓ 12-19 GE-15221	1/14	A	PEAVINE BLUES By Charlie Patton Acc. Guitar	"			1/2		Paramount	" " 40.00	
✓ 12-19 GE-15222	1/14	A	TOM RUSHEL BLUES By Charlie Patton Acc. Guitar	"			1/2		Paramount	" " 40.00	
✓ 12-19 GE-15223	1/14	A	SPOONFUL BLUES By Charlie Patton Acc. Guitar	"			1/2		Paramount	" " 40.00	
✓ 12-19 GE-15224	1/14	A	DON'T LET IT FALL MAMMA By Charlie Patton Acc. Guitar	"			1/2		Paramount	" " 40.00	
✓ 12-19 GE-15225	1/14	A	PRAYER OF DEATH By Charlie Patton Acc. Guitar	"			1/2		Paramount	" " 40.00	
✓ 12-19 GE-15226	1/14	A	LORD IM DISCOURAGED By Charlie Patton Acc. Guitar	"			1/2		Paramount	" " 40.00	

(courtesy of BOB ALTSHULER)

MASTER NO.	FROM N. Y.	MADE FOR	TITLE	DESCRIPTION	MASTER-TEST				SHELLS ORDERED	CATALOG NUMBER	REMARKS
					OUR O. K.	CUST. O. K.	TO N. Y.	TO FROM CUST.			
✓ 12-18 GE-15668	1/24	A	LONG DISTANCE MOAN By Lemon Jefferson Acc. Guitar	VOCAL			1/3		Paramount	Made for New York Recording Lab. Pt. Washington, Wis.	
✓ 12-18 GE-15669	1/24	A	BAKERSHOP BLUES By Lemon Jefferson Acc. Guitar	VOCAL			1/3		Paramount	" " 40.00 1/19	
✓ 12-18 GE-15670	1/24	A	PNEUMONIA BLUES By Lemon Jefferson Acc. Guitar	VOCAL			1/3		Paramount	" " 40.00 1/19 23-18	
✓ 12-18 GE-15671	1/24	A	THAT CRAWLIN' BABY BLUES By Lemon Jefferson Acc. Guitar	VOCAL			1/3		Paramount	" " 40.00 1/19 23-20	
✓ 12-18 GE-15672	1/24	A	FENCE BREAKIN' YELLEN BLUES By Lemon Jefferson Acc. Guitar	VOCAL			1/3		Paramount	" " 40.00 1/19	
✓ 12-18 GE-15673	1/24	A	CATMAN BLUES By Lemon Jefferson Acc. Guitar	VOCAL			1/3		Paramount	" " 40.00 1/20	
✓ 12-18 GE-15674	1/24	A	THE CHEATERS SPELL By Lemon Jefferson Acc. Guitar	VOCAL			1/3		Paramount	" " 40.00 1/25	
✓ 12-18 GE-15675	1/24	A	EGG TIN ME BOUT By Lemon Jefferson Acc. Guitar	VOCAL			1/3		Paramount	" " 40.00 1/22	
✓ 12-18 GE-15676	1/25	A	SIXTY SIX By Frank Roberts Bud Alexander Fred Simons	MARCH Mandolin Piano			1/3		Paramount	" " 40.00 1/18	
✓ 12-18 GE-15677	1/25	A	BILLBOARD By Frank Roberts Bud Alexander	MARCH			1/3		Paramount	" " 40.00 1/20 1/20	

(Gennett Ledgers courtesy of BOB ALTSHULER)

MASTER FOR	FROM N. Y.	MADE FOR	TITLE	DESCRIPTION	MASTER-TEST				SHELLS ORDERED	CATALOG NUMBER	REMARKS
					OUR O. K.	CURT. O. K.	TO N. Y.	FROM EXP. CURT.			
CFX 2407	A		Param Blues						Param		New York Recording Lab. Hood
CFX 2408	A		Atlanta Blues						Param		
CFX 2409	A		Spout and Rag						Param		
CFX 2410	A		Basin the Rain						Param		
CFX 2411	A		Shower of Rain						Param		
CFX 2412	A		Pool Country Florida						Param		
CFX 2413	A		Param Blues						Param		
CFX 2414	A		Upon the Hill Blues						Param		
CFX 2415	A		When You Dream of Mississippi Water						Param		
CFX 2416	A		Hot Va. Blues						Param		

(courtesy of BOB ALTSHULER)

October 23, 1929—Gennett recorded Edward Thompson at its New York studio at \$40 a side. Paramount issued 4 of the 6 sides as "Tenderfoot Edwards."



(from the collection of
MIKE KIRSLING)

Chair Company president Bostwick turns 93

"Mr. Bostwick, this is Tony Olinger. I'm singing Mother Machree for you in commemoration of your 93rd birthday anniversary."

(September, 1930.
The master number, L-503,
appears just before L-504,
"Mistreatment Blues,"
by Charlie Spand)

in July of 1930, to issue a memorial record for him. Most of the musicians the company now relied on were provided by Speir and Jesse Johnson, who had sent nine St. Louis artists to Grafton four months earlier.

What gave the label real worth was its manufacturing equipment: in the 1920s, the technology required to produce records rested almost entirely in the hands of a few record companies, all of which were located in northern cities.

Unable to obtain backing from the local Chamber of Commerce, Speir could not buy the label. "I couldn't even get no one down here to even help me move the company," he later complained. "If I'da had that company I'da made a million dollars."

In 1931 Moeser fired Laibly, then replaced him with Henry Stephany

In early or mid-1931, Moeser fired Laibly, who thereafter peddled busts of George Washington to Minnesota schools and never held another job in the record industry. Although Laibly later explained his dismissal as the result of industry "conditions," no other record executive of the period lost his job as the result of them. The position of recording director and sales manager fell to Henry Stephany, a former Chair Company employee who had been moved into Paramount in the early 1920s, after favorably impressing Maurice Supper. Although his prior responsibilities had been restricted to advertising and matching releases for Laibly, Moeser regarded him as second only to Supper as a valued Paramount employee.

For the most part Stephany acted as a caretaker for a company that did only perfunctory record production, scaling down its pressing operation to some 10 presses, as opposed to the 50-odd presses it operated in the pre-Depression period. The shift of its reduced pressing department amounted to a three-day work week, consisting of five hours per day.



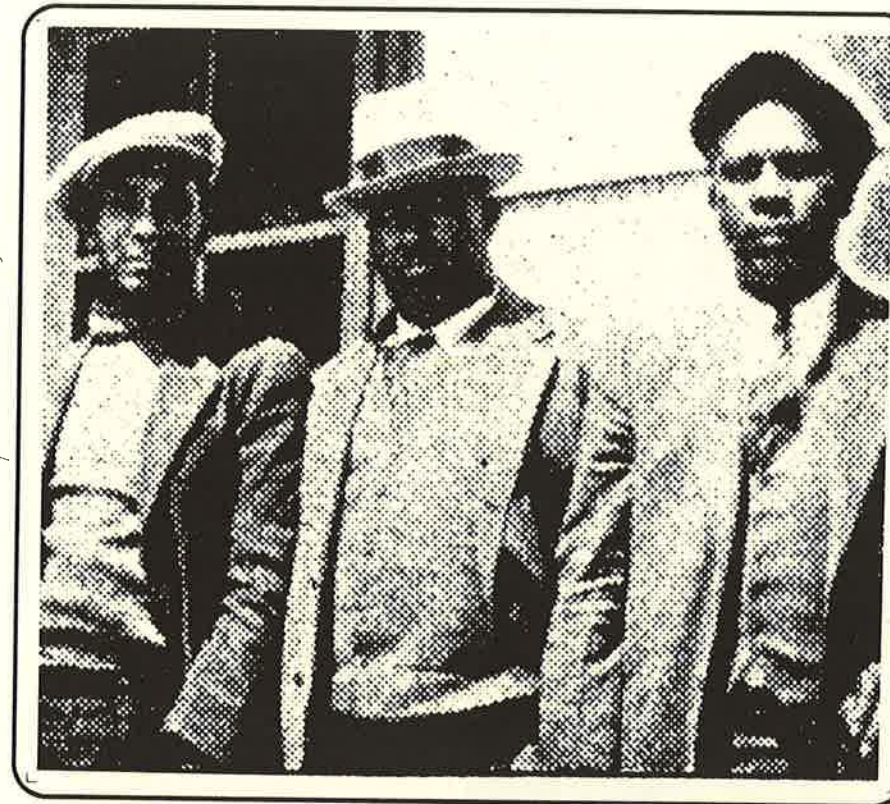
January, 1932 produced this "best seller" (it was reissued 6 years later on Decca)

During the latter part of 1931, Paramount attempted to dispose of its masters in an apparent effort to rid itself of the record business: "They told me they was sellin' their masters over to Gennett," H. C. Speir recalled, "and you might say I was barred from makin' sales (i.e., placing orders), oh, maybe six months." Nothing seems to have come of this attempt: less than a dozen Paramount titles are known to have been obtained by Gennett, and it is unclear whether they were sold or leased.

Despite the moribund condition of the record industry, and the reluctance of most recording directors to involve themselves in scouting, Stephany traveled to Birmingham in late 1931 and obtained two local properties: a dance guitarist named Marshall Owens and the Famous Blue Jay Singers of Birmingham, whose *a cappella* spiritual *I'm Leaning On The Lord* improbably became a best seller for F.W. Boerner's mail order company and proved so successful that it would be reissued on Decca in 1938.

A prelude to or extension of that trip apparently resulted in Stephany's discovery of a vagrant Sibley, Louisiana street singer, Joe Holmes. The latter's widow recalled: "They was in Minden. He was playin', he had the guitar with him when he run up on this man and they talked, and the man come on home with him...I think that man come from Chicago when he come down here..." After listening to Holmes play one or two songs at home, Stephany made arrangements to return to Sibley or Minden two or three weeks later and to take Holmes (and another blues artist from nearby Arcadia, Ben Curry) by train to Birmingham. He was subsequently recorded as "King Solomon Hill," the name of a nearby Louisiana community. Although Holmes returned home with three white-labelled tests, his records sold so poorly that most of his acquaintances never believed he had recorded. A running-mate (John Willis) recalled: "He said: 'Well, I had some records made, John...Yeah, you'll hear 'em; they'll be out, someday, I don't know when—they'll be out.'" Likewise, Skip

(courtesy of STEPHEN CALT)



The Mississippi Sheiks (left to right) Do Carter, Lonnie Chatman, Walter Vincent



Paramount waited over two years before "covering" the Sheiks' OKeh hit

James, who had recorded nearly a year earlier, only heard three of his nine records.

"You couldn't sell anything in '32"

By 1932 the record industry had nearly collapsed; industry sales had fallen to \$11 million, a tenth of its 1920 figure. "You couldn't sell anything in '32," Harry Charles recalled. "Oh boy, you couldn't a-sold no record." Instead of cutting prices, companies like Paramount merely limped along. Despite the Depression, Paramount's production costs were so low that the company broke even between 1930 and 1932, according to Otto Moeser.

Four final blues sessions were left for the Grafton studio in 1932. In January, the company recorded Blind Blake; in May, the Birmingham-St. Louis pianist Jabo Williams. In July, a month after Blind Blake made a final Grafton appearance, H. C. Speir sent the Mississippi Sheiks to Paramount. The Sheiks had been the rage of "race" recording some two years earlier on the basis of *Sittin' On Top Of The World*; for their follow-up OKeh session, Polk Brockman had paid them \$1000 per day. Now they agreed to record a full day's worth of material for \$250 apiece. After arriving in Grafton, they noticed a letter from Speir on Stephany's desk, confirming that they were to record for \$200. When the musicians balked at recording on those terms, Stephany agreed to their fee, which was to work out to about \$10 per side. The 21 sides they recorded (12 of which were issued) constituted one of the longest Grafton sessions, and would become the last of the 1500 recordings Paramount made at Grafton, which had resulted in some 250 "race" records.

Paramount fired its low-echelon employees, then dismantled the recording studio and pressing plant

After a year and a half of almost complete inactivity, Paramount went out of business in late 1933, firing its lower echelon em-



H.C. Speir in the late '60s—"If I'da had that company, I'da made a million dollars."



Recorded July 1932, The Mississippi Sheiks' 13156 became the last Paramount to come out of Grafton

ployees at a Christmas party. It was the only record company of the era to fold of its own accord, without bankruptcy or imposed receivership. Both the recording studio and the pressing plant were soon dismantled and stripped of their ten by ten lengths of timber, which were sold locally.

Its decision to cease operations, Alfred Schultz said, was based on the conviction that the radio had permanently killed the "race" business. One executive (either Stephany or Klopp) had argued in favor of keeping four or five presses in operation, but was overruled because of the envisioned expense of running a water boiler in the process.

Not long after Paramount's demise, which went unnoticed in the record industry, Grafton's reigning sound became the Hitler speech. "A Grafton industrialist named Ben Grob started a Nazi Bund camp in the area," recalls a Port Washingtonite, Dave Schreiner. "My mother...tells the story of going for a walk with my future dad and stumbling into the rear area of the camp—near the river, as the record factory was. As they tried to find their way out...they heard loudspeakers, nailed to trees, booming out Hitler speeches."¹² In time the town became nationally notorious for its Bund activities.



Meels dick in the background, as The Führer greets his followers

Despite the claim of Nazi propagandist Joseph Goebbels that American culture consisted of "only a few Negro songs," the black music that had created Paramount's fortunes was of no use to its producers. When Jack Kapp of the newly-formed Decca label learned of Paramount's closing in 1934 or 1935, he dispatched Mayo Williams to Port Washington to purchase the rights to its material. Williams found that Moeser had no remaining masters to sell; the company's copper masters, which must have included dozens of unreleased Grafton recordings, had been sold as scrap to a Milwaukee junk dealer.¹³

As a keepsake, President Moeser kept a copy of the first Paramount ever recorded. Henry Stephany left the firm with hundreds of records, eventually giving them to a poor Wisconsin farm boy who was attempting to start an orchestra with his brothers. Alfred Schultz kept test pressings of Paramount's ill-fated recordings of the Dempsey-Tunney radio broadcast, which had been placed in its "race" series.¹⁴ No one gave any thought to preserving its catalog of nearly 1200 "race" records, some 42 of which have never been recovered. "The last ones we had in stock," Fred Boerner said of his company's records, "we threw in the air and used them for target practice."

FOOTNOTES

1. "We went up to Chicago to make the final deal," Schiele said. "We were supposed to have a day meeting in Chicago in a hotel room to carry out the negotiations and stuff. But then someone wanted to go up to Milwaukee to carry on the negotiations so his attorney could be in on the act."
2. Another dealer who furnished Paramount with talent in this period was W. R. Calaway of Charleston, West Virginia. He brought musicians from both Charleston and Frys Alley, Virginia to the company.
3. Records bearing the imprint of the *Deluxe Music Shop* have been discovered in rural Mississippi, indicating that Johnson had a mail-order sideline.
4. In January of 1927, Marsh Laboratories had been sold to a syndicate of businessmen.

5. Electrical recording made Paramount's New York studio obsolete. After being discontinued in 1928, the studio was converted to a ship-

ping department for records and Chair Company products. Later that year, it was vacated, and the shipping department was transferred to an office on Whitehall Street that had previously been the business headquarters of Black Swan.

6. Gennett had developed its electrical recording process by working with the Radio Corporation of America and the General Electric Company.



W.R. CALAWAY—1934

7. These included an August, 1929 session by the *Biddleville Quintette*, who were originally placed with Paramount by Harry Charles, and an October, 1929 session by Edward Thompson, a find of W. R. Calaway's.
8. Two sides Papa Charlie Jackson recorded in late 1929 that were allotted unique control numbers (A-1-2 and A-2-2) were likely recorded at this unknown Milwaukee studio. Later Grafton recordings bore the prefix "L." Although Laibly denied that the initial stood for his surname, Alfred Schultz thought it did so.
9. Maurice Supper's son Frederick recalled that it had "...red, plush cloth hangings, to diffuse the sound."
10. Marsh Laboratories had no studio guitar. "Some of them, you know, they had about a \$10 guitar," Charles said of his discoveries.
11. During their stay in Milwaukee, Bracey and Tommy Johnson performed locally: "Us would go out and play on the old opera houses right around Milwaukee, and they'd give us seven-fifty apiece to play...Old musicianers went to kickin' on us, so we stopped. But we wailed."

12. Letter to Robert Crumb, December 7, 1987.
13. Some 15 Paramounts recorded between 1927 and 1932 (including Willie Brown's *Future Blues*, Skip James' *22-20 Blues*, King Solomon

Hill's *The Gone Dead Train*, Ben Curry's *New Dirty Dozen*, a sermon by Reverend Emmett Dickinson, two items by the Norfolk Jubilee Quartet, three by the Famous Blue Jay Singers of Birmingham, and 12 titles by the Mississippi Sheiks) wound up being reissued on Decca's short-lived Champion subsidiary, inaugurated in 1935. Although this material may have been purchased by Williams during his trip to Port Washington, it more likely came to Decca by way of Gennett, which had formerly run the Champion label.

14. Marsh and Laibly had recorded the radio broadcast of the fight, which was famous for its "long count": "They was just recordin' that for fun," Harry Charles recalled. Just 'cided to come out with it on account of that (long) count." Commercially, it failed because of the competition of the fight films, which cost a quarter. "I carried that flop trying to peddle it," Laibly recalled. "One dealer in Cleveland took 10."

POSTSCRIPT

A Chicago jazz collector named John Steiner visited Port Washington in 1942 and purchased whatever odds and ends were left of Paramount from Otto Moeser, whose chair company would go bankrupt 12 years afterwards. This cache seems to have largely amounted to metal parts from the Mississippi Sheiks' final session and a few test pressings. Although Steiner is said to have bought the rights to the company itself, Paramount had no assets to sell.

Despite Steiner's contact with the company's chief executive, who was still hale and hearty when contacted by the writer in 1970, Paramount remained an enigmatic, undocumented record label. Its executives were virtual ciphers. It was not until the rediscoveries of Skip James and Son House in 1964 that researchers learned the name of its recording director Arthur Laibly.

WALTER KLOPP & MAURICE SUPPER

By that time, two of the company's key personnel were long dead. Walter Klopp died in May, 1942. Maurice Supper, its guiding genius, had died in June, 1943. At the time of his death Supper was vice-president of the F.W. Boerner Company, a position then occupied by his widow Viola until 1967.



(courtesy of FRED SUPPER)
MAURICE SUPPER—(1890-1943)



(courtesy of STEPHEN GALT)
ARTHUR SATHERLY—(1889-1986)

Arthur Satherly became the recording director for American Record Company in the 1930s. Thanks to his work with hillbilly artists, with whom he became closely identified, he was elected to the Country Music Hall of Fame in 1971. He died in California in 1986.

MAYO WILLIAMS

Mayo Williams became the only careerist in the "race" recording industry. After a brief Depression exile at Morehouse College in Atlanta, where he coached football, he rejoined Jack Kapp as an assistant recording director at Kapp's new firm, Decca.

At Decca Williams recorded former Paramount artists such as Alberta Hunter, Norfolk Jubilee Quartet, Monette Moore, Grant and Wilson, Trixie Smith, Tiny Parham, and Blind Joe Taggart. "If it was good enough for Paramount, it was good enough for me," he said. For the most part, however, "I tried to keep up with the trends and changes in the music business." The most notable trend was towards ensemble accompaniment: "You didn't find many artists who played a single instrument after the Depression," he recalled. "Those times were gone."

After retiring from Decca in 1946, he launched his own label, Ebony. Incredibly, Williams was still fronting his one-man business at the

age of 77 when interviewed by the writer in 1970. At the time he was the only 1920s record executive still in business. He had no interest in accolades and no illusions about his prospects for success. "Competition is so great now," he said, "with so many changes having taken place in the music business, that a small company can hardly exist...Today is the age of conglomerates in the music world."

What made Williams an anachronism was not only the shoe-string size of his label, but his capabilities. He was an untutored man from an age when a musician could succeed on the basis of a striking voice or catchy lyric; he knew nothing about arranging, which had become an indispensable part of any successful post-50s musical formula.

As "a feeler for old hits," he put out an updated 45-RPM version of Papa Charlie Jackson's *Shake That Thing*. "Nothing happened," he reported. If only to hold court with cronies like St. Louis Jimmy, to whom he had once given a Decca distribu-

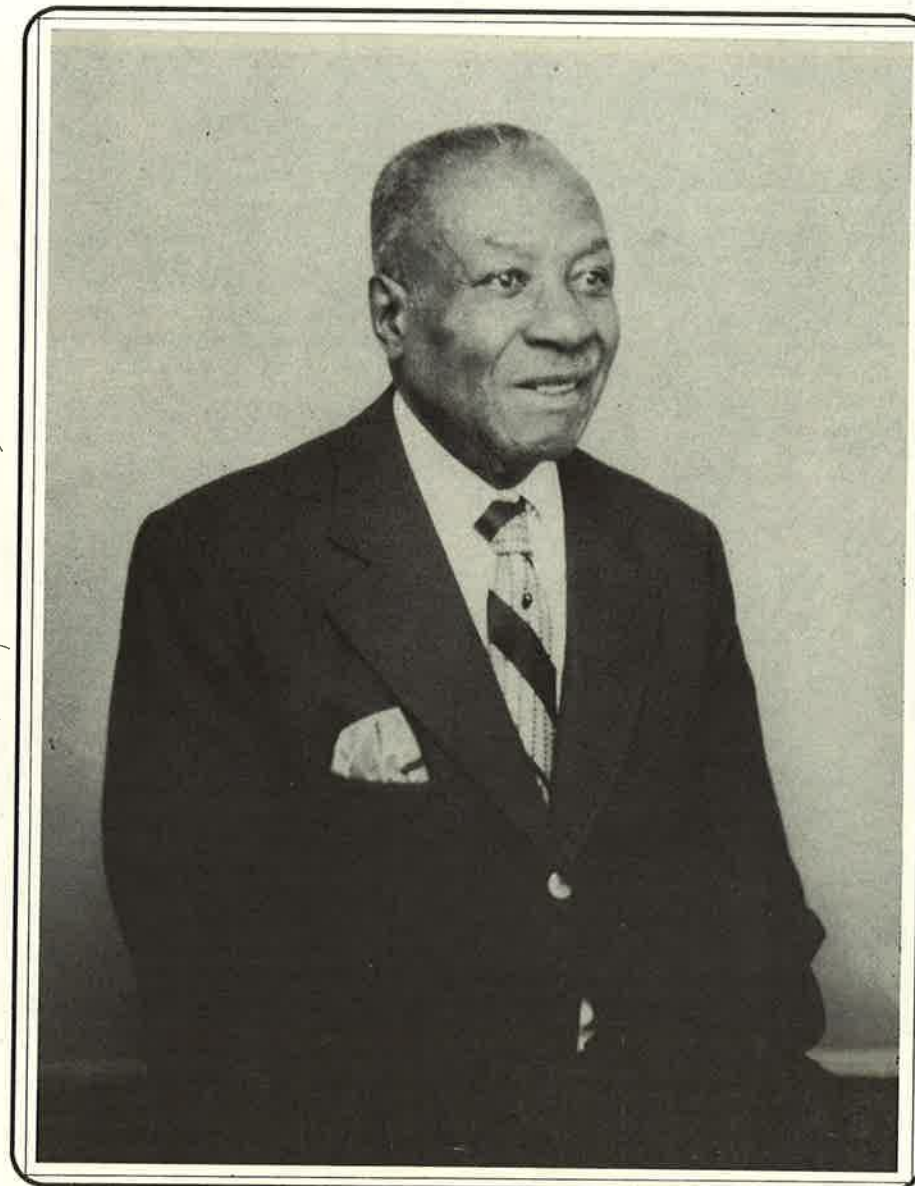


(courtesy of GAYLE DEAN WARDLOW)
ARTHUR LAIBLY—(1894-1971)

In 1967, Gayle Wardlow located Laibly in Park Ridge, Illinois. Laibly had spent most of the intervening years as an insurance agent for Boars and Wausau. Perhaps owing to a distaste for "race" music, he had little desire to reminisce about his days in the record business. By 1971, Laibly was ailing and about to enter a nursing home; he is thought to have died soon afterwards.

HENRY STEPHANY

Henry Stephany, who became a successful Sears, Roebuck executive after leaving Paramount, refused to discuss the company when approached on several occasions before his death in the 1970s. Despite his hostility to interviewers, his widow maintained that his first love had been the record business, and that only the Depression was responsible for his having left it.



(courtesy of STEPHEN GALT)

1970—MAYO WILLIAMS turns 77

torship, he daily visited his East 47th Street office on Chicago's South Side. While Williams gave the impression of someone who was merely going through the motions of operating a record business, there was some purpose to his sedentary executive style. In the 1920s, aspiring artists had besieged his office at Chicago Music; in the late 1940s, before embarking on his Chess career, Muddy Waters had recorded for Ebony. It was not unthinkable that lightning would strike again in Williams' bottle, provided he was there to catch it.

Occasionally Williams would audition amateurs who did not know that they were largely providing a

diversion for a man who had simply refused to retire.

In the midst of our interviews, a quaking young woman, flanked by her father, arrived at his office and performed a rendition of *Summertime* for Williams, who somberly appraised her performance and offered vague, gracious reassurances of commercial possibilities. She beamed with expectation when Williams introduced her to the writer as "my distinguished associate from New York"; it was as if the city still had the glamorous connotations that led Paramount's founders, five decades before, to incorporate as "The New York Recording Laboratories."



(signed "M.P. GOOSSENS, Grafton, 1915"—courtesy of GORDON SIMONS)

BETTER DAYS AT PARAMOUNT:
 Oil painting of the future Grafton pressing plant—
 abandoned in the wreckage of a fire
 at the Chair factory and offices
 in 1947

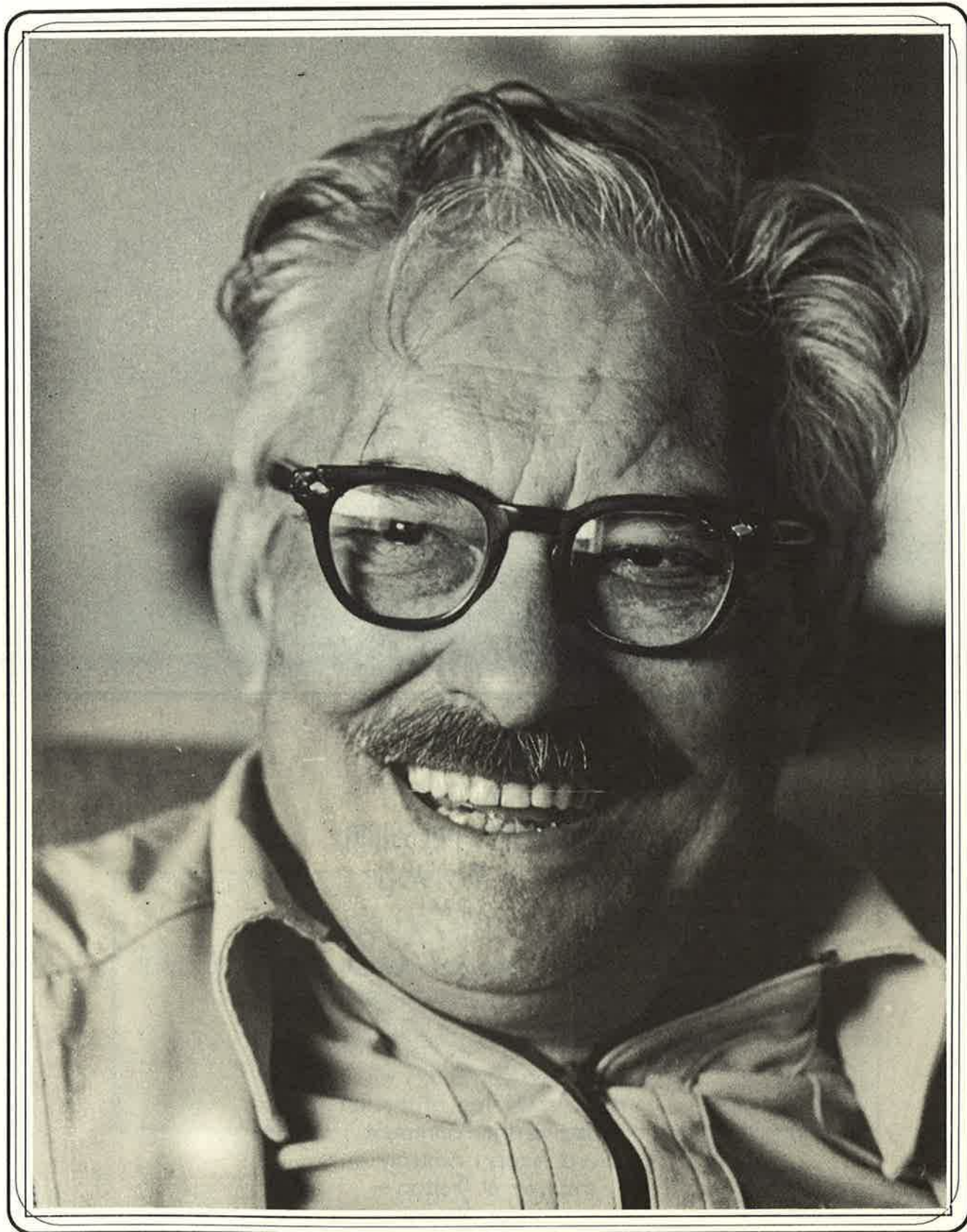


(photo by GORDON SIMONS)

REMNANT OF
 GRAFTON'S PRESSING
 PLANT IN 1986

(at left).

An article in the May 6,
 1990 *Milwaukee Journal*
 presaged the closing and
 razing of 58 Wisconsin dams.
 "Clearing state waterways of
 dams and millraces will
 result in the loss of the last
 trace of the Paramount
 record factory's existence on
 the river at Grafton"—
 Gordon Simons



JOHN STEINER (born 1908), a Milwaukee chemist and co-owner of S. D. Records, bought Paramount from Otto Moeser in 1943

THE MAN WHO BOUGHT PARAMOUNT

by
PETE WHELAN

What happens when you buy a 1920s record company? Suppose the company that produced the greatest blues and jazz evolved into a decapitated Medusa gasping for air. The imagination runs wild. I suspect the old pressing plant looked like a dismal warehouse—dark halls, vileness hidden in the twists and turns of labyrinthine corridors—the perfect setting for the murder of a business partner or an unfaithful wife. On the day of the sale, I pictured a wind-torn sky, streaked with grey, fields in the distance stripped of vegetation. Pigeons that had nested in the warehouse roofs are gone now, blown off course, discouraged from ever coming back. The office is somber. It has that aura of tired decisions. The company president sits behind a desk. Over the years, cigarette marks had scarred the top of it. President X had been looking down (bald pate crisscrossed with fine wrinkles) at an open desk drawer. Careful. The drawer holds a lifetime of secrets. He draws out a legal-sized sheet, studies it for a moment, and glances up. "Sign here," he says.

When I first thought about interviewing John Steiner as a bleak *finale* to Stephen Calt's fascinating, but grim Paramount Part 5, it had to be by phone, and I didn't know what to expect. The phone itself puts you in a two-dimensional world: good say, for making a lunch appointment,

but not so good for proposing marriage. You don't get that "feel" for life. What happens in life doesn't always happen on the phone. And what happens on the phone is always only part of the story:

Pete Whelan—This is probably not the right question...but how did you find out that the rights or assets of the Paramount Company were for sale? Was it through a newspaper ad or...?

John Steiner—No, about 1942 I wrote, inquiring if we could get the rights to use material that they had, whether they had any masters or anything of that sort that would allow us to have the highest possible fidelity for a reissue program. Actually, we were already issuing material that we had recorded, Hugh Davis and I. (That's where we got the "S. D.") In reply they said Yes. The rights were available and they'd like very much if I would stop in and see them. I wanted to stop in and see them anyway, to see what was available, but I had preceded that by a letter. When I arrived they said they had a lot of things they wanted to sell, including old recording equipment for which I had no use. It was obsolete.

Whelan—They still had some equipment left then?

Steiner—Yes. It was still over in Grafton (Wisconsin)—where the factory (pressing plant) and (recording) studio were located—Grafton being only two or three miles from Port Washington.

Whelan—Was it Otto Moeser (Paramount's president) you were in touch with?

Steiner—Yes...but well, first I simply wrote to Paramount Records care of The Wisconsin Chair Company. Now, Wisconsin Chair Company still maintained offices at that time in a building they were renting mainly for manufacturing purposes—what had been the Chair Company. They still had a lot of machinery and a raft of lumber, because they aged the lumber, and they were selling off a lot of that stuff.

It didn't occur to me at the time that they would be particularly interested in selling what rights they had to musical compositions. So I just approached them on the basis of leasing material and showed them some information I had on it...what royalties they were entitled to by law. They were familiar with all that anyway. It wasn't until I paid them a royalty check—the first one may have been in '43 or '44—I don't remember...we didn't go as rapidly as we thought with this because we had to locate some shellac. There was a shellac shortage.

Whelan—Was the Chair factory at Port Washington still in operation when you were there?

Steiner—Well, they were renting at the time I began negotiating with them, and about 50% of the factory was rented out to a shoe company. A rather famous shoe company today with a hyphenated name. Something hyphen Edmunds was the last name.

Whelan—You already had S. D. Records? Was that going at that time?

Steiner—Well we were recording on the streets. We were recording anybody who wanted their child recorded or their church choir—anything of that sort. What we had was a recording service to start with, supplying acetate copies. We did discover there were some pretty good Paramount surfaces available—I made the rounds of the collectors.

Whelan—Did they (Paramount) have any of their original 78s left?

Steiner—Yes, they had some metal masters, but they weren't in the plant, they were down in Richmond (Indiana). Jack Kapp (of Decca) had gotten the usage of some of their material for Decca's newly purchased Champion label (on the 50,000 series). And eventually, I scraped up what small amount of shellac they had, mainly in the form of test pressings, and the metal from Richmond.

Whelan—Were you ever able to restore or use any of the metal parts?

Steiner—So far, we haven't used the metal parts for pressings, and the mothers which can be played, the metal being indented, have not been issued, and the only one of prime importance is a Charlie Spand. There isn't much else that would be of interest unless it could fit a particular program. Thus far, nothing is on the boards for using some of the other material. It could be used, but really it's of secondary importance—only the Charley Spand.

Whelan—I have some questions about the recording studio/pressing plant at Grafton...

Steiner—The pressing plant was on the river that went through Grafton, and that's the reason they chose the site—to have cold river water cooling the hot platens, so they could run off pressings at a higher capacity. This was the reason Gennett was on a river too. And I think (Victor) used (Delaware) river water at Camden.

Whelan—Almost like the cooling used in a power plant...

A cement slab
was all that remained
of the pressing plant

Steiner—Well, the power was incidental. At Grafton they did build a dam, and the Company did use some of the power.

Whelan—The landscape at Grafton—would you describe it as bleak?

Steiner—It (the Grafton site) was at the edge of a small town. It was farmland, rolling farmland in Wisconsin with plains formed by Ice Age glaciers. Across the river was a higher bank from where the plant was located. The plant sat on a cement slab. The cement slab was still there 20 years ago. I haven't been back since then.

Whelan—Was the pressing plant still there when you were first there (1943)?

Steiner—No. It had been torn down, and the recording equipment had been moved to a storage shed. The plant was gone—probably by 1940. An Italian salvage firm from Milwaukee bought the plant, used the timber, tore it down, sold off most of the machinery used for pressing, and found a market for all their masters—at a price that surprised them, because there was so much copper and nickel in their masters. They were getting five dollars apiece for them, which was unbelievable—they thought there was no value there at all. They were glad to get them. Nobody offered to buy them at that price. Paramount first offered them to Co-

lumbia. Then they offered them abroad, so they told me. Nobody wanted them.

Whelan—There was a story that you had found some Paramount rusted metal parts in a Wisconsin chicken coop...

Steiner—The people who worked at the plant, when they discovered the plant was closing, would take anything they could use. One of the fellows patched his chicken coop with those plates. The plates were probably pressing shells, material that had shown enough wear so that they couldn't use them anymore. Rather than throw the pressing shells into the scrap heap, why, he took them home to patch his coop. I don't know what the shells were. I didn't jot down the master numbers. Later, I also sold many things—copper that wasn't yet plated—to people who were interested—who wanted to frame something for their home.

Whelan—How did the idea come about—your buying up Paramount?

Steiner—Well, I had been working around there for a year, checking what accounts that they had. They said that their (Chair accounts) were available. Moeser told me that they were going to liquidate everything.

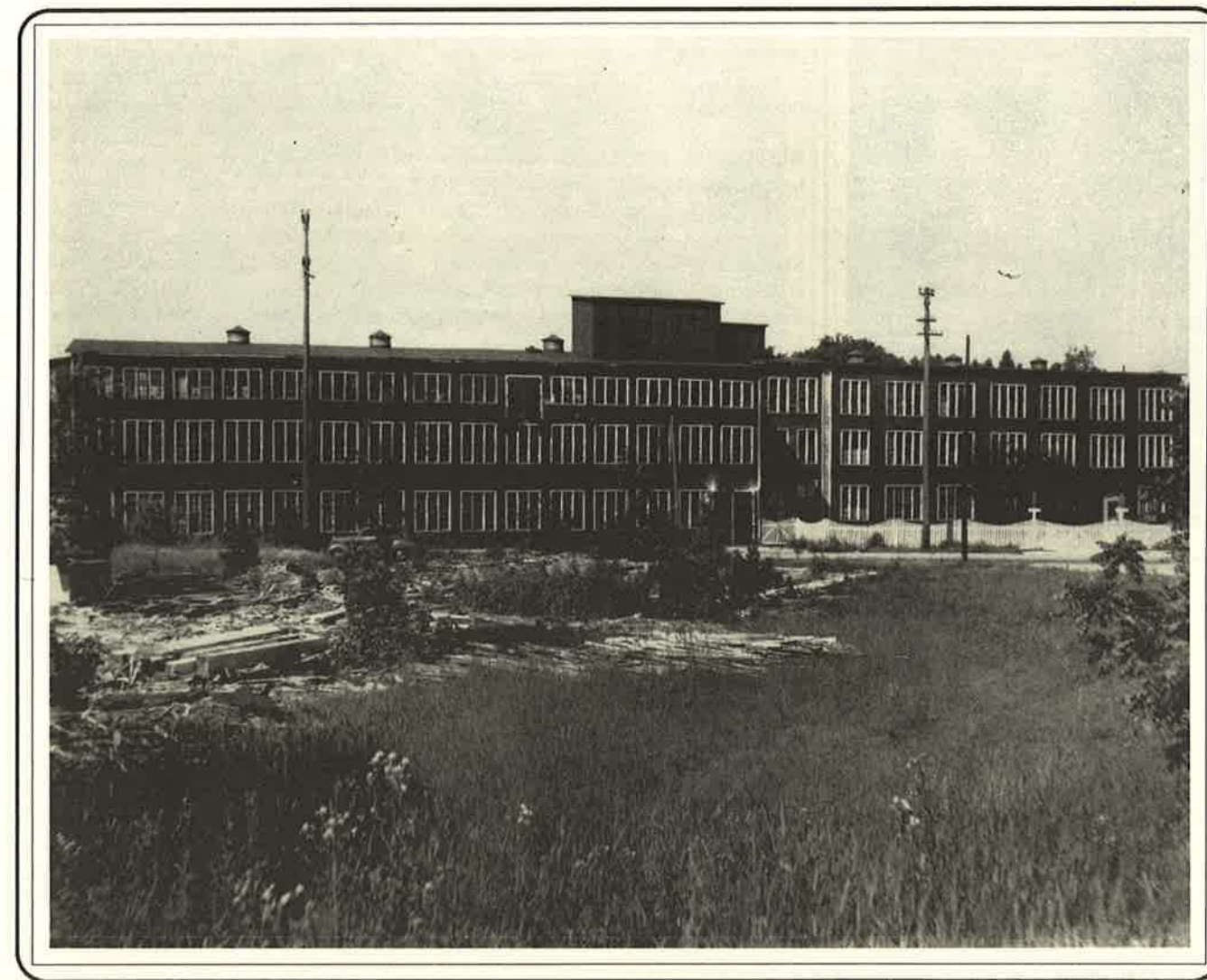
Whelan—What exactly did you buy?

Steiner—Their interests in music, their rights, their copyrights... well, the material which had been copyrighted.

Whelan—Who drew up the contract? Did it involve any lawyers?

Steiner—Yes. A lawyer who worked for Squirrel Ashcraft (note: Squirrel Ashcraft, an early jazz collector, organized, composed, and played piano-accordion on five 1926-1928 Princeton Triangle Club pressings on Columbia. Steiner was to record him again in the late '40s for Paramount. It's reported that Ashcraft later became a high-ranking officer in the CIA).

Whelan—What was your impression of Otto Moeser?



(courtesy of GORDON SIMONS)

Grafton's
plant site/furniture
warehouses—as they
must have appeared
to John Steiner
in the early 1940s.
Note: the water tower
is gone, and
'modern' telephone
poles are installed.

S. D. RECORDS

Announces
two reissues

KING OLIVER (1924)

Mabel's Dream/Riverside Blues . . . SD 100

JELLY-ROLL MORTON (1924)

35th Street Blues/Mamamita . . . SD 101



Price \$1.00 each
Tax10
Shipping—Packing . . .35
Total \$1.45

S. D. RECORDS
104 E. Bellevue
CHICAGO (11)

The first SD. ad appeared in the
February, 1944 Record Changer



(courtesy of STEPHEN CALT)

In 1935 Jack Kapp of Decca began using Paramount masters for his Champion 50,000 series

Steiner—Well, he was getting on in years. He was probably 20 years older than I was. At the time he was living alone in a house that he had been in all of his mature life. And I would say that he was a kind of cultural hermit. But he was easy to talk to, no problem. Not evasive.

Whelan—Did you ever meet Arthur Laibly, the onetime recording director?

Steiner—Yes. Now he had moved to a northern suburb of Chicago. I called on him several times.

Whelan—What was your impression of Arthur Laibly?

Steiner—Well, he was kind of a timid soul. He didn't have a lot to say, except in response. He did offer to tell us he himself had played violin as a young boy. He had come from the Kentucky area, and therefore was familiar with hillbilly music and had probably influenced the company to go into the hillbilly line, when nobody else would have.

Whelan—What was your impression of Mayo Williams?

Steiner—Well, he was a kind of an arrogant fella sometimes. He thought he was cunning, but if you kept after him, you could get almost anything out of him.

Whelan—I understand that Arthur Laibly and Mayo Williams had a feud in the 1920s at Paramount.

Steiner—Well, it probably had something to do with copyrights—the copyright company they were in. Mayo was claiming copyright privileges and royalties on a lot of stuff on which he had very little right.

Whelan—Did you ever meet anyone from Paramount's St. Louis distributor, The Artiphone Company? This guy (Vice-President) Herbert Schiele?

Steiner—No. The only Artiphone connection I knew of were the pamphlets that were published in Port Washington.

Whelan—How about Orlando Marsh? Did you ever meet him?

Steiner—No. I met the successors. A fellow by the name of...Walter Klopp.

Whelan—He was the recording engineer at Grafton, apparently. What was your impression of Walter Klopp?

Steiner—Well, I didn't know him that well to have any sort of impression. As I recall, he was old and bent and certainly not in great physical condition.

Whelan—Also at Paramount was Alfred Schultz (the pressing plant foreman)—Did you know him?

Steiner—Yes, from Schultz I got some records. He had a farm at that time—a half-mile or mile from Port Washington—apparently it was a family farm. There was a brother involved too. I think that's all he was doing at that time—assisting in the farming.

Whelan—Apparently, at least initially, Paramount used Marsh studios...?

Steiner—Well, they used several. I think initially it was a New York studio. That's where they got the "New York Recording Laboratories." That may have been the name of the New York firm. That would have even been before they made their first pressing, which was in 1917. I believe they had already gotten in touch with this New York firm and borrowed the name.

Whelan—There was Marsh in Chicago, later (in 1929), they used Gennett in Richmond (Indiana), and finally, the Grafton studio (late 1929 on). Max Vreede (author of the book *Paramount 12000/13000 Series*) thought there was still another studio in Chicago.

Steiner—Yes. There were several. In fact they accepted material that was submitted to them, and they (the masters) could have come from anywhere.

Whelan—Nobody seems to know what other studios Paramount used in Chicago. Do you know what "the other Chicago studio" might have been?

Steiner—A studio run by somebody who was very famous with religious songs...not far from the Lion-Healy Building, where Marsh was located...(Homer) Rodeheaver. Yes, the Rodeheaver Studio...near the Marsh Studio in the Lion-Healy Building...Not far south on Wabash was the Rodeheaver Studio.

Whelan—Did you ever meet Henry Stephany, Laibly's successor as Recording Director?

Steiner—No.

Whelan—Maurice Supper (Paramount's former General Manager)?

Steiner—His nephew, Ed Supper, supplied me with a lot of literature, which he had, because he prepared the Paramount catalogs for mailing. And from him I got many of the cuts (printers' engravings), which had been used in the (Paramount) ads.

Whelan—Three or four blues records on an almost identical Paramount label were issued (on a 9000 series) by



Walter Roland (recorded July 17, 1933) appears on 'Paramount'-9000 series—an American Record Corp. pressing



Bumble Bee Slim (recorded July 7, 1935) appears on 'Broadway' 9000 series—a Decca pressing

American Record Corp. in the mid-'30s. I wonder if you know anything about this?

Steiner—They had an exchange arrangement with American (Record Corp.). I think maybe it was under the terms of this exchange agreement that they were exchanging masters. That may have been where they picked up the name Paramount—when they discovered that Paramount wasn't using it otherwise. However, there was no impediment to my getting the name Paramount, as well as all the other names they had used, plus all the companies they had bought.

Whelan—That would include Broadway?...

Steiner—Yes. Broadway, Puritan, QRS, Rialto...there were several others—where they had purchased all assets relating to the record business. Now, QRS retained the rights to QRS piano rolls. So I had no right to use either QRS piano rolls or copies made from the piano rolls.

Whelan—The other puzzling thing was that Decca put out two blues issues on an almost identical Broadway label (also a 9000 series). Do you know anything about that?

Steiner—No. I didn't know that. I've never seen them. It must have been before I got involved.

Whelan—Oh, yes. I think that was in 1935 or '36...Hugh Davis (co-owner of S. D. Records), was he also a chemist?

Steiner—No. He was an electrical engineer.

Whelan—Did you both use any of that (knowledge) in recording?

Steiner—Yes. He worked for Seaburg, the jukebox people, doing development work, and he designed a recording machine for home use, which they put on the market. I don't think they used their own name. In that connection we got a lot of commercial recording—amplifiers, lathes, so forth. And all of it being portable, we used studios all over Chicago. We used Presto cutters and starters, and

amplifiers and Turner microphones, whatever was available in those years (1943) and considered to be of good quality.

Whelan—Did you have a leasing arrangement with Riverside?

Steiner—Yes.

Whelan—I know that Bill Grauer (owner of Riverside Records, publisher of *The Record Changer*) died quite a few years ago...

Steiner—Yes. After his death the company was run for a couple of years by Orrin Keepnews. And before Grauer died, the company had gotten into financial difficulties. Eventually they had to resort to a Chapter 11, and Fantasy bought them.

Whelan—Do you recall the other record companies that you had arrangements with?

Steiner—Yes. Bill Russell's American Music. I checked Moeser on arrangements he had had before with other people. It turns out that everybody had their own arrangements. Paramount was very pliable. Most of them would have their own lawyer write up some kind of arrangement, and Moeser might have his lawyer touch it up a little bit. But it was simply intended to get as much business as possible for the pressing plant, or for recording, or for anything—distribution. Moeser had production relationships, as well as distribution for the Rialto Music Stores in Chicago, who in turn distributed a second label named Autograph. And then somebody else who did distribution—Claxtonola in Iowa, Herwin in Missouri, and there were two Mexican companies—and Sears—their Challenge label—and Mitchell—and then they went to (Decca-owned) Champion and to Jack Kapp personally, so any of Jack Kapp's labels might have used some (Paramount) material. Now, there were a lot of private pressings too, for high school bands, for individuals who thought they could sell stuff on the road—generally people who were on the Chataugua circuit, or other vaudeville circuits—bands going from spot to spot would carry records with



(from the collection of STEPHEN CALT)

This 1944 SD. (originally Paramount 13085) was the first country blues to be reissued for a white collectors' market

them—there was a kind of break-even point of 500. If they could sell 500 records for a dollar, Paramount would enter into a business arrangement with them in which Paramount would also have the rights to use their distribution facilities.

Whelan—Did that 500 break-even point also apply to "race records" in the later Grafton Paramount issues (12900 through 13100s)? Do you have any idea how many Paramounts might have pressed initially?

Steiner—No. No idea at all—only that the good-sellers were usually pressed on a one-day basis—all they could run off in one day. (That's) what they would stock, because they didn't work nights. The plant would have to cool down. In the morning when the presses were cool, they would put another master on and press all day. And they had many presses—I think it ran to 10 or 12, although sometimes they were only

using two or three at a time—off-season. I think that a day's run was between 1000 and 1300...it makes me think that on some of those short orders, they (private individuals) had to pay (Paramount) for setup time. If they didn't have distribution rights, as well as the artists, why, it wasn't exactly a money maker if they were only using the press for half a day.

Whelan—Gennett lasted a few years longer (December, 1934), but I understand that with some of those late Champions fewer than 50 were being shipped out of certain issues...

Steiner—They were probably shipping from stock. When Paramount closed, when they went out of business, they claimed they had about a million records. And most of them went to two or three wholesale agencies in New York City.

Whelan—I wonder what those places might have been?...

Steiner—Well, John Hammond acquired quite a collection by knowing about this, getting in touch with whoever had them.

Whelan—It's funny. There was a place called "The Polish Music Store" on East 14th Street in New York, where, apparently in the late '30s, there were loads and loads of Paramounts. I think, according to what Fred Ramsey said, John Hammond notified Bill Russell, and then Bill Russell notified Fred Ramsey...Oh yes, and there was something I meant to ask about the record company ABC Paramount...

Steiner—They, the American Broadcasting Company, did not have the word "Paramount" as it applied to phonograph records; they had Paramount applied to theaters, movie production, and several other things. But it did not antedate Paramount being used for phonograph records, so I had renewed that (Paramount) before they began to produce pho-

nograph records. So I asked them to cease and desist—and when they didn't, why, I sued them.

Whelan—Good. I don't want to ask how much money you got, but...

Steiner—Well, I got half as much as I finally sold the whole thing for.

Whelan—That's good. I'm glad it worked out. It's funny they wouldn't have done anything about that...changed the name.

Steiner—Well, it's funny they didn't do something beforehand...to be sure the name (Paramount) could be applied to phonograph records.

Whelan—That reminds me...I know that you issued Paramounts on the Paramount label (with silver lettering) in the late '40s, but wasn't there some other company in New York that re-issued a Ma Rainey album using the Paramount label?

Steiner—Yes. It was without authorization. I think it was that fella who looks like me...

Whelan—I wonder who that was?

Steiner—He did a lot of off-the-air recording, sold by mail, a broodish looking man...

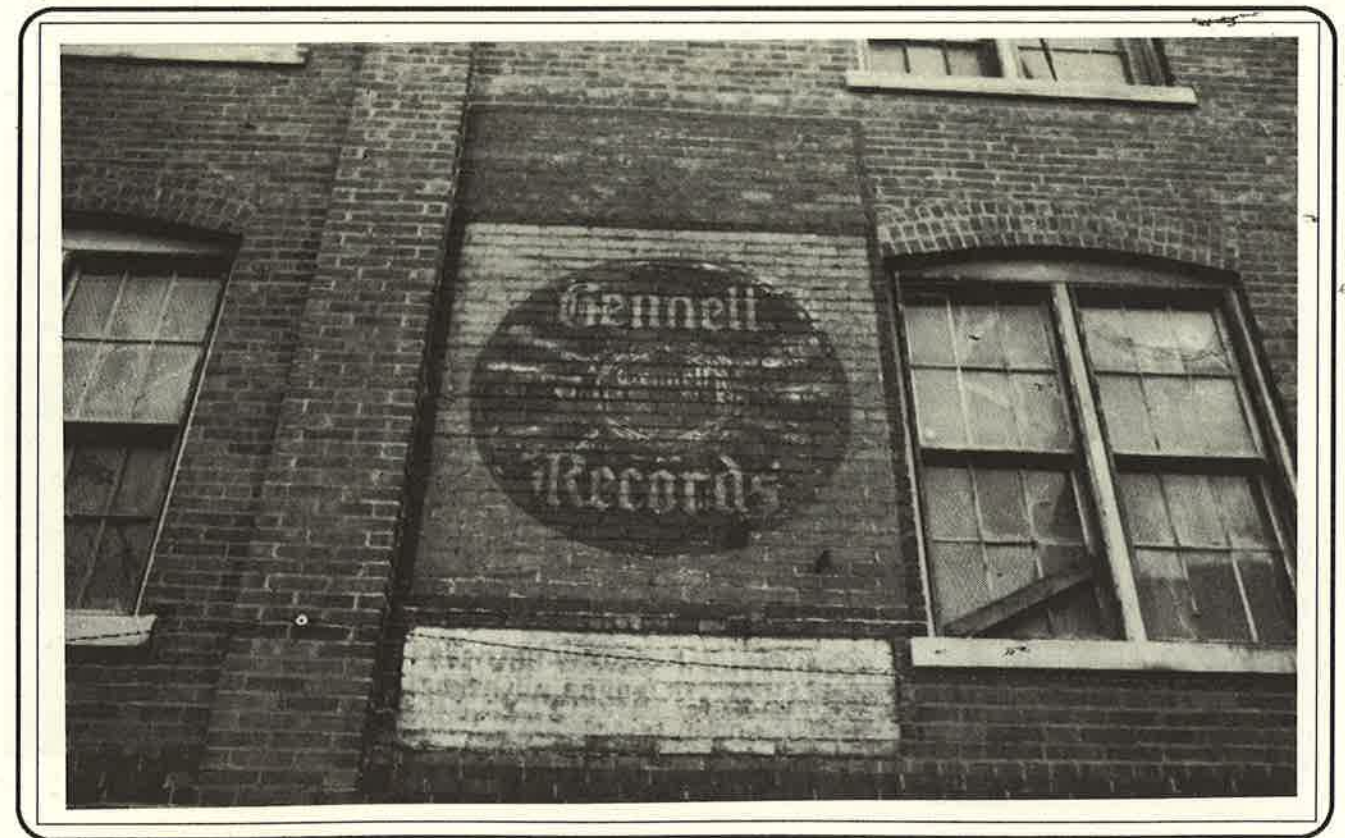
Whelan—British or brooding?

Steiner—Brooding.

Whelan—Not Boris Rose?

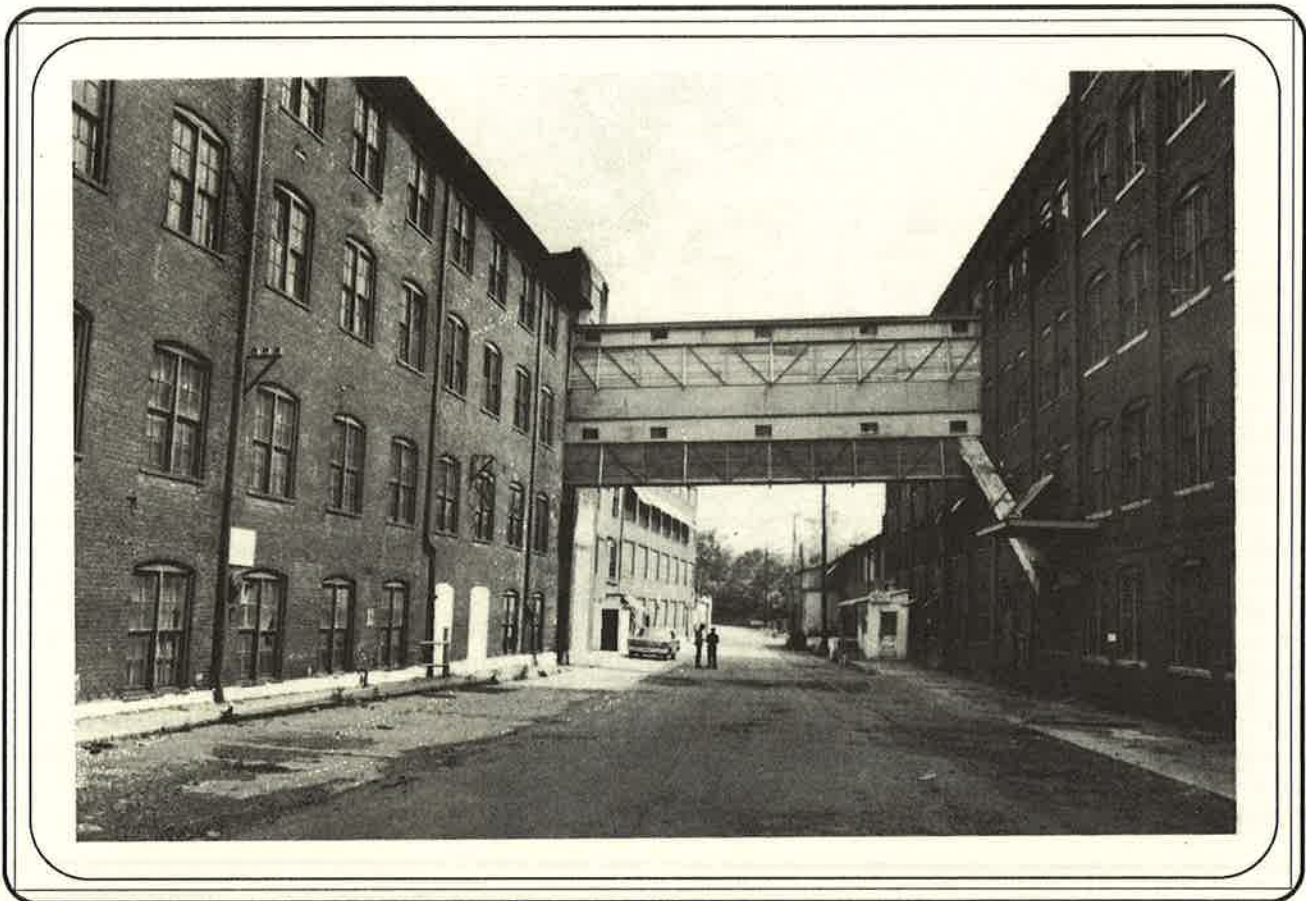
Steiner—Yes. I think it was Boris Rose. I may have told Boris that Sam Meltzer had paid something like \$10 down and never paid any other royalties and that Moe Asch was \$1000 behind, and it led me to think he might get into that crowd.

Whelan—Those Centurys (Meltzer) were pretty well-recorded, but those bogus Paramounts were terrible.



(courtesy of STEPHEN CALT)

Richmond, Indiana: The Gennett pressing plant in the early 1960s



In the early '60s the Gennett "Starr Industrial Center" still had its own railroad trunk line (bottom left). Unlike Paramount, It continued pressing 78s (for other companies) into the 1950s.

One thing I wanted to know—and this is from a guy who collects old recording equipment—whether Paramount had any microphones at the time they were selling their equipment...

Steiner—Yes. Those went to a fella in Milwaukee by the name of Pacquette.

Whelan—Were those microphones hand-crafted, or were they of standard manufacture?

Steiner—I don't know that Pacquette was particularly concerned with where he got his equipment. I don't think he could identify positively what he got from Paramount...They (Paramount) didn't have any microphones that I'm aware of when they offered to sell me what they had left. What they had left was heavy equipment, which were probably workable, some turning equipment, which for some reason or other, they had not disposed of when they sold off the whole lot...Would you like to know the date of the first pressing?

Whelan—Yes.

Steiner—I have the first pressing. They (Paramount) put that in a picture frame. Inscribed in the wax at the side—by somebody with a screwdriver—is "first printed Grafton, June 29, one nine, one seven. One side of it is master number 24, printed with a tool, and there's a band recording of "Wedding Of The Winds."...The title of the other side is "Your Country And My Country."

Whelan—What color was the label?

Steiner—No label. And it was a vertical pressing. They *did* issue both of those masters. I don't know if they were back-to-back...You know "Wedding Of The Winds" became very popular about 10 years later...for Victor...

Whelan—Rick Kennedy from Cincinnati, who's under contract to write a book about Gennett in Richmond, Indiana...is trying to find out—we're all trying to find out—what happened to those metal parts that Fred Gennett had—supposedly had...

Steiner—Yes. He sold those to (Bill) Grauer. Grauer and I were in Richmond the same day. Most of what he (Fred Gennett) really had kept, largely, were sound effects records that he was putting out for theaters. Probably half to three quarters of the metal he kept was free from corrosion. He kept them covered up in racks in his cellar...we had stopped by and saw them. He had picked out a mother (knowing what I know now) of a King Oliver Gennett and played it.

Whelan—Yes. You could play a mother.

Steiner—And I said—I asked him, "don't play it again." Well, I offered Gennett \$2000, or something like that. And when he told Grauer, whom he saw later, that I had offered to buy Gennett. He didn't tell him what I had offered, but Grauer offered him twice as much. I said, "No. I didn't think it was worth that." I told him I would be leasing to people later on. Grauer had the last laugh. He took all the metal and sold it at a terrific price. He dumped most of it immediately.

Whelan—I wonder who wound up with it?

Steiner—A junk dealer.

Whelan—My God! He sold it as junk?

Steiner—I don't think he had sold the masters, but the plates were heavier...with concentrations of copper and nickel in them.

Whelan—It reminds me of what you had said about the junk firm in Milwaukee—what they had gotten from Paramount and had sold at tremendous prices...I did some "research" trying to find out what happened to the Gennett ledgers. It turns out that the originals are at the Institute Of Jazz Studies at Rutgers.

Steiner—Oh, I'm glad to know that.

Whelan—Apparently, one of them was missing. It was lost in the mail—all the information on the Superior label.

Steiner—That information had been put together in *Record Research*...



(courtesy of JOHN STEINER)

In an ironic reversal, Black Swan Records (owned by George Buck) has become the heir to Paramount since 1970

Whelan—Right. Len Kunstadt told me he had sent the Superior ledgers back to George Kay and the post office lost it.¹ There's similar material on those late Champions, the number of pressings, but, hopefully those are at Rutgers.

Steiner—I imagine that when Decca took over Champion, they were pressing records in the same plant that Gennett had been operating in Richmond. They had taken some Paramount material—and Gennett material—if you get into those (Decca) files, you could see what had happened to some of that material.

Whelan—Do you think Decca might still have some of that Paramount material they issued on the Champion 50,000 series?

Steiner—I think I have records on that. Everything was returned to me, but I'll have to double check that.

Whelan—There's a strange mystery: Eli Oberstein, when he put out Varsity, apparently must have used some of the same metal parts.²

Steiner—I think he pressed in that same plant.

Whelan—That would be the Richmond plant?

Steiner—Yes.

Whelan—And the big question everybody wants to know—Varsity was the last one to have contact with those metal parts—and you wonder what happened to them all after that...

Steiner—Well, I don't know what happened to the plant. Have you ever heard?

Whelan—No.

Steiner—The plant was still being used in the 1940s when I visited there and what's there? I haven't been there lately. Maybe they went to somebody in Richmond—or (Rick) Kennedy could find out if the plant exists. If it exists, it's possible some Paramount metal parts are still there with other material Decca had leased or captured from Gennett stock.

Whelan—You know, in those Varsitys were quite a few Paramounts, mostly Grafton masters that had passed on from Crown.

Steiner—Yes. Paramount was trying to sell material. They went as far as Europe. Columbia had turned them down, although at a later time they used some things—Teschemacher. But Columbia had turned them down because the quality was unsatisfactory, and I don't know if anything went to Europe—Rust (*Jazz Records—1898-1942*)—you'll want to check that, but I've never heard of anything.

Whelan—Did you sell all your Paramount rights to George Buck? (George Buck's company is currently known as "Black Swan Records.")

Steiner—Yes.

Whelan—When was that?

Steiner—About 1970.

Whelan—You or George Buck would be within your rights to ask Decca (or its successor) to locate and return to you the metal parts of the Paramounts they used for their Champions (50,000 series). The same is true of Crown (Eli Oberstein's label and its successor—Varsity).

Steiner—I tried to trace some of that material—and either it had been returned or discarded. At any rate it had been legally sold...

Whelan—And it was already *fait accompli*...

Steiner—The Chair Company had dumped truckloads of stuff...if I had been there earlier perhaps...

FOOTNOTES

1. Other sources report that sometime after the Superior ledgers were returned, George Kay burned the entire manuscript in his fireplace.

2. Current discographies (Rust/Dixon-Godrich) list all Varsity reissues as dubs. This premise is based on the fact that Varsitys had lead-in grooves, a device not in use when Paramount and Gennett masters were originally cut. However, a lead-in groove can be recut into the master simply by reversing the direction of the turntable.

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*

After years of research conducted by Bob Corneal at the Library of Congress, Tom Owen and associates at the Rodgers & Hammerstein Archives in New York and George Alexandrovich at Stanton Magnetics, the custom manufacture of 78 and transcription styli and recommendations for their use were made available through Owl Audio Products with Audio "78" as exclusive distributor. These styli are all original diamonds mounted on original cantilevers, not re-tipped stylus assemblies.

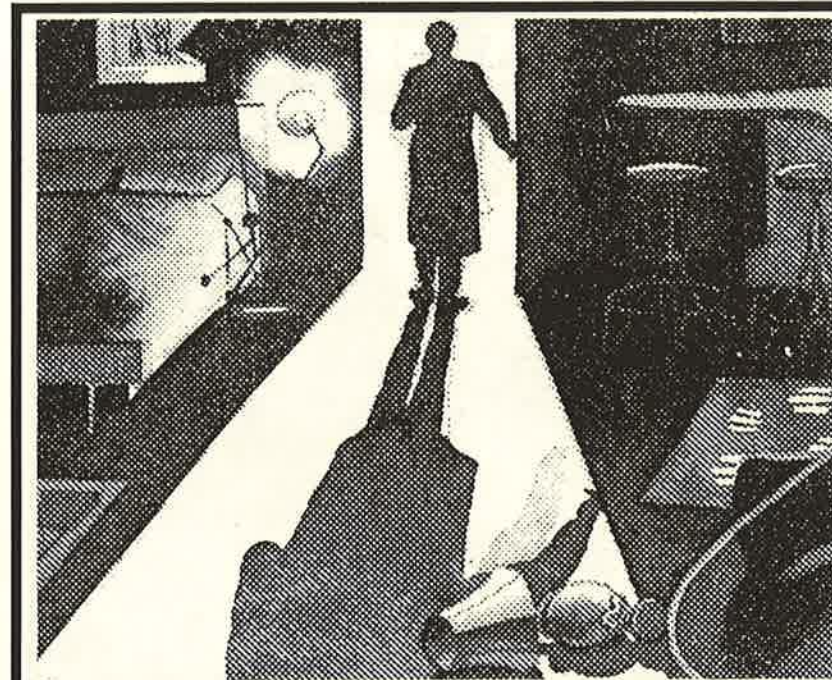
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STILL MISSING?



**35 ISSUED PARAMOUNTS (12900 THROUGH 13156)
ARE STILL MISSING! (NOBODY'S HEARD THEM)**

- (1) Paramount 12908—Unknown
- (2) Paramount 12959—Rev. Emet Dickenson—Sermon For Men Only/What The Men Wanted The Woman Was Settin' On
- (3) Paramount 12962—Unknown
- (4) Paramount 12983—Blind Joe Reynolds—Ninety Nine Blues/Cold Woman Blues
- (5) Paramount 12984—Smoky Harrison—Blub Blub Blues/Mail Coach Blues
- (8) Paramount 13011—Unknown
- (9) Paramount 13012—Unknown
- (10) Paramount 13027—Unknown
- (11) Paramount 13029—Unknown
- (12) Paramount 13032—Edith North Johnson—Beat You Doing It/Whispering To My Man
- (13) Paramount 13036—Rev. T.T. Rose and Singers—/This Holy Train/Stay On Board The Ship
- (14) Paramount 13040—Kaydee Short (*sic*)—Drafted Mama/Wake Up Bright Eye Mama (this was an alternative issue of 13040, Charley Patton—Circle Round The Moon/Devil Sent The Rain Blues)
- (15) Paramount 13045—Clara Burston—Too Bad For You/Ginger Snappin'
- (16) Paramount 13046—Irene Scruggs—Borrowed Love/Back To The Wall
- (17) Paramount 13053—Birmingham Bertha and George Ramsey—Gone Away Blues/Maybe It's The Blues
- (18) Paramount 13068—George Ramsey and Mae Belle Lee—Bumble Bee No. 1/I'm Talking 'Bout You No. 1
- (19) Paramount 12973—Unknown
- (20) Paramount 13079—Unknown
- (21) Paramount 13083—Dobby Bragg—Don't Look At Me/Sail On Little Girl Sail On
- (22) Paramount 13084—Big Bill Broomsley (*sic*)—Station Blues/How You Want It Done
- (23) Paramount 13091—Jaydee Short—Flaggin' It To Georgia/Tar Road Blues
- (24) Paramount 13093—Dobby Bragg and Charlie MacFadden—St. Louis Tricks Woman/You Got That Thing
- (25) Paramount 13096—Son House—Clarksdale Moan/Mississippi County Farm Blues

(26) Paramount 13097—Henry Townsend—Doctor Oh Doctor/Jack Of Diamonds Georgia Rub

(27) Paramount 13099—Willie Brown—Kicking In My Sleep Blues/Window Blues

(28) Paramount 13105—Black Billy Sunday—The High Cost Of Sin/Will You Spend Eternity In Hell

(29) Paramount 13120—Tommy Settlers and His Blues Moaner—Jazzin' The Blues/Blowing The Bugle Blues

(30) Paramount 13121—Chocolate Brown/Charles Taylor—You Got What I want/*P.C. Railroad Blues

(31) Paramount 13122—Ben Curry—The Laffing Rag/Hot Dog

(32) Paramount 13123—Blind Blake—Night And Day Blues/Sun To Sun

(33) Paramount 13125—King Solomon Hill—My Buddy Blind Papa Lemon/Times Has Done Got Hard

(34) Paramount 13131—Marshall Owens—Texas Blues Part II/Seventh St. Alley Strut

(35) Paramount 13132—Bumble Bee Slim—Rough Rugged Road Blues/Honey Bee Blues

The remaining sides up to the last Grafton issue of 13156 (Mississippi Sheiks—She's Crazy About Her Lovin'/Tell Me To Do Right) have all turned up. The 12900 thru 13156 series is rare. In most instances, only one or two copies exist, and many of those are barely audible. Our special thanks to Roger Misiewicz and Gayle Dean Wardlow for help in updating these Paramounts.

#2 name those blues greats!

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for answers to these puzzlers, see page 95



78 PRESENTS
THE RAREST
78s

James Ollerenshaw of Eugene, Oregon writes: "In your next issue, could you please let us newcomers to the field in on the secret of what E, F, G, V+, V-, etc. means?" Russ Shor describes these grading symbols wisely on pages 4 and 5 of Spring '92 *Vintage Jazz Mart* (P.O. Box 8184, Radnor, PA 19087). *78 Quarterly's* "extremely poor taste" gradings are: **N** = 17-year old virgin; **N-** = 17-year old "virgin" who gave in once; **E+** = 18 and engaged; **E** = 21, and married to Swell Guy; **E-** = 25, divorced, living with third Mr. Right; **V+** = 35, three divorces, lives with motorcycle weiner, and shows the wear; **V** = 40, too many men, too many hangovers, too many psychos in singles bars; **V-** = working the streets; **G+** = still working the streets at age 50; **G** = too sick to work the streets regularly, has AIDS; **G-**, **F+**, **F** = successive last stages; **P** = terminal.

First, the updates on some jazz rarities featured in Issue No. 6 (H-I-Ja). Bernard Klatzko reports that in 1979 these 78s traveled from his collection to The Perls Collection: the Hightower's Night Hawks Black Patti E+, Chippie Hill Vocalion 1248 N- ("Trouble In Mind"), and both Preston Jackson Paramounts (12400 V+) and (12411 E+). Werner Benecke describes Uwe Durr's collection as "one of the best in Germany": highlights in the H-Ja category include an E+ Lil Hardaway/Al Wynn Vocalion, Alex Hill Vocalion 1493 ("Southbound") E+, Herwin Hot Shots (but F), and Dewey Jackson's "Capitol Blues" Vocalion 1040 E+. Among earlier Durr jazz updates are three Eddie & Sugar Lou's, Will Ezell's "Hot Spot Stuff" Paramount 12914 N-, two nearly extinct Mae Glover Champions (16238 V and 16268 V+/E-), Tom Gates Gennett 6184 E ("Bucket"), and both Gowans' Gennetts E and E+.

From England Richard J. Johnson sends us this fascinating news: "Thought you might like a bit of input... The Jazz Harmonizers may not be as rare as you think. The Indiana University Archive holds 33 copies of 40336 Copenhagen/Oh Baby and 37 copies of 40339—Riverboat Shuffle/Susie. Unfortunately, however, only

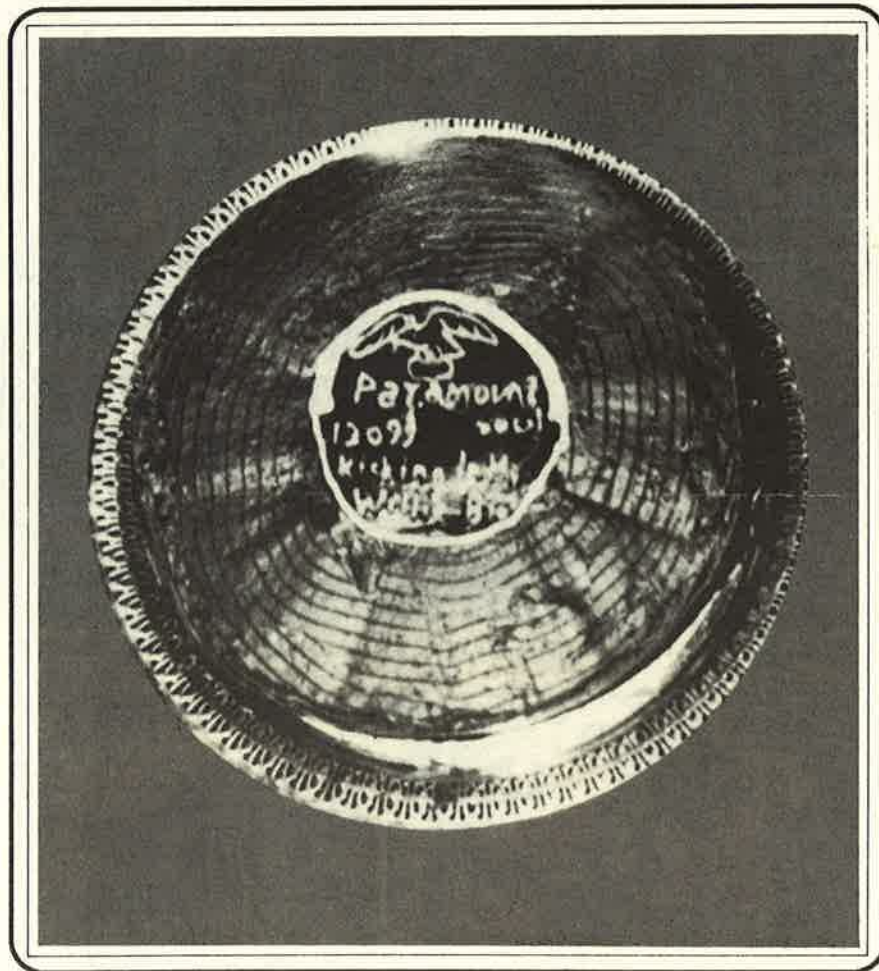
the librarian and God are allowed to see them. Likewise, they also hold 35 copies of Sensation/Lazy Daddy on Claxtonola 40375.

"The Keith Prowse (p. 34, No. 6) Jelly James is extremely rare, as are the other two in the series. The others consist of Andy Preer (I've Found A New Baby-GEX 513)/Ross Gorman (Come Day, Go Day-GEX 521) on KP K-102, and Johnny Dodds (Wild Man Blues-C 796)/(Melancholy-C 799) on KP K-103. Whilst these sides may not be rare on original USA pressings, the KP's (all master pressings) are like hen's teeth!—or banana oil. The only one I ever saw was in Z condition, half of it missing, and that's in 30 years of collecting. Your note that the company was basically a ticket agency is no longer true I'm afraid, as they recently had to

close their doors to the Recession. However, in the early '20s they imported large quantities of USA originals for sale in their shops. Even now, you still find odd discs with the label 'obtained by Keith Prowse Ltd.'

"The second label which gave us some great rarities was the buff "Oriole" 1000 series...produced by Levy's of Aldgate. This ran to 12 issues, all derived from Vocalion masters by Sonny Clay/Rosa Henderson/Viola McCoy/Russell's Hot Six/Erskine Tate/Edmonia Henderson/Dewey Jackson/Jelly Roll Morton/Jimmy Bertrand/Lil's Hot Shots/Duke Ellington/Fess Williams/Clarence Williams.

"The third collector's label, equally rare, is the Guardsman 7000 series, which produced 18 issues.



"Paramount 13099—black label, brown wax"

Ken Oilschlager:
"It is the only known copy of Paramount 13099! Unfortunately, all we have is this photo, because we ate it. About 15 years ago, my wife, Kay, was into making weird cakes. For my birthday that year she called Doug

Seroff and asked him the name and label of the rarest blues record. He came up with Willie Brown, and Kicking In My Sleep Blues became a culinary delight. However, I was quick to point out that the brownish red wax was not used that late..."

These all (again) derive from Vocalion and include Fletcher Henderson/Lena Wilson/Viola McCoy/The Ambassadors/The Tennessee Tooters/The Old Southern Jug Band/McKenzie's Candy Kids/Three Jolly Miners (all labeled 'Negro Race Dance Record'). The only one in the series not so labeled is by Gene Austin and Roy Berger.

"The fourth label is another produced for Levy's of Aldgate, which had two series. The 'A' series ran three issues using Sonny Clay/Vic Meyers/Tennessee Tooters/and McKenzie's Candy Kids. The other series appears to be all Ukelele Ike from Perfect. The one thing all these have in common is that they were pressed here by English Vocalion, which also had a tie-up with Brunswick/Vocalion in the USA, and also Gennett. All were issued between 1925 and 1927. It is commonly believed that one person was responsible for these—and whoever he was—we English collectors owe him a large debt; he presented us with some gems..."

Rounding out our jazz updates...Peter Bradford reports that there is a copy of the Hollywood Shufflers' "Low Down Rhythm" on Vocalion 15837. He has it E+. Other additions include Fran Haase's Berlyn Baylor Champion 16422 V to V+, Helge Thygesen's Gowans Gennett 6039 V/V+, and Ken Oilschlager's V+ George Hamilton (Davenport) Champion of "Atlanta Rag."

Our blues/jug/skiffle/string/piano (H-I-Ja) updates begin with a letter from Ron Brown: "...I was a bit disconcerted to find that none of my input was acknowledged or added to your totals...For example, I had written that I had had two copies of the Homewreckers on Bluebirds—one a G+ copy traded to Paul Garon; the other a V- that I kept. Yet, you only noted Garon's G+ copy. Also, I had mentioned having an E+ copy of Hattie Hart's Victor 23273...I neglected to mention Hokum Boys and Jane Lucas on Savoy 502. I have 'Hip Shaking Strut/Fix It' in V-/E-shape." Our Savoy 502 aggregate reaches a possible four copies—the goliath "big seller" of five Savoy issues.

Klatzko reports having had two V+ copies of the Elder Hadley (Patton) Paramount. The first went to Nick Perls in '79; the second to Matt Winter in 1990. Others that journeyed from Klatzko to the Perls Collection in '79 were Helen Harris and Willie Harris—Champion 15550 V ("Dead Drunk") and Brunswick 7149 N ("Stranger")—Blind Roger Hays Brunswick 7047 N and Blind Willie Jackson Herwin 93005 V+—plus that "G" (not G+) copy of Skip James' "Special Rider" on Paramount 13098.

Don Kent writes: "Confirm E/E+ copy of Lane Hardin in my collection (from Stendahl), Willie Harris Brunswick 7149 E/E- from Max Vreede. I, along with Spottswood, and Nick, too, were here, would include 7092 ("Tom Cat")—a fine record. Cast my vote for this guy being the Gennett Harris. Both Hattie Hart Vocalions are E.

"Hawkins 'Awful Fix' and 'Raggin' The Blues' may be his best record, and is certainly one of his scarcest. All Hawkins are good. Boo Whelan! I guess my copy of (Son) House's 'Dry Spell' is V+...marginally better than Bussard's. Nope, don't have Slim Hunter (Broonzy) Superior 2560. Some other Don Kent. Perls Collection has Klatzko's Vocalion file copy of Jim Jackson's 'St. Louis Blues.' Bob Guida has Sherwin Dunner's old G+ copy of Skip's 'Devil Got My Woman,' via me, who found it too depressing at that time.

"The Perls Collection also has the Alex Hill Vocalion 1270 N- and the Banjo Ike & Ivory Chitison Vocalion 25011 in good shape [see under PIANO, Issue No. 6]. Clifford Hayes Victor 23407 is pretty much of a dog, which I sold to Bob Hilbert at a loss. The saga of Matt Winter's Hokum Boys ['Saturday Night Rub'] is an interesting one. This initially came from Paul Riseman, who graded it E-; I thought it was V/V+, one side having a terrible fade at the inner grooves. Luckily, I latched onto a slightly better copy and traded it to [John] Mastaka first-hand in 1973 for a McTell Victor. Unfortunately, my better copy went to Perls as one of the ingredients of a Son House trade...Also have Madelyn James (file copy from Altshuler), the

Hayes & Prater Okeh 45231 E-, and Sammy Hill Victor E/E+; Perls has this too, E about..." Going back to "E-F-G," Kent confirms a known second copy of Okeh 8924 (McTell—"Georgia Rag"), N- in the Perls Collection, and four Clifford Gibsons on QRS and Victor in his own collection, E or better.

Space limitations (in this issue anyway) force us to omit much fascinating correspondence (Russ Shor: "You've got a lot of big records, but musical midgets on this one") and for this, we apologize. We missed hearing from Tom Bertino, Bob Fertig (deceased), Tom Hudgins, Dick Raichelson, John Steiner, and Max Vreede (deceased). Paul Riseman wrote that his 78 jazz collection was notable (possibly unique) for its absence of principals named "Johnson." To those of you still in hiding—come out! All is forgiven. Please list those 78s you believe are rare, whose names begin with "L, M, or N," their conditions, and send to our "editorial offices."

JAZZ

Jeanette's Synco Jazzers—What's That Thing?/Jeanette & Her Synco Jazzers—The Bumps—Paramount 12451. Estimated less than 10 copies. Joe Bussard E, Robert Crumb V+, John Sadowsky V+, Jeff Tarrer V, Terry Zwigoff V-(?).

Jeanette's Synco Jazzers—Midnight Stomp/Jeanette James Acc. by Her Synco Jazzers—Downhearted Mama)—Paramount 12470. Less than 10. Dick Spottswood "had V+." No others reported, but the late Dan Goetter also had it (condition unknown).

Speed Jefferies And His Night Owls—Georgia Grind/Wild Man Stomp—Superior 2648. Less than five copies. Jim Lindsay E+, Pete Whelan E+, Joe Bussard V+. Superior factory ledgers show 780 records shipped out.

Speed Jefferies And His Night Owls—Kentucky Blues/Me An The Blues (sic)—Superior 2670. Less than five. Whelan E, Sadowsky V+. 755 shipped.

Speed Jefferies And His Night Owls—Stomp Your Stuff/Sic 'Em Tige (sic)—Superior 2728. One or two. Whelan V+. 384 shipped.



(small-label Superior) 384 shipped from the factory between October 31, 1931 and February 28, 1933

Speed Jefferies And His Night Owls—South African Blues/Tiger Moan—Superior 2755. None reported. 286 shipped.

Tom Tsotsi: "In his Superior Catalog (*Record Research* 1961-1963), George W. Kay shows the spelling as *Speed Jefferies* for all issues except Superior 2797, where he shows it as *Speed Jeffries*. Really trivial, and, possibly a typo?"

Speed Jeffries (sic) And His Night Owls—Richmond Stomp/I Want To Be Your Lovin' Man—Superior 2797. None reported [Ed. note: "Jeffries" on Superior 2797 also appears in the Gennett ledgers]. 135 shipped.

The Jelly Whippers—Goose Grease (John Williams' Synco Jazzers—Paramount 12457)/S.O.B. Blues (DAD Blues—Dixon's Jazz Maniacs—Paramount 12405)—Herwin 92018. Slightly under 10. Ron Hale "looks V...but plays a strong V+." Russ Shor "have V and unloaded a V- copy on Fertig years ago...not a very interesting record." Helge Thygesen V/V- "plays above grade." Rolf von Arx V-, Les Docks "G+", sold 12/87." Martin Bryan: "E- condition, but with a substantial half-moon hunk out of it" Whelan P.

Joe's Hot Babies—Dry Bones (Toledano Street Blues—Ernest

"Mike" Michall & His New Orleans Boys—Black Patti 8046)/Beans And Greens—(Twin Blues—Dixon's Chicago Serenaders—Black Patti 8010)—Paramount 12783. Less than 10. Jim Prohaska: "traded V+ copy about a year ago." Ken Oilschlager: "I know of a solid V+ copy belonging to someone who is not plugged into the *Quarterly*. Hopefully, I will get it one day." Sadowsky: "Joe's Hot Babies—Herwin 92018 [?] shot, a typical house-to-houser!" Whelan G.

Eddie Johnson's Crackerjacks—The Duck's Yas Yas/Good Old Bosom Bread—Victor 23329. Less than 20. Werner Benecke E+, Ken Crawford E, Sherwin Dunner E, Bill Thompson E, Spottswood "had E+", Jim Prohaska: "know of an E copy in Cincy."

Elizabeth Johnson And Her Turpentine Tree-O—Be My Kid Blues/Sobbin' Woman Blues—Okeh 8789. The record straddles country blues and jazz, but deserves its own category. Less than 15. Perls Collection N- (from Bernard Klatzko), Werner Benecke E+, Don Kent E+, Docks E-Whelan E-, Roger Misiewicz V. Prohaska: "know of an E+ copy in Cincy."

Graveyard Johnson And His Gang (King Mutt And His Tennessee Thumpers)—Nut House Stomp/Good Time Mama—Supertone 9369. Less than 10. Gayle Wardlow: "Swapped E-

copy to [Max] Vreede in 1983," Whelan "had it E- with 1-inch hc."

Graveyard Johnson And His Gang—Maxwell Street Stomp/Original Stomps—Supertone 9431. Less than 10. Klatzko had it V+.

Graveyard Johnson And His Gang—Shake Your Shimmy/I Wanna Get It—Supertone 9432. Less than 10. Docks V, Tsotsi: "V-, dig. One very curious thing about this 78: the sides are Shake Your Shimmy (Blythe)/I Want To Get It (Miller). Note the title on the second—this is what's shown on the label, yet, the Gennett ledgers show the title as 'I Wanna Get It.' As I understand it, Gennett 6844 and Champion 15929 show *Wanna* in the title. The only thing I can figure is that the Sears-Roebuck buyer was a stickler for proper grammar! The second side has vocal by Al Miller (who also plays mandolin on these sides). The composer credit refers to Al, not Punch Miller, who's not present on these sides."

Jesse Johnson And His Singers (featuring Baby Jay and Ike Rodgers)—I Wish I Had Died In Egyptland-Part I/I Wish I Had Died In Egyptland-Part II—Paramount 12829. A copy in the Vreede Collection (condition unknown).

J.C. Johnson And His Five Hot Sparks—Crying For You/Red Hot Hottentot—QRS 7064. Less than 10. Andy Hale E, Charles Huber E, Sadowsky E, Jim Lindsay V+, Spottswood "had V+," George Paulus V+ (hc), Crumb "V- with digs repaired with wax," and two in England (conditions unknown). Don Kent: "I should think there are over 10 copies...Koester had one, E.B. Sullivan, Stendahl...I junked one in Chicago and traded it to Dave Purdy..."

Jimmy Johnson And His Orchestra—A Porter's Love Song/(New Orleans Wildcats—Wild Cat Stomp)—Columbia 14668 (a Ken Crawford addition overlooked on our preliminary survey)—Crawford: "Ten or less—my copy E+."

Mary Johnson—Dream Daddy Blues/(Mean Black Man Blues)—Paramount 12931 (Ike Rodgers acc. on side one). Less than five? Francis Smith V+, Spottswood "had E+," Whelan G+, Tarrer "V copy broken 1964 by child."

Mary Johnson—Barrel House Flat Blues/Key To The Mountain Blues—Paramount 12996. Less than 10 of this Ike Rodgers item. Smith N-, Wardlow: "Sold N- copy to Vreede in 1981," Spottswood "had E+," Whelan G+ (1-inch crk).

Jim Prohaska: "How tough is the Roy Johnson Happy Pals?" Robert Crumb:

"What about Roy Johnson's Happy Pals...is this record rare?"

Stovepipe Johnson—I Ain't Got Nobody/(Don't Let Your Mouth Start Nothing Your Head Won't Stand)—Vocalion 1211. Less than 20 of the Jimmie Noone item (side one). Bob Hilbert E, Gayle Wardlow V+. Russ Shor: "...musically, my impression was that it was not worth the 29 cents postage to bid on it."

Stump Johnson (acc. by Baby Jay)—Transom Blues/(Soaking Wet Blues)—Paramount 12906. Less than five. Perls Collection E+. Russ Shor: "This is a 'Tar Baby' record: it's tempting enough to pick up, but once you do you can't get rid of it...it's so boring. I had an E/E- copy, which I traded five years ago (defying the odds) to Mike Stewart. However, the one Stump Johnson that should be on this list...QRS 7050 'Monkey Man' is a truly overlooked classic; thumping, uptempo instrumental...but overlooked because its session mate is so lousy & common. 7050 is pretty rare, because I tried to upgrade my V copy for years and haven't seen another." Paul Garon V-, Jeff Tarrer P/V.

Alberta Jones Acc. By The Ellington Twins—Lucky Number Blues/I'm Gonna Put You Right In Jail—Gennett 3403. (A Ken Crawford addition, and he notes: "15 or less, my copy E+.")

Alberta Jones (acc. by unknown t/cl/p)—My Slow And Easy Man/Where Have All The Black Men Gone?—Gennett 6535. Less than five. Jim Prohaska E-. Tarrer: "I have Champion 15550 Bessie Sanders." Tsotsi: "A tape copy of Champion 15550 'Where Have All The Black Men Gone?' shows acc. to be trumpet/alto sax/piano (no clarinet). I do not have access to 'My Slow And Easy Man.' Does the reed man play clarinet on this?"

Alberta Jones Acc. By Horsey's Hot Five—Wild Geese Blues/Red Beans And Rice—Gennett 6642. None reported.

Gayle Wardlow: "Alberta Jones Acc. by Corky Williams and His Blackbirds—Dying Blues—Gennett 6424 (E), excellent side, probably only copy found." Jim Lindsay: "I also have this rare one that you didn't ask for—Alberta Jones—Acc. by Corky Williams Blackbirds/(Mae Matthews)—Shake A Little Bit—Gennett 6439 E+."

Clarence Jones And His Sock Four—I've Got It All/Mid The Pyramids—Paramount 12716. Less than 15. Huber N, Perls Collection E+, Thompson E+, Sadowsky E, Whelan E.

Clarence Jones And His Sock Four—Hold It Boy Blues/(Beverly Syncopa-

tors—Sugar)—Paramount 12747. Less than 15. Whelan E+, Dunner E, Tom Bertino E/E-, Huber V, Tarrer: "V, Maxey Tarpley also has," Spottswood "had each of these E+—they didn't go to Bob (Altshuler)."

Richard Jones And His Jazz Wizards—Hot And Ready/It's A Low-Down Thing—Paramount 12705. Less than 10. Huber E, Whelan E, Wardlow V+, Crumb V-, Ben Kaplan V-.

Willie Jones And His Orchestra—Michigan Stomp/Bugs—Gennett 6326. About five on Gennett. Spottswood "had E," Whelan V+; (pseudonym unknown, possibly as "Pete Richards") Bugs/(reverse unknown)—Superior 302. None reported. Bill Thompson: "Willie Jones as by Pete Richards & His Orch. 'Bugs' Champion 15402. I don't know if this counts, but what gets me are the composer credits—Bugs (The Gang) E+/reverse of this is The Plantation Serenaders—I Call You Sugar and is listed in Rust as an alternate take, but I can't tell any difference from the Gennett."

Willie Jones And His Orchestra—Ragamuffin Stomp/(reverse unknown)—Gennett 6370. None reported. Tsotsi: "Reverse is Bill Wyder And His Orchestra—Lovely Little Sil-

houette."

Joe Jordan's Ten Sharps And Flats—Senegalese Stomp/Morocco Blues—Columbia 14144. Scarce for an early Columbia. Less than 15. Benecke N-, Terry Zwigoff N-, Prohaska E+, Whelan E+, Bill Frase V+, Huber V+, Martin Bryan V+/V, Tarrer V.

Joe Jordan's Ten Sharps And Flats—Morocco Blues (6701-1)/Old Folks Shuffle (6702-3)—Banner 1821. Less than 15. Dunner E, Sadowsky E-, Crumb: "know of two others on Banner." Sherman Tolen: "have a nice copy, but mine is take 3 on 'Morocco' and take 1 on 'Old Folks Shuffle.'" Terry Zwigoff: "I used to have an E copy on Banner that was stolen—along with a rare Morton 78—by a guy who painted my house five years ago"; Morocco Blues (6701-3)/Old Folks Shuffle (6702-1)—Domino 3791. Less than 10. Benecke N-, Crumb E+, Huber V-; Fossey's (Australia) 8129. Less than five; Bon Marche (Australia) 1034. Less than five; Old Folks Shuffle (6702-1)/(reverse unknown)—Regal 8129. Less than 15. Zwigoff E+; "Morocco (6701-3)/Old Folks 6702-1." Mike Montgomery: "I have Regal 8129—Old Folks, take 1. The reverse is Morocco Blues (6701-3), E- and slightly cracked." Prohaska: "know of a V+ Regal here in Cleveland"; Old



Richmond, Ind.: January 18, 1922 white label, gold lettering



Chicago, c. September, 1924. Unnumbered, blue label

Folks Shuffle (6702-2)/(reverse unknown)—Oriole 717. Less than 10. Montgomery: "I also have Oriole 717 as *Dixie Jazz Band*. Old Folks is take 2 (460-2). The reverse is Sweet Thing (Williams-Kahn-Verges) by Bob Green's Dance Orch. (459-2)—prob. V+ cond." Russ Shor: "(both Columbias & ARCs) E or better copies are rare; pretty common in V+ or lower."

Jimmie's Joys (sic)—No No Nora/Tiger Rag—Golden B-1858. Five or less. Mark Berresford: "Why not list them all? All the Goldens [are] in the U.K.—one of each, plus one Tiger Rag."

Jimmie's Joys—Bugle Call Rag/St. Louis Blues—Golden B-1865. Five or less.

Jimmie's Joys—Tom Tsotsi: "Dick Raichelson's Arcadia Lp 2017 indicates two more titles issued—'Sobbin' Blues/Memphis Blues' (mx. nos. G-1855 & G-1856), but no issue number available for the Golden 78."

Jungle Kings—Friars Point Shuffle/Darktown Strutters Ball—Paramount 12654. Less than 15. The John Hammond/Bob Altshuler three N-copies vanished into a quicksand of anonymous collectors. Huber N, Vreede Collection N-, Whelan N-,

Spottswood "had E+," Shor V+ (auctioned in VJM).

Elmer Kaiser And His Ballroom Orchestra—Fox Trot Classique/Monkey Business—Autograph (no number). Less than five. Whelan E+, Docks V-/V, Shor: "I got V+ copy hc from you."

Kansas City Frank And His Footwarmers—Waffling Blues/St. James Infirmary Blues—Paramount 12898. Estimated 10 or less. Wardlow E+, Whelan had it E, and all those others who missed it (it was inadvertently omitted from our initial survey).

Gene Kardos—Jazz Rondo/Jam Man—Victor 23377. Ken Crawford adds this to our list of queries: "Both sides are labeled Dickson's Harlem Orchestra, but I have noted that this record was not listed under 'D' in issue #4. Three known copies. My copy N-."

Joe Kayser And His Novelty Orchestra (sic)—Everybody Step/Some-where In Naples—Gennett Personal Recording Department (sic). Less than 10. Benecke E, Montgomery "I junked a V+ copy of this some years ago in Richmond, Indiana (of all places) and ended up giving it to Frank Powers of Cincinnati." Whelan

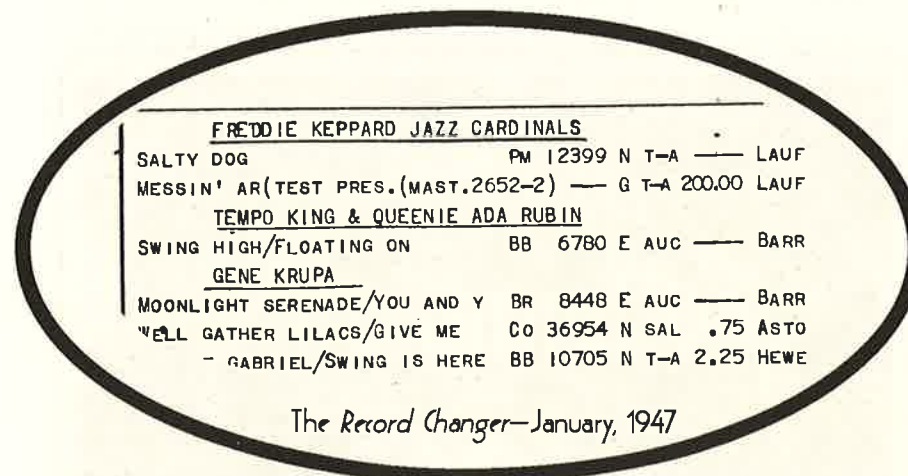
E- (but hc to label). Berresford: "E-, E (1-inch hc), and V in U.K. and Holland."

Dick Kent And His Band—Clementine (From New Orleans)/(Kibblers's Kollegians—Good News)—Gennett 6341. This "Seidel spin-off group" sounds suspiciously like a hot Adrian Rollini combo. Sizzling, but unlisted in Rust. Less than 10. The Fertig Collection E, Whelan E, Dunner E-, Randall Stehle V to V+. Sadowky: "I have Champion 15422 in V Clementine (from New Orleans) as by Gene Weiner and His Pepper (sic). Is this the Dick Kent?" Tom Tsotsi: "...listed under *Kibbler's Kollegians* in Rust's Am. Dance Bands (p. 961). The Gennett ledgers note: 'Clementine' (GEX 1028) by *Kibbler's Kollegians* 'replaced by 13328 on Gennett and Champion.' MX. 13328, recorded nine days later, on Dec. 28, 1927, is shown as 'Clementine (from New Orleans) by Dick Kent & His Band, slow fox trot, vocal chorus—Benny Benson.' Incidentally, the 'Good News' side was issued on Disco Gennett 40106 as *Richard y Su Orquesta* playing 'Buenas Noticias.' From a Disco Gennett flyer (copy from Richard Johnson of England), it appears that most of the label data is in Spanish. So that's why collectors may have bypassed them—if you saw Discos Gennett 40114 by *Coller y Su Orquesta* playing 'Buena Cosa,' would you immediately recognize it as Wallie Coulter's 'Good Stuff?'"

Freddie Keppard's Jazz Cardinals—Salty Dog (2653-1)/Stock Yards Strut—Paramount 12399. Less than 10. Klatzko N- "still have," Whelan N- (from Dick Holbrook in 1954), Huber E-, von Arx E-, Berresford "one in U.K."

Freddie Keppard's Jazz Cardinals—Salty Dog (2653-2)/Stock Yards Strut—Paramount 12399. Less than 15. Benecke N-, Klatzko N- "sold \$1800," Paulus N-, Whelan N-, Vreede Collection N-, Sadowky E+, von Arx V+, Berresford "one in U.K." The late Jake Schneider kept four copies, all N- Mx 2s, in "The Vault." Sherman Tolen "traded a copy (Mx-2) to Dan Goetter about 15 years ago." A letter from Carl Davis to Dick Rieber (dated May 23, 1950) states: "Francis Wolff found a boxful of Pm Keppard Salty Dog #2 (sold 3 for \$25 each)...according to Bill Grauer."

Freddie Keppard's Jazz Cardinals—Messin' Around—(one-sided. Paramount test). For years, the test of either matrix 2652-1 or -2 was little more than a rumor. But it's on Page 18 of the January, 1947 *Record Changer*. Mx 2652-2 is listed in G condition by "George Laufer, 2079 Wallace Ave., New York, N.Y." It had a \$200 minimum bid, a lot of salami



The Record Changer—January, 1947

in 1947 for a G record—even if it is an unissued Keppard/Dodds test.

Lena Kimbrough Acc. by Paul Banks Kansas Trio (sic)/Sylvester And Lena Kimbrough Acc. by Paul Banks Kansas Trio (sic)—City Of The Dead/Cabbage Head Blues—Meritt 2201. Less than 10. Klatzko E- (sold), Whelan V+/V, Shor V+/G.

Lottie Kimbrough/Lottie Kimbrough And Winston Holmes (?)—Blue World Blues/Don't Speak To Me—Gennett 6660. None reported on Gennett.

King Mutt And His Tennessee Thumpers—Maxwell Street Stomp/NutHouse Stomp—Gennett 6796. One or two. Whelan V-.

King Mutt And His Tennessee Thumpers—Good Time Mama/I Wanna Get It—Gennett 6844. One or two of what is probably the most coveted jazz group on Gennett. Bob Graf reports that a fire at the home of Seattle collector William Lovey melted down his entire collection, consuming E copies of both Mutt Gennetts.

Bob Hilbert: "I'll submit two others that you should consider—Anna Jones on Harmograph 859 and Jones and Collins on Victor 38576, a very tough record."



February 12, 1929—not Punch Miller

COUNTRY BLUES

Blind Lemon Jefferson And His Feet/Blind Lemon Jefferson—Hot Dogs/Weary Dogs Blues—Paramount 12493. Hot Dogs, Jefferson's only fast rag, is his most sought-after performance, and possibly, his scarcest. Estimated less than 10. Terry Zwigoff N- (hc inaudible), Jeff Tarrer "E+/F or better," Perls Collection E (from Klatzko), Whelan E (from Kinney Rorrer), Peter Brown E-, Helge Thygesen E-, Bussard V+, Paulus V+, Ron Hale V/V+, Frank Mare V "with a bad groove that hangs up on one side," Wardlow E- (cracked), Benecke V+ (hc). Spottswood: "I had your old (E-) copy." Shor: "Clean copies are rare, but I think that's the case with a lot of BLJ's, especially the late 12800s/12900s." Kent: "...you grossly underestimate the number of Lemon's 'Hot Dogs'...description should read 'Lemon most sought after by Pete Whelan.' I can't believe that a Lemon of this period didn't sell...better than 'Big Road Blues,' correctly estimated at about 25." Klatzko: "How about Blind Lemon Paramount 12933 (hasn't been reissued—must be rare)."

Big Bill Johnson (Big Bill Broonzy)—Skoodle Do Do/(Western Kid [Frank Brasswell]—Mountain Girl Blues)—Gennett 7210. Two reported: Bill Frase E+ and Pete Whelan E; Champion 16015—Skoodle Do Do/(Bill And Slim [Broonzy and Brasswell]—Papa's Gettin' Hot). Perhaps as many as 15. Ron Hale "E+, great disc," Whelan E to E+ (pressure dent), Howard Berg E-, Shor V+, Tarrer V, Charles Howard "strong V-/V, went up in smoke 4.8.1981."

Big Bill Johnson—I Can't Be Satisfied/(Western Kid [Frank Brasswell]—Western Blues)—Gennett 7230. None reported.

Big Bill Johnson—How You Want It Done?/That Won't Do—Champion 16172. Less than five. Tarrer "poor and cracked"; Savoy 501—How You Want It Done?/(Georgia Tom—Don't Leave Me Blues). None reported on Savoy.

Big Bill Johnson—The Banker's Blues/(Sam Tarpley—Try Some Of That)—Champion 16327. Less than five. Whelan G (3-groove flake). The late Don Brown was said to own a clean copy.

Big Bill Johnson—Worried In Mind Blues/Mistreatin' Mamma—Champion 16396. Less than five. Sherman Tolen V-.

Big Bill Johnson—Too Too Train Blues/Big Bill Blues—Champion 16400. Less than five. None reported.

Big Bill Johnson—Mr. Conductor Man/(Steele Smith—You Do It)—Champion 16426. Less than five. Wardlow E-, Whelan V+, Tolen V-.

Bud Johnson (William Harris)—Bull Frog Blues/Kitchen Range Blues—Champion 15614. About five. Wardlow V+/E-, Paul Garon V-, Whelan "had E-, went to Perls collection."

Bud Johnson—Hot Time Blues/Early Mornin' Blues—Champion 15675. Benecke E-, Wardlow E-, Paulus V+, Matt Winter V+, Whelan: "had two copies: E- to the Perls collection, V+ to Max Vreede."

Buster Johnson—Undertaker Blues/(James Cole—Mistreated The Only Friend You Had)—Champion 16718. The only known copies are on Varsity, and James McKune had three N- Varsity tests.

Frank Johnson (Frank Palms)—Ain't Gonna Lay My 'Legion Down/Troubled 'Bout My Soul—Herwin 92038. One or two on Herwin. Francis Smith P: "There is, I believe, music beneath the hiss." Tarrer "sold on auction F(?)."

Martha Johnson (Lottie Kimbrough)—Rolling Log Blues/Going Away Blues—Superior 2753. None reported on Superior.

Robert Johnson—Hollywood Bologna, hype in "rock" circles, and high auction bids—define his ARC issues as celebrity souvenirs. Most less than 50.

Paul Garon: "Do you care?" George Paulus: "Preachin' Blues"—seems to be five or less." Ron Hale: "I have 4 or 5 of these discs, fine music (almost as good, at best, as the hype; at worst, derivative). I agree, most are very scarce, but not super rare." Russ Shor: "I admit there's a lot of hype here, and some, like Terraplane and Come On In My Kitchen are fairly common, but how often do you see Preaching Blues, Walking Blues, 32-20 or Four Until Late? They're pretty damn scarce!" Charles Howard: "I have a few, including Vo 04630 [Preachin' Blues] E, which I believe is quite rare, and for me, anyway, it's a fine record." Matt Winter: "Your entry regarding Robert Johnson seems strange. I agree about the hype, but how can you dismiss his records, etc., when you had a 20-page article in 78Q No. 4 with all those pics of his records. Even if you mentioned one of his records, i.e. "Preachin' Blues," which is a rarity, certainly rarer than Tommy Johnson's "Big Road/Drink Of Water," which you notate at 25 copies.



(from the collection of SHERMAN TOLEN)

February 9, 1932—one copy reported

[Preachin'] is lifted from Son House's version...a great country blues record." Steve LaVere: "I have one of the Robert Johnson's you noted: 'Walkin' Blues'—Vocalion 03601—New...In the Robert Johnson blurb you wrote, I think that you are being unduly vindictive regarding the current price of his records. After all the hoopla, the prices will return to being more reasonable. In the meantime, it shouldn't be cause for anyone to belittle the value of his music. (That blurb might be interpreted as such by some. For yourself, who placed him on the cover and throughout your [fourth] issue, I find that unbecoming.) In many cases, as you well know, the two have little to do with one another." Ron Brown: "I have...the 850th reported copy of 'Terraplane Blues' on Vocalion in V+ shape."

Robert Johnson—Preachin' Blues/Love In Vain—Vocalion 04630. Shor N-, Howard E, Paulus (E?), Perls Collection (E or E+?), Winter E, Smith E/E-, Garon V+ to E-. Whelan "had Preachin' on an 11-inch, laminated, one-sided, pre-war ARC test E+ from Schneider." Winter: "There is a shellac test of take 2 of Johnson's 'Crossroads' in England!"

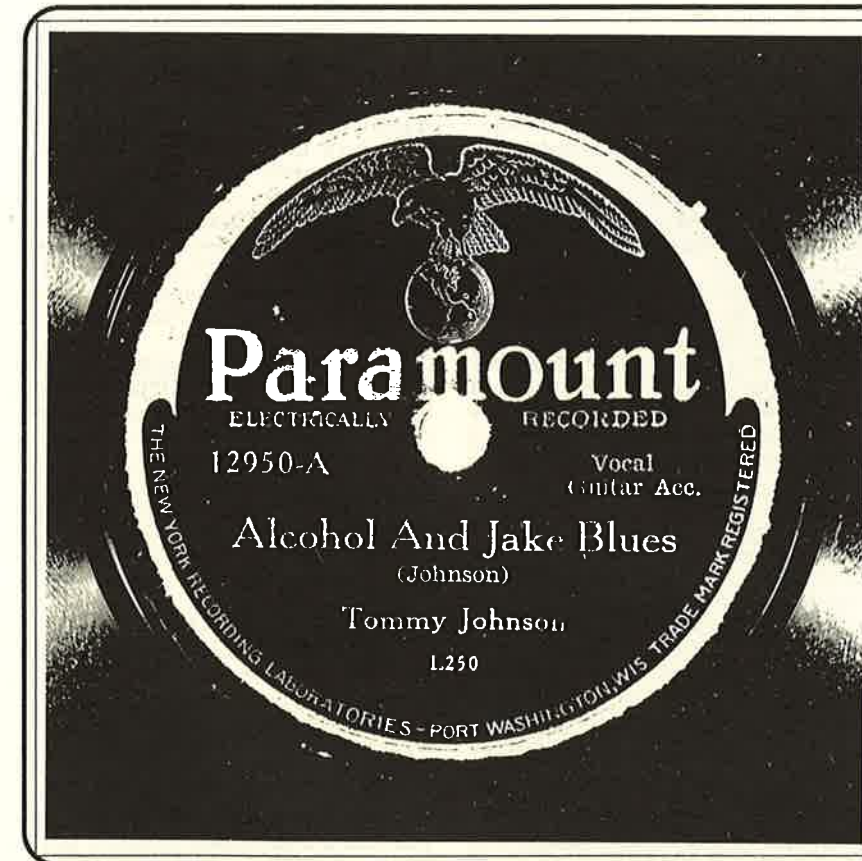
Tommy Johnson—Alcohol And Jake Blues/Ridin' Horse—Paramount 12950. Whelan V/G (from Dunner).

Sherman Tolen: "Paramount 12950 in approx. E- condition (I held it in my hands!). It was found here in Cleveland for (what I was told) 15 cents, bought from an older black lady in a tiny junk shop. The guy who found it was/is a 'nut case,' and he vanished about 12 years ago. I saw the record at his house...perhaps 15 years ago. At first he said he would trade it to me: he wasn't a blues collector; he wanted jazz in return. Once he found out how much I wanted it, he dangled it in front of my face, having a good time, knowing it bothered me. When he vanished, Paramount 12950 vanished with him."

Tommy Johnson—I Wonder To Myself/Slidin' Delta—Paramount 12975. Jeff Tarrer V.

Tommy Johnson/Tommy Johnson And New Orleans Nchi Boys—Lonesome Home Blues/Black Mare Blues—Paramount 13000. Perls Collection V.

Tommy Johnson—Cool Drink Of Water Blues/Big Road Blues—Victor 21279. Estimated less than 25. The Perls Collection N- (from Klatzko), Shor N-, Kent E, Smith E, Thompson E, Peter Brown E-, Bussard E-, Steve LaVere E-, Thygesen E-, Howard V+/E-, Tom Bertino "V++," Kip Lornell V+, Paulus V+, Wardlow V+, Benecke V, Oilschlager V, Tolen V, Crumb V-



December, 1929—a possible two copies

Howard: "This was reported to have sold over 100,000 copies (!). So, I don't see how there can only be 25 or so still around."

Tommy Johnson—Maggie Campbell Blues/Bye-Bye Blues—Victor 21409. Less than 25. Benecke N-, Klatzko N-, Perls Collection N- (from Klatzko), Dunner E+, Thompson E+, Bussard E, Smith E, Wardlow E-, Paulus V+, Howard V, Andy Hale V-, Berg G+.

Tommy Johnson—Canned Heat Blues/Big Fat Mama Blues—Victor 38535. Less than 10. Wardlow "two copies N- and V+," Perls Collection E+, Docks "E+, sold 7/88," Thompson E+, Whelan E+, Winter E+, Kent E+/E-, Paulus "two copies V+ and V," Howard V+.

Blind Willie Johnson—Sweeter As The Years Roll By/Take Your Stand—Columbia 14624. Less than 15. Bussard N, Kaplan N, Smith N, Perls Collection E- (from Klatzko), Ron Hale "E, but an edge flake takes 4 grooves on 'Sweeter' and 7 gooves on 'Take,'" Spottswood "had V." Roger Misiewicz V/V- "tiny flake on 'Stand' plays over. A great record—but I always thought Columbia 14530 was the rare one. I'm still missing 14597, as well as 145316-2 and 14571-1 (and 14530)." Smith: "Co 14530 N. Was 14530 withdrawn? Many copies?"

Jolly Two (Walter Roland and Sonny Scott)—Frisco Blues/Come On

Down—Vocalion 25014. Ron Brown V+, Perls Collection V+ (from Howard), Russ Shor: "I traded my V copy to Don Kent a long time ago." Whelan G+.

Willie Jones (Willie Baker)—Mama, Don't Rush Me Blues/Sweet Patunia Blues—Supertone 9366. Less than five (we forgot to put this, 9434, and 9435 on our preliminary list, so, of course, there can't be a tally).

Willie Jones (Willie Baker)—No No Blues/Weak Minded Woman (sic) (14668)—Supertone 9427. Less than five. The Gennett ledgers list this matrix as "Weak Minded Blues," but Supertone titles it "Weak Minded Woman." Spottswood "had E+," Whelan E-, Crumb V+, Wardlow V.

Willie Jones (Willie Baker)—No No Blues/Weak Minded Blues (14896)—Supertone 9427 (Gennett 6751 [Willie Baker], and The Gennett Ledgers, but not Dixon-Godrich, title this matrix "Weak Minded Blues"). Supertone copies unknown. Does "Weak Minded Blues" really appear on Supertone 9427? Kip Lornell "Willie Baker 'No No Blues' (This is a one-sided test of 14667, probably from the late 1940s) E to E+.

Willie Jones—Ain't It A Good Thing/Crooked Woman Blues—Supertone 9434. Less than five (includes Wardlow V copy).

Willie Jones—Bad Luck Moan/Rag Baby—Supertone 9435. Less than five (includes Wardlow E- copy).

Charley Jordan—Keep It Clean/Big Four Blues—Vocalion 1511. The Perls Collection N- (from Klatzko file copy), Bussard E+, Wardlow E-, Mare E- "had a second copy about V+, which is now (?) owned by Jim Hadfield in Chase Mills, N.Y." Paulus, Thompson, and Whelan all V-, Berg G+.

Charley Jordan—Hunkie Tunkie Blues/Raidin' Squad Blues—Vocalion 1528. Randall Stehle (who found that box of new (N- or E+) Jordan "Hunkie Tunkie" Vocalions): "have one N copy left." Wardlow "two copies, N- each," The Perls Collection N- (file copy from Klatzko), Zwigoff N-, Berg E+, Dunner E+, Kent E+, Paulus E+, Whelan E+, Winter E+, Crumb E, Howard E. Ron Brown: "I have had three copies of Vocalion 1528 at one time or another, all around E shape, which were sold or traded."

Charley Jordan—Just A Spoonful/Two Street Blues—Vocalion 1543. Paulus N-, Perls Collection N- (file copy from Klatzko), Kent E+.

Charley Jordan—Running Mad Blues/Gasoline Blues—Vocalion 1551. Don Kent N- (file copy). Wardlow: "one copy in Texas with a 1 & 1/2-inch bite." No others reported.

Charley Jordan—Stack O' Dollars Blues/Dollar Bill Blues—Vocalion 1557. Less than five. The Perls Collection N- (file copy from Klatzko). No others reported.

Charley Jordan—Keep It Clean—No. 2/You Run And Tell Your Daddy—Vocalion 1611. The Perls Collection N- (file copy from Klatzko), Benecke E+, Zwigoff E+, Bertino E/E-, Berg V+/E-.

Charley Jordan—Keep It Clean—No. 3/Silver Dollar Blues—Vocalion 1666. Perls Collection E+. Oilschlager: "I found a nice E copy about three years ago in South Carolina." Docks "G at best."

Charley Jordan—Stir It Up/Doin' Wrong Blues—Vocalion 1696. None reported. Because of creeping urbanization and blandness, we've omitted the other Vocalions.

Charley Jordan—Workingman's Blues/Santa Claus Blues—Victor 23304. Joe Bussard "new." No others reported.

Charley Jordan—Greyhound Blues/Bad Breaks Blues—Victor 23372. George Paulus E. No others reported.

Luke Jordan—My Gal's Done Quit Me/Won't You Be Kind—Victor 38564.

Estimated less than 10. Kevin Cleary: "Must have sold well around Lynchburg, Luke's home town. I found three copies—traded V copy to Kent, V copy to Lornell, while other copy was about G. I have fourth E-copy, acquired in a trade with Rorrer." Crumb E, Whelan E, Lornell V, Kent V/V-, Bussard "poor," Spottswood "had E with bite."

Luke Jordan—Tom Brown Sits In His Prison Cell/If I Call You Mama—Victor 23400. Still unfound and unheard.

Kansas Joe And Memphis Minnie—What Fault You Find Of Me?—Part 1/What Fault You Find Of Me?—Part 2—Vocalion 1500. Less than 15. Wardlow "two copies E- and G," Lornell E-, Mare V+, Shor V+, von Arx V, Berg V-, LaVere V-, Paulus V-, Tolen V- to G+, Shor: I have a V+ copy and traded a similar one to George Paulus a long time ago...I don't think it's that rare (Decca 7038 seems to be as rare as some of the Vocalions, judging by the number of collectors who have it on their want lists—but that's listed with MM's name first)."

Kansas Joe And Memphis Minnie—Can I Do It For You?—Part 1/Can I Do It For You?—Part 2—Vocalion 1523. Less than 15. Benecke E+, Whelan E+ (swish) "also had 11-inch ARC test E+

of Part 2," Thygesen E-, Ron Hale V+, Shor V+, Berg V, von Arx V, Paulus V/V-, Misiewicz F/G "still listenable and enjoyable even in this shape—that's how great a record it is. I used to perform this song in the '60s with my ex-wife." And Tarrer F.

Kansas Joe And Memphis Minnie—I Don't Want No Woman I Have To Give My Money To/Cherry Ball Blues—Vocalion 1535. Less than 15. Paulus N-, Benecke E+, Mare E-, Bussard V+, Andy Hale V+, Shor V+, and Wardlow V+, David Frost V/V+, Kent "had it E-." Howard "had it V/V+, burnt up 4.8.81."

Kansas Joe And Memphis Minnie—What's The Matter With The Mill/(Memphis Minnie—North Memphis Blues)—Vocalion 1550. Less than 10. Winter E+, Dunner E, Paul Garon V, Paulus V-, Zwigoff V-, Tarrer "one copy F, one copy P."

Kansas Joe And Memphis Minnie—Somebody Got To Help You/(Memphis Minnie—Tricks Ain't Walking No More)—Vocalion 1653. Kent N-, Wardlow: "An E copy belongs to David Sheppard that I traded him," Ron Hale V+, Paulus V+.

Kansas Joe/Kansas Joe And Memphis Minnie—Botherin' That Thing/I'm

Wild About My Stuff—Vocalion 1570. Kent N-, Bussard E+, Winter E+, Benecke E, Perls Collection E, Howard V/V+, Ron Hale V.

Kansas Joe And Memphis Minnie—She Wouldn't Give Me None/My Mary Blues—Vocalion 1576. Less than 10. Benecke E+, Kent E+, Perls Collection E+, Tolen V+, Whelan "had it E-."

Kansas Joe And Memphis Minnie—She Put Me Outdoors/Pile Driving Blues—Vocalion 1612. Perls Collection N- (from Klatzko file copy).

Kansas Joe And Memphis Minnie—I Called You This Morning/(Memphis Minnie—Plymouth Rock Blues)—Vocalion 1631. Kent N-, Perls Collection E+, Lornell E to E+, Wardlow V+.

Kansas Joe—Beat It Right/Preachers Blues—Vocalion 1643. None reported. Kent "had."

Kansas Joe—Shake Mattie/My Wash Woman's Gone—Vocalion 1668. None reported.

Kansas Joe—That's Your Yas-Yas-Yas/I'm Fixed For You—Vocalion 1677. None reported.

Kansas Joe—Joliet Bound/Stranger's Blues—Vocalion 1686. Berg V, Whelan "had it V-."

Kansas Joe And Memphis Minnie—You Stole My Cake/(Memphis Minnie—Socket Blues)—Vocalion 1688. Less than 10. Kent E- to E, Garon E-, Whelan V-.

Kansas Joe—Dresser Drawer Blues/I'm Going Crazy—Vocalion 1705. Whelan "had it V+."

Kansas Joe—You Know You Done Me Wrong/(Memphis Minnie—Jailhouse Trouble Blues)—Vocalion 1718. Kent E/E-, Wardlow E-, Perls Collection V-, Bussard G+, Shor F+. Francis Smith: "What about all those Kansas Joe's?—most boring voice in the blues!"

Lottie Kimbrough And Winston Holmes—Lost Lover Blues/Wayward Girl Blues—Gennett 6607. Less than five. Paul Garon G and Perls Collection E (but cracked). An E+ '40s vinyl test went from Jake Schneider to Whelan-Klatzko-Perls Collection.

Lottie Kimbrough—Going Away Blues (sic)/Rolling Log Blues—Gennett 6624. Less than 10. The Gennett is an odd pressing. Identical, but has a "deader" sound (worn stampers?) than the Champion, Paramount, or Supertone. Later Varsity pressings used Gennett stampers, which have been erroneously cited as examples of "Varsity dubs." Paulus N-, Whelan E-, Kent V/V+, Klatzko V to V+, Thygesen V-; Paramount 12850—an

E copy went from Whelan to Klatzko to Perls (Collection).

Charlie Kyle—Walking Blues/No Baby—Victor 38625. Ron Hale E, Kent E-, Bussard V+, Mare V+, Ben Kaplan V "a very fine record. I wish there were more of them (and him)." And Whelan V-.

PIANO

Easy Papa Johnson (Roosevelt Sykes)—Cotton Seed Blues/No Good Woman Blues—Polk 9010. None reported.

Easy Papa Johnson—Drinkin' Woman Blues/Papa Sweetback Blues—Polk 9011. None reported.

Lil Johnson (Charles Avery acc.)—House Rent Scuffle/Rock That Thing—Vocalion 1410. Less than five. Wardlow N-, Francis Smith E, Spottswood "had E+," Jim Prohaska: "have a V/V+ copy—know of an E copy in Cincy—what about Vocalion 1299? It seems to be just as tough. I have a N- copy" (as does Francis Smith).

Louise Johnson (acc. by own piano)—All Night Long Blues/Long Ways From Home—Paramount 12992. Less than 15. Perls Collection N- (from Klatzko), Spottswood "My E+ copy went to Francis [Smith]," Winter V+, Crumb V, Wardlow V-/G+, Whelan "had it N- from Schneider," Shor: "had V+ copy and traded it to somebody."

Louise Johnson (probably Cripple Clarence Lofton acc.)—On The Wall/By The Moon And Stars—Paramount 13008. Less than 15. Smith N-, (Perls Collection ?), Wardlow E, Winter E, Whelan "had it N- from Schneider." Smith "surprised you list these as 15!"

Mary Johnson (Roosevelt Sykes acc.)—Rattlesnake Blues/Mary Johnson Blues—Champion 16570. None reported.

Mary Johnson—Mean Black Man Blues/(Dream Daddy Blues)—Paramount 12931. (see under JAZZ)

Ruth Johnson (piano acc. Cassino Simpson)—Careless Love/Rockin' Chair (sic)—Paramount 13060. Less than five. Mike Montgomery: "I bought an E+ copy from Altshuler 18 years ago. Ruth Johnson is (or was) Clarence Johnson's wife and was a cousin to Fats Waller (her maiden name). I interviewed her about Clarence. She may still be alive in L.A." Bussard E, Vreede Collection (E or E+?), Whelan V+. Huber "had N, traded." Kent "had 13060—what a suck record!"



Odd piano solo from Marsh Labs—circa March, 1923

Jolly Jivers—Jookit Jookit/Wacha Gonna Do—Vocalion 02532. Ten or less. Smith N, Wardlow "two copies N- and V+," Whelan E, Kent (E?), Paulus V+, Dunner V, Spottswood "had E or E-." Howard: "John Mastaka had a fine copy from Perls in trade. It went to Stephen, and, I believe, to you."

Jolly Jivers—Hungry Man's Scuffle/Piano Stomp—Vocalion 25015. Ten or less. Smith N-, Wardlow E+, Whelan E-, Dunner V, Spottswood "had E+."

Clarence M. Jones—Modulation (piano solo)/Carpenter And Ingram-The Harmony Girls—Acc. By Clarence M. Jones—Trot Along—Autograph (no number). Whelan E-.

Clarence M. Jones (piano solos)—Hula Lou (Mx. 402)/May Be (She'll Write Me) (She'll Phone Me) (sic)—Autograph (no number). Whelan E to E+, Montgomery "I got a V+ copy from Toad Hall in 1991 and saw another copy, somewhat damaged, in Duncan Schiedt's holdings (needle skips or something)."

Clarence M. Jones (piano solo)—Hula Lou (Mx. 402)/(Ezra Rowlett Shelton [sic] [piano solo])—Dearest Darling—Autograph (no number). Whelan E+.

Clarence M. Jones—The Rosary (piano solo)/(H.N. Green acc. by Everett Robbins—A Son Of The Desert Am I)—Messiah Sacred Records (Marsh—no number). Rare, not jazz, but worth noting? One or two. Whelan E.

Kansas City Frank (Frank Melrose)—Jelly Roll Stomp/Pass The Jug—Brunswick 7062. Less than 20. Benecke E+, Berg E+, Dunner E+, Perls Collection E+ (from Klatzko), Thompson E+, Bertino E, Huber E, Wardlow E-, Zwigoff E-, Crumb V+, Ron Hale V+ "also have a second copy G+ and cracked to label..." Spottswood "had E+."

Willie Kelly (Roosevelt Sykes)—Kelly's 44 Blues/I Love You More And More—Victor 38608. Estimated less than 10. Tolen N, Benecke N-, Ron Hale V, Tarrer V, Tsotsi "V-, but one of those longitudinal cracks which only causes clicks at the beginning...a 'freebie' from a collector friend who knows how much I admire '44 Blues' as one of the great piano blues," Thompson "Z" condition.

Willie Kelly—32-20 Blues/Give Me Your Change—Victor 38619. Less than 10. Smith N-, Spottswood "had E+," Benecke E-, Shor E-/V+, Misiewicz V+



January 10, 1929 (?)—only on Supertone

"an upgrade from my previous G copy," Wardlow V+, Lornell V, Whelan V, Oilschlager "have a clean label, whipped-dog copy Gish," and Ron Hale G-.

Willie Kelly—Kelly's Special/Don't Put The Lights Out—Victor 23259. Less than 10. Tolen N, Smith N-, Thompson N-, Benecke E+, Crawford E, Kent E, Crumb V, Spottswood "had E+," Tarrer "sold on auction V."

Willie Kelly—Nasty—But It's Clean (piano solo)/You So Dumb—Victor 23299. Less than five. Perls Collection E+, Thompson E, Spottswood "have E/E- copy now," Whelan E-.

Willie Kelly—I Done You Wrong/Sad And Lonely Day—Victor 23416. Any known copies? Tsotsi: "I have a tape copy...a copy does exist, and it's in E (or better) condition."

Willie Kelly—Sykes' repetitive drone-singing on the five other Victor releases doom them to our neglect. Spottswood: "...Well, you're the editor!" Francis Smith: "Still don't like your comment re Willie Kelly—personal likes shouldn't cloud your judgement...who cares about Clarence M. Jones?" Werner Benecke: "I miss Stump Johnson Victor 23327."

I have one of the 285 released copies in E+...Sykes plays a fine piano on 'Barrel of Whiskey.'"

Kid Stormy Weather—Short Hair Blues/Bread And Water Blues—Vocalion 03145. Only one or two. (Francis Smith?) Klatzko: "Short Hair Blues was reissued on Blues Classics B.C. 7."

STRING
JUG
SKIFFLE

Johnson And Smith—Brown Skin Shuffle/Stove Pipe Stomp—Champion 16411. George Avakian had it (E). Whelan E repaired crk. Mike Montgomery: "I didn't find (and do not have) the Champion 16411, but did turn up three E+ copies of Champion 40074 in a collection here in Detroit that I'm selling for the estate involved." Howard Berg: "two E+ Decca (Champion) copies." Charles Howard: "have it, but only on Ch 40074 E+."

Henry Johnson And His Boys—Blue Hawaii/Hawaiian Harmony Blues—Gennett 6156. None reported on Gennett; (Henry Moon and George Thomas—Blue Hawaii/Hawaiian Harmony Blues—Herwin 92024). Whelan V, Crumb G-.

Henry Johnson And His Boys—Ash Can Stomp/Neck Bones And Beans—Gennett 6168. Tarrer E+/E, Tolen EE+, Joop Goudswaard E- to E, Crumb E-, Perls Collection E-, Garon "V+ or E-."

Ki Ki Johnson—Lone Grave/Look What A Hole I'm In—QRS 7001. Bertino N-, Ron Hale N-, von Arx N-.

Ki Ki Johnson—Wrong Woman Blues/(Lady, Your Clock Ain't Right)—QRS 7003. Bussard E, Whelan E, Thygesen V-. Wardlow: "Have both of these on Broadway, but they are cracked or broken—the way they were found." Shor: "If you are omitting boring records, why list Ki Ki Johnson?"

Jolly Two—Guitar Stomp/Railroad Stomp—Vocalion 25018. About five. Smith E-, Winter V to V+, Howard "had this strong V+", traded it to Perls about 8 years ago"—Perls Collection (but cracked?); the best copy is on Mexican Brunswick X-25018; owned by Don Kent E+: "It's available in...goodness knows, how many Mexican collections!"

Tom Tsotsi: "Champion 15338, 15437, and 15509 have artist credit thus: *Hank Jones and His Ginger.*"

Hank Jones And His Ginger (Henry Johnson And His Boys)—Neck Bones And Beans/(Them Birmingham Nite Owls [Black Birds Of Paradise]—Sugar)—Champion 15338. Less than five. Whelan E, Spottswood "once owned a G copy."

Hank Jones And His Ginger—Barbecue Blues (Watson's Pullman Porters)/Ash Can Stomp (Henry Johnson And His Boys)—Champion 15437. Less than five. Tsotsi E+: "This was Dick Holbrook's copy which he auctioned ca. 1960," Werner Benecke E.

Hank Jones And His Ginger—Down Home Special (Watson's Pullman Porters)/(Bud Preston's String Band [Al Miller's String Band]—Saturday Night Hymn)—Champion 15509. None reported on Champion.

Kansas City Blues Strummers—Broken Bed Blues/String Band Blues—Vocalion 1048. Berg E-, Bertino E-, Benecke V+, Crumb V+, Garon V+, Tolen V+, Huber V, von Arx V, Perls Collection V-, Misiewicz G: "A distant pressing, with poor miking, neglecting the vocalist...neither a distinguished, nor memorable performance, but an important historical document regarding black string-

band (if one would want to call it that) music." Tarrer "clean break. I broke it! But V."

Kansas Joe And Memphis Minnie (guitar duet)—Pickin' The Blues/Let's Go To Town—Vocalion 1660. Perls Collection E+, Dunner E, Garon E-, Zwigoff V.

Jack Kelly And His South Memphis Jug Band (sic)—Believe I'll Go Back Home/Ko-Ko-Mo Blues—Melotone 12812, Oriole 8274, Perfect 0260, Romeo 5274. Fifteen. Bussard (Melotone) E, LaVere (Melotone) E- "(both takes 1)," Thompson (Melotone) E-, Garon two copies (alternate takes) V+ and V, Paulus (Melotone) V+, Frost V-, Oilschlager: "I have a cracked V- copy now and sold a V+ copy several years ago. Both copies were junked in Mississippi."

Kentucky Jug Band—Walkin' Cane Stomp/Hard Hustlin' Blues—Vocalion 1564. Less than 10. Jim Lindsay E+, Crumb E, Bussard E-/E, Spottswood "once had a file copy N-," Tarrer "I broke F."

King David's Jug Band—Tear It Down/Georgia Bo Bo—Okeh 8861. Less than five. Tarrer E+, Zwigoff E-, Crumb G. Thygesen: "A correction to your [original] list. (Tear It Down) was issued on 8861; misprint in B&GR; 8961 is a Carl Martin item."

King David's Jug Band—Sweet Potato Blues/I Can Deal Worry—Okeh 8901. Less than 10. Zwigoff N, Paulus N-, Berg E-, Ron Brown E-, Thompson E-, Garon V.

King David's Jug Band—What's That Tastes Like Gravy/Rising Sun Blues—Okeh 8913. Less than 10. Bussard N, Peter Brown N-, Thompson N-, Dunner E+, Garon E, Thygesen E-/E, Wardlow E-, Zwigoff E-. Howard "had it E+/E+, but sold it to Stephan in 1975." Peter Brown: "I'd like to trade off 8913, but nobody seems to want it!"

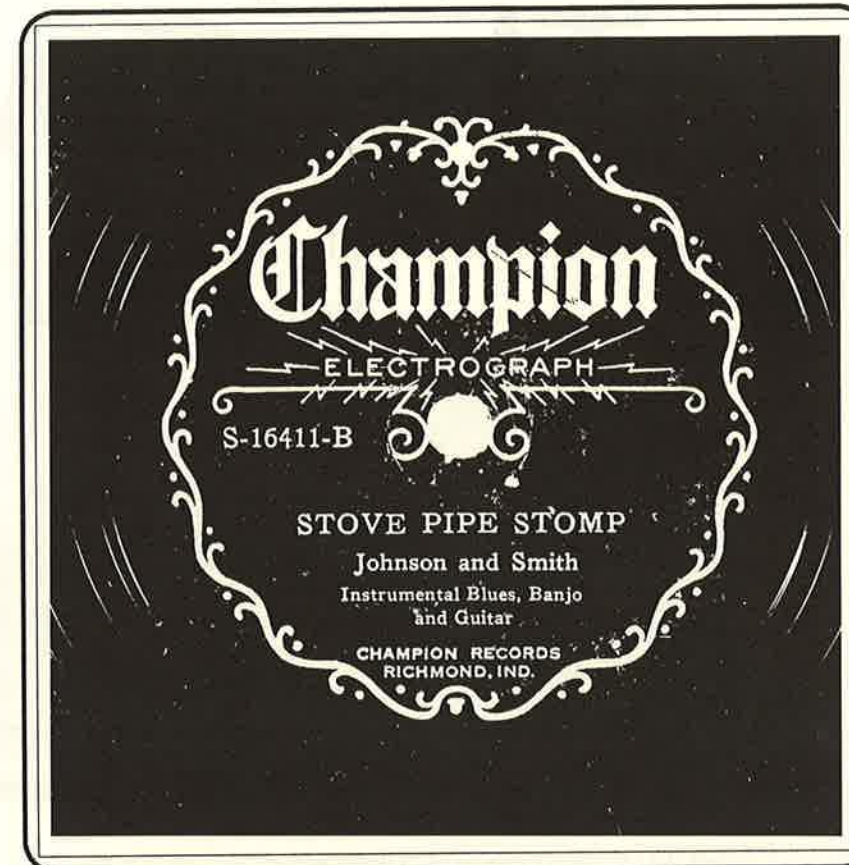
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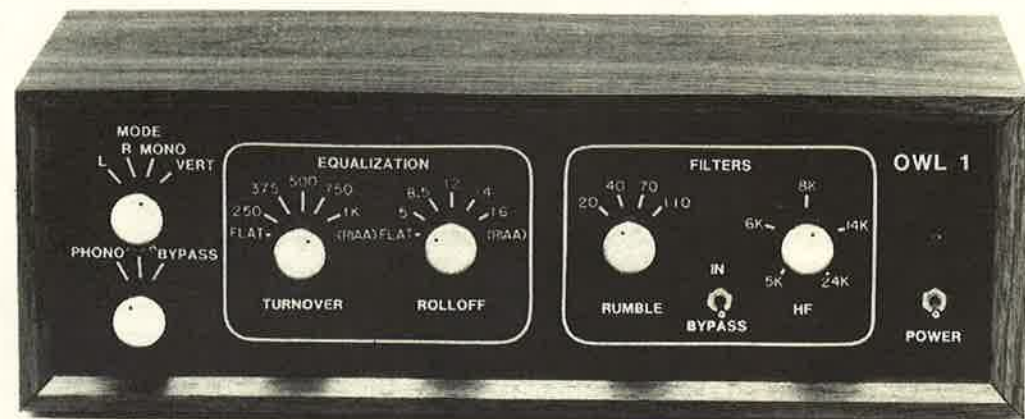


Found in 1982. Don Kent: 'probably in everybody's Mexican collection—getting more common every day'

(photo courtesy of DON KENT)

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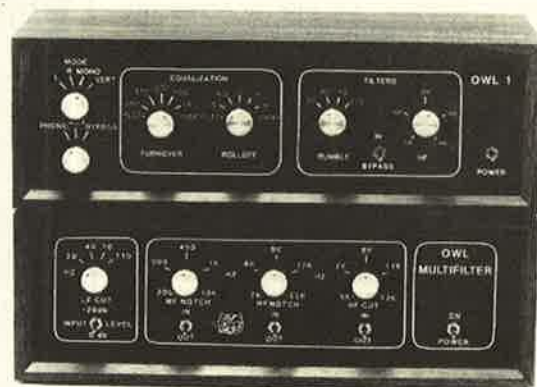
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LIZZIE MILES

HER
FORGOTTEN
CAREER
IN CIRCUS
SIDE-SHOW
MINISTRELSY
1914-1918

an excerpt from
THE ASCENDENCY OF BLUES AND JAZZ
IN MINISTRELSY AND VAUDEVILLE
1910-1920
a book-in-progress

by
Lynn Abbott
and
Doug Seroff

"There was always something happening to me that kept me reminded of the past."—Lizzie Miles

Of the several New Orleans women who recorded blues material during the 1920s, Lizzie Miles is best remembered. While most of them—Esther Bigeou, Tillie Johnson, Mary Mack, and Lizzie's half-sister, Edna Hicks—died young or slipped into deep obscurity, Lizzie went on to make an impressive career comeback and reign through the 1950s as a matron saint of the New Orleans "jazz revival."

During her comeback years, Lizzie showed herself to be personable, outgoing and more than accommodating. She corresponded regularly with hundreds of fans, friends and scholars around the world, and it's difficult now to open a vertical file on her that doesn't hold a few examples of her chatty letters and Christmas cards. These were generally accompanied by some little religious tract, the kind handed out on street corners. Lizzie was a devout Catholic—one New Orleans jazzologist respectfully labeled her a "Catholic Puritan"—and the little tracts gave meaning and purpose to her rivers of correspondence.

Beneath the surface, Lizzie was surprisingly secretive. By at least one account, she didn't trust writers: "They take down what you say, and they tell you this is how it will be, and then they twist it all around."¹ A review of the various newspaper, magazine and jazz-journal articles that comprise her published biography indicates that she did not wish to bare the facts of her early life and career. To protect herself, she managed, good naturedly, to compress all public recollection of her personal life into a few pat anecdotes.

The slice of autobiography

that she most consistently reduced to anecdote concerned the origin of her "stage name," *Miles*. Its history of public misinterpretation is a story in itself:

On January 18, 1952,² Bob Greenwood and Dick Allen taped a "jazz interview" with Lizzie in the back room of the Mardi Gras Lounge on Bourbon Street. In a previous, informal conversation she had told the two aspiring jazzologists that she was once a "close friend of a Mr. Miles." Sensing this was significant, they attempted to bring it out in the interview:

ALLEN: "Now, what about your name, we want to get that down straight. How did you happen to get the name Lizzie Miles?"

MILES: "Well, they'd say, just like, for a good billing, they'd say, 'Miles of Smiles from Lizzie Miles.' But, my name is Elizabeth. Elizabeth Mary Landreaux, that's my maiden name. And then, my marriage name is Elizabeth Pajaud."

She went on to explain that Miles was "an easy name to say; Pajaud would have been too hard to say," and she laughingly demonstrated the various ways people mispronounce Pajaud. In point of fact, Lizzie was not a Pajaud until well into her career, but Landreaux also gets butchered outside of South Louisiana, so, either way, she may have wanted to adopt an easier-to-pronounce stage name. Then, too, she was always smiling;

GREENWOOD: "Well, the Miles name, was it just made up, or was there a, in other words, just because you were smiling they made up the Miles, or..."

MILES: "That was how the idea started, you see: 'Miles of Smiles from Lizzie Miles.'"

This was Lizzie's first and last public statement on the subject. She made no further mention of her "close friend" or any other link to the name Miles other than to point out that it rhymed with "smiles." Ultimately, the "Miles of Smiles" anecdote made fodder for journalists, and it started turning up in "human interest" accounts of her remarkable comeback.

Then a rumor surfaced that

her father had been a circus impresario named J.C. Miles. This is traceable to Sam Charters' 1958 book, *Jazz: New Orleans*, where, in a brief profile of cornetist Amos White—drawn from oral testimony but presented as factual data—the author touched on White's 1918 sojourn with the Cole Bros. Circus:

He took over for Cole Brothers after a competition to see who could play ESPANA WALTZ the fastest. Working for the show was a girl named Lizzie Miles. Her father, J.C. Miles, led the colored show, and Lizzie was the featured performer, riding around the ring bareback, singing, while pigeons landed gracefully on her shoulders. Amos courted her unsuccessfully for months.

It was fairly common knowledge that Lizzie had sung in a circus—*Time Magazine* mentioned this in 1955—but there was never any indication that her own father had "led the colored show." On the contrary, the *New Orleans Item* had reported in 1952 that "her father was a barber" and her mother "did all sorts of work, to add to the family's small budget."

An opportunity to clear the matter occurred on February 2, 1958 when the New Orleans Jazz Club threw a tenth anniversary bash on the riverboat *President*. The affair was telecast on the old Dave Garroway show, "Wide Wide World," with Lizzie as its centerpiece. Viewers were swept into the *President's* ballroom, where Lizzie and Paul Barbarin's band were performing "Basin Street Blues." The scene dissolved to Lizzie's dressing room for an informal chat:

GARROWAY: Lizzie, what brought you to New Orleans?

LIZZIE: I got here the best kind of way. I was born here. Right on Bourbon Street.

She breezed through scenes of her early life: oldest of 11 children, started singing as a child at lawn parties staged by her neighborhood catechism teacher, joined a traveling show at age 15...

Then a man named Elmer Jones, Mr. E. H. Jones offered me a bigger salary than I was getting. Mr. Jones owned the Alabama Minstrels and the Georgia Minstrels and the Virginia Minstrels and he and his brother—



Lizzie appeared on the cover of the official New Orleans Jazz Club magazine, *The Second Line*, for March-April, 1963. The accompanying article announced, "Lizzie Miles Joins Seraphic Choir."

they got the Cole Bros. Circus. That was a five-car circus and I was with them...

This was as much as Lizzie had ever publicly divulged about her circus career. By coincidence, Elmer H. Jones himself happened to be watching the telecast, and, according to a report in *The Second Line* magazine, he "immediately recalled what a versatile performer" Lizzie had been: "She sang, danced, did a slack-wire act, and even 'worked' with the elephants!"

Sadly, however, there was no attempt to follow up on Jones. All that surfaces in the Jazz Club files is an undated clipping from what must have been his hometown newspaper: "Veteran North Warren Circus Man Mentioned on TV Program." It says he was "king of the two car shows." The accompanying photo shows a wiry little old spectacled white man in a sporty felt hat, plaid shirt, reversible gabardine jacket, and bolo tie. Certainly this old trouper could have remembered the man who led his "colored show."

In April 1958 the Hogan Jazz Archives received a major oral histories grant and sent pioneer jazz historian Bill Russell out to collect interviews. On August 23 he taped a lengthy session with Amos White at his home in Oakland, California. Obviously White had read Sam Charters' *Jazz: New Orleans* by then, and he was not entirely pleased with it. He countered the insinuation that he was Lizzie's unrequited lover, insisting they had always been, and yet remained, good friends. He also volunteered:

My season, 1918, I began that season with Cole Brothers Circus, under the directorship of J.C. Miles, the husband of Lizzie Miles. Contrary to what another publisher said about he being the father, that's not true. That was her husband.

He went on to reiterate the "pigeon" anecdote: Lizzie "had these beautiful pigeons on her shoulders that would light around her as she paraded around in the pageant... and they had billboards flashing that." He also confirmed that Elmer and Augustus Jones owned the Cole Bros. Circus, as well as the Alabama, Vir-

ginia, and Georgia Smart Set Minstrel companies, and he said it "was no disgrace" to be in any of these shows. "They were fine shows."

Bill Russell wanted to include Lizzie in the oral histories he was collecting, and Amos White's statement begged to be addressed. He arranged an interview, but Lizzie repeatedly stood him up. Finally, on June 3, 1960, she sent him a postcard adorned with a sticker that said "Holy Infant of Good Health Bless Us":

Dear Mr. Russell

I've changed my mind about the tape. I don't care to make it. Thought I'd let you know so you would not be figuring on me. Thanks for the offer.

God Bless you,
Lizzie Miles

She later confessed that she "just couldn't talk about jazz any more."

Lizzie's final public statement came in response to an invitation to the New Orleans Jazz Museum's "Grand Opening" in 1961:

Dear Sirs

Just to thank you for nice invitation to opening of Museum. But since I have chosing to live a life of a nun not a modern one an old fashioned Godly one and has given up the outside world I take part in nothing. I only attend church rest of my time in prayers for these troubled times all over the world. Making penance for all my past sins and trying to serve God as I should. My way of thanking him for all his wonderful blessing.

God bless all "Adieu"
Lizzie Miles

On March 17, 1963, Lizzie Miles died. A eulogy appeared in the *Louisiana Weekly*, written by jazz buff Carey James Tate. Tate identified himself as a "long time friend and confident (sic) of Lizzie," then fell back on *Jazz: New Orleans* to identify J.C. Miles as her father. The notion went unchecked in the revised edition (1965) of Charters' book, and from there it fell into the first edition (1979) of Sheldon Harris' *Blues Who's Who*.

"The Lizzie entry had bothered me for some time, even after the book was published," Harris recalls. "I had a gut feeling her family info was wrong." Finally, after examining

a copy of her death certificate, he was able to correctly state in the revised fifth edition of *Blues Who's Who* (1989), "Father was Victor Landreaux."

So, how did J.C. Miles fit into the picture? The mystery is revealed in a body of correspondence from the "J.C. Miles Band and Minstrels" which appeared in 1914-1918 issues of the Indianapolis *Freeman*. In view of the fact that Lizzie had taken J.C.'s memory to the grave, discovering this body of correspondence was like digging up bones. In short, it confirms what Amos White had told Bill Russell in 1958: J.C. Miles was Lizzie's husband. She was his wife and companion, and for five years running they worked together in a traveling circus side-show.

J.C. Miles was from Indianapolis. The *Freeman* was his hometown paper, and it catered to professional troupers. Some of the "Band and Minstrels" correspondence was submitted by Miles himself. The bulk of it was unsigned, and, given Lizzie's penchant for letter-writing, it's tempting to speculate that she had a hand in it, too. At any rate, it not only brings Lizzie's fascinating early career into focus, but opens a door to the lost history of the circus annex "colored show" phenomenon and its important role in the commercial ascendancy of blues and jazz.

During the first quarter of the 20th century, it seems every circus in America had a "colored show," comprising a brass band and an old-fashioned minstrel show—the familiar semi-circle with mister tambo, mister bones and an interlocutor. The brass band participated in afternoon parades and accompanied various acts that appeared in the "Big Annex of Wonders"—the *side-show*. Along with freaks, contortionists, and serpentine dancers, the minstrel show was a feature of the Annex, and members of the brass band generally doubled in the semi-circle or the small "orchestra" that provided accompaniment.

Within this context, Lizzie and J.C. Miles faced a grueling succession of one night stands, working six nights a week, traveling by rail, living out of a Pullman coach. Their

Photo by LYNN ABBOTT



Lizzie often quipped that she was "born right on Bourbon Street." The 1890 New Orleans City Directory, compiled from information collected in 1895, the year she was born, lists her maternal grandfather, Athanais Lazende, as a bricklayer residing at 1508 Bourbon Street. It also lists her father, Victor Landreaux, as a barber residing at—1508 Bourbon Street. It follows that Lizzie was born at 1508 Bourbon (this section has since been renamed Pauger) Street, two blocks below the French Quarter in the City's Seventh Ward. The flags flying there are not in commemoration of this previously unheralded event.

annual circus season stretched roughly from April through November, and was measured in less-than-50-mile jumps from town to town. In this manner they managed to hit most every state in the Union. During the off season, they would fall in with a traveling "tent show," or book theater dates within the vicinity of the circus' winter quarters.

J.C. Miles had worked in tent shows several years before joining the circus. In November 1911 his Sunflower Minstrels were "having success" in Florida. In April 1912 he accepted the job of "assistant manager, official announcer and ticket seller" for the Alabama Minstrels, and in February 1914 he wrote from Roanoke, Virginia to say the troupe was:

doing fine business throughout the Virginias, Carolinas and Tennessee. We closed our tent show season at Norfolk recently, and are now playing the finest and best theaters throughout these sections. While playing this city [Roanoke] myself and wife also our entire company had the pleasure of stopping at the Hotel Pierce... simply the finest colored hotel in the south."

On April 2, 1914 Miles closed his "long engagement" with the Alabama Minstrels, and he and his wife—Lizzie—journeyed from Braddock, Pennsylvania to Norfolk, Virginia to open the 1914 season with Jones Bros. & Wilson's Three-Ring Circus. "Mr. Miles has charge of the colored band and minstrels, which is the feature attraction of the side show." All mail would reach him "care Jones Bros. & Wilson Shows, U.S. Ptg. & Litho. Co.,

Cincinnati, O., or home address No. 403 West Seventeenth Street, Indianapolis, Ind."

The J.C. Miles Band and Minstrels opened with Jones Bros. & Wilson's Circus on April 7, 1914. From Norfolk, they dipped into North Carolina, then worked back up through Maryland, and by mid-May they were in Pennsylvania, where Miles reported:

Our band and minstrels, although only eleven strong, is the feature of the Annex, featuring principally the latest rags and popular airs. And who says that the "Blues" won't go in this section. It goes bigger here than it does in Bam, as they follow the big band wagon in vast throngs, yelling can be constantly heard, "Give us some more of yer 'Memphis Blues.'"... Mrs. J.C. Miles is the only one of her

sex in the company. She sings her favorite song, "Good-bye, My Own Dear Heart" and sells the copies like hot cakes.

Mid-June found them in New York State:

This state, too, starts off as though she will be a "pippin," as we have been welcomed by tremendous crowds so far. Our colored band must be a feature here, as we get quite a praise from both the management and the public. The popular ragtime numbers and standard selections, and the way they are being put over, must be responsible for the congratulations along this line...J.C. Miles says hello back, Seymour James, also Freddie Pratt...Mrs. Miles is still getting them with her song hit, "Good-bye, My Own Dear Heart."

On June 17 the troupe crossed paths with the Nashville Students in Carthage, New York, and they "got out a swell dinner for the occasion." Miles had "trouped several years" with the Students' baritone soloist, Teddy Redmond, and when Teddy showed up for the afternoon parade, Miles "called out several new ones that might 'stick' some baritone players at sight, but there was nothing doing that day, so the joke fell on Mr. Miles."

A note on June 27 spoke of "capacities, turn-aways and no rains." It closed with a special request: "Mrs. Lizzie Miles would like to hear from her sister, Edna Benbow, of the team of Benbow and Landry." Edna Landreaux Benbow, Lizzie's half-sister, was then teamed with Southern vaudeville pioneer William Benbow. She would eventually record as Edna Hicks.

In Cleveland, Ohio, on July 1, 1914, J.C. enjoyed a visit from his brother Willis who was en route with his wife to her family home in Chattanooga, Tennessee. "Their trip should be called a visiting tour," said Miles, "as the object of the couple are to visit all relatives before returning to their home in Oregon, which will cause them to cover several thousand miles."

By August the troupe had rolled across Northern Michigan and into Minnesota. Early September found them in Kansas, when Miles

announced the "E.H. Jones' World Renowned Alabama Minstrels will open somewhat earlier than was planned." He directed potential joiners to his ad in the September 5 *Freeman*:

WANTED!
Musicians and Performers
For E.H. Jones'
Alabama Minstrels No. 2

Those doubling band and orchestra or stage preferred. Remember this is to be the swellest colored minstrel show with the finest two Pullman cars, and the most complete Canvas Theater in existence, barring none. This is not a shoe string show, nor a skip pay day concern, but an up-to-date Minstrel Show under proficient management and in front of sufficient capital. Will open not later than Sept. 15. Now organizing in St. Louis, Mo. Write quick and state what you can do and lowest salary in first letter, no time for lengthy correspondence. Tickets if necessary to right parties.

A September 17 report said Miles' troupe was "Missouri bound...At Flat River, Kans. [sic—Flat River is in Missouri], October 24th, our band will play 'Home, Sweet Home,' as at this place and date our circus season ends. Mr. and Mrs. J.C. Miles will perhaps take a few weeks

of much needed rest at home." The Alabama Minstrels No. 2 actually opened on September 14 in East St. Louis, and Mr. and Mrs. Miles caught up with them in Paragould, Arkansas on October 27, three days after closing with the circus. Miles came in as minstrel interlocutor and solo cornetist in the 12-piece band led by Frank Moland. He felt the show was "without any doubt above the ordinary as a tented one nighter." A report on November 7 described the show:

Happy Kimble, E.H. Robbins, Chas. Berry and Harry Anderson, as end men, are especially good. J.C. Miles, interlocutor, is one of the best in the business. Mrs. Irene McCloudy, the pretty little soubrette, does a very clever song and dance and is a strong support.

E.H. Robbins, better known as "Rucker," and his wife, keep the house in an uproar during an eighteen minute act, finished with a song and tango dance. Mrs. Elizabeth Miles, the girl with the silvery voice, is repeatedly encored on her beautifully rendered songs.

Billie Freeman, well-nough said, you all know Billie and what he can do. Joe White is another you all know. Joe keeps them busy laughing when he is before the footlights.



An odd, early Lizzie Miles Brunswick (June 18, 1923), in which she sings and plays kazoo.

Happy Kimble and Mrs. Arthur Cox, in a farce comedy act entitled "The Spooks," is another side-splitting number, and when Happy finishes the act with his comic dancing, the house is in an uproar. Mrs. Cox also sings "Virginia Love" and does it justice.

Moving southward through Oklahoma and Texas, the Alabama Minstrels No. 2 closed its winter season at Houston on Christmas Day. There a "big spaghetti and lager supper" was prepared by Houston's "Palace Theatre bunch." Then, Miles reported:

myself and wife paid an enjoyable visit with the mother and father of Mrs. Miles at New Orleans, La., and I feel safe in saying that a more enjoyable time would have been evidently impossible, as the features of the engagement were joy riding, sight-seeing and eating good eats, and on the latter is right where I shine. How about it, Mother Morand?

The reference to "Mother Morand" indicates that Lizzie's mother was by this time remarried to Victor Morand, father of Herb Morand, who recorded in the 1930s with the Harlem Hamfats. Miles didn't say whether he and Lizzie's New Orleans visit included a trip to the infamous Poodle Dog Cabaret in Storyville, where Will and Edna Benbow happened to be working. However, Benbow acknowledged in a letter to the *Freeman* that, "Mrs. Lizzie Landry Miles, sister to Mrs. Edna Landry Benbow, is in the city visiting relatives."

Departing for their home in Indianapolis, J.C. and Lizzie arrived on New Year's Day, 1915, in time for the Miles family's traditional New Year's dinner. "Our family orchestra furnished the music while together with a number of relatives and invited guests we proceeded to knock old turkey right off." They remained in Indianapolis for the rest of the winter, while Miles put together his annex show for the 1915 season with Jones Bros. World's Toured Three-Ring Circus.

The circus opened its 1915 season on April 14 in St. Louis. "Our band and minstrel is again the feature attraction of the big side show annex, although each and every member of the band and minstrels with the exception of Mr. and Mrs. Miles are new

to the aggregation." A report in mid-May bragged about the minstrel portion of the show, noting, in part, "Mrs. Miles sings 'Wonderful Boy,' with great success. She is also interlocutor."

June found the Band and Minstrels in New Hampshire and Vermont. A report on June 12 assured:

At this writing we are all O.K. as usual. Our little band of eleven pieces is still with it, and still creating much excitement all along the line, as we have drifted almost entirely from the standard marches and have gone into the popular ragtime stuff which seems to be more desired by the public in this region. They certainly like "He's a Devil in His Own Home Town," and the "Jogo Blues." We only do one concert each afternoon. Our feature number now is Remick's hits No. 15. Must sound good, for applause is positive whenever same is rendered.

By mid-July, the Band and Minstrels were out on Long Island, where they stayed more than a week. Miles noted they were "in close range of the big city, New York, and we often take the cars in, as it is only a short run in." As the summer waned, they headed West, then South, and they were down in Texas by mid-October.

On Sunday, November 21, while plowing across North Louisiana, they crossed paths with J.C. O'Brien's Famous Georgia Minstrels No. 2 in Ruston. "Here was one happy day, as it was spent on both trains, first aboard our Pullman, 'The Virginia,' and then on O'Brien's handsome 'Ruth.' And at the finish...everybody was feeling mighty good, I tell you, as no one seemed to talk in his same tone. Ha! Ha!" They spent the last week of the 1915 season in the heart of the Mississippi Delta, playing Indianola, Greenville, Rosedale, Cleveland, Clarksdale and Jonestown, where they closed on December 6. "It won't be so long between drinks," Miles assured, "as we open the season of 1916 early in March."

Miles and his band spent part of the winter season "furnishing music for the Jubilee Minstrels, which are in conjunction with the Rogers Greater Shows." The new year found them in Mississippi. Then, on February 26, 1916 Miles reported that he and Lizzie

were "located at Hot Springs, having baths and preparing for the opening of our season with Cole Bros.' Circus, which opens here March 29":

On our way [to Hot Springs] we stopped over at Memphis, Tenn., where we enjoyed an exceedingly nice time at the residence of my friend Mr. William (Tuba) Thomas. Here we managed to assemble a number of my professional friends. Among them were Mr. William (King) Phillips, composer and writer of the famous Florida Blues; Mr. Jasper Taylor, Mr. Walter Lee, Mr. Thomas himself and several other prominent musicians and performers were present. A proficient pianist was also on hand in the person of Mr. Buddy Gilmore, who more than entertained during our hours of pleasure. A swell luncheon was gotten out by the Madam and Mr. Thomas, which, of course, was a feature number on our bill. We also took in several shows while in the city, and must speak well for Porter and Porter, who were at the Metropolitan, as they seemed to be favorites, judging from the applause they received. Furthermore, I am a fair judge myself. I also visited the music publishing establishment of Pace & Handy. Here you will find quite a staff of musical employees, who, together with Messrs. Pace and Handy, extend a cordial welcome to all professional folk at all times. With a tremendous stock of music to select from, I succeeded in securing quite a few copies. Among them were "Joe Turner Blues," one of Mr. Handy's latest numbers. Here's another "whang" for you blue lovers [sic]. Oh yes several members of both companies of the Alabama and Virginia Minstrels are here at Hot Springs, playing permanent stock, doing capacity and turn aways and two performances nightly. A twelve piece band under the direction of Prof. Jeff Smith furnishes concerts in front every evening. Some band, some show! With best wishes to my Memphis friends, also the entire profession, I am yours truly, J.C. Miles, 125 Water Street, Hot Springs.

The Cole Bros. Circus was a reincarnation of the Jones Bros. Circus. Miles identified J. Augustus Jones as his immediate boss for the 1916 season. Perhaps Augustus and Elmer Jones had decided to exploit the name of multi-millionaire circus magnate William "Chilly Billy" Cole, who had just died in 1915. At any rate, the 1916 season opened in Hot Springs on March 29, as planned, and Miles reported, "Our band and minstrel show is about at its normal size, having ten people in all. But we will be some-



October 12, 1927: Lizzie Miles with unknown clarinet and piano

what larger in a few days as we expect to add three more musicians and Mrs. Miles will make the fourteenth member. Our minstrel part is all new and elaborately costumed."

Three weeks later they were "finishing Arkansas, with Oklahoma, Kansas and Missouri to follow." Haley Walker, the troupe's alto horn and violin player, reported:

I must speak well for our lineup for this season...We have added one more to our band, making it ten in number, and expect to add two more soon... With six doubling stage and Mrs. Miles as conversationalist, com-

pletes the seven chair semi-circle supported by our elevated six-piece orchestra...No-Sir-Ree-Bob. Not the best band on the road. Neither do we play William Tell in rag time and Poet-and-Peasant backward, but we do play some very pleasing overtures that we consider suitable for the amount of pieces we have; in other words (instrumentation). Remick's hits, popular song numbers and standard marches. And the several "blues" happen to be our long suit, and as for our ability in putting over each number we attempt, ask musicians in the cities we have played or the public in general or the management. Go further than that; try and make it your business to meet us during our long season.

Miles noted on May 20, 1916 that "everything is running smoothly" and that his Band and Minstrels were still the hit of the "Big Annex of Wonders." He added that "Mrs. J.C. is the conversationalist and is featuring a number of late songs, among them is the great craze 'Mother.'" He sent regards to Freddie Pratt ("Hello, Freddie Prattie"), and added, "We play in and around Chicago all this week."

While playing Hammond, Indiana May 23, J.C. and Lizzie visited Howe's Great London shows, and were "nicely entertained by members of Prof. Jackson's Band." In Michigan

City May 25, the troupe "gave a charitable performance within the walls of the Indiana state prison to more than 1800 prisoners. Circus acts with the horses, ponies, elephants, clowns, etc. were to be seen. The acts that went the biggest with the prisoners were the elephants dancing the 'Cooche,' the band playing the 'Blues,' and when Mrs. Miles sang the 'Hesitating Blues' the riot commenced. A happy day for the boys within."

The troupe hit Minnesota in July, and by August they were in Colorado, "more than 7,000 feet above sea level, the temperature being fine and cool, but the atmosphere is so light that we can scarcely gather wind to blow our instruments." From Colorado they dipped through the Southwest, "showing daily to thousands of soldiers and Mexicans" in the border towns of Arizona and New Mexico. In October they moved into Texas, then made a long jump to the West Coast.

They closed the 1916 circus season in Fullerton, California on December 8 and set up winter quarters at Riverside, "which is only a street car ride from Los Angeles." To "fill in the time" until the circus went out again, Miles booked the Band and Minstrels into the Angeles Theater in Los Angeles. On December 30 he was:

proud to say that we have been doing nicely, playing at S.R.O. [standing room only] and capacity houses nightly, and for this is a reason of course, and that is we have and deliver the goods, so say the people of Los Angeles. Our company is twelve strong ten piece band, Mrs. J.C. Miles and Mrs. Marguerite Montague, which gives us a four piece orchestra and including piano and eight stage aspirants. A red hot show, supported by a real band.

The J.C. Miles Band and Minstrels opened their 1917 season with Cole Bros. Circus on March 7 in Riverside with a roster of 12. Most were veterans of the previous season, and Miles noted their "minstrel first part with seven in semi-circle supported with five-piece orchestra" was "full of pep." Over the next three months they played one-nighters through California, Nevada, Utah, Wyoming, Idaho, Montana, and the Dakotas.



New Orleanians Lizzie Miles and Jelly Roll Morton record for Victor on December 11, 1929

By July they had backtracked into Oregon, where they were visited by one of Miles' sisters:

Yes, J.C. is one happy fellow these days. His younger sister is here on the show with him and his wife. She is paying a joyous visit, looking at the elephants, feeding the monkeys and hearing the band play. Ha! Ha! Her visit will extend until July 7th. When we play Pendleton, Ore., the home of our visitor and J.C.'s brother, we will pull off a real one. Our entire company is rehearsing to put on an eating act that day. Some grease slinging, I'll tell you.

Like J.C., Willis Miles had "travelled for many years with various shows" before establishing himself as "a noted race horse trainer and driver" with a comfortable home in Pendleton. Lizzie must have been dazzled by the party he threw for the Band and Minstrels. He:

left nothing undone to make it a real affair, and of all the eats you ever ate you have seldom "et" eats that "ate" like these "ate." The bunch was driven to and fro in the Buick. All ate hearty and enjoyed after our evening show which was 8:30 o'clock. As usual we were entertained on the lawn...Special electric lights and all necessaries having been arranged for the occasion. Our band and orches-

tra furnished music and songs with the able assistance of Mr. Willis Miles, who is a real violinist...At 12 o'clock sharp, after a joyous day and evening had been spent, all dispersed and boarded the 'Virginia' and were soon en route to our next stand."

They headed back into Idaho and Utah, Colorado and Kansas, a blur of one-nighters. In September, they turned South into Arkansas and North Louisiana. Correspondence from September 29 found them heading for Texas and a "long season South." It said Lizzie was "featuring all the latest and up-to-date songs and taking care of the semi circle as conversationalist." It also noted that "most of our company are in the draft limit...but so far have not been affected by same. Let us hope."

October 27 correspondence informed that Miles "and the bunch" were "in Texas indefinitely." Eventually they would "winter the circus at Shreveport, La." By mid-November they were playing day-and-date along the Kansas City-Southern Railroad line in Southwest Louisiana—Opelousas on November 12; next day, De Quincy; then north to DeRidder,

Leesville, Many, Mansfield and, finally, Shreveport.

From there, Lizzie and J.C. dropped down to New Orleans, and they reported on December 29:

Mr. and Mrs. J.C. Miles, after closing their season for 1917 with Cole Bros.' circus are comfortably located Miles' mother [sic], Mrs. R. Moran, whose address is 824 North Villere Street [one of the Tremé community homes that was demolished to make way for Louis Armstrong Park], New Orleans, La. Will be glad to hear from all friends at any time, especially musicians who expect to troupe during the season of 1918. Happy New Year to all.

From Lizzie's mother's Villere Street home, Miles hatched plans to manage an independent minstrel company during the 1918 season. He ran an ad in the February 23, 1918 *Freeman*:

WANTED

For the Largest, Grandest and Best Colored Organization in America, 75—Musicians and Performers—75. Want two more good band leaders that Play Cornets. Good Teams if Male Doubles in Band. Best of Pullman Cars on Which You Eat and Sleep. Show Opens About 15th of March, Playing Principal Cities of U.S. From One to Six Day's Stands. All Old-Timers Write.

Miles' timing for this big venture was not good. World War I was on; the draft was taking musicians and performers away at an alarming rate, and increasingly harsh restrictions on rail transportation were already leaving shows stranded. Still, Miles persisted. He said his show would "open somewhere in Louisiana about March 25."

While J.C. labored to get his show off the ground, Lizzie appeared in stock at the Booker Washington Theater in Shreveport, opening on April 8. The theater's *Freeman* correspondent reported:

Our manager, Mr. Evid D. Lee is full of smiles and has hung the S.R.O. sign out.

Mrs. Muriel Ringgold and Mr. Earnest Watts took the roof off.

Mrs. Ringgold made good as usual with her eccentric buck dancing and as a comedienne she is in a class by herself.

Mr. Watts took five encores on his song, singing a parody on "It Takes a Long, Tall Brownskin Gal to Make a Preacher Lay His Bible Down." This parody cannot be excelled.

Mrs. Lizzie Miles stopped the show, singing "Come Back to Your Home Again" and the "Mamma Blues."

Mr. Ray Gibson, "Pork chops," had 'em falling out of their seats and stopped the show for ten minutes.

Mr. Fred Moseley is one of our old comedians and is going better and better each performance.

Miss Emma Johnson is a sure cure for the blues.

Nuf sed.

Mr. Bob White is making good as a straight character man.

There was no further word from Miles until July 27, when his return to Cole Bros. Circus was announced:

J.C. Miles and his sixteen merry-makers mostly musicians, and all performers, will soon have completed their sixteen weeks' engagement under canvas, playing the principal cities and towns throughout Oklahoma, Kansas and Missouri, and will resume duty with the Great Cole Bros. (world-toured shows) on playing-dates at Sedalia, Mo., the middle of August. The big minstrel show that was to be launched last spring was called off on account of the great shortage of musicians which of course derived from the world's war, and the show that we now have was immediately arranged, hit the trail and proud to say has done an excellent business, playing week stands with a repertoire of six complete shows, giving an entire change of program nightly. Our band will perhaps be featured with the big circus riding the number one band wagon in parade and playing the circus program, as the white band there at present is very low in number on account of the draft. This of course would take us completely away from the side show as heretofore, would also mean a somewhat larger band for us, as we are only eleven strong at present. So you musicians watch for our ad in the old reliable *Freeman*, also the *Billboard*.

Miles' dream of a 75-person, year-round, nationwide touring show had been reduced to 16 troupers and 16 weeks in "Indian territory." At this point, his *Freeman* correspondence ceased. There is some indication, at least, that his band actually did get to play the number one wagon and main circus program, "completely away

from the side show." In his 1958 interview with Bill Russell, Amos White recalled being with Miles' troupe when they fell back in with the circus at Sedalia. He spent a night in jail there for not being able to produce his draft card. "We were playing the big show then. They had no white band on the show."

If any event of 1918 cut more deeply into the ranks of minstrelsy and vaudeville than the draft, it was the Spanish flu epidemic. This was reflected in the *Freeman*. In mid-October a letter from Rocky Mount, North Carolina informed that, "Prof. Eph Williams closed the 'Silas Green from New Orleans' company here suddenly on Oct. 5, owing to the Spanish Influenza epidemic." A report from Busby's Minstrels on October 26 said:

This writing leaves the bunch in Kansas City, Mo., closed on account of the Spanish influenza. The country closed on us at Albuquerque, N. Mex., October 7th, and we jumped from there to Kansas City, Mo., which is quite a jump. Here we found many companies closed on the same account and the city is also closed. All or most of the Alabama Minstrels are here and that show is closed, too, according to a message which was received by one of the members of that show last night while the bunch were taking a drink at Billie King's saloon. To tell the truth, I never saw so many performers, and nobody working: performers on top of performers now tell the tale of who saved the dollar and who did not. It pays to save a dollar for a rainy day.

By November 1918, virtually every theater and travelling show that was writing to the *Freeman* had some sad story to tell. In Chicago so many out-of-work performers were turning up at the stock yards that a correspondent was inspired to file this report:

The Union Stock Yards, for decades one of Chicago's most renowned show places, have recently taken on a new phase of showlife since the appearance of "Villain Flu." There is being featured daily by stars and end men alike the art of canning, casing and beef killing, etc., in various departments throughout the yards and from all indications the performers are serving as box office attractions, judging from the size of the bacon they are bringing home.

Of the various anecdotes that Lizzie Miles dispensed during her

comeback years, the one best remembered by writers and fans concerned her own personal bout with the flu. Jazzologists know the story as "Lizzie's Influenza." She gave her most detailed—and, in retrospect, accurate—telling of it to Dave Garroway in 1958. Garroway asked her when it was she had sung with the circus:

LIZZIE: Well, that was back during the World War I, during the flu epidemic. It was the end of the season and we were on our way to Winter headquarters at Shreveport, Louisiana.

Everybody on the train nearly came down with the flu. Every little town we'd come to they'd stop and try to get a doctor or a nurse or somebody to come and take care of the sick ones. I'd been doing what I could to take care of them, and they told me I'd better be careful or I'd come down with it. Well, I did and I got so sick I went out of my head and they had to take me off the train.

They put me in this little town in a sanitorium and twice there they thought I was going to die or go into tuberculosis or something. They was all Baptist in the hospital and I couldn't pray. Couldn't speak to God. I was so sick I was nearly dead. They couldn't get me a priest and I wanted to do what little I could alone to save my soul, save what little of it I could, and one of the women there said, "Why don't you talk to God? Talk to him and tell him you'll make a sacrifice or something, if he'll let you get well." Well, I did. I talked to God, just the way I'm talking to you here and I promised him that if he'd just let me get over it, get back to my Mother, that I'd never set foot on a stage or travel with any actors again.

When I made the promise I guess I was almost unconscious, at least when I got well, I remember I was saying goodbye to the nurses and told them I'd be going on to my next appearance on the stage. And they said, Lizzie, how can you play with God this way? And Mama said, Lizzie, did you really make that promise. I started remembering that bargain I'd made and it all started coming back to me and I knew I had to keep it and I've never set foot on a stage again. I do sing in the nightclubs and people ask me what's the difference and I tell them that when you sing in a nightclub you're a servant of the public, you're not out there acting or making a spectacle out of yourself.

She went on to explain how she turned down a big part in the Broadway hit play "Jamaica," starring Lena Horne. "I went, spent 10 days up there, and they all talked to me and



J. C. MILES DEAD.

The many friends of J. C. Miles, in the profession, will be grieved to learn of his death, which occurred in Shreveport, La., October 19th, of the influenza. Mr. Miles was well known in the musical world and at the time of his death was bandmaster with the Cole Bros.' circus. The remains were buried at his home in Indianapolis, Indiana.

J.C. Miles' brief obituary in the Indianapolis *Freeman*, November 10, 1918, was accompanied by this photograph

tried to get me to take the part. They even wanted to get Bishop Fulton Sheen to talk to me, and I told them even if the Holy Father in Rome told me to go on the stage I wouldn't do it."

The *Freeman* brings out a more tragic side of "Lizzie's Influenza." While Lizzie took sick, J.C. Miles actually died on that last train to Shreveport. The story broke on November 2: "Jno. C. Miles, noted bandmaster and

musician, passed away October 19, 1918, while en route to Shreveport, La., Cole Bros. world toured shows winter quarters. His wife is suffering from the same complaint, which was an attack of influenza and pneumonia." Miles' remains were shipped to Indianapolis for burial at Crown Hill Cemetery, and brother Willis came from Oregon for the funeral. The November 16 *Freeman* carried a brief eulogy, accompanied by a photo of the departed minstrel bandmaster.

Following J.C.'s death, Lizzie disappeared from the *Freeman*. Apparently, she did retreat to her mother's New Orleans home to recuperate. Amos White, whose recollections check out remarkably well against the *Freeman* documentation, told Bill Russell that he had been drafted out of the J.C. Miles Band & Minstrels shortly after their July 1918 date in Sedalia. Following his discharge from the Army in the fall of 1919, he went down to New Orleans. "I knew J.C. Miles had passed, and I knew Lizzie was down there. It wasn't the idea that I'd go down there and wed anybody. That was completely out of the question. But, I went down there because I had a friend down there." He said he found Lizzie working with Arnold Metoyer's band at the Pythian Temple Roof Garden. He and Lizzie started working cabaret dates in Bucktown. A few years later, in February 1922 in New York City, Lizzie launched her recording career with a rendition of "Muscle Shoals Blues."

Acknowledgments and Footnotes

All contemporaneous references to J.C. and Lizzie Miles' activities, 1911-1918, and to the 1918 Spanish Influenza epidemic, are drawn from the authors' review of the Indianapolis *Freeman*, 1910-1920.

We are grateful to Richard B. Allen, Sheldon Harris, Donald Marquis, and William Russell for shared knowledge and resources.

1. Lizzie Miles conversation with Paul Rossiter, quoted in the "Lizzie Miles Memorial" show prepared by Rossiter and Jack Nelson for broadcast over radio station WWMT, New Orleans, April 1, 1963.

2. The Allen-Greenwood interview with Lizzie was thought to have taken place January 18, 1951, but a review of Greenwood's letters in the Hogan Jazz Archives indicates he was still in graduate school in Ann Arbor, Michigan at that time. Therefore, 1952 seems more likely.

3. Sheldon Harris letter to Lynn Abbott, July 2, 1991.

4. "Landry" is an Americanization of "Landreaux."

Appendices

A. Roster of the J.C. Miles Band and Minstrels—The troupe's correspon-



In February, 1924 pianist Everett Robbins, once a member of the J.C. Miles Minstrels, made this rare Autograph for Marsh Labs in Chicago. He was the leader of this historic Milwaukee band.

dence often included a roster. These are collected here:

1914

May 16: "The roster of the band is as follows: P.M. Williams and J.C. Miles, cornets; Earnest Montague and Samuel Johnson, trombones; Chas. Brewer, clarinet, Jess Watt, snare drum, and James Small, bass drum."

June 13: "Mr. James Jackson joined our band. Mr. Jackson is some trombonist, too. He and our old reliable, Ernest Montague, form some trombone battery, with Ben Jones, tuba; Ed Miller, alto; Chas. Brewer, clarinet; James Small, baritone; Jess Watt, snare drum, and Edward Evans, bass drum, and owing to the illness of Mr. P.M. Williams, cornet player, Mr. Peter Davis is assisting J.C. Miles on cornets. Mr. Williams is expected to be up and on the job again in a few days."

August 8: "Mr. John Wilson of the Kit Carson shows, has joined us, doing bass drum and stage."

November 7: "The band is composed of the following members: Mr. J.C. Miles, solo cornet; Mr. Frank Moland, solo cornet; Mr. J.C. O'Bryant, first clarinet; Mr. Arthur Cox, second clarinet; Mr. Willie Brown, first alto; Mr. Harvey McCloudy, first trombone; Mr. J.R. Jackson, second trombone;

Mr. Ernest Montague, baritone; Mr. Robert Cade, tuba; Mr. Andrew Evans, snare drum; Mr. Harry Anderson, bass drum."

November 14: "Roster of the band as follows: Prof. Frank Moland, leader and cornet; J.C. Miles, cornet; Arthur Cox and John O'Brien, clarinets; Earnest Montague and Harry McCloudy, trombones; Russell Jackson, baritone; Robt. Cade, tuba; Willie Brown and Eddie Frye, altos; Andrew Evans, bass drum. In the minstrel first part we find Mr. E.H. Robbins and Harry Anderson holding extreme ends, backed up by Eddie Lemons, J.W. Johnson, Billie Freeman, Chas. Berry, Mrs. Hattie Cox, Mrs. Marie Robbins, Mrs. Irene McCloudy and Mrs. Elizabeth Miles."

1915

April 24: "Members of the band...are: J.C. Miles, cornet and leader; Ben Penn, cornet; Dranan Pernot, clarinet; Geo. Sharp and Wm. Moore, trombones; Geo. Walker, baritone; Fred Weaver, alto; Geo. Blanks, tuba; John H. Mason and Edw. Carson, drums."

June 12: "Roster of band as follows: J.C. Miles, leader and cornet; Ben Penn, solo cornet; Harry Franklin, first cornet; Dranan Pernot, clarinet; Edgar Carson, clarinet; David Gordon, alto; Geo. Sharp, trombone; Geo.

Walker, baritone; Geo. Blanks, tuba; John H. Mason, snare drum; Willie Moore, bass drum."

July 31: "The Original Billie Moore is now with J.C. Miles Band and Minstrel, doubling trombone in band and minstrel."

October 16: "Mr. Boonie Walker has been added to our roster. Mr. Walker is an excellent cornetist, who succeeds Mr. Ben Penn, who closed recently."

1916

April 8: "The roster of the band is: Ira Walker, cornet; George Walker, baritone; J.R. Powell, clarinet; Fred Goodwin, alto; Russell Jackson, trombone; Clarence Walker, drum; John Moody, bass drum; J.C. Miles, cornet and leader."

April 22: "Here is our line-up: J.C. Miles, cornet; Ira Walker, cornet and second violin; James Powell, clarinet, B. and O. [Band and Orchestra: i.e., played in both the parade band and the side-show stage orchestra]; Fred Goodwin, alto and traps; Haley Walker, baritone and first violin; James R. Jackson, trombone and B. and O.; W. Greene, trombone and stage; Clarence Walker, tuba, B. and

O.; John H. Mason and John Moody, drums and stage."

May 20: "Here's the lineup: J.C. Miles, cornet; Ira Walker, cornet; James R. Powell, clarinet; Edw. Smith, clarinet; Geo. Walker, baritone; Fred Goodwin, alto; James R. Jackson, trombone; Clarence Walker, tuba; John H. Mason, snare drum; John Moody, bass drum."

July 1: "Our band line-up is J.C. Miles, cornet and leader; Ira Walker, cornet; James R. Powell, clarinet; Joseph Smith, clarinet; Fred Goodwin, alto; Geo. Walker, baritone and violin; James R. Jackson, trombone; John H. Mason, snare drum; John Moody, bass drum. Some line up fellows, each member is real and cut the big ones just the same as the little ones."

December 23: "We regret very much to state that we lost our friend James R. Powell. No, not dead; just did not care to go to California. Our late addition is Mr. and Mrs. Ernst Montague, Harry Smith and Kosko Krop."

December 30: "Members of band are: J.C. Miles, cornet; Ira Walker, cornet; Raymond Lattimore, clarinet; George Walker, baritone and violin; John Wet, alto and traps; Earnest Montague and J. Russell Jackson, trombones;

Clarence Walker, tuba; Little Harry Smith and Cosgo Cropp, drums and principal comedy."

1917

April 24: "Members of our company are: Ira Walker, J. Russ Jackson, Geo. Walker, Harry Smith, Cosgo Cropp, Clarence Walker, Lawrence Baker, Earnest Elliott, Ben Shelton and Mr. and Mrs. J.C. Miles."

July 7: "Members of our company at present are Ira Walker, Harry Smith, Cosgo Kropp, H.A. Quick, Clarence Walker, Ben Coy, Earnest Elliot, James R. Jackson, Roy Mays, Mr. and Mrs. J.C. Miles. Some happy family, and we expect to enlarge some with the addition of another clarinet and slip horn soon."

September 22: "J.C. Miles has added to his roster Frank Perryman and John H. Mason."

September 29: "Our company consists of the following twelve people: J.C. Miles, cornet and leader; Ira Walker, solo cornet; William Simpson, first cornet and end; H.A. Quick, clarinet; George Walker, baritone and violin; Harry Smith, alto and end; Frank Perryman, trombone; J.R. Jackson, trombone; Clarence

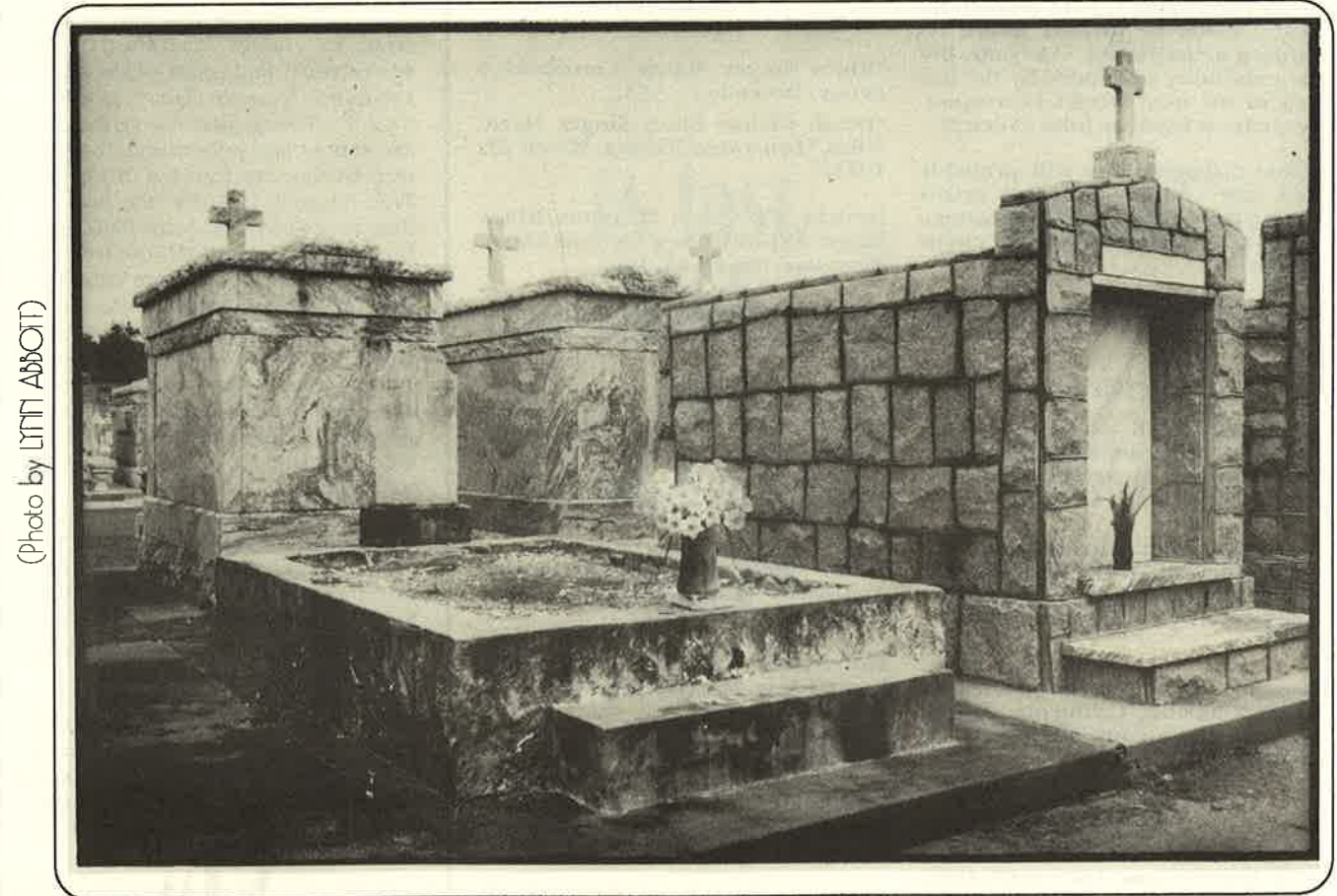


Photo by LYNN ABBOTT

A vase full of plastic daffodils brightens the site of Lizzie's unmarked grave in St. Louis Cemetery No. 3, New Orleans

Walker, tuba; John H. Mason, snare drum and end; J.K. Johnson, bass drum and end, and Mrs. J.C. Miles, featuring all the latest and up-to-date songs and taking care of the semi-circle as conversationalist."

November 3: "Members of our company are J.C., Ira Walker, James Jackson, Geo. Walker, Frank Perryman, Harry Smith, John H. Mason, Arelis Watts, Clarence Walker, Joe Johnson, Mrs. J.C."

Note: Several future recording artists can be found in these rosters:

James Powell would lead Powell's Jazz Monarchs on a 1926 Okeh recording of "Laughing Blues." During the late 30's and early 40's, he recorded with Benny Carter, Hot Lips Page, Fats Waller, Billie Holiday, etc.

Ira Walker and **E.H. Robbins** would turn up on an obscure 1924 Auto-graph release by "Everett Robbins and his Syncopating Robins."

Harry Smith could be the same man who recorded extensively in London during the mid-1930s, including sessions with W.C. Handy's one-time banjoist, Ike Hatch.

J.C. O'Bryant, listed as "first clarinet" in the November 7, 1914 correspondence, could be prolific future recording artist Jimmy O'Bryant, but the possibility is clouded by the fact that in the next week's correspondence he is listed as John O'Brien.

Astute discographers will probably find more future recording artists among the musicians who accompanied Lizzie Miles during her circus career.

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FIRST AND LAST DAYS IN LYNCHBURG

(A last look at LYNCHBURG LUKE)

by DON KENT



(photo by HENRY SMITH)

THE ONLY KNOWN PHOTO OF LUKE JORDAN

KEVIN CLEARY: "I want to tell you about this photo of Luke Jordan. In 1977, I wrote a story about Luke for the *Lynchburg (Virginia) News*. A couple of days later, I received a phone call from Henry Smith, who told me he had a picture of Luke Jordan. I went over to Mr. Smith's house and was shown a small snapshot Mr. Smith said he shot in the 1940s after receiving a camera for his birthday. Mr. Smith said he routinely walked around Lynchburg's Fifth Street area—predominately black—photographing everything he saw. Luke Jordan just came walking by and gestured to Smith as he shot this photo (note the wilted flower in his lapel). I took the photo to several people who knew Luke, and they identified it without hesitation—including Frank Wright, a local guitarist who operates a commercial art studio. Mr. Wright said he once showed Luke how to make a barre chord on his guitar, and Luke reacted with amazement."

In 1968 preliminary research was done on Luke Jordan of Lynchburg, Virginia (see *Blues Unlimited* #66), then and now a favorite artist, which continued sporadically over the next 15 years. Aided by Lynchburg's own Kevin Cleary, who had a really profound passion for Luke "Jerdin" (as he was called), we made a multitude of (often vague) "expeditions" to try and ferret out the secrets of one of Virginia's few prewar secular artists. Kevin's tenacity paid off with a copy of the only snapshot known of Jordan, as well as locating the undertaker who buried him, which resulted in finding Jordan's grave.

Virginia's black music was largely ignored by record companies

A not-unexpected side result of all this chasing after old musicians and vagrant leads was the realization that Virginia's black music was woefully unrepresented by commer-

cial record companies during the Golden Age of Shellac (circa 1926-1940), excepting religious quartets. Twenty years of canvassing and interviewing (as Kip Lornell could testify) leads one to realize that there were a multitude of musicians of all stripes who flourished at this time and then vanished without a note. From Richmond to Roanoke, from Rectorville to Danville, black music rose and fell without documentation. If half as much black string music had been recorded as white, a phenomenal picture of Virginia blues would have emerged. The handful of artists who did record were firmly in what is characterized as the "East Coast" tradition, but remnants of more maverick and hard-hitting musicians who were active in the '20s and '30s would have (had they recorded) shaken assumptions.

Regardless, all the information that can be expected after more than a half-century is meager: Luke Jordan was born in West Virginia in 1894. Brown Pollard, a contemporary

(b. 1897) who began hanging out in Lynchburg from his native contiguous county (Amherst) in 1914, remembers Jordan's coming to town around 1916. He had thought Jordan was from Appomattox, Va., because Jordan knew musicians there. More likely, Jordan had merely come from there as his last stopping-point before Lynchburg. Luke was already playing "Pick Poor Robin Clean," as well as "Cocaine Blues," when he joined a robust musical scene in Lynchburg. Although Jordan's best effort was probably "Church Bells Blues," it was not unique to him. Pollard stated that the tune was the rage around 1914, and everybody played it. He claims to have taught it to Jordan and implied that the blues were not a major part of Jordan's repertoire prior to his arrival. Another informant stated that "Church Bells" went back at least to 1912, and, before that, Vesterpol was preferred to standard tuning.

Jordan was drafted in World War I

Jordan's being drafted during World War I prevented him from being a complete cipher, since he received a military funeral which also supplied the dates of his life and death. While it is unknown if he served overseas, he went on to become the most well-remembered and liked musician in the town and surrounding area. The majority of older people Kevin and I interviewed remembered Jordan's singing and playing, and his most popular songs. In much the same way Charley Patton is mostly remembered for "Pony Blues" and "Banty Rooster," few citizens of Lynchburg could recall any songs other than "Pick Poor Robin Clean," "Cocaine Blues," and "Church Bells Blues." An unexpurgated verse (that he would only sing to male groups) is recalled from the former song:

"Picked his head, picked his feet.

Would've picked his asshole, but it wasn't fit to eat."

Still, it was unusual to find anyone middle-aged who hadn't seen or heard Jordan play on the streets or attended a party or dance where he played. He was popular with white and colored alike, playing white square dances as quickly as country



(courtesy of Joe Bussard and Sherman Tolén)

(from the collection of JOE BUSSARD)

Charlotte, N.C., August, 1927—remembered in Lynchburg as early as 1912—said to have been Jordan's "best effort"



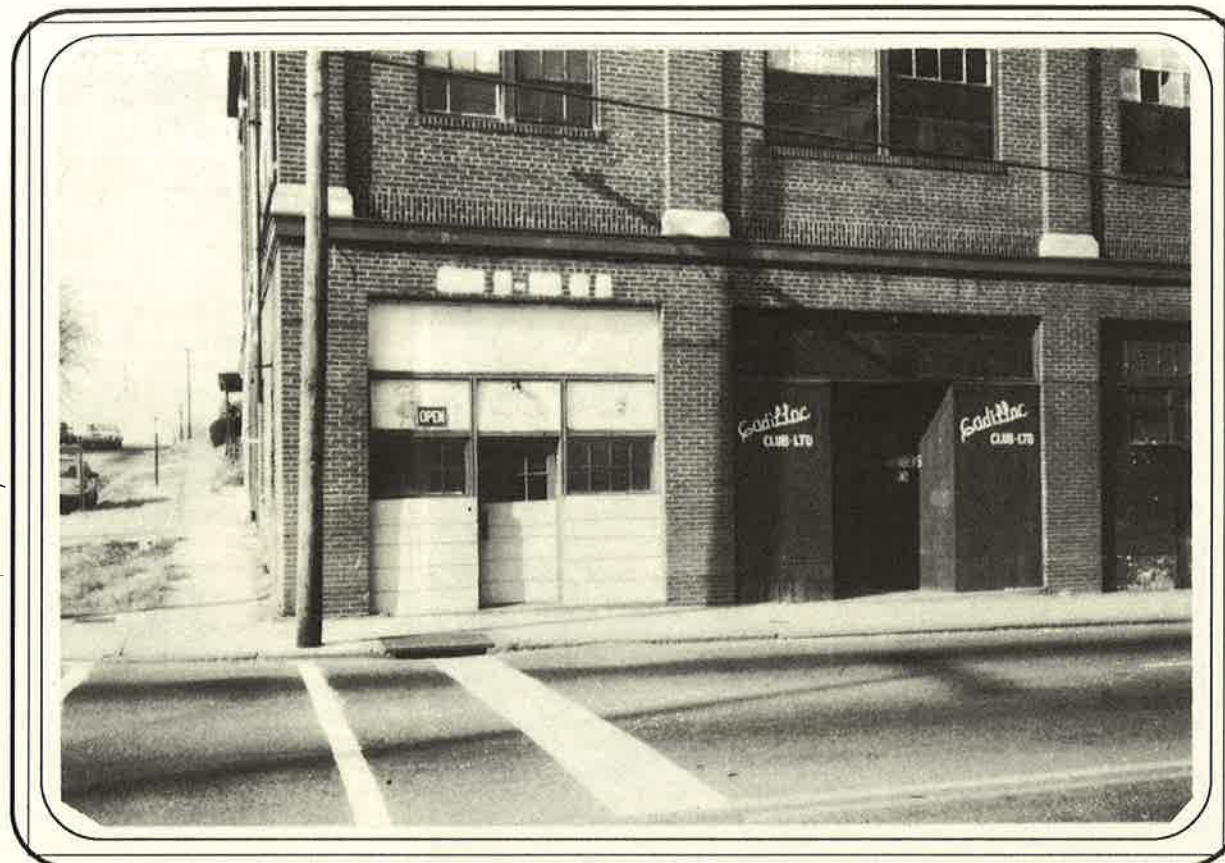
(photo by KEVIN CLEARY)
FIFTH AND MAIN—Lynchburg, Va.

'I was going down Fifth Street, turning out Main. Looking for the man who sell cocaine'—(from 'Won't You Be Kind')

(transcription by Kevin Cleary)

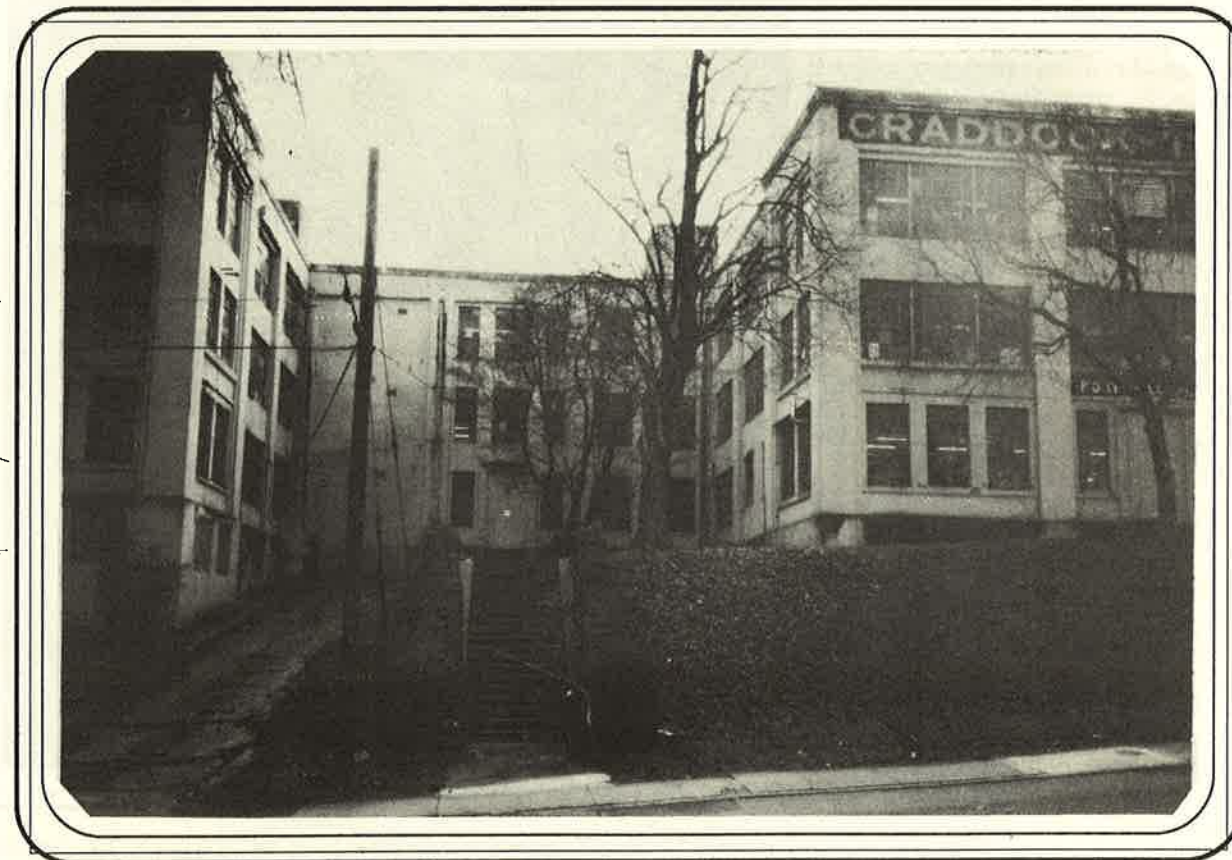


Jordan's second session:
New York City—
November 18, 1929



(photo by KEVIN CLEARY)

FIFTH AND POLK—Kevin Cleary: '(photo of Luke Jordan was shot just around the corner.) Green's barber shop used to be at this corner. 'Luke was a regular visitor,' Mr. Green said,—especially if it was raining.'



(photo by KEVIN CLEARY)

Lynchburg Shoe Manufacturing Plant—Kevin Cleary: 'Luke Jordan used to show up at local manufacturing plants at lunchtime and play for 5¢ per song.'



August 16, 1927: Luke Jordan's best-remembered song

Jordan's first two records sold well for Victor ("Pick Poor Robin Clean," especially, sold enough in the area to be canvassed regularly in the 1960s). Victor contacted him again in 1929 to record him in New York, resulting in Victor 38,564: "My Gal Done Quit Me/Won't You Be Kind?" This coupling is a minor treasure, if not as powerful as "Church Bells/Cocaine," and fortunately, not hopelessly rare, even for a Depression record. Two other intriguing titles that no one recalled, "If I Call You Mama/Tom Brown Sits in His Prison Cell" have never surfaced (by virtue of their issuance on Victor 23,400 in July, 1933). A long-projected release by the now-defunct *Mamlish Records* ("Old Dominion Blues") was forestalled in hopes of its recovery.

Jordan had lost his voice by the mid-'40s

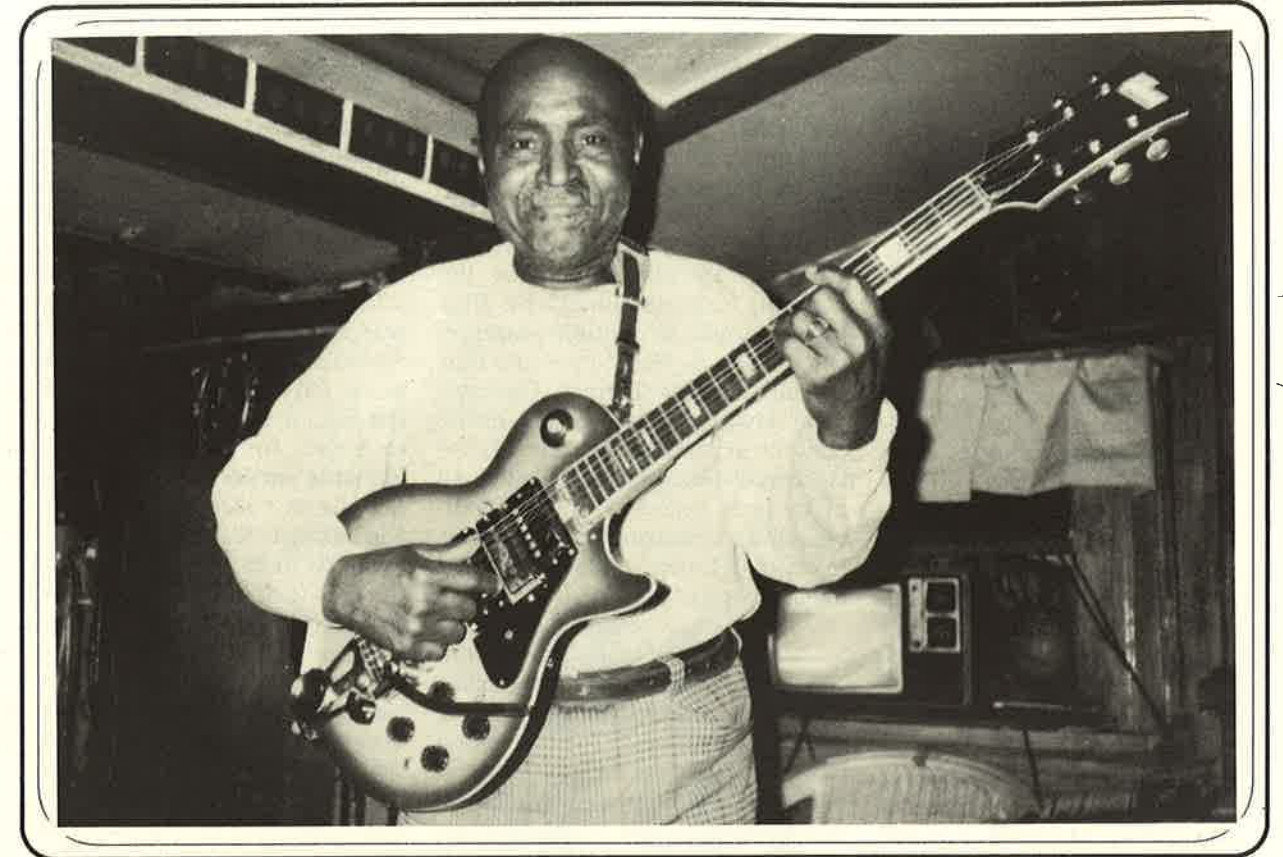
Jordan stayed in Lynchburg throughout the Depression, often playing in front of the local shoe factory for a nickel a song. No one ever recalled him having a job, but

suppers. He was noted as a stone cocaine addict in his early years, and an almost hopeless drunk in his later ones.

His introduction to the Victor race lists is a mystery. It's remotely possible—he did travel some in the '20s—that he auditioned for Victor in Charlotte, N.C. in 1927. More likely, he was referred by the Victor dealer in Richmond, who occasionally acted as talent scout. Or, possibly, he was referred by the local Victor/Paramount dealer on Main Street, since he had become a musical presence in town by then. A former crony, Fortune Anthony, said that Jordan (best man at Anthony's wedding) had already become known as the best singer around by 1925. It should be mentioned that although Jordan absorbed some of the local style, he does not reflect the area's entire blues scene, anymore than Richmond's Spark Plug Smith (who sojourned frequently in Lynchburg, allegedly even living there for a few years) is typical of that area's blues scene.



January 5, 1933: Spark Plug Smith, a Richmond, Va. native, was a frequent visitor to Lynchburg



(photo by KEVIN CLEARY)

GEORGE COLMORE—During the '40s he and his wife played in a gospel group in the Lynchburg area. Luke Jordan was a regular visitor at his house (George also plays blues)—(Kevin Cleary)



November, 1929—"a minor treasure"

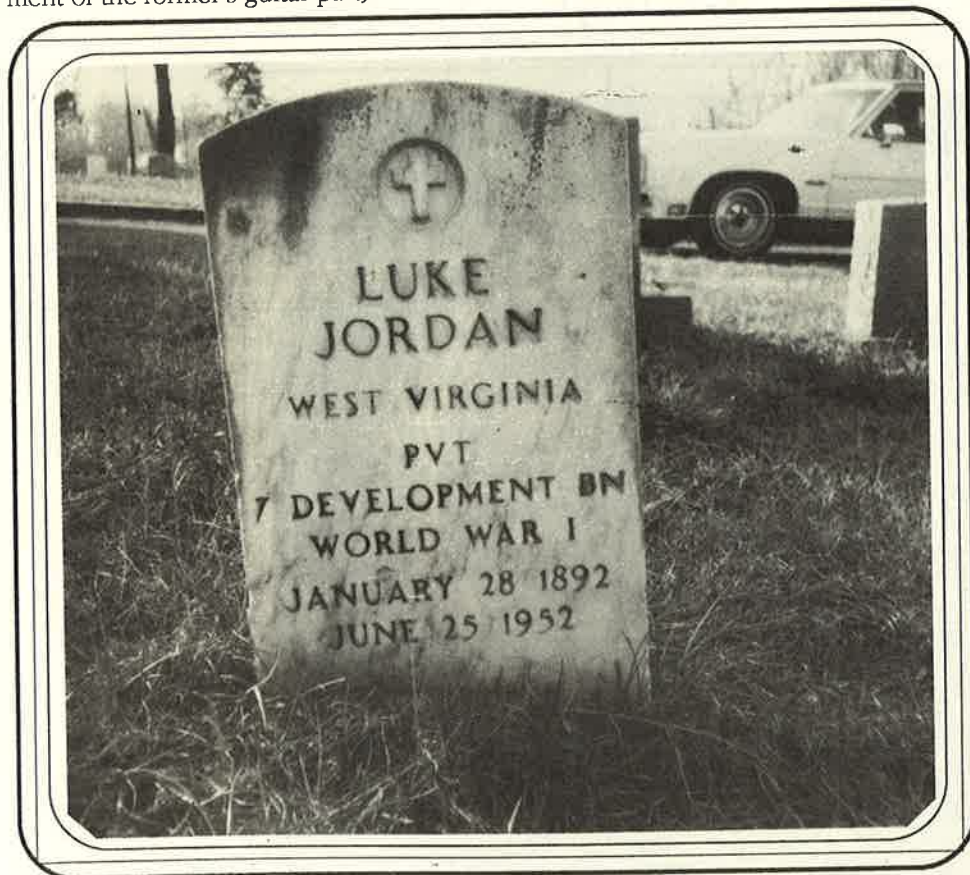
obviously, he could stay at some sort of sustenance level in an area where he was well known and had friends. By the early 1940s, he seemed to have lost his voice, or ruined it through drinking. He played and sometimes stayed with a local gospel/band guitarist, George Colmore, until the late '40s, when he went to live with a sister in Philadelphia. He returned to Lynchburg to be buried in 1954.

It would be stretching things to term Luke Jordan a bluesman, although he was oft described as such. He was more of a local bard, such as Mance Lipscomb. The black population of West Virginia (never very large) was not substantial in Jordan's youth; only after the turn of the century did blacks migrate to the southern counties for work. In the years when his repertoire was forming, blues were probably less vital in an area that was fairly isolated (even for the time) and overwhelmingly white. Of his six sides, only two (in the key of E) would seem to qualify as blues: "Church Bells Blues" and "My Gal Done Quit Me" (the latter, his only narrative theme, features a slight rearrangement of the former's guitar part).

The remainder are representative of pre-blues, raggy, minstrel, secular black music, which had wide circulation. Other snippets of songs remembered by Jordan's friends were not particularly blues oriented. Versions were done of "Pick Poor Robin Clean" by Geeshie Wiley and Elvie Thomas, "Traveling Coon" by Jim Jackson, "Cocaine Blues" by Dick Justice, and the *double-entendre* "Won't You Be Kind" by Hattie Hart as well as Walter Coleman. The latter song always contained an erotic content as exemplified by Mance Lipscomb's unexpurgated version. All of Jordan's versions show an individualistic treatment of these songs (excluding Justice's, which was most likely a copy of Jordan's).

Only "Church Bells" (from 1912-1914) is indicative of the blues style played around the area, along with "Tampa Blues." The latter song (in A standard) was the most popular blues theme in the area—anyone who picked guitar before 1950 (and even after) was familiar with it. When interviewed in 1968, Brown Pollard claimed it was one of the two songs he had originated (around 1918); at

the time, I had not heard the song or realized how widespread it was. The song itself is widely known in the counties surrounding Lynchburg, but does not seem to have traveled farther south than Stuart, Va., or further north than Charlottesville, Va. (where a 12-string guitarist is remembered having played it with local favorite "Hopper" Grass). One recording of it was made in Newark, N.J., in 1943, by Skoodle-Dum-Doo and Sheffield on Regis; the former pseudonym cloaks the identity of Seth Richards, who recorded for Columbia in 1928. Richards' version is identical to those heard and collected by myself and Kip Lornell. It's not impossible for Richards to have been from around the area (nor is it impossible for him to have only been a temporary resident, or having learned the song in Newark from migrating Virginia musicians). There's nothing in Richards' approach that precludes a Virginia origin, and the fact that he used a 12-string is only incidental. His music is more indicative of Virginia styles that flourished and went unrecorded.



(photo by KEVIN CLEARY)

LUKE JORDAN'S GRAVE

—Forest Hill Cemetery on Route 221 in West Lynchburg—Kevin Cleary: "An employee of the local funeral home took me to the grave. He said he remembered it because he liked Luke. He was my friend."

100 YEARS FROM TODAY

A SURVEY OF AFRO-AMERICAN MUSIC
IN 1891
AS RECORDED IN THE
BLACK COMMUNITY PRESS

FISK UNIVERSITY! CONCERT

AT
MASONIC HALL
Two Nights,
THURSDAY & FRIDAY
March 9th & 10th.

THE CANTATA OF
ESTHER,
The Beautiful Queen!

Will be sung, in Costume, by Students from Fisk University.

PERSONATIONS:

Esther, the Queen—Soprano,	Miss Maggie Porter, Nashville.
Ahasuerus, King of Persia and Media—Bass,	Mr. Greene Evans, Memphis.
Haman, Overseer of the Realm—Baritone,	Mr. L. P. Dickerson, Chattanooga.
Zeresh, Haman's Wife—Alto,	Miss Minnie Tate, Nashville.
Mordecai—Tenor,	Mr. Thomas Rutling, Nashville.
Queen's first Maid of Honor—Soprano,	Miss Jennie Jackson, Nashville.
Hegai—Bass,	Mr. J. D. Burrus, Nashville.
High Priest—Bass,	Mr. J. H. Burrus, Nashville.
Zeresh's Maid of Honor—Alto,	Miss P. J. Anderson, Memphis.
Harbonah—Tenor,	Mr. Benj. F. Holmes, Nashville.
Prophetess—Soprano,	Miss Georgia Gordon, Nashville.
Messenger, (Reader) Maids of honor, Choruses, Quartets, etc.	

MISS ELLA SHEPPARD, - - - - **Organist.**

PROGRAMME.

PART I.	PART II.
No. 1. Chorus of Haman's friends—Haman, Haman, looz the Haman.	No. 1. Chorus of the Jews, with soloist—In the refuge of His people, Solo: "In Thee, O Lord, do I put my trust."
No. 2. Solo, Haman: "Behold this Mordecai is scorn."	No. 2. Solo, King: "What honor and dignity?"
No. 3. Duet, King and Haman: "A song a song of joy."	No. 3. Dialogue, King and Haman.
No. 4. Solo, Prophetess: "Lo, over the wicked in hours that seem brightest."	No. 4. Chorus, "Aha, proud Haman begins to fall."
No. 5. Solo and chorus, Mordecai, Esther and the Jews: "O O Israel, for thus do I tremble!"	No. 5. Quartet of male voices: "The King has given con- sentment."
No. 6. Mordecai and Esther, with chorus of Jews: "In thus into the King."	No. 6. Chorus of rejoicing at Haman's defeat, with solo: "Open ye the gates."
No. 7. Chorus: "H—that goeth forth and weepeth."	No. 7. Solo, with chorus a lamentation: "Thus will keepers in perfect peace."
No. 8. Solo, King and Esther: "What wilt thou Queen Esther?"	No. 8. Solo, Haman protesting Mordecai the favored of the King: "Thus shall it be done—into the man whom the King delighted to honor."
No. 9. Solo and duet, King and Queen: "Long live our beau- tiful Queen!"	No. 9. Solo, Zeresh on a letter to Haman: "The galling defeat, alas! we know it all."
No. 10. Chorus, Call to the banquet: "All come to the banquet hall."	No. 10. Duet and chorus, at the Banquet: "Long live our beautifull Queen."
No. 11. Solo, "Aha—Why should I be so vexed? With my destruction, 'Then shall no care."	No. 11. Banquet music.
	No. 12. Dialogue, King and Esther: "What is thy petition?"
	No. 13. Quartet, Mordecai, Zeresh, Hegai and Maid of Honor: "Do I wake or do I dream?"
	No. 14. Chorus: "When the Lord is angry in the captivity of Zion."
	No. 15. Finale, Chorus with a compassing chorus: "Praise ye the Lord!"

Tickets of Admission - - - - **50 Cents.**
Reserved Seats - - - - **75 Cents.**

Reserved Seats can be secured at the Hall on Thursday and Friday. The Concert will begin at 8 o'clock.

The Fine Cabinet Organ, belonging to the University, used at these Concerts, is of the cele-
brated Mason & Hamlen make, for which R. R. DORMAN & CO. are Agents for Tennessee.

"The Cantata Of Esther" was a popular vehicle for 19th
century African-American school programs

Courtesy: Fisk University Library, Special Collections

RESEARCHED
FROM
MICROFILM BY DOUG SEROFF
AND LYNN ABBOTT
EDITED AND WITH COMMENTARY
BY DOUG SEROFF AND LYNN ABBOTT

JANUARY 2, 1891: "The Cantata Christmas Night—The delightful cantata of 'Queen Esther,' was given under the auspices of St. Matthews Lyceum at Fraternity hall on Christmas night. The attendance was large and hence the Lyceum must have netted a neat sum as the results of their efforts. Some of the principals in the cast were the same as those who participated in the same some time ago, but there were quite a number of new voices, who while lacking in the power of voice almost made it up in sweetness of tone. Despite mistakes here and there, such as a principal, singing out of tune, the pianist in error, and long waits, the presentation was as creditable as could be expected from the short time that was spent in preparation. The chorus was unusually good. Miss E. Azalia Smith made a very pretty queen and sang as sweetly as she always does. "After the cantata dancing formed the chief amusement." (*Detroit Plaindealer*)

George L. White, inspired the organization and initial tour of the Fisk University Jubilee Singers.

JANUARY 3, 1891: "The students of Hampton Institute gave a concert in New Bedford, Mass. last week. The singing by a quartet of students was excellent. A collection was taken after the concert, for the benefit of the Institute." (*Indianapolis Freeman*)

JANUARY 10, 1891: "Exceptionally fine invitations announcing the marriage, January 27th at Port Elizabeth, Cape Colony, South Africa, of Miss Mattie E. Allen of Columbus, Ohio, and Orpheus Myron McAdoo have reached many of their friends in this country... Mr. McAdoo is an educated gentleman who is very successfully managing a jubilee company which left the country some months ago. We rather think he is a graduate of Hampton College. Miss Allen is well-known in Ohio, and Washington, D.C.... She taught school several years in this state." (*Cleveland Gazette*)

JANUARY 16, 1891: "A number of the members of the Cleveland Colored Minstrel Company got into a fight with trainmen on the Missouri Pacific between St. Joseph, Mo. and Achison, Ks. last week. Tom McIntosh the principal comedian was badly hurt." (*Detroit Plaindealer*)

JANUARY 17, 1891: "The Tennessee Jubilee Singers, Mme Mathilda S. Jones, leading soprano, sang at the President's Palace in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, November 16th. The music hall was handsomely decorated... The President complimented the singers in a neat speech." (*Indianapolis Freeman*)

JANUARY 17, 1891: "Miss Mattie Allen of Columbus, Ohio, who is now traveling in South Africa as a soloist in a concert troupe organized in the East for a three

years tour, is winning the highest encomiums from the press of the various cities in which she sings, as well as having secured a husband in manager McAdoo. The following concerning her is clipped from a paper published in Cape Town, S.A.: 'Miss Mattie Allen has a complete tenor voice, and anybody not looking at the singer would imagine that a gifted male tenor was performing. Her solo was encored to the echo, and she kindly obliged with the "Maid Of The Mill," sung with a simple pathos which carried her hearers with it.'" (*Cleveland Gazette*)

JANUARY 23, 1891: "Loudin's Jubilee Singers gave a very excellent concert at the Metropolitan Church Thursday night to an audience of over 2500 people. Between the first and second parts he gave a very interesting narrative of his tour around the world." (*Detroit Plaindealer*)

JANUARY 24, 1891: "The Sad Ending of Blind Tom's Eventful Career—Where Is His Money?—Poor 'Blind Tom,' the musical genius, is driving away the remaining months of an eventful life at a private retreat in St. Mark's place. He has been for some time an idiot, and now consumption has set its iron grasp upon his once tough frame, and his days are numbered. 'Blind Tom' earned in his day something like half a million dollars. Today he is comparatively a pauper, and the wonder is what has become of the fortune he made, as he was always in charge of a guardian and was never allowed to spend it.

"Judge Andrews, of the Supreme Court, confirmed a report of referee Jerome Buck allowing the estate of Daniel P. Holland \$3,000 for services rendered and necessities furnished the mad musician during the life-time of Holland. Mrs. Elise Bethune, the committee having charge of Tom, vigorously opposed the confirmation of the report. The Judge observed that it was sadly apparent that there would be nothing left for the maintenance of the unfortunate pianist after all claims were paid.

"The musician's real name is Thomas Wiggins. He was born in Virginia about forty-six years ago. His mother was a slave. From the time he was able to toddle Tom displayed wonderful powers as a musician. He could play on any kind of instrument, and yet never had an instructor. With the surrender of Lee at Appomattox, Tom became a free man, or rather free boy. An alert, enterprising Southerner, J.W. Bethune, saw his pecuniary value and got an order from a Virginia court appointing him a committee for the maintenance and safety of Blind Tom. Bethune took him out on the road—to every city, town and hamlet from Bos-

"The Cantata Of Esther, the Beautiful Queen," a costumed musical drama based on the Old Testament story, was a popular and ambitious vehicle for 19th century African-American school programs, as well as church and community entertainments among the "aspiring" strata of black society. The successful presentation of "Queen Esther" early in 1871, by a group of Fisk University students under music instructor



BY 1891 BLIND TOM
HAD EARNED HALF A MILLION DOLLARS
—BUT WHERE WAS THE MONEY?

ton to San Francisco. Tom proved the best card of his time. In those days Tom earned for his manager from \$2,000 to \$4,000 a week. His mother, Charity Wiggins, thought that she ought to get hold of some of his earnings and fought in the courts for the possession of her son. There were speculative people behind her who supplied her with the needed cash to get legal and bodily control of Tom. Bethune won in every fight. The courts decided that she was not a proper person to have control of such an erratic genius as Tom.

"When Bethune died a few years ago he left Tom to the care of his wife, Elise. She, in time, was appointed a committee by the court to maintain Tom. She, too, had to fight with Mrs. Wiggins and other people for the control of Tom. Soon, however, he broke down in health, became dangerously insane and was placed under restraint. All last summer Tom had delighted audiences in the house adjacent to his retreat in St. Mark's place. He played incessantly upon the piano, guitar and other melodious instruments. He can play no more.

"The wonder is what has become of the money which Bethune was obliged, by mandate of the court, to deposit for Tom's maintenance. It was supposed to be twenty-five per cent of the net proceeds of the entertainments given. That would give Tom at least \$125,000 in his own right. There is now, it is authoritatively stated, less than \$5,000 in the exchequer. The \$3,000 judgment entered will make an awful gash in the fund." (*Cleveland Gazette*)

NOTE: A variation of this article appeared in the January 17 *New York Age*, where it was credited to the white *New York Morning Journal*. There's an excellent chapter on Blind Tom in James M. Trotter's *Music And Some Highly Musical People*, originally published in 1881 and reprinted in 1968 by Johnson Reprint Corporation, New York. Trotter called Blind Tom: "unquestionably and conspicuously the most wonderful musician the world has ever known."

JANUARY 24, 1891: "The Nashville Tennessee Jubilee Singers, under the direction of Prof. J.H. Jones, gave an acceptable concert on Thursday evening, last week at Little Zion Church, Harlem." (*New York Age*)

JANUARY 31, 1891: "*Lightbourn's Mail Notes* of St. Thomas, W.I., in its issue of January 8, contains the following: 'The Allemania from Haiti brought to our shores yesterday Mme Mathilda S. Jones and her talented company of Jubilee Singers. On repeated occasions we have had the plea-

AFRICAN AS SHE IS SUNG.

A Familiar Hymn and a Song as Rendered by Zulu Dingang Omesah.
From the Galveston Weekly Text.
"COME TO JESUS."

1 Enar Jessebar,
Enar Jessebar,
Enar Jessebar.
Chorus—Sarnar, Sarnar.

2 I Quebarlar,
I Quebarlarlar,
I Quebarlar.
Chorus—Sarnar, Sarnar.

3 I Aquarmar,
I Aquarmar,
I Aquarmar.
Chorus—Sarnar, Sarnar.

4 I Adarwar,
I Adarwar,
I Adarwar.
Chorus—Sarnar, Sarnar.

5 I Baquarnar,
I Baquarnar,
I Baquarnar.
Chorus—Sarnar, Sarnar.

6 E Midono,
E Midono,
E Midono.
Chorus—Sarnar, Sarnar.

THE PICKANINNY'S SONG.

Yea Yea Yea,
Yea Yea Yea,
Oo da see,
Oo da see—e—e.

Chorus—Yea, Yea, Yea.

Ching, ching, ching hollamarsar har.
Ching, ching, ching hollamarsar har.
Ching, ching, ching hollamarsar har.
Chorus—Yea, Yea, Yea.

Yi yi yi oh yi yi yi yi,
Oo wy ou wy ah sy wa,
O ding a mar O ding a mar.
Chorus—Yea, Yea, Yea.

Hook O mocka;
Hook O mocka;
Hook O mocka;
Hook O mocka.

Chorus—Yea, Yea, Yea.
—Zulu Dingang Omesah. Capetown, Africa.

January 3, 1891
(*New York Age*)

sure of mentioning the great success which this new celebrated prima donna has attained in the West Indies, in fact each island has been but a fresh field in which to gather laurels. It has now been two or three years since Madame Jones made her debut before a West Indian audience at Jamaica and starred. In Haiti she and her company have just met with great success and we hope that a portion is in store for them here." (*Indianapolis Freeman*)

FEBRUARY 7, 1891: "Natchez, Miss. is the birthplace of the late Miss E.T. Greenfield, the famous 'Black Swan,' who was a noted vocalist of her time. She sang at the Queen's Concert Rooms, in Hanover Square, London, in about the year 1859. The present prima donna, Madame Selika, is a native of the same place, and has extensively traveled abroad, singing before several crowned heads." (*Cleveland Gazette*)

FEBRUARY 7, 1891: "Association Hall, Brooklyn, was crowded to its utmost capacity last Monday evening, at the concert given for the benefit of Siloam Presbyterian Church...The overflow of Brooklyn's music loving people was a splendid tribute to Miss Flora Batson, the famous mezzo-soprano...The concert was opened with a piano solo, 'Racing Down the Rapids,' by Mrs. Wilson...Mrs. Robert W. Conner...is an accomplished elocutionist, and kept the audience in a perpetual uproar. As she had never appeared before an audience of like complexion before, perhaps, the appreciation with which she was received must have been an agreeable surprise to her...Miss Batson sang 'Scene E Cavatina' from the opera 'Atilla' in which the vast improvement she has made in operatic singing as against her fame as the queen of ballad soloists was remarked. The fact that she received four encores for this rendition is sufficient evidence that she acquitted herself to the satisfaction of the audience." (*New York Age*)

FEBRUARY 7, 1891: (Stage column) "Prof. Z.A. Coleman, the basso profundo, formerly of Donovan's Jubilee Singers, has been stopping in Helena, Montana for the past few months, trying to get the Helena people stuck on his style, but they didn't stick, he finally gave them a cool shake and married a white lady, and embarked for Great Falls, taking with him his new wife and her \$3000. We wish the Prof. success, esp. as long as the \$3000 lasts." (*Indianapolis Freeman*)

FEBRUARY 7, 1891: (Washington, D.C. News) "Loudin's Jubilee Singers met with a crowning success while here; they sang in all of the principal colored churches in the city." (*Indianapolis Freeman*)

FEBRUARY 7, 1891: (Albany, N.Y. News) "The concert given by the champion solo singers, Prof. M.S. Simmons and Henry Tate, at Israel A.M.E. Church, Thursday evening was well attended. Prof. Simmons has travelled in twenty-eight States of the Union and also extensively in Europe. Whoever hears the bass solos rendered by him acknowledges him to be a singer of merit. The fine soprano of Mr. Tate is something wonderful. He assumes fe-

The South Conquered! California Surrenders! The Middle States Captured!

To FLORA BATSON, Queen of Song.

THE GREATEST COLORED SINGER IN THE WORLD.
Completes a fifteen thousand mile tour of the continent and will appear in concert
At ASSOCIATION HALL, Bond and Fulton Sts., Brooklyn,
Monday Evening, Feb. 2, 1891,

SUPPORTED BY
Mrs. ALBERT WILSON, Miss MAGGIE SCOTT, Mr. HENRY JACKSON, Mr. HENRY W. ORKIN
and Other Talent,

For the benefit of SILOAM PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, Rev. W. H. DICKERSON, Pastor.

A charming and gifted singer.—San Francisco Chronicle.

A mezzo soprano of wonderful range.—San Francisco Examiner.

A sparkling diamond in the golden realm of song.—San Jose (Cal.) Mercury.

Her vocal register has a wonderful sweep, from lowest contralto notes to soprano heights.—Los Angeles (Cal.) Evening Express.

She will not be forgotten by this generation of Californians.—San Francisco letter in New York Age.

A better pleased audience never fled out of a theatre than that which listened to her last evening.—Los Angeles (Cal.) Tribune.

The marvelous sweetness, purity and compass of her voice, covering in its range nearly three octaves, is the wonder and admiration of musical critics.—San Diego (Cal.) Sun.

She scored a complete success as a vocalist of high ability and fully justified the favorable criticisms of the Eastern press.—San Francisco Examiner.

The indescribable pathos of her voice in dramatic and pathetic selections wrought a wondrous effect.—The Colonial, Victoria, British Columbia.

A magnificent voice, highly cultivated and capable of compassing more octaves than any voice we ever heard.—Southern California Christian Advocate.

She sings without affectation, and has an absolute command of her voice from the highest to the lowest register. Her execution is firm, her notes correct and her enunciation perfect. She has a surprise to every one present, and established a reputation that will guarantee her full houses at her future concerts on the Pacific coast.—San Francisco Call.

Miss Batson possesses two distinct voices, both flexible and firm in tone; one, a clear, bell-like mezzo soprano of wide range, which never once runs into the falsetto, and the other a melodious soft and deep baritone, whose lower chest notes, clear and distinct, appear almost unnatural coming from a woman. The audience would have willingly listened to her melodious voice until morning.—San Jose (Cal.) Times.

Never before was so select, so critical an audience, more moved, more educated, more electrified, than by this colored mistress of song. Though of pleasing presence, she is unaffected, almost child-like in her bearing; this with her wonderful singing, captivates the heart of the listener, regardless of the "color line."—San Diego (Cal.)

Her remarkable voice, which is of equal purity in the upper registers of a mezzo soprano and the rolling depths of the lowest tenor notes, was a revelation to her hearers. The flexibility, metal and purity of her vocal organ justify the title Miss Batson to the distinction of being called the colored Jenny Lind.—Pittsburgh (Pa.) Dispatch.

Those who crowded the opera house last night to hear Miss Flora Batson, the "colored Jenny Lind," had a new experience. For the first time they saw on the platform the embodiment of the new civilization in the people of that race—a lady of refinement and cultivation. As a crowned queen of song—and she wore her jeweled diadem with a self-poise and humility that a princess might have envied—Miss Batson convinced the critics with her first selection, the "Huntman's Horn," as the sonorous amplitude of her rare voice resounded like a silver bugle echoing the hounds to pursuit of game, that she possessed an organ magnificent in respect of sound, and in the use of which there is little the European masters will find to correct. In response to the encore which brought her back, she gave a selection from Il Trovatore in baritone, showing the extraordinary range of her voice, and producing a melody like the low tones of a pipe organ under a master's touch.—San Diego (Cal.) Sun.

Has earned the fame of being the greatest colored singer in the world.—Vicksburg (Miss.) Post.

All her numbers were sung without effort—as the birds sing.—Mobile (Ala.) Daily Register.

A voice of great range and of remarkable depth and purity.—Louisville (Ky.) Courier Journal.

She will never lack for an audience in the "City of Seven Hills."—Richmond (Va.) Planet.

The sweetest voice that ever charmed a Virginia audience.—Lynchburg (Va.) Daily Advance.

It is the general verdict that her singing here has fully justified the magnificent notices of the Eastern press.—New Orleans Pelican.

A highly cultivated mezzo soprano of great sweetness, power and compass and of dramatic quality.—Charleston (S. C.) News and Courier.

The range of her voice is such she can easily change from the purest soprano to as fine a baritone as any male singer can produce.—Columbus (S. C.) Daily Register.

No other singer has ever drawn such audiences in New Orleans so many (seventeen) successive nights. The marvelous sweetness, power and range of her voice, her perfect articulation, and her ability to express in song every passion of the soul, enable her, without apparent effort, to electrify by her dramatic power, to convulse with laughter by her inimitable humor, or to move to tears by the irresistible pathos of her voice.—New Orleans Standard.

Her voice is rich in the qualities most valuable to a singer. The range is wonderful. It is clear and resonant, exceedingly flexible and pure. Her articulation is perfect, and she sings with a freedom from effort seen rarely, except in the most famous singers. The tones of her voice are powerful and thrilling. It is rather dramatic than emotional. Her renditions last night covered an extraordinary versatility and range.—Nashville American.

We of the South have all our lives enjoyed the sweet melodies characteristic of the colored race, but no one ever dreamed that a colored person could reach the merit and achieve the distinction which this singer has attained.—Wilmington (N. C.) Daily Journal.

Miss Batson, with her wonderful voice, has a divine mission to aid in breaking down the stubborn walls of prejudice, which must sooner or later give way to our nation's progress towards a higher civilization.—Lynchburg (Va.) Coe. Boston Transcript.

In marked contrast with some others, Miss Batson never boasts of her own work, nor speaks ill of other singers. She simply does the best she can, and round by round is steadily climbing the ladder of fame. Like all really great artists, she is modest and unassuming, but she need not praise herself. No colored singer living can present such endorsements from the American press as stand under her name to-day.—Chicago Conservator.

She electrified the vast audience at the (Mormon) Tabernacle service on Sunday by her marvelous rendition of the 7th Psalm.—Deseret Evening News, Salt Lake City, Utah.

The secret of her matchless power of electrifying an audience lies not solely in her studied art, but in the captivating melody and sweetness, and singularly extensive range of her faultless voice, coupled with her simple, unostentatious and childlike naturalness.—Rt. Rev. Bishop S. T. Jones.

Her progress through the country has been one continuous triumph.—Denver Rocky Mountain News.

The sweet magic of her voice held the vast audience spell-bound.—Bishop Tanner, Phila.

Her name is the signal for a crowded house.—Rev. L. J. Copps, Editor Church Revue, Phila.

A brilliant example of the possibilities of the race.—Dr. Swannson, Pres't University of Kentucky.

A concert in herself! It is worth going a thousand miles to hear her.—Phila. Tribune.

She has sung her way into hundreds of thousands of hearts.—Phila. Sentinel.

The unrivaled favorite of the masses.—New York Age.

The Fearless mezzo soprano.—New York Sun. The Colored Jenny Lind.—New York World.

The peerless of the country, from the Atlantic to the Pacific, white in crown—her the greater singer from the 8,000,000 colored people in America, and worthy to be ranked among the great singers of the world.—Portland (Vt.) Post.

TICKETS, to all parts of house, FIFTY CENTS.

Address Manager J. G. BERGMAN, 238 South 10th street, Philadelphia, or care of NEW YORK AGE.

"Flora Batson—Queen Of Song"
January 10, 1891 (New York Age)

male costume and imitates the part with perfection." (New York Age)

FEBRUARY 14, 1891: (Zanesville, Ohio News) "Miss Sadie Hall received a \$40 gold watch - 1st prize for selling the largest number of tickets for the concert given at Black's music hall by the Tennessee Warblers. Miss Hall sold \$58 worth." (Cleveland Gazette)

FEBRUARY 14, 1891: (Chillicothe, Ohio News) "In 1865 we had a good colored brass band, also a band wagon, but most of its members are dead now. At present we have no brass band in the city that is fit to fill an engagement." (Indianapolis Freeman)

FEBRUARY 14, 1891: (Brooklyn, N.Y. News) "Bills and cards, to which, with others, were attached the names of Messrs. Geo. A. Slater, Geo. E. Thompson and W.I. Stanley, announced a cake walk on Feb. 12, but as these gentlemen regret the use of their names and deny having any sympathy with the affair, it may be safe to say that cake walks form no portion of their social provender." (New York Age)

FEBRUARY 20, 1891: (Washington, D.C. News. A portion of a concert review:)

"The concert was largely advertised and Miss S. Labelle Anderson, we were told was the 'colored Patti' and superadded to the treat of hearing a 'Colored Patti' we

were promised several selections by the 'Inimitable Powell Quartette of Phila.' and to fill our measure to overflow, the celebrated Cook's orchestra, Prof. John T. Layton and Miss Lula Hamer, all local talent were to add to the occasion... A few minutes after eight o'clock Cook's orchestra struck up a classical overture before a select and critical audience which would have inspired a more doubtful troupe. Following the orchestra came the quartette, then the soloist and 'Shylock's Soliloquy' by Mr. Downes... From an artistic standpoint the concert was a disappointment. Miss Anderson unfortunately chose pieces too difficult and lost the effect which her voice evidently could have produced. The range of her voice is high and her tones are sweet but not strong and had she chosen a ballad, doubtless she would have scored a decided hit, but as it she has lost her last chance. The quartette introduced so much of the comical that it was encored several times and were it not for the fact that comedy is a common possession of the race, they would deserve some credit in that line. The greatest disappointment was in the elocutionist. Such a miserable murdering of Shakespeare's masterpiece would certainly have brought the old bard from his grave had he been buried in this continent. With however the appearance of the orchestra, Prof. Layton and Miss Hamer, everybody left with the appearance of having spent a pleasant evening." (Detroit Plaindealer)

FEBRUARY 21, 1891: (Erie, Penn. News) "Cleveland's Colored Minstrels gave a first class performance at the Opera House... Mr. Ollie Hall of the Challenge Quartette gave a very pleasing rendition of the hymn 'Jesus, Lover Of My Soul' to the tune of 'In The Gloaming.'" (Cleveland Gazette)

FEBRUARY 21, 1891: "The celebrated Miller Quartet (of mixed voices), under directorship of W.A. Miller, sang recently for the Hon. John Wannamaker at Bethany Sunday School at Phila., before a large audience of about 2,000 persons. They were introduced by M. Wannamaker with high recommendation." (New York Age)

FEBRUARY 28, 1891: "After Thirty-five Years Experience as an Amusement Caterer, Mr. William Foote Decides on a New Departure with Afro-American Talent..."

"Mr. Foote... was for many years manager of Haverly's Mastodon Minstrels... For three years, Mr. Foote, in London, successfully controlled the Mastodons. While in London Mr. Foote spent many an hour in the British Museum, turning over numberless volumes treating of Africa and its people. He made copious notes of the humorous side of the Negro character, as described by African travellers from the days of Mungo Park to the time of Livingstone.

WANTED

HIGH CLASS COLORED ARTISTS.

of unmistakable NEGRO ORIGIN, possessing SUPERIOR talent in ANY BRANCH of amusements and desiring engagements in Europe 1891—2 and returning to World's Fair in Chicago, 1893. Only the best representatives of Afro-American talent in the world can secure equitable and liberal pay, by addressing,

WILLIAM FOOTTE, Manager,

106 West 28th Street, New York City,

N. B.—Operatic, Dramatic, Musical, specialty Gymnastic and Dancing Stars of best quality only desired. A GREAT CHANCE AND A NEW FIELD and only opportunity for Genuine Colored talent (if accepted) to APPEAR BEFORE THE CROWNED HEADS OF EUROPE.

February 28, 1891 (New York Age)

"His study at that time was made for the purpose of getting new material, new business for his company; but the growing popularity of rival companies, which under the guise of burnt cork, were introducing variety business into minstrel shows, led him to lay aside certain cherished ideas for a more convenient opportunity. The degeneration of minstrel companies was rapid. Instead of portraying the comicalities of the Negro character, business from variety shows and the gradual growth of the burlesque and the farce comedy, developed a new field for comedians and no more study of the Negro was made. The public became tired of men who, as Mr. Foote said, 'blackened their faces to hide their gall.'...

"Through all these years Mr. Foote has been studying the problem of how to rescue Negro minstrelsy and bring it again to its former popularity... He has nosed through the Astor Library and the Cooper Institute; he has wandered about the haunts of the Negro in town and country; he has talked with them, attended their churches and schools, observing and noting many a bright action and funny gesture, until of the humorous side of the Negro he has become an authority.

"From a mass of material thus gathered, Mr. Foote hopes to evolve an evening's entertainment that will be edifying, interesting and highly amusing. It is his aim to portray the progress of the Negro from savagery, through slavery to the fullness of his powers as citizen, making the comical side of the Negro's character prominent throughout..." (*New York Age*, reprinted from the *Pueblo Opinion*)

FEBRUARY 28, 1891: (Article titled: "The African and the Foot Lights") "...In the present presentation of the drama the Afro-American has a very small, if any, part, either as an impersonator or as a character in the play. Is the time ripe for him to take his place upon the boards and become embodied in the framework of the drama? We think so. So, also does Mr. William Foote..."

"Mr. Foote... has mighty big ideas about his pet project to give the Afro-American his legitimate place in the drama and upon the stage. He has a magnificent field upon which to draw. There is as much humor and wit and pathos in the African nature as in the Irish, and given a proper opportunity to display these we believe he would take with the amusement public." (*New York Age*)

MARCH 21, 1891: (Cincinnati News) "The Carmen double quartette is making preparations for an entertainment at Union M.E. Church this month. The following

composed the club: Messrs. Charles Hinson, Grafton Jones, W.W. Staton, Harry W. Smith, C.A. Gradison, Chas. Bushong, Thos. R. Jones, C.N. Johnson. Mr. Chas. Trotter is pianist. Under the direction of Mr. Fred Burch they have attained high musical excellence." (*Cleveland Gazette*)

MARCH 28, 1891: (Kansas City News) "The Oberlin minstrel troupe has returned from their tour in an excellent, healthy condition, but bankrupt." (*Cleveland Gazette*)

MARCH 28, 1891: (Kansas City News) "The Silver Leaf Mandolin and Guitar Club is the best in the city and consists of the following gentlemen: Clun James, Fred Spencer, George Clay. They are open for engagements for balls and entertainments." (*Indianapolis Freeman*)

APRIL 4, 1891: (New Haven, Conn. News) "The National Brass Band held their promenade concert Easter Monday night at the Masonic Temple... The band was assisted by the mandolin orchestra... The affair was a success, the net proceeds being \$45." (*New York Age*)

APRIL 4, 1891: "The Johnson Brass Band is destined to fill a place in this city [New York] which is much needed. Since their inaugural concert in December last the number has been increased to twenty-four musicians, and by constant practice they have attained a high proficiency." (*New York Age*)

APRIL 11, 1891: (Lengthy article reprinted from *Transvaal Advertiser*, Lydenburg, South Africa. In part:) "Mr. Orpheus M. McAdoo must be congratulated on drawing his honor, President Kruger, out of his shell, and inducing him to attend a public entertainment on Friday at noon. His honor, punctual to his engagement, attended at the theater, just as the gun boomed forth the hour of twelve noon... His honor was received by Mr. McAdoo and conducted to a seat in front. The 'Volklied' was then sung in English by the jubilee singers, the whole of the vast audience standing. The translation was made by Mr. Leo Weinthal, and reflected the greatest credit on his ability. The anthem would have been sung in Dutch but for the risk the singers ran in failing to learn the words correctly. His honor was evidently greatly pleased with the cordial reception accorded to him, and greatly enjoyed the entertainment. The opening items, 'Steal Away to Jesus,' 'The Lord's Prayer' and 'Get You Ready,' were exceptionally well rendered and secured loud applause. In place of item No. 3 an old slave song, 'Nobody Knows The Trouble I Have Seen,' was substituted, and so plaintive was the melody

that tears could be seen stealing down the rugged features of the president. After the singing of 'Good News' Mr. Orpheus McAdoo's powerful basso voice was heard to great advantage in the rendition of 'Poor Black Joe,' whilst the hidden chorus gave Pretoria a sample of a pure harmony. 'Peter, Ring Them Bells' was another acceptable item, and the 'Jingle, Jingle, Sleigh Bell' chorus with bell accompaniment created a perfect furor.

"Mr. McAdoo at this stage announced that in consequence of the hour there would be no interval, and in a short speech thanked his honor for his presence, remarking that when back in America they would be proud to boast of having performed before the president of the great South Africa republic.

"The second half of the programme was opened by a medley consisting of selections from airs of all nations, followed by the singing of 'The Old Ark's a' Movering.' At this stage his honor left. Madame Bell then sang 'The Old Folks at Home' in a splendid manner, securing an encore. After the song of 'Wrestling With Jacob,' in which Miss Belle Gibbons' rich contralto voice was heard to great advantage, the troupe gave an imitation of the Pretoria band. The greatest praise we can bestow on the effort is to say that all the bands in Pretoria rolled into one could not produce such rich volume of sound or harmony as the jubilee singers. 'Hard Trials,' 'Bingo Was His Name,' and 'Sweet Chariot,' concluded one of the pleasantest afternoons ever spent by Pretorians." (*Cleveland Gazette*)

MAY 2, 1891: "On Tuesday evening the Apollo Social Club gave their first stag party. The club room was brilliantly illuminated with electric lights and the club's colors, blue and white. The party opened with a lively address by president Wm. H. Nimor, followed by a banjo solo by Mr. Fred A. Stevens, the popular treasurer. Boxing by Mr. Gussie Bell and Mr. Everette Chapelle, Mr. Geo. Townsend and Mr. Edward Anderson showed that the club was not lacking in pugilistic sport. The violin selection by Mr. Woodley was highly rendered. The solo by Mr. Steven Morris was very fine. The quartette by Messrs. Morris Stevens, Townsend, Dyer and Bell was received with high glee... Checkers, chess and dominoes were indulged in... Supper served at 12 o'clock." (*New York Age*)

MAY 9, 1891: "Madam Selika is said to get \$7000 a year and has a contract for three years with Foote's Afro-American Specialty Company, that left for Europe a few weeks ago. Song and dance and other acts, as well as solos, will be given.

CLEVELAND GAZETTE
June 8, 1901—Mrs. Mattie
Allen McAdoo, her son
eight-year old Orpheus
Myron Jr., her brother
Robert Allen,
and sister Lula Allen



MADAM E. AZALIA
HACKLEY
December 25, 1915,
THE FREEMAN

Selika surprises all her friends and admirers in taking this downward step." (*Cleveland Gazette*)

MAY 11, 1891: "The general public is hereby warned against the fraudulent representations of a troupe styling themselves the 'New Orleans University Glee Club,'... which is said to be raising funds for an industrial school in the South. The faculty and trustees of New Orleans University know nothing of such a troupe. They have fraudulently assumed our name and are gulling our friends, especially in the North." (*Southwestern Christian Advocate*)

MAY 16, 1891: "James Bland, the comedian, has left Cleveland's (colored) minstrels, and gone back to England. Henderson Smith, the cornetist, leads the minstrel band." (*Cleveland Gazette*)

MAY 23, 1891: "Sulzer's Harlem River Park... was the scene of the fourth annual picnic given by the J.T. Delph Social Club. This being the first picnic of the season the many present enjoyed themselves with unusual enthusiasm. Through the energetic efforts and popularity of Mr. Jas. T. Delph, the president, the entire privileges were secured... At 12:30 the Twilight Quartet appeared and were greeted by tumultuous applause. Many old fashioned songs were sung by the quartet and endorsed. The chief feature of the evening was the prize waltz... The prizes were a Scotch pug dog and a gold headed silk umbrella... The affair was attended by over 500 people and was a financial success. Prof. Craig's orchestra played the music." (*New York Age*)

MAY 30, 1891: (Providence, R.I. News) "The Apollo Club celebrated its 15th anniversary. All had an enjoyable time and the merriment prevailed until morning. Just at the hour of twelve the club drank to absent members and then sang 'Nearer My God to Thee,'... The Banjo Quartet acquitted themselves nicely." (*New York Age*)

JUNE 6, 1891: "Billy Kersands will be with Richard & Pringle's minstrels next season." (*Cleveland Gazette*)

JUNE 6, 1891: (Pittsburgh News) "The concert given by the 'Old Jubilee Singers' in Lafayette Hall Wednesday evening was very successful. After the concert, dancing was indulged in until 1:30." (*Cleveland Gazette*)

JUNE 6, 1891: (Stage column) "A challenge from the 'Boss Quintette' of Mobile, Ala. has been made public to sing for \$100 a side with any quintette in the South." (*Indianapolis Freeman*)

PROF. J. M. BECKER'S BRASS BAND.
Here for the Season! A first class Colored Brass Band from Southern Kentucky are prepared to furnish Music for Excursions, Picnics, Festivals and Receptions. We earnestly ask the patronage of Churches, Lodges and Music hunters in general. We are six in number and will endeavor to give you perfect satisfaction. Give us a trial. Address, **J. M. BECKER,** 929 Sixth Avenue, Top floor, **Or: 453 Seventh Avenue.**

May 10, 1891 (*New York Age*)

JUNE 6, 1891: "The Latest Combination in the Variety Line—Sam T. Jack's Creole Burlesque Company.

"Except in the minstrel line the Afro-American has held a very small place on the stage. It has been a number of years since Haverly put the first Georgia Minstrels upon the boards, which for a time forced recognition of worth and appreciation the world over. But minstrelsy had its day and for the past four or five years has been on the wane. The stars, McIntosh, Kersands, Banks, Lucas, the Bohee Brothers, 'Judge' Crusoe and many others having divided their forces or retired from the stage, is probably the cause of this lack of public interest. Mr. Cleveland has tried with some success to revive the colored minstrel business, and while he has a few of the original merry makers, Tom McIntosh being the manager, his company is made up mostly of new talent.

"Probably the most refined and elevated Afro-American amusement company ever organized was brought together recently by Mr. William Foote for a tour of Europe. All of his stars are new in this line, and instead of making plantation melodies and peculiar dialect their forte, they have a sort of historical bearing in portraying the different evolutions from 1860 to 1891. With such stars as Mme. Marie Selika, leader of the burlesque opera, and her husband Mr. Veloska, baritone; Mme. Mamie Flowers, a noted soprano as leader of the choruses and Mr. H.E. Jones, as banjoist and guitarist, one can see the organizer's intention was to elevate the character of the minstrel show and possibly draw a new interest.

"The latest combination seen around New York in this line is Sam T. Jack's Creole Burlesque Company. This company is composed of all Afro-Americans and the program contains many names familiar to the musical and theatre going public. The company is what they call in theatrical circles a variety company and is made up

of many New York city girls. They played to full and appreciative houses last week at Hyde and Behman's Theatre, Brooklyn. The performances commenced with a tropical revelry, introducing an excellent array of artists. The curtain rose amidst the singing of a beautiful melody, and displayed a galaxy of artists in graceful poses, with the customary end men to make the fun. Misses Florence Briscoe, Florence Hines, May Bohee and Mrs. Sam Lucas, as conversationalists and soloists, gave a new impression of the possibilities of our girls in the variety business. Miss Bohee is a daughter of one of the Bohee Brothers and is destined to attain much prominence among theatricals as a serio comic singer. The DeWolf Sisters in sunset melodies, George Westener and Fred Piper, punsters, Jones, Norris and Grant, fun makers, Irving Jones, Premier knock about song and dance comedian, the four Creoles and Mr. and Mrs. Wesley B. Norris kept the audience highly amused for over an hour. The veteran Sam Lucas and his wife are splendid entertainers. Mrs. Lucas, besides playing many musical instruments, has developed into a contralto singer of much merit. Miss Florence Hines impersonated a male character in a manner that would do credit to any variety actor on the stage. The prize dancing by Burrell Hawkins, Irving Jones, Burt Grant, Wesley Norris and Miles, Marie Valerie, Stacciona and Stabolo, with George Weston as banjo accompanist, was a feature that elicited much applause. 'The Beauties of the Nile', or 'Doomed by Fire,' an ancient Egyptian burlesque, by twenty young women, nobles, soothsayers, fire worshippers and Nubians, was a gorgeous display of physical development. The grand Amazonian March, under the direction of Miss Florence Hines, with a superb tableau, concluded the performance. The entire company is well drilled and perform their respective parts with much exactness and precision." (*WLM Chaise, in New York Age*)

JUNE 11, 1891: (At New Orleans University Commencement exercises, musical interludes included.) "Miss Eloise Bibb, 'Sebastopol,' guitar concerto." (*Southwestern Christian Advocate*)

JULY 4, 1891: (Kansas City News, announces an upcoming entertainment sponsored by the Aeolian Society) "The Athletic Quartette, which is considered the best male quartet in the West; also our famous Female Quartette (of K.C.) will render selections. Admission: 15¢. Mrs. Mattie L. Tuter—Musical director; Prof. A.R. Harris, business manager. (*Indianapolis Freeman*)

JULY 25, 1891: (Delaware News) "The Twilight Male Sextet of Norfolk, Va. gave a concert recently at the A.U.M.P. Church." (*New York Age*)

JULY 30, 1891: (From a letter to the editor, signed by Mrs. Alice R. Albert.) "I clip the following from the [New Orleans] *Times Democrat* of July 21:

"Texarkana, July 20.—The colored people who came originally from the ante bellum home of Jefferson Davis, in Mississippi, will give an entertainment at Ghio's Opera House, Wednesday night, the proceeds of which are to go to the benefit of the Jeff. Davis monument fund."

"This is an outrageous shame! What has Jefferson Davis done for the colored people that they should want to help raise funds to help build a monument for him? The cause for which he fought, and spent his life, I should say, left enough monuments on the backs of our poor fathers and mothers, to satisfy any people..." (*Southwestern Christian Advocate*)

NOTE: Alice R. Albert was the wife of Rev. Aristides E.P. Albert, editor the *Southwestern Christian Advocate*. An article in the June 6, 1889 issue revealed that Rev. Albert was a Louisiana-born Creole of slave descent, who converted from Catholicism to Methodism in 1866, then moved through several comfortable positions in the administrative arm of the Louisiana Methodist Conference and became editor of the New Orleans-based *Southwestern* in 1887.

AUGUST 1, 1891: (Coshocton, Ohio News) "At the meeting of the McKinley club of this city, last Friday evening, the Golden Tip quartette was chosen as the McKinley quartette. They are L.S. Yager, first tenor; T.B. Carr, second tenor; Isaac C. Dorsey, baritone; Jerome Nichols, bass. The Golden Tip singing club and the Coshocton String band, both managed by

Lewis Yager, are gaining quite a reputation." (*Cleveland Gazette*)

AUGUST 8, 1891: (Portion of a biographical sketch of Madam Marie Selika, headed "The Sweet Singer") "Her maiden name was Price, and she was born in Natchez, Miss. Her mother died when she was quite small, and her father, H. Price, with several other daughters came to Cincinnati to live. Selika was raised by an elder sister, Mrs. Holloway. Her voice was first remarked upon in the Allen Temple Sunday-school where she sang; afterwards she took part in nearly all the Sunday-school and church entertainments in Cincinnati. From Cincinnati she went to Chicago, where her voice was tested, and here she was married to her husband, who is now traveling with her, Mr. Sampson W. Williams. After their marriage he put her under the musical training of Farina. From Chicago she went to California and remained under a teacher there for three years, after which she returned east, and she now claims Columbus, Ohio as her home, having purchased property in that city. She is at present on a three years' tour of Europe, having signed a contract calling for \$21,000." (*Cleveland Gazette*)

AUGUST 8, 1891: (Stage column) "From the careful manner which Manager Lew Johnson of California has followed in selecting his concert troupe it will, when ready to appear, be one of the finest concert jubilee troupes in America. Everyone selected is an artist in his particular role." (*Indianapolis Freeman*)

AUGUST 8, 1891: (New York City News) "H. Sylvester Russell, the operatic soprano of Orange, N.J. and H.W. Scott of Boston, basso profundo, left the city to join Hicks & Sawyers Minstrels at Philadelphia." (*New York Age*)

AUGUST 8, 1891: "Knights of Pythias Meet—The Supreme Lodge K. of P., N.A.S.A., E., A. and A. held its sixth biennial session in this city [New York] at Wendel's Assembly Rooms this week... a welcome reception was tendered to the Supreme Lodge by the Grand Lodge of New York... The concert which followed was of a very high order; the performances of Misses Joseph of New Orleans, demonstrated them artists of the first class. The Onward Brass Band of St. John, La., also contributed worthy numbers to the program. The features of the program, however, were the numbers given by Mrs. and Miss Preston of Detroit, Mich. The Delsartean Pantomime by Miss Preston and selection 'Le Partate' stamped her a young woman of unusual culture and an

artist of exceptional power... On Wednesday evening the Knights held a musical and literary entertainment at Bridge Street A.M.E. Church, Brooklyn... The musical part of the program differed little from the one rendered the previous night in New York City. The Knights were to have a clambake and encampment at Flushing Thursday and wind up their festivities with a street parade Friday..." (*New York Age*)

NOTE: Prominent black New Orleans lawyer J. Madison Vance was one of the session's principal speakers, and he probably accompanied the Onward Brass Band of "St. John, La." to New York. To think that they were upstaged by a Delsartean Pantomime! "St. John" must refer to St. John the Baptist Parish, which is just upriver from New Orleans and includes the riverside town of Reserve, where New Orleans clarinetist Edmond Hall's father was from. Hall told Nat Shapiro and Nat Hentoff in *Hear Me Talkin' To Ya* (1955): "My father was a musician. His name was Edward Hall. As a matter of fact he was a member of the Onward Brass Band that came to New York from New Orleans in 1891..." He mentioned this again in an interview with Bill Russell and Dick Allen (1957) and said the band was led by "Jim Humphries," patriarch of the Humphrey family of New Orleans jazzmen, who reportedly instructed brass bands in several river parish towns.

AUGUST 13, 1891: "The sharp criticism which Mrs. A.E.P. Albert administered to the colored minstrel troupe which was announced to give a performance at the opera house in Texarkana, Texas, for the benefit of the Jeff Davis monument fund, has raised a considerable flurry in the troupe, and they have united in a letter in which they seek to exonerate themselves. They claim that they performed for 40 per cent of the proceeds and that 60 per cent went to the contractor... He may have given a part of his 60 per cent for the use of Jeff Davis' name, but we did not give a cent of our part."

"This, to say the least, smells rather suspicious, and makes it appear as if somebody was quite willing to go into partnership, into any kind of co-operation, so long as 'our 40 per cent' was not diminished..."

"The troupe is composed of Dave Jackson, Will Dyson, Isaac Mingo, James Benson, Cary Daughtry, Scott Soplin [*sic*], John Adams, Pleasant Jackson and Hugh Garner. Their action dishonors their race and curses the memories of John Brown,

Abraham Lincoln, Wm Lloyd Garrison, Calvin Fairbank and the host of abolitionists that fought and bled that they might enjoy the privilege of organizing such a troupe." (*Southwestern Christian Advocate*)



The first known newspaper reference to Scott Joplin (above) was the Jefferson Davis monument fund controversy cited in the August 15, 1891 *Southwestern Christian Advocate*

NOTE: Here we find, complete with a bothersome typesetting error, the earliest known contemporaneous reference to Scott Joplin. The contradiction-riddled "Jeff Davis Monument" incident, Mrs. Albert's reaction to it and Scott Joplin's part in it will be explored in the Joplin biography that Edward A. Berlin is preparing for Smithsonian Institution Press.

AUGUST 15, 1891: "Rev. Sherwood, an evangelist, is said to have taken a number of colored boys from an asylum at Omaha, Neb., drilled them, and appropriated their earnings, allowing them but 10¢ a day for food." (*Cleveland Gazette*)

AUGUST 15, 1891: "Wherever the famous Fisk Jubilee Singers have appeared, the name of Jennie Jackson is familiar...now Mrs. DeHart, has organized a vocal sextette after the model of the original company of Jubilees, and has trained them, selecting the kind of music she knows will please the audiences. The Cincinnati lecture and music bureau will arrange the tour." (*Cleveland Gazette*)

AUGUST 15, 1891: "The concerts given by the Hall Jubilee Singers at Cory Chapel... were well attended and seemingly enjoyed. The singing was not of the first note quality, but was well rendered. It consisted mostly of southern plantation melodies." (*Cleveland Gazette*)

AUGUST 29, 1891: (A portion of a lengthy biography): "The Black Patti—The Race's Most Brilliant Song Bird, Madame M. Sissieretta Jones—

"This charming and celebrated singer was born Jan. 5th, 1868 at Portsmouth, Virginia. When very young Madame Jones displayed a great love for music... She commenced her instrumental education at the age of 15 at the Academy of Music, Providence, R.I., under the tutelage of Baroness Lacombe, an eminent Italian preceptor, and Mr. Monros, also eminent in the world of music.

"At 18 she commenced vocal training at the Conservatorium at Boston, where she made such rapid progress that

she was at once pronounced America's future Afro-American Queen of Song.

"In 1887 being asked to sing at a grand entertainment for the benefit of the Parnell Fund before an audience of five thousand she carried the great gathering by storm, and had them, metaphorically speaking, at her feet, by her daring bewildering flights of matchless melody...

"She commenced her professional career in 1888 at Wallack's Theatre, New York City, where no other Afro-American artist had ever appeared, and from that day to this her career has been one chain of unbroken triumphs and vocal achievements...



Jennie Jackson DeHart

Courtesy: Fisk University Library, Special Collections

"Before entering upon her West Indian Trip she sang before all the newspaper critics of New York City... The New York Clipper gave a glowing account of her, and gave her the name of the 'Black Patti.' On the 28th of July, 1888, she started on her West Indian trip, appearing first for two months in Kingstown, [sic] Jamaica, where her success was very great. The trip lasted eight months, during which time she appeared in all the different colonies of the West Indies. Upon her return home to Providence she was received and feted in a manner due her exalted triumphs...

"After needed recreation and rest she made a starring tour throughout the largest cities of the Union with unequivocal success. While on this trip she met Mr. Mikado [sic: McAdool, of Australia, who offered her a great consideration to visit the Indian Continent on a professional trip which, owing to a promise to return to the West Indies, she was compelled to decline. The story of her triumph, measured by years is a short one, but within the same time, we know of no Afro-American songstress who has so filled the measure of brilliant achievements upon the lyric stage." (*Indianapolis Freeman*)

AUGUST 29, 1891: (Lakewood, N.Y. News) "The concert given by the waiters of the Sterlingworth on the 18th was a grand success... Mr. Frank Crane was the favorite of the evening. His rendition of the comic song entitled 'Charcoal,' carried the audience by storm. Mr. Henry Forbes was especially good in Negro Minstrelsy... Mr. E.H. Leonard captivated all by his clever remarks in a stump speech... Mr. James Randolph rendered the familiar song 'Old Black Joe'; Mr. W.H.E. Hall recited Tennyson's 'Bugle Call'; Prof. Mitchell entertained the audience by a rendition of the Carnival of Venice upon the piano." (*New York Age*)

SEPTEMBER 5, 1891: (Advertisement) "Wanted - Vocalists - A first class soprano and tenor for the Fisk-Tennesseans Jubilee Singers. Address Robert Day, Jr., business manager... Pittsburgh, PA." (*Cleveland Gazette*)

SEPTEMBER 5, 1891: (Saratoga Springs News) "There was a cake walk in the Kensington Hotel dining room, the proprietor giving prizes for the best dressed lady, the most graceful dancer and the best walker." (*New York Age*)

SEPTEMBER 5, 1891: "The 11th annual excursion of Mt. Olive Baptist Church took place on Thursday, Aug. 27, to Grand View Park on Long Island. The steamer Pavonia and barge Warren, which were

chartered for the occasion, comfortably accommodated the large number that embarked for a day's pleasure... A pleasant sail of a few hours was had up the East River... Meanwhile, J.M. Becker's Brass Band discoursed sweet music, which had an inspiring effect on those who desired to trip the light fantastic toe on the barge. The refreshment tables were under competent attendants and were well patronized. Nothing unpleasant transpired until the Grove was reached, when one of the young men anxious to land so as to secure a table on the grove, unintentionally jostled against a white deck hand, who cut him badly on the left temple and in turn was severely thrashed by the young man's friends and was not again seen during the day on the boat. At the grove the excursionists set their tables and ate their dinners in the open air. The band in the meantime had marched at the head of a large procession to the platform, playing lively airs, which amused the younger portion of the assemblage very much, and then they danced there." (*New York Age*)

SEPTEMBER 26, 1891: "The old and original Nashville University students at P.T. Wright's Grand Colored Concert Company were enroute September 13:

Brunswick, Missouri—September 21, 1891

Miami,	"	—	"	22,	"
Norborne,	"	—	"	23,	"
Harding,	"	—	"	24,	"
Camden,	"	—	"	25,	"
Liberty,	"	—	"	26,	"
Kansas City,	"	—	"	28,	"

Personnel of Company: Billy Johnson, stick dancer; Mlle. Pauline King, leading soprano; Ed. Harris, specialist + banjoist; Miss Josie Anderson, old woman impersonator; Jeff. Davis, comedian; Mrs. T.P. Wright, contralto; Prof. John Owen, Musical Director; Master Albert Brown, slack

MME. H. C. PALMER GIVES VOCAL LESSONS

By permission of her teacher, Sig. A. FARINI.
Terms Reasonable.
603 Broadway, Brooklyn, E. D.,
NEW YORK.

Becker's Brass Band,

having concluded to remain in the city, desires to inform the public that it can be hired at very reasonable terms. Satisfaction guaranteed.
Address,

J. M. BECKER, 919 Sixth Ave.,
TOP FLOOR, OR
GEO. H. WASHINGTON, Manager, 453 7th Ave.

September 20, 1891 (*New York Age*)

SEPTEMBER 26, 1891: "Mr. Harry T. Burleigh of Erie, passed through the city this week for Ravenna, where he joins Loudin's Jubilee Singers for the coming season." (*Cleveland Gazette*)

SEPTEMBER 26, 1891: "The Blind Boone Concert company, one of the most successful and enterprising Afro-American Concert companies on the road, is now doing Michigan and Canada." (*Indianapolis Freeman*)

wire performer and juggler; Will J. Smith, business mgr." (*Indianapolis Freeman*)

OCTOBER 3, 1891: "Mr. Harry T. Burleigh, of Erie PA. did not join Loudin's Jubilee Company, as first intended, because of satisfactory inducements offered him by his employers, to remain at home." (*Cleveland Gazette*)

OCTOBER 3, 1891: (New Haven, Conn. News) "Mrs. Flora Batson-Bergen... gave a concert at the Dixwell Avenue Congregational Church last Tuesday evening. A

Bergen Star Concerts.

BRIDGE ST. CHURCH, Brooklyn, Oct. 8. **Mrs. Flora Batson-Bergen,**
Mrs. Matilda S. Jones,
 Miss TILLIE MARTIN, Miss ADA COOLEY,
 Miss B. WOODBURN, BUBHAM droopers,
 Bridge Street Church, Dr. MCKINLEY, Director.
 Miss MONTGOMERY, Miss ANNIE MCKINLEY other popular talent yet to be announced.
 TICKETS, 50 CTS. for sale by church members and at Greene's, 62 Sixth Avenue, New York.

SEVEN'S CHURCH, New York, Oct. 10. **Mrs. Flora Batson-Bergen,**
Mrs. Matilda S. Jones,
 Mr. E. H. WRIGHT, Mr. FRED. (RAYAOK)
 Miss MONTGOMERY, Miss C. M. MASON and
 other popular talent yet to be announced.
 TICKETS, 50 CTS. for sale by church members and at Greene's, 62 Sixth Avenue, New York.

For forms and dates for Mrs. FLORA BATSON BERGEN and Mrs. MATILDA S. JONES
 address Manager DENNEN, Summer House, 192 West 37th Street, New York.

FIRST GRAND DEMONSTRATION
 OF THE
NEW ENGLAND AND NEW YORK PATRIARCHIE,
 WILL BE CELEBRATED ON
October 7, 1891.
 WITH A GRAND PARADE IN THE AFTERNOON, A COMPLIMENTARY RECEPTION IN THE EVENING.
 THE COMPLIMENTARY RECEPTION WILL TAKE PLACE AT
Wendel's Assembly Rooms,
 241 West 44th Street, near 6th Avenue.
 Under the auspices of the New York Patriarchie No. E. O. U. O. of ... A. Cambridge, N. Y. P.
J. THOMAS BAILEY'S Orchestra will render choice selections.
ADMISSION, Wardroom Check Included, 75 CENTS.
 The Grand Marshal, W. F. GEO. N. QUARLES, will start the procession at 2 P. M. The Patriarchie and several branches of the order will appear in complete regalia. Leaders desiring further information may receive same by addressing the Grand Marshal, W. F. GEO. N. QUARLES, 50 Fifth Avenue, New York City.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE.
 W. F. George W. Jean, Chairman. M. Y. J. Wm. H. Carr, Vice Chairman.
 M. Y. J. C. Johnson, Secretary. P. Thomas H. His own, Assistant Secretary.
 M. Y. J. W. U. H. Curtis, Treasurer. W. P. George Washington, Assistant Treasurer.
 W. W. A. Anderson, Sergeant-at-Arms.

ALL HAIL NEW YORK!
THE ENTERPRISING WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE
 WILL GIVE AN
AFTERNOON & EVENING PICNIC
 in Aid of the Joint Committee of the Odd Fellows and other Benevolent Societies Hall Association
AT SULZER'S HARLEM RIVER PARK,
 Corner Second Avenue and 126th Street, New York City,
ON WEDNESDAY EVENING, SEPT. 23, 1891.
 Music by Prof. J. THOMAS BAILEY'S Full Orchestra.
 TWENTY ORGANIZATIONS UNITED.

Rev. R. D. WYSE will address the audience on the subject of "Having a Hall at 2 o'clock." An exciting drill by the company of Veteran Quarters, Capt. J. T. Oulphoff, commanding; Captain's Jewel prepared. Everybody go!
ADMISSION, 35 CENTS. CHILDREN, under 12 years, 15 CENTS.
 Gates open at 2 P. M. and a joyful reunion until 4 A. M.
 No Post-ponement on account of the weather.
 JOHN W. JACKSON, Chairman; J. P. STEWART, Treasurer; C. STEWART, Secretary.

1884. **W. F. C.** 1891.
A GRAND SUMMERNIGHT'S FESTIVAL AND FETE
 WILL BE GIVEN BY
WALTER F. CRAIG,
 AT
SULZER'S HARLEM RIVER PARK,
 125th Street and Second Avenue,
Friday, Sept. 25, 1891.
 MUSIC BY CRAIG'S UNRIVALLED ORCHESTRA.
TICKETS, 50 CENTS.
COMMITTEE.
 E. T. Matheny, J. H. Woods, E. A. Walker, Wm. Harkless.

SECOND GRAND CONCERT AND RECEPTION
 OF
JOHNSON'S MILITARY BAND,
 OF NEW YORK CITY,
 At LYRIC HALL, Sixth Avenue, between 41st and 42nd Streets,
Wednesday Evening, Oct. 28, 1891.
 CARD.
 The object of this Entertainment is to obtain funds with which to procure suitable uniforms. The Rev. Wm. B. Herrick, D.D., will make the opening address. MOUNT ERNE QUARTET of Newark, N. J., will render some of their most noted vocal selections: Harry Harty, 1st tenor; Frank Williams, 2nd tenor; Leon Williams, 1st bass; Edward Smithers, 2nd bass.
TICKET, 50 CENTS.
 To Concert and Reception, including Hat Check.
 WILLIAM JOHNSON, Manager, 10 Spruce Street. F. H. HENRICKS, Secretary.
 H. P. VAN DYKRE, Leader. See circular for further particulars.

1899. **GRAND CLOSING EVENT!** 1901.
F. C. B.
DAMON LODGE No. 10, K. OF P.,
 WILL GIVE THEIR SECOND
ANNUAL PICNIC AND MUSICAL FESTIVAL
 At SULZER'S HARLEM RIVER PARK & CASINO,
 Second Avenue and 127th Street,
FRIDAY, OCT. 2, 1891.
 Music by Prof. W. F. CRAIG'S Famous Orchestra.
ADMISSION, 35 CENTS.
COMMITTEE OF ARRANGEMENTS.
 Mr. A. B. Jones, chairman; Mr. C. H. Randolph, assistant chairman; Mr. W. A. Boyd, secretary; J. H. Cole, assistant secretary; C. W. Johnson, treasurer; C. T. Smith, sergeant-at-arms; W. H. Johnson, J. H. etc.

September 19, 1891
 (New York Age)

large audience gathered within and in front and around the sides of the church. . . . During the concert an accident occurred outside but no one was hurt. The desire to see and hear Miss Batson caused the people to build a temporary stage with benches, which gave away with a crowd on it. The Flower Song from 'Faus' [sic] by Miss Batson scored a complete success. She afterward sang as an encore a selection from 'Il Trovatore' in baritone. . . . (New York Age)

OCTOBER 3, 1891: "Mrs. Flora Batson Bergen, 'Queen of Song,' and Mrs. Matilda Jones, the rising star, supported by New York and Brooklyn talent, will be heard at Bridge Street Church, Brooklyn, Thursday evening Oct. 8 and at Bethel Church, New York, Monday evening, Oct. 12. A word to the wise—go early." (New York Age)

OCTOBER 10, 1891: "Loudin's Jubilee Company drew a large crowd to Music Hall Tuesday evening (6th), and sang, as it always does—exceedingly well. Mt. Zion church received the proceeds, having engaged the company for that evening. Next Monday evening (12th) the company concerts again. Shiloh church will receive a percentage of the receipts." (Cleveland Gazette)

OCTOBER 17, 1891: (New York City News) "The concert given October 11th for the benefit of Bethel A.M.E. Church was a grand success and a crowded house greeted the stars, Mme Flora Batson Bergen and Mme Mathilda S. Jones. This was Mme Jones' second appearance in New York since her return from her tour through the West Indies and South America, where she met with great success. Her voice is something wonderful. They were supported by local talent. Mme Maria Selika, the great Prima Donna, is touring Europe." (Indianapolis Freeman)

OCTOBER 17, 1891: "Harry T. Burleigh of Cleveland expected to join the Fisk Jubilee Singers, but the First Presbyterian church in whose choir he sang refused to let him go and raised his salary as a retainer." (Indianapolis Freeman)

OCTOBER 23, 1891: (Editorial by T. Thomas Fortune) "We are natural vocalists. We sing almost as naturally as Shelly's 'skylark.' We need not the elaborate culture of European conservatories to be able to touch the tenderest chords of human sympathy. In our church choirs all over the country there are soprano, alto, basso and tenor voices almost angelic in purity of tone and expression the possession of which by a white person would be worth a snug fortune; but just now there

is small space on the operatic stage for black interpreters of classic sonatas. But the triumph is coming. These natural flowers from Nature's musical garden cannot always 'waste their sweetness on the desert air.'" (New York Age)

NOTE: T. Thomas Fortune, part owner and chief editor of the Age from its inception in 1887, was a pioneer civil rights leader. Fortune founded the Afro-American League, forerunner of the twentieth century NAACP, in 1890.

OCTOBER 23, 1891: "Mr. William Foote writes me from Germany that he has met with tremendous success with his combination, 'The African in Slavery and Freedom,' and that the best musicians of the Fatherland have been captivated and captured by the splendid voice of Madame Marie Selika. He talks of producing 'Uncle Tom's Cabin.' He expects to remain in Europe until the World's Fair opens, when he will descend upon the Windy City and rob it of some of its conceit." (New York Age)

OCTOBER 24, 1891: "The Richmond Jubilee Singers have headquarters at Philadelphia." (Indianapolis Freeman)

OCTOBER 24, 1891: "The Louisiana Jubilee Singers are the attraction at the corn palace at Sioux City, Iowa." (Indianapolis Freeman)

OCTOBER 24, 1891: "Blind Boone has engaged with O.B. Shephard for a forty weeks tour in Canada next season, for \$12,000 clear of all expenses." (Indianapolis Freeman)

OCTOBER 24, 1891: (City News) "The Magnolia Quartette is the name of a new musical organization, composed of the following gentlemen: Thos. Pittman, soprano; Silas Fisher, baritone and specialist; Paul Floyd, tenor; Charles Poole, bass. The organization made its first public appearance and scored a great success. Mr. Fisher the specialist of the quartet, is an artist of high degree." (Indianapolis Freeman)

OCTOBER 31, 1891: "A Colored Opera Company—The Success of the Virginia Jubilee Singers in Africa—The Virginia Concert Company (Orpheus McAdoo's), now in South Africa, is warmly commended by 'The Burlesque,' a weekly newspaper, and 'The Star,' a daily, both published in Johannesburg, South Africa. Special mention is made of the company's new members. Misses Julia Wormley and Kate Slade of Washington, D. C., and Robert Allen of Columbus, Ohio, who left this country a few months ago to join the

company. Miss Belle Gibbons, Mrs. Mattie Allen-McAdoo, Messrs. McAdoo and Hodges are also highly spoken of. Miss Wormley is the company's elocutionist; the others named are vocalists. On December 1, all sail for Australia. In his 'Star' interview, Mr. McAdoo said: 'I have met with financial success far and away beyond my wildest dreams and anticipations. In all my travels I have met with the most flattering receptions, and the press, generally, have been unanimous in their kind expressions of praise. When I have finished with my present line of business, my crowning ambition is to open a first class opera company in Great Britain, return to South Africa, and my ultima Thule is Australia, and home again to Virginia.'" (Cleveland Gazette)

OCTOBER 31, 1891: "More Color Prejudice Shown—The Star Quartette, accompanied John Rice, secretary of the county Republican executive committee. . . . went into the Hollenden House (Cleveland) barroom last Saturday evening for liquid refreshments. The bartender refused at first to give the quartette anything to drink unless they agreed to step behind a screen. This Sam Moore, a member of the quartette, refused to do, and started in to lecture the bartender, telling him he drank wherever he pleased, when he had the price, here in Ohio, long before the said bartender left the old country. Meanwhile, Sam was pounding the counter and seemed in a fair to demolish things in general. Messrs. Akers and Rice told the man in charge that unless the quartette was served, they wouldn't accept anything and never would darken the doors of the Hollenden again. The rest of the party concurred, and immediately all were properly served." (Cleveland Gazette)

NOVEMBER 7, 1891: (Cincinnati News) "Walker's Merry Makers, the great southern trio. . . . have just closed a seven week engagement at Kohl & Middleton's museum. Great credit is due these gentlemen, for the artistic manner in which they render their music, vocal and instrumental." (Cleveland Gazette)

NOVEMBER 7, 1891: (Glasgow, Kentucky News) "The Non Musical Quartette were out last Friday night and made the stillness of the night melodious with fine music rendered by them." (Indianapolis Freeman)

NOVEMBER 7, 1891: "A Juvenile Band said to be from the Colored Orphans' Home at Jacksonville, FLA., which institution they are raising means to support in this city." (Indianapolis Freeman)

NOVEMBER 14, 1891: (Cincinnati News) "The Carmen double quartette, composed of the best male talent in Cincinnati, will concert during the holidays. Messrs. Johnson and Bushong are the best bass singers in the city. The quartette has rendered music of a very high standard. Such an organization of young men has never before existed in this city." (Cleveland Gazette)

NOVEMBER 14, 1891: "The S.B. Hyer colored musical comedy company are playing 'Out Of Bondage,' 'Blackville Twins' and 'Colored Aristocracy' in the East." (Indianapolis Freeman)

NOVEMBER 14, 1891: (Evanston, Illinois News) "The Tennessee Jubilee Singers gave one of their characteristic concerts in Evanston on Tuesday evening the third to a large audience, and were encored a number of times. Their programme, for the most part, was very good, especially the songs by the male quartette; the solos by Miss Zoe Ball, and the old Negro preacher, delineated by Mr. Wise." (Indianapolis Freeman)

NOVEMBER 21, 1891: "The Olympian Quartette, comedians and vocalists, are making a great hit in Texas." (Indianapolis Freeman)

NOVEMBER 21, 1891: "The Young Star Quartette concert at Excelsior Hall (Cleveland) December 2. Tickets for sale by members of the quartette, or at the door. A good orchestra in attendance." (Cleveland Gazette)

NOVEMBER 28, 1891: (New Haven, Conn. News) "Mr. John Godette, Jr., gave one of his popular concerts Thursday evening Nov. 12, at the Athenaeum with a full house of New Haven's best people, of whom one half were whites. . . . The Elm City Quartet produced in addition to their special selections, some of those quaint old plantation songs which received prolonged applause." (New York Age)

DECEMBER 5, 1891: (Cincinnati News) "The Carmen double quartette gave their first concert in Allen Temple, November 26. Mr. Clarence N. Johnson, the bass singer of the Carmen quartette, has joined the concert company of Mrs. Jennie DeHart." (Cleveland Gazette)

DECEMBER 5, 1891: "The concert given Wednesday at Excelsior hall by the Young Star quartette was quite a success indeed, both from an artistic and financial standpoint." (Cleveland Gazette)

DECEMBER 5, 1891: "The Tennessee Jubilee Singers, under the management of Lew Johnson, are in California." (Indianapolis *Freeman*)

DECEMBER 5, 1891: "M.M. Sisieretta Jones of Cape Town, Africa, known as 'Colored Patti,' made her first American debut at Baltimore, in the Trinity A.M.E. Church, Nov. 6; she possesses \$3000 worth of diamonds, and other presents, which she received from Queen Victoria, King of Denmark, Chas. Stewart Parnell and the President of Hayti; she was born 22 years ago, and is full blooded African and received her musical education in London, England. She has a high soprano voice, of the first quality." (Indianapolis *Freeman*)

NOTE: This wildly fictitious account of Sissieretta Jones appears to be in the nature of a spoof, aimed at the widespread stage practice of concocting professional histories from a mixture of fact, fantasy and other people's exploits.

DECEMBER 19, 1891: (Review of Fall Leaf Social Club entertainment, includes the following:) "The Young Star quartette sang well... A little fair criticism will but help this organization, and we offer it here in the shape of two or three suggestions. One of the tenors, Master John Cossey, should aim to sing more naturally, and not 'pucker up' his mouth quite so much, in imitation of some vocalists. His brother forces his voice too much, and it sticks out prominently above the others. Master Joseph Lucas should exercise a trifle more care in his effort to sing, so as to harmonize entirely with the other voices. The best voice in the quartette, and the one deserving of the least criticism is Master Ben Shook's. He has a remarkable basso voice for one so young, and with care and study, it will make many a dollar for him, when fully developed and trained. His parents will do well to place him under Prof. Underner, at once. Our suggestion to Master Lucas can be taken by Master Shook and the other members of the quartet with profit. However, the organization is the best one of the kind the younger element of this city has ever produced." (*Cleveland Gazette*)

DECEMBER 19, 1891: "McCabe & Young Colored Minstrels are in Mississippi." (Indianapolis *Freeman*)

DECEMBER 19, 1891: "The Hyer sisters will start for the Pacific slope in January." (Indianapolis *Freeman*)

DECEMBER 19, 1891: "The Bohee Brothers, specialists, will make the season in Australia." (Indianapolis *Freeman*)

DECEMBER 19, 1891: "The Hearne Academy Choral Union will travel next year in the interest of the school." (Indianapolis *Freeman*)

DECEMBER 19, 1891: "Sylvester Russell Angry—I was surprised when I picked up last week's *New York Clipper* and saw my name advertised as a member of the Tennessee Minstrels. I sang at two performances with this company last October, while waiting to appear at a star concert at the Academy of Music in Philadelphia." (*New York Age*)

DECEMBER 26, 1891: (Stage column) "McCabe & Young's Minstrels are in Georgia with twenty-five artists." (Indianapolis *Freeman*)

COMMENTARY

The year 1891 saw a departure on the African-American stage, the first flashes of a new style of black entertainment. Shrewd, progressive African-American performers and open-minded producers set a course away from the older minstrel format, toward a variety program which would eventually become vaudeville. The main concern of minstrelsy had always been the "delineation of Negro character." It was widely held that whites were better suited for this work than black actors, though the logic of such a belief isn't readily apparent to the modern mind.

During the prior decade, black performers had made gradual professional inroads in the field of popular minstrelsy. A handful of outstanding entertainers such as Sam Lucas, Billy Kersands and the Bohee Brothers carved out a limited place for themselves in the fantastic plantation recreations and Ethiopian delineations of classic minstrelsy but there had been no widespread breakthrough.

Above all, the new minstrelsy of the 1890s represented a platform for a fuller expression and development of legitimate African-American stage arts. The "olio" portion of the standard minstrel show was broadened. "Variety" became the keynote of the new style of shows. Diverse vocal and instrumental music, comedy, dance, and cross gender impersonation, all became staples of the new program, along with comedic and dramatic skits, which forged a

pathway for the emergence and growth of legitimate black theater.

The role of African-American women on the minstrel stage was rapidly expanding. As described in the excellent *New York Age* commentary of June 6th, Sam T. Jack's Creole Company was the first to feature chorus lines of beautiful African-American females; while at the same time a great variety of black women singers, dancers, comedienne and actresses also claimed a place on the stage.

As described in the newspaper commentaries, William Foote's Afro-American Specialty Company initiated the specific vehicle of a panoramic "Negro evolution" theme, representing the cultural progress of the race since slavery. This motif was employed repeatedly through the remainder of the 1890s and beyond. It can be seen as a metaphor for the new era in African-American entertainment that was in the process of unfolding.

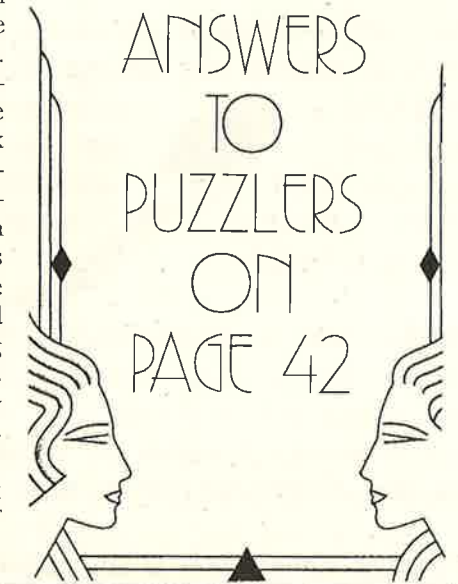
While developments described in the black community press of 1891 reflect real progress in "the profession," the gathering success of a new African-American entertainment could not be completed until the emergence of popular ragtime, a half-decade later. When ragtime did appear, the apparatus for its full professional exploitation was already firmly in place. In retrospect, 1891 might be seen as a year in which the stage was set for the monumental ragtime minstrelsy of the late 1890s.

The initial efforts of this new generation of black minstrel companies were duly noted, and their progress was hopefully observed in the black press of 1891. However, some well-founded skepticism is also in evidence. The *Cleveland Gazette* of May 9th expressed disappointment that Madam Marie Selika, one of the most highly trained aspiring black operatics, would take the "downward step" of joining William Foote's minstrel company. Hopes expressed on October 23rd, by *New York Age* editor T. Thomas Fortune, that there would soon be space on the operatic stage for black interpreters, proved to

be decidedly premature. In fact, it wasn't until the 1950s, two generations later, that the New York Metropolitan Opera Company accepted its first permanent African-American member. Before the end of the 1890s, all three of the aspiring "Black Queens Of Song," Selika, Flora Batson and Sissieretta Jones would have to compromise their ambitions and resign themselves to singing occasional operatic excerpts in the new generation of black minstrel road shows. They were not the only ones to fall back on minstrelsy, as Robert C. Toll describes in his book *On With The Show!*: "...for a quarter-century, the minstrel show was virtually the only steady entertainment opportunity for black performers. 'All the best (Negro) talent of that generation came down the same drain,' recalled W.C. Handy, 'Father of the Blues,' who began his own career as a black minstrel. 'The composers, the singers, the musicians, the speakers, the stage performers—the minstrel show got them all.'"

In 1891, however, minstrelsy had just begun to tighten its grip on African-American popular entertainment. A broad spectrum of performance contexts is represented in these newspaper commentaries. Professional companies of jubilee singers still enjoyed international celebrity, appearing before heads of state abroad, and entertaining both black and white audiences in the U.S. There were elaborate musicales in middle class black churches, presenting cantatas and other vocal and instrumental "Western art music." In the larger urban churches, "star concerts" remained a prevalent mode of local promotion, usually presenting one of the nationally recognized African-American "Queens of Song" supported by outstanding local talent. String bands and brass bands entertained at picnics and "excursions," street parades, political rallies, lodge meetings and stag parties. Vocal quartets were heard everywhere. They already permeated African-American musical culture, and there is ample evidence in these commentaries of the geographically scattered presence of "community-based" quartets, seemingly not unlike those we are familiar with from the post-World War I era.

Of course, even this vast array of musical styles and venues only represents the strata of entertainment reported in the black community newspapers, whose orientation remained decidedly bourgeois. In general, the musical culture of the "under class," and most importantly that of the rural South, fell outside of their purview. Between the lines, however, are references to the musical activity that attended the emergence of a black, urban lower middle class. In New York, while Johnson's 24-piece military band catered to the concert requirements of the "black bourgeoisie," Becker's Brass Band—six pieces from Southern Kentucky—managed to carve out a living from church and fraternal functions. It's tempting to conjecture that bands like Becker's and the Onward Brass Band of Reserve, Louisiana were bringing black vernacular music to the brass band performance style. Within only a few years, though, ragtime minstrelsy usurped all the energies of the African-American stage. One result was a profound homogenization of black musical culture.



CURLEY WEAVER	WINSTON HOLMES & CHARLEY TURNER	BOBBY GRANT
MISSISSIPPI JOHN HURT	HENRY THOMAS	RABBIT BROWN
BLIND ROOSEVELT GRAVES	WILL BATTS	GEORGE "BULLET" WILLIAMS
KID BAILEY (2)	NAPOLEON HAIRISTON	HOUND-HEAD HENRY

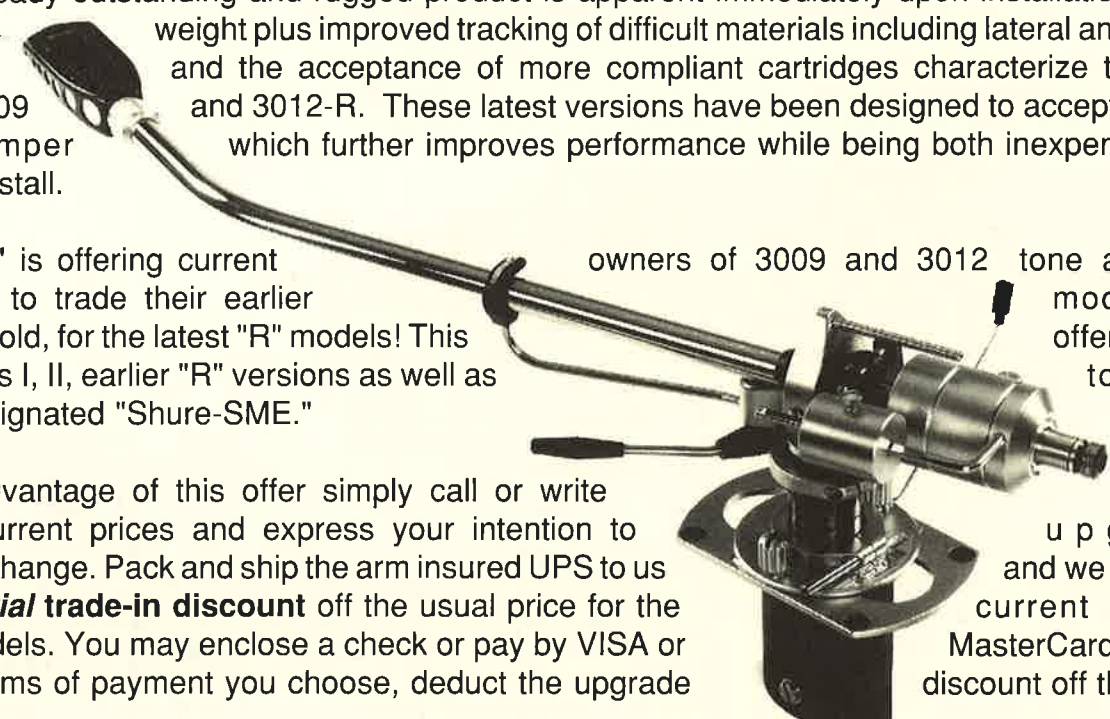
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THE BOHEE BROTHERS

(1844-
1897/
1856-
1926(?))

Were these Afro-
Canadians the
best banjoists
ever?

by **Dr. RAINER
E. LOTZ**



(courtesy of Dr. Rainer E. Lotz)

James and George Bohee
on stage in formal dress—early 1880s?

The Afro-Canadian-born brothers, George and James Douglass Bohee, served a long apprenticeship in U.S. minstrelsy before sailing to Britain in 1881 as members of Haverly's Colored Minstrels. When the company returned to America a year later, the Bohees stayed in Europe. Eventually they organized their own minstrel troupe and toured the provinces. Even though the late 19th century environment had become increasingly racist, the Bohees were conferred the privilege of royal patronage. In London they became a focal point for Afro-American visitors who, unlike themselves, worked the gruesome routine of European concert halls or variety house circuits.

The Bohees were song-and-dance artists who excelled in playing the banjo. Indeed, they were considered by some to be the world's pre-eminent virtuosos on that instrument. Although the banjo's history remains obscure, there can be no doubt that it has African, or at least Afro-American origins. Today, "the banjo is all-American, fully adopted, secure, even taken for granted" (Webb, p. 2)—and is played almost exclusively by whites. Banjo recordings, on cylinders or flat disc records, have been dominated by white artists since 1910, when the fledgling recording industry gained momentum. Yet, the Bohee brothers pioneered recorded banjo as early as 1890. Few, black or white, recorded before them. They may also be the first black artists to have recorded commercially. Their Edison wax cylinders were considered so exceptional and exemplary that Douglas Archibald, a phonograph promoter, chose them as demonstration prototypes when he traveled the Australian colonies in the mid-1890s.

It is our misfortune that the Bohees recorded so early, at a time when soft wax recordings only lasted a few playings. The techniques of molding cylinders and mass producing pressed flat discs had not been developed. The more rewarding the recordings, the more often they were played—and the quicker they were wasted. Today, not one of their his-

toric cylinders is known to have survived. This may explain why musicologists and sound recording historians alike have ignored the contribution of the Bohee brothers to the heritage of popular music in the U.S. and Britain.

James Douglass Bohee was born in Indiantown, the port town of St. John, New Brunswick, Canada, on December 1, 1844.¹ His brother, George B. Bohee, was born there 13 years later on March 25, 1857.² A sister, Laura, was active in vaudeville; and Mayme Bohee may also have been a relative (Southern, p. 40). Known as Mary (Mae) Bohee, "The Creole Nightingale," she toured the U.S. as a member of The Black Patti Troubadours in 1896; with Sheridan and Flynn's Big Sensation Company in 1897; as Madam Bohee, "The Cuban Melba" in Tom McIntosh's musical farce comedy *A Hot Time In Dixie* in 1899; and with Sam T. Jack's Creoles. Mary Bohee was married to minstrel comedian Charles Hunn.

"Delicacy of touch"—"Tenderness of treatment"

The brothers went to school in Indiantown, then moved south with their parents to Boston. The Saint John *Daily Telegraph* reported in 1880 that "James had always been, from youth, partial to string instruments, his particular affection settling upon the banjo. His first banjo was given him by Phil. Logan, well known at that time. Young Bohee took great delight in picking away this instrument, until he reached a good degree of excellence. He taught himself entirely, without instruction, and though acknowledged the best banjo player in the United States, he can read no note of music. His execution on that very difficult instrument is unlike in character to that of the generality of banjo artists. The rough and heavy thumping and strumming is avoided by him. The delicacy of his touch and skillfulness of his fingering brings out the most delicate melodies with a touch that is perfection and a tenderness of treatment that is remarkable.

He is an artist of that instrument."

"Jas. Bohee, ... appeared at all the principle theatres of note. His brother George, also in the [Haverly's Colored Minstrel Company], has a sweet tenor voice.... He reaches C with ease and is a banjoist and specialty artist, both brothers appearing in dialogue songs and dances. These, like many others of their features, are said to be entirely original with themselves, at least they have never been produced here before." (Anonymous, May 18, 1880, p. 3).

That both Bohee brothers should have taken up the banjo (George also played the piano) in an autodidactic manner, rather than through formal training, may be due to the social situation of the family at the time (about which we know nothing). Perhaps it made for better publicity to suggest they were "natural" and not trained instrumentalists. That they chose the banjo in the first place may have been influenced by the location. Banjo authority Bollman estimates that among banjo makers active during the first hundred years of shop and factory construction from 1840 onwards, none seems to have contributed more, or produced any finer instruments, than the fraternity of craftsmen located in the greater Boston area. During the great Victorian rage for the banjo as a parlor instrument, the art of banjo making flourished in Massachusetts.³ St. John had sea links to Boston through the fishing and boat-building trades. Thus, Boston-made instruments and instrumentalists would be found in St. John in the 1850s.

Minstrel veteran and historian Harry Reynolds spent decades in British minstrel circles. His 1928 *Minstrel Memories* gives details of the Bohees' early career, presumably based on first hand information from the brothers themselves: In the late 1860s, when James was in his 20s and George probably still in short pants, the two "gained much valuable professional experience in a Lager Beer and Concert Saloon on Washington Street, Massachusetts, U.S.A., of which James Bohee was the proprietor. Short concerts were given at intervals between 8 and 12 p.m. to the customers

to which the musical accompaniments were provided on the banjo and piano by James and George Bohee respectively." Reynolds continues to explain their close association with other well known black entertainers: "In the early seventies for many months the concert party consisted of three artistes only, namely, Hen Jones, a coloured comedian who specialized in the older type of nigger song, and two young minstrel artistes still in their teens, named Henry E. Dixey and Tom Moore. Each artiste's salary was a dollar a night and refreshments. Being growing lads they naturally preferred solids to liquids. Tom Moore said he ate so many extra large slabs of mince pie during that engagement that he was ashamed to stare a mince pie in the face in after years. Henry E. Dixey afterwards became one of America's greatest stage favourites, and certainly its most versatile actor." (Reynolds, p. 201.)

Bohees form their own minstrel troupe.

George B. Bohee married Frances Jennings on May 7, 1876 (Brewer, 1952, p. 227). Around 1876 the Bohee brothers organized their own minstrel troupe and went on tour, probably starting in Philadelphia. A remarkable aspect of this entrepreneurial decision is that The Bohee Minstrels were a combination of white and black artists. The black artists predominated and employed their white fellow entertainers. Apparently this troupe had a fair amount of success. Usually, a street parade featured George Bohee wearing a breathtaking costume and heading the procession on horseback (Reynolds, p. 202). The success of this tour was probably due to the renown of the Bohee brothers themselves, but it is worth noting that in 1876 Afro-American singer/composer James Bland was a member of the troupe. Bland later joined Sprague's Georgia Minstrels, then the Haverly Colored Minstrels, after which he "continued his rise to stardom and his outpouring of minstrel songs, which both black and white minstrels used

extensively." (Toll, p. 216.) Bland was hired by the Bohee brothers once again for an 1891 tour of England.

However, the success of The Bohee Minstrels cannot have been overwhelming; by 1876 the brothers toured the U.S. as members of Callender's Georgia Minstrels. In 1878 Jack Haverly had bought the Callender Minstrels, and manager Gustave Frohman took the troupe on a tour to the Pacific Coast. Haverly organized a new troupe in the Northeast in 1878 and, as Haverly's Genuine Colored Minstrels, played New York in July 1879 and the Boston Theater in October, moving on to New Orleans, Galveston, and Shreveport, all in November 1879. The roster of this show included some of the famous names in black entertainment. Apart from the Bohee brothers, there were Billy Kersands, Sam Lucas, Wallace King, Tom McIntosh, Dick Little, James Bland, the acrobatic team of Sommerfield & Holcomb, Woodson & Sykes (billed as the New Orleans Pickaninnies), Pete Devonaer, A.A. Luca, W.W. Morris, Charles Anderson, Cunningham & Chase, James Grace, Neil Moore, William Allen, Bob Mack, Chase & Brockley, "Steamboat Bill," Sam Jones, A. Boyer, George Skillings, James Crosby. This minstrel organization was entirely professional; they employed the usual special effects to draw crowds. Sampson (p. 37) quotes a contemporary review: "Haverly's Genuine Colored Minstrels astonish the citizens of Shreveport, La., giving a parade with two brass bands, the company being divided, each band going in different directions and later coming together on the main street, both playing the same tune in perfect union."

May 1880 found the troupe up north, and if reports in the local press are any indication, the Bohees had become more and more of a drawing card: "Haverly's Genuine Colored Minstrels delighted a crowded house at the Portland (Maine) Theater. The first-part, as heretofore, was their strong feature. The Bohee Brothers' songs and dances were well received, as was the banjo sextet, led by George Bohee. This company's street parade is a novel one, attracting crowds of spec-

tators. George Bohee wielded the drum major's baton in a manner difficult to surpass." (Anonymous, May 12, 1880; Sampson, p. 40.) A few days later (May 17 thru 22) the Bohees were at home in St. John, Canada, playing the Mechanics Institute. The brothers played banjo duets and did a song and dance routine. As customary, James Bohee also acted as the drum major of the minstrels' parade. The May 22 edition of the *Daily Telegraph* noted that James Bohee's skillful performance on the banjo earned an encore. Further performances were given at Halifax, Nova Scotia.

By the time the troupe had reached Chicago and opened at the Haverly Theater, it had been considerably augmented. It contained 20 end men and included preeminent black entertainers. "The second part exhibited Alex Hunter in his remarkable imitations; the Bohee Bros. in banjo song and dance; Charles Caruso in a stump speech; The Blackville Jubilee Singers, headed by Billy Speed; Abe Cox and Bob Cox in barnyard frolics; the company in plantation songs and dances; the sextet banjo-orchestra; and the sketch 'Brudder Bones Baby.' Robert Elkins has succeeded Gus Frohman as manager." (Anonymous, October 30, 1880; Sampson, p. 41.)

Bohee Brothers go to England.

Later that same year, Haverly's Mastodon Minstrels left the U.S. for England, to open at Her Majesty's Theater in the London Haymarket. This was evidently a different company of whites using burnt cork, and there is no evidence that the Bohees visited England at that time. The show did include a banjo orchestra of some dozen performers, but the leader was one W.A. Huntley. There are no confirmed reports of the Bohees' activities during the 1880/1881 season, but it may be assumed that they continued to tour the States as members of Haverly's Genuine Colored Minstrels. On June 13, 1881, the company began a week's run at Halleck's Alhambra in South Boston,



(courtesy of Dr. Rainer E. Lotz)

George and James Bohee
on stage in knee breeches and jockey caps
c. 1881

Mass., their last engagement before sailing to Liverpool, England, on July 14, 1881 (Sampson, p. 42).

Haverly's Genuine Colored Minstrels opened in London at Her Majesty's Theatre, Haymarket, on July 30, 1881. Reynolds (p. 203) describes the event: "When the curtain went up on the opening night it disclosed on the stage about sixty-five real negroes, both male and female, ranging in shades of complexion from the coal black negro to the light brown Mulatto or Octoroon. They were of all ages, from the ancient Uncle Toms and Aunt Chloes, smart young coons and wenches, down to the little Piccaninny a few months old nestling in his mother's lap. Their costumes were of the Plantation, in a picturesque plantation setting, somewhat reminiscent of the Jubilee Festival scene from 'Uncle Tom's Cabin.' There were sixteen corner men in all, eight bones and eight tambourines, arranged in two rows on the stage... The programme was a mixture of plantation solos, concerted numbers, Jubilee Quartettes, and spirituals, interspersed with comic nigger ditties and witticisms by the comedians... The music was not an outstanding feature of the show. Some clever specialties were introduced by a troupe of twenty dancers and a banjo orchestra... W.H. Allen gave an excellent display of high pedestal clog dancing and the Bohee Brothers (James and George) made their first appearance in this country with this troupe."

After a season of two or three months the company toured the principal cities in the English provinces, then returned to the U.S. in the late spring of 1882. The tour's apparently limited success can hardly have been due to the all-Afro-American roster which featured outstanding professionals such as Billy Kersands (principal comedian), Sam Lucas, James Bland (singer), Billy Speed, Irving Sayles, Tom McIntosh (comedian, drummer), Richard Little (bass voice), Wallace King (tenor voice), Bob Mack (comedian), J. Grace (comedian), W.H. Allen (clog dancer). The banjo band consisted of E.M. Hall, Arthur Thatcher, Tom Beet and, of course,

the Bohee Brothers. The white troupe, which had performed at the same venue the previous year, had "stolen the show" and the novelty effect of a large American troupe had worn off.

A contemporary review (in the August 6, 1881 edition of *Entr'acte*) is revealing in its racist undertones: "The band of sable entertainers, now disporting at Her Majesty's Theatre, under the auspices of that comprehensive caterer, Mr. Haverly, must not be confounded with the troupe which first made a sensation here something like twelve months ago under the same management; the first batch got their black faces by artificial means, whereas nature has effected the darkening operation for the performers who are just now demonstrating at this theatre. The entertainment which these coloured folks give is varied in character, though, we humbly opine, not sufficiently differing from that given by artificial blacks to endow it with an absolutely special mark. There is no feature in the performance which we witnessed and listened to last Saturday that is more suggestive of negro life than was to be found in the entertainment tendered by Mr. Haverly's former troupe, which was made up of entirely white men; and, in our opinion, this is the weakness of the enterprise. England has done much for the black people, and ever since Mrs. Beecher-Stowe's story of 'Uncle Tom's Cabin' created such a furor as has ever been made by the publication of any book since, English people have felt a strong interest in the man of color, and in the accounts of his daily life. Let us say that there are excellent voices among the choristers, more especially in the basso department. There are also some twenty female choristers, and it seems to us hardly enough is made of this factor. In the comedy department we make bold to say that the negro can hardly be ranked as a man and brother with the professional white 'corner' man; the former knows how to make the most of a wide mouth and a wealth of tongue; but such play ceases to be humorous, unless supported by something more substantial. The chief 'corner' man Mr. McIntosh, we think, is his name—is

possessed of some humour which he demonstrated in other ways besides grimacing. Another weakness of the entertainment is the comparative poorness of the orchestral accompaniments. The feature which prospered well on Saturday, and which was genuinely comic, was that produced by a member of the troupe who was made up as a chanticleer, and who imitated that bird with such fidelity that a real bantam-cock attacked him with much ardor, afterwards indicating his victory by crowing with all its might. To see this little bird chasing a man-size counterfeit was sufficiently ludicrous to send the audience into fits of laughter. This item made a splendid success, as it deserved to do, for it is one of the funniest exhibitions that has ever been seen on the stage."

Six weeks later, on September 6, 1881, the same paper carried a more favorable review: "The entertainment which is now forthcoming here is tendered with desirable celebrity, is pleasantly varied, and is manifestly superior to that which graced the opening of the campaign. Some of the features which helped to make up the inaugural programme are still retained, it is true; but the changes that have been made have had the effect of illuminating the performance in its entirety. The ballads which happen to be under the treatment bear a more popular ring than did those which we first heard these darkies interpret, while the breakdown dancing and the clog dancing, interspersed with a series of poses, after the styles of those introduced by Mr. Haverly's first batch of minstrels (white), are excellent features of their kind. The performances of Mr. Mack and his little bantam-cock are received with volleys of laughter every night, and it may safely be said that this is the specialty of the entertainment. The concerted singing is of a very fair order, and the voices in the bass department are singularly good in volume and quality. The comedy of the entertainment is mostly supplied by Mr. Kersands and Mr. McIntosh, and the last-named is genuinely funny, while Mr. Kersands' fun is good but more of the negro order. This venture seems to be a highly prosperous one, and full houses are the rule here."

Chromolitho-lithographs of minstrel musicians before World War I

Banjo



Bones

(from the collection of Dr. Rainer E. Lotz)

These figurines were free to minstrel customers
buying chocolates and sweets.

Tambourine



(from the collection of Dr. Rainer E. Lotz)



Bones

How Joe Sweeney invented the 5- string banjo—

It is interesting to note that this theatrical paper made no reference to the banjo orchestra. However, we know through Reynolds that "their entertainment consisted of ballads, banjo solos and duets, and their famous double banjo song and dance in the orthodox costume of velvet coats, knee breeches and jockey caps—a very smartly worked number this." (Reynolds, p. 205) [see illustration]. E.M. Hall played "Home Sweet Home," with variations, and introduced the tremolo style of playing for the first time in Britain. James Bohee was a stellar performer and his favorite banjo, when he arrived in England, was a smooth-arm instrument made by Hammig of New York (he had played it for President Grant), but in later years he used a banjo with five raised frets (Brewer, p. 217). Both banjo construction and playing techniques had undergone dramatic changes from when the white American minstrel Joe Sweeney introduced the banjo to Britain in 1843.⁴ "Previously the banjo was made from a gourd with four strings only. So Sweeney experimented. He took an old cheese box, cut it in half, covered it with a skin and added another string... This happened about 1830." (Reynolds, p. 78.)

By June 1882 Charles Frohman had purchased the whole company from Haverly in London.

Frohman's plan was to bring together the largest black minstrel company ever organized and to make a grand tour of the U.S. However, when the company returned to the U.S. in mid-1882, the Bohees (and some other artists, among them James Bland and Billy Allen) stayed behind in Europe.⁵ Obviously, the Bohees had examined the prospects of making a living in Britain as professional banjoists and decided to enter the competition. Once again, the elder brother, James, seems to have been the driving force. When the brothers organized their own minstrel troupe, the actual proprietor was James. It was also James who, in response to demands for performances at society functions and "private entertainments" in London, set up a banjo instruction studio in Coventry Street (London W.1). This London studio was where Queen Victoria's son and future heir to the British throne, took banjo lessons from James Bohee. (Green, p. 4.) Years later, they advertised themselves as the "Famous Royal Bohee Brothers, banjoists and entertainers to their Royal Highnesses, the prince and princess of Wales, the late King Edward VII and Queen Alexandria." (Southern, p. 40.) A studio portrait of James Bohee together with pictures of Alfred Weaver and the Weaver banjo (as played by the Prince of Wales) were reproduced in the London *Sketch*, on January 30, 1907.

In contrast to other Afro-American visitors in Europe, the Bohees never left Britain. They made London their permanent home and never entered the strenuous circuits

organized by variety house owners all over Europe. Here, venues changed weekly, and there were no paid holidays. No wonder the Bohees themselves had become a kind of haven for other black visitors from the U.S. (who normally started their European careers in England, where there were the least language problems and the fastest maritime connections), such as the operatic singers *prima donna* Madam Selika and her husband Sampson Williams: "Madame Selika is profuse in her thanks to the prosperous brothers, Messrs Bohee, who were ever friendly and even devoted to herself and husband while the latter remained in London. These gentlemen (formerly from Chicago, I think) are still meeting with great success in their professions. In fact they are now considered permanent London institutions. This shows what talent combined with study and pluck can do." (Trotter, p. 91.)

Apart from running the banjo academy in London the Bohees regularly toured Britain for six-month cycles. The Bohee Brothers Coloured Minstrel Company consisted of about 30 mostly black performers—a policy which the brothers already had adopted in the U.S. *Minstrel Memories* (p. 202-203) is the source for the following details:

"It was about 1889 that the Bohee Brothers' Operatic Minstrels opened their season in the International Hall (now known as the Café Monico), Piccadilly Circus. It was certainly an admirable position. The troupe, just over thirty strong, possessed a good orchestra under the direction of Arthur Anstis, of practically all white men. The first part consisted of the usual ballads and eccentric ditties. The best of these were, 'Falling Shadows' and 'Only A Ringlet Of Hair', sung respectively by Fred Walton, a pleasing alto, and Ben Shaw, a good robust tenor; the only two white soloists in the troupe. Two coloured ladies, Miss De Simoncourt and Georgina Barlee, introduced 'Sleep Little Baby' and 'Angel Mother's Last Good-bye', with excellent effect. The coloured comedians were: bones, Charles White, whose eccentric dance imitating roller skating was very successful; James Carson, who appeared



(courtesy the Lotz Collection)

British royal stamps issued during the Bohee Brothers era: (left to right) 1882—Queen Victoria, 1902—King Edward II, 1912—King George V.

[Those of the audience who may desire to leave the Hall are requested to do so in the Intervals.]

PROGRAMME.

SUBJECT TO ALTERATION.)

GRAND FIRST PART - - BY THE COMPANY.

SELECTION		THE BOHEE BAND
BONES:	BANJOIST:	
MR. GEORGE B. BOHEE	MR. JAMES D. BOHEE	
MR. CHARLES WATSON	(The World's Champion).	
	TAMBOURINES:	
	MR. WEBSTER SYKES	
	MR. GEORGE AYTOUN	
	INTERLOCUTOR:	
	MR. IKE JONES.	
OPENING CHORUS	"Freedom To-day"	THE COMPANY
OVERTURE	"A la Bohee"	THE BOHEE BAND
COMIC REFRAIN	"Swinging on the Golden Gate"...	MR. GEO. BOHEE
BALLAD	"Baby's Laughing"	MISS JOSIE RIVERS
COMIC SONG	"Up high in the Sky"	MISS AMY HEIGHT
COMIC INTERLUDE	"Fifteen Pence"	MR. GEORGE AYTOUN
BALLAD	"Sweet Chiming Bells"	MISS C. CUSHMAN
FINALE... ..	"Mary's gone with a Coon"	MR. WEBSTER SYKES

NO INTERVAL.

P A R T S E C O N D .

SPECIALITY	"Hush little Baby"	MISS AMY HEIGHT
	THE ROYAL BOHEE BROTHERS,	
	<i>The most accomplished Banjoists in the World, in their Artistic, Classical, and Refined Entertainment.</i>	
BANJO DUET	"The Boulanger March"	MESSRS. BOHEE
SONG	"A Boy's Best Friend is his Mother"	MR. GEO. B. BOHEE
BANJO SOLO	"Home, sweet Home," or "The Mocking Bird"	MR. JAMES D. BOHEE
BANJO SONG AND DANCE	(in Costume)	MESSRS. BOHEE
IMPERSONATION	(W. J. Ashcroft)	MR. J. P. CURLETT
ECCENTRIC PLANTATION PASTIMES	(The Funny Little Coon)	MR. WEBSTER SYKES
SERIO-COMIC	"Can't do it"	MISS JOSIE RIVERS
SONG	(By America's Prima Donna)	MISS CORELENE CUSHMAN
BLACK SWAN TRIO	Miss CUSHMAN, Miss RIVERS, and Mr. IKE JONES	
COMIC MUSICAL FINALE	"American Antics"	MR. GEO. AYTOUN
	GOD SAVE THE QUEEN.	

The Orchestral Band conducted by Mr. THOS. WEST. Lime Light and Properties by Mr. G. H. CHAPMAN.
The entire Entertainment produced under the Direction of Mr. GEORGE B. BOHEE.

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(from the collection of Dr. Rainer E. Lotz)

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BOHEE BROS.

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No. 1 PROGRAMME AND SONGS, PRICE 2d.

W. WALL, PRINTER, HUETER STREET, LIVERPOOL.

1889 Program—(from the Lotz Collection)

later in a plantation act; and D. Marks: tambourines, Billy Taylor, James Hodges, and H. Miller. The songs and comedy business of the coloured comedians in the first part was of a quaint and lively description, if devoid of subtlety, and rather lacking in variety. Miss Carr Lyon, the possessor of a remarkable double voice, gave a clever exhibition. But the special attraction of the second part was the clever act of the Bohee Brothers themselves, comprising banjo solos, duets, ballads, and songs and dances, during which they accompanied themselves on the banjo. James Bohee was the banjo soloist, and a remarkably clever executant. George Bohee had a pleasing tenor voice and sang with great expression that well-known

ballad, 'A Boy's Best Friend is his Mother', of which he was the original singer in this country.

"Charles H. Chivers was interlocutor and bass vocalist. Mr. Lawrence Brough was the business manager of the company. A white comedian, Dick Davies, was specially engaged for the concluding sketch 'The Kentucky Court House', in which he introduced some clever and welcome comedy as the judge. The whole entertainment, while quite good of its kind, was hardly calculated to establish itself permanently in the West-end of London. The show ran here for about six months, after which they continued to tour the provinces for several years, until shortly after the death of the actual proprietor, James

D. Bohee, on December 1, 1897 (sic). James Bohee was greatly respected in the profession."

The Bohee
Minstrels used
protest material.

James Bohee's special number was "Home Sweet Home" (with variations), but among his original compositions for the banjo may be mentioned "Star Of The Night Waltz" and "American Jig" (BMG, June 1952, p. 224). While it is undoubtedly true that the Bohee Minstrels' repertoire included "the usual ballads," Toll (p. 246) has pointed out that it also made use of overt, direct protest material. Recalling the moving antislavery images white minstrels had used over 20 years earlier, black minstrels focused on the threatened black family. In unmistakable language, George Bohee, for example, sang of a tormented mother, who cried that if there was "any room in heaven for a poor black slave," she hoped her baby would die rather than live under her brutal master.

Hark! baby, Hark! your mama is dying,
For saving her child from cruel master's blows
Oh! cruel, cruel slavery! hundreds are dying.
Please let my baby die and go.

The program for the May 6, 1889 performance at Free Trade Hall, Manchester [see facsimile illustration], reveals a balanced mixture of ballads, comedy, spirituals, and instrumental showpieces. Members of this troupe included the well-known Black Swan Trio, performers who successfully graduated to the variety theaters, where they were extremely popular until the death of (Miss) Corlene Cushman—a fact explicitly mentioned in James Bohee's obituary in the December 11, 1897 issue of the *Menthyr Express*. (Other black Americans hired by Bohee directly from the U.S. were the famous composer, James Bland, and "Julian The Juggler"; both sailed to England to join



(courtesy of Dr. Rainer T. Lotz)

"Mr. George Bohee, who taught the king to play the banjo." — *The Sketch*, London, 1907

the Bohee Brothers Company after closing with Cleveland's Colored Minstrels in early 1891.)

As well as being instrumentalists (banjo and piano), singers, dancers, entertainers, promoters, theatrical managers, composers, and banjo tutors the enterprising brothers also became manufacturers and recording artists. The aforementioned printed program carries the following advertisement:

"The Great American Banjos manufactured by the Messrs Bohee, and played by them nightly, may be purchased from them. These instruments are without exception, the finest Banjos yet made. They are remarkable for their brilliancy and volume of tone, peerless construction and carrying power. Lessons given during the visit of the company."

Were they the first
Afro-Americans
to record?

Although the brothers' claim of having manufactured banjos is questionable (they probably just sold U.S.- and British-made instruments), they *were* sound recording pioneers. Unfortunately, none of their cylinders is known to have survived, and no company ledgers exist with titles and recording dates.

When the Australian scholar Peter Burgis researched the history of recorded sound in Australia, he discovered that in mid-1890 a Professor Douglas Archibald introduced the Edison phonograph to Australia. Archibald toured the Australian colonies until March 1892, recording celebrities and musicians. The press also reported that Archibald played cylinder recordings by the Bohee Brothers (Burgis to Lotz, December 1989). If, as is likely, he brought the cylinders from England to Australia himself, the recording date must be earlier than March 1892. For the time being the entry in my forthcoming discography, *The Banjo On Record*, can therefore be no more specific than:

**THE BOHEE BROTHERS
James Douglas Bohee,
George Bohee (Banjo
duet)**

Probably London, between early 1890 and March 1892.
**Unidentified titles—
Edison cylinders (?)**

By now, the Bohees were something of a legend—in England as well as in the U.S. Whereas it is well-known that entertainers who pursue professional careers abroad will soon be forgotten and unrecognized at home, the Bohees are exceptions. Edward B. Marks in his *They All Sang* (1905) states that they were the first team to play banjos while dancing. He rates them among the great song and dance men. Eileen Southern's *Biographical Dictionary* (1982) also mentions that they won wide attention for their soft-shoe dances and skills at playing banjos as they danced. James Weldon Johnson refers to them in *Black Manhattan* (1930, p. 89-93): "The two Bohee brothers was (*sic*) a soft-shoe dance in the calcium light while they sang and accompanied themselves on their banjos....The two Bohee brothers were, perhaps, the first finished performers on the banjo." As late as 1953 the English magazine *B.M.G.* recalled that "James Bohee's 'American Jig' was given publicity later by Alice Walkinshaw, a noted player and pupil of Clifford Essex. She married James Dunn, who as a 'Banjo Sketch Artist' at the Palace Theater, London, on March 7, 1898, imitated the Bohee Bros. in his act." The obituary for James D. Bohee in the December 11, 1897 issue of the *Merthyr Express* also notes that the Bohees were being imitated: every barrel-organ played their favorite banjo song and dance "I'll Meet Her When The Sun Goes Down."

James Bohee dies
at age 53

The popularity and continuing acclaim of the Bohees is all the more remarkable, since James, the elder and more enterprising brother, died in his best years. James made his

final appearance at Temperance Hall, Merthyr Tydfil, South Wales on December 1, 1897, his 53rd birthday. He then journeyed to Ebbw Vale, where on December 8, after a week's illness, he died of acute pneumonia.⁶ James passed away in his wife's arms; his brother was also present. The burial took place on December 11, 1897 at Brompton Cemetery, London.

Such was his reputation that the news of his death was reported within a week in Germany, a country he had never visited, in the December 19, 1897 issue of *Der Artist*. Obituaries in the local press as well as in theatrical papers in London noted that the brothers "were considered the best banjoists in the world and had performed before royalty; they were commissioned to the privilege of using the honourable title of Royal Bohee Brothers." "The brothers did more to popularize 'the banjo' than any American entertainer who has visited these shores, either before their arrival or since." "Mr. Bohee was one of the first of the clever banjo players to visit England, and he and his brother helped to make the instrument popular over there. He was a London favorite for many years, and appeared frequently at the London Pavilion." The American *Cadenza* magazine commented upon this a couple of years later: "The foregoing notice omits the fact that Mr. Bohee was a colored man, and one of the very few colored men who ever played the banjo in a creditable manner. He was also one of the few surviving 'old time' banjo performers and belonged to the 'old school of players.'" (Green, 1988.)

For a while, the surviving brother, George, tried to continue The Bohee Operatic Minstrels but, by late 1898, was forced to disband in Hereford (*B.M.G.*, June 1952, p. 227). George Bohee then accepted engagements as a solo act at music halls (*B.M.G.*, August 1953, p. 270). Sometime in 1898, he returned to the recording studios in Liverpool as a soloist:

**MR. GEORGE BOHEE,
BANJO SOLO**

George Bohee (banjo-solo); accompaniment unknown, if any. Liverpool, before May 1898.

The Darkey's Wedding—Edison Bell cylinder

The Darkies Patrol—Edison Bell cylinder

The Yellow Kid's Patrol—Edison Bell cylinder

Bohemian Galop—Edison Bell cylinder

Darkey's Dream—Edison Bell cylinder

Darkey's Awakening—Edison Bell cylinder

Medley Of Airs—Edison Bell cylinder

Resistless March—Edison Bell cylinder

March In C—Edison Bell cylinder

Hunter's March—Edison Bell cylinder

Niagara March—Edison Bell cylinder

According to British researcher Frank Andrews, the above are wax cylinders with two minutes playing time, manufactured by the Edison Bell Supply Company of Liverpool, and may not be Edisonia Ltd. recordings. (Frank Andrews to Lotz, December, 1989.) None of these cylinders are known to have survived.

George Bohee continued touring the British halls, mostly on the reputable Moss Empire circuit, and was billed "Geo. Bohee (of the celebrated Bohee Brothers)." At some unknown time he also appeared in England in duet with Kathleen Marie (white). He was sufficiently popular to merit his photograph appearing on current songs of the day, an example being "As Dainty As A Rose, Banjo Song and Dance," written and composed by Miss Helen Charles, sung by George Bohee. The title page of the sheet music, published in 1902, features George Bohee in his stage costume, playing an unfretted banjo (*B.M.G.*, June 1952, p. 227). He toured Scotland in 1902; his latest confirmed engagement ended at the Newcastle Empire on January 2, 1904. He was the author of "George Bohee Medleys," which comprised excerpts from "Manhattan Beach March," "Washington Post," and "Rastus On Parade." His last years are shrouded in mystery. According to one source, he was reported to have died in the U.S. in 1915

(LaBrew, pp. 46-47); according to another, he returned to the U.S. and settled in New York either during the 1920s or 1930s (Southern, p. 40). According to yet another source, he was seen in London as late as 1926 (*B.M.G.*, August 1953, p. 270).

FOOTNOTES

[1] British researcher Jeffrey Green drew my attention to the fact that the black communities of eastern Canada are over two centuries old. Their origins date to the American Revolutionary War, when those who sided with the British moved to Canada after independence. Blacks who sided with King George were promised land. However, in Canada black Nova Scotians were so disillusioned with life under the crown that they formed part of the settlement in Sierra Leone (West Africa). Other black people, often from the West Indies, and often sailors or fishermen, settled in eastern Canada. Although slavery was abolished in the British Empire in the 1830s, the segregation of black Canadians continued until very recently. Black Canadians contributed a number of boxers (often regarded as Americans) throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, but their role in music has not been researched. The Bohees, song writer Shelton Brooks ("Some Of These Days"), and pianist Oscar Peterson suggest that this is an area that is overdue for study. (Green to Lotz, August 1990.)

[2] Although these dates have been verified by researcher Rosenberg, other sources claim that statistics of the U.S. census indicate that James Bohee was born in Canada in 1815, while "George Bohee was born in 1856 in Canada; was not the brother of James; he died after returning to the U.S. in 1915." (LaBrew, pp. 46-47.)

[3] Bollman cites the following major Massachusetts manufacturers: Fairbanks & Cole; A.C. Fairbanks; O.R. Chase Apollo Banjos; William A. Cole; George C. Dobson; Lincoln B. Gatcomb; John C. Haynes Bay State Banjos; Elias Howe; Luscomb, Thompson & Odell; Gad Robinson; Charles Stromberg; The Vega Company (Bollman, p. 37-54).

[4] Michael Pickering, in his otherwise excellent essay on "Black Music in Nineteenth-Century Britain," mistakenly identifies Sweeney as a "black musician...who rejected the Jim Crow-type plantation costume and attempted to improve the image of the Black" (p. 24).

[5] After returning to the U.S., Haverly and Callender's United Colored Min-

strels closed in Philadelphia on December 30, 1881, where they separated into two companies, one managed by John Rice and the other by William Welch.

[6] The certified copy of an entry of death in the sub-district of Tredegue was reproduced in the June 1952 issue of *B.M.G.* (p. 220).

ILLUSTRATIONS

(1) James and George Bohee, seated on stage, in formal dress. No date. [Originally published in Reynolds (1928), facing page 196].

(2) James and George Bohee, standing on stage, in fancy dress (knee breeches and jockey caps). No date (about 1881). [Originally published in Reynolds (1928), facing page 196].

(3) George Bohee, three quarter portrait, seated in the studio. No date. [Originally published in *The Sketch*, London, January 30, 1907, p. 80.]

(4) Program, *Bohee Bros. Colored Minstrel Company*, Manchester, May 6, 1889 [Lotz collection].

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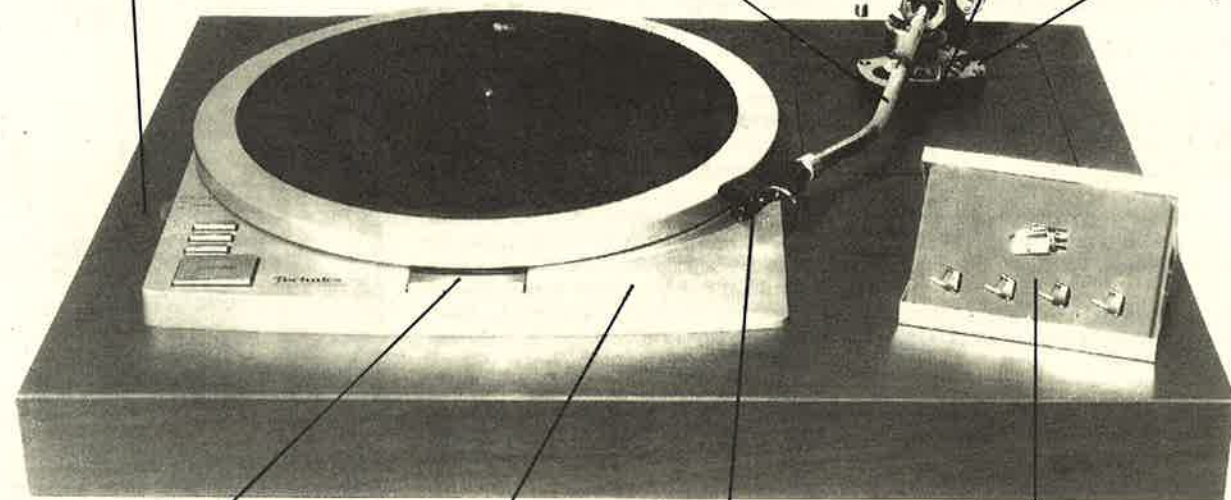
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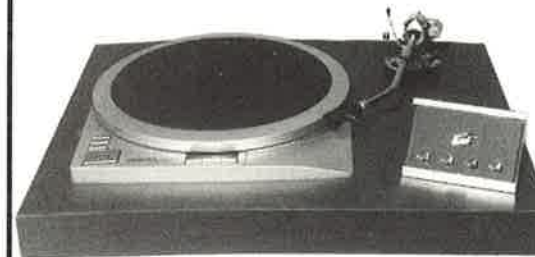
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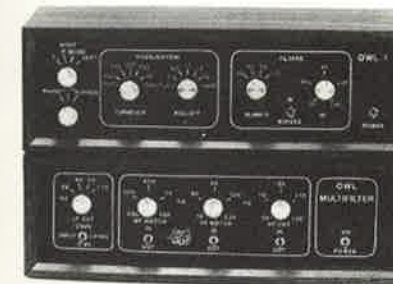
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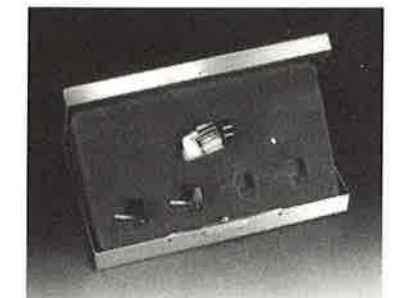
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