

THE RECORDINGS OF WALTER BENNETT

An Annotated Tentative Personello-Discography

W.C.Allen WALTER A. „Jock“ BENNETT (trumpet)
Reportedly from Pittsfield, Mass., or Chicago.
An older man, knew FH from New York days.
Reportedly recorded with J.C. Johnson (Feb/29),
Bennett's Swamplanders (Sep/30), Wilmoth Houdini (1931).
Played with Fats Pichon (1931); Allie Ross (1931);
Savoy Bearcats (1932-33); Eli Rice (1934-37).
Joined FH c Sep/42 to c June/43; played lead horn, high notes,
was "tremendous" according to fellow musicians; doubled on piano.
Believed to be deceased; not listed in 1961 Local 802 Directory.

When in 1969 STORYVILLE issued a most interesting piece called "The Other Take" by John R.T. Davies and Laurie Wright, I first became aware of a trumpet player called Walter Bennett. Only very few of the cited recordings were in my collection then, although I had been keen in purchasing every long-playing record in the field of Classic Jazz. (Wisely I decided then not to start collecting 78 records!) Through the great services of Dick M. Bakker of Deventer / The Netherlands I got hold of RISTIC 26 "J.C.Johnson" and from then on Walter Bennett was one of the musicians on top of my list of interest.

Getting in contact with John R.T. I received a list of his collection which really left me breathless in those days. Following his advice: "How to make the best out of John R. T.", I had him transcribe the "Bennett's Swamplanders" titles for me.

These titles, together with the J.C.Johnson Five Hot Sparks sides, left a lasting mark in my audio-memory, which in turn made me compiling anything I could find regarding Walter Bennett.

Here now is a list of all Walter Bennett's recordings I could find. The interested reader may find some recordings here that have never before been attributed to Walter Bennett. But I am rather certain of their belonging into this list. As mostly when trying to attribute unknown personnel to recordings of the Classic Jazz period, it is impossible to be certain, and therefore I would invite any interested reader to check himself and let me know any objections, approvals and/or stimulations.

The reader will find no original research in this article, as I shall leave this to people living close to the sources and to native speakers, and because my profession and my family duties would not have allowed this in the past decades. But I have tried to compile everything on Mr. Bennett I could find in the available literature. And I used my ears for listening, identifying and discriminating.

Who is Walter "Jock" Bennett? the reader may ask. And here already the problem is obvious. You would not find anything about him in the reference books. You even would not find anything in Chilton's Who is Who in Jazz!

And, yet, this man has left us a fine but small body of recordings of first class hot and driving jazz of the first order.

Not much is known of the person. Walter C. Allen has to say, that Walter Bennett probably came from Pittsfield, Mass., or possibly from Chicago. So, nothing definitive! No date of birth. He just seems to have appeared in New York to make the recordings this article deals with.

But Rainer Lotz in his Examination of The Musical Spillers in STORYVILLE 152 lets us know that Bennett perhaps was a member of the Musical Spillers' travelling show in or before 1921, possibly having been replaced by Rex Stewart in that very year.

At least in the years after 1927 he obviously spent his time in New York, making the below listed recordings.

He further played with Walter "Fats" Pichon and the Allie Ross band in 1931.

Also somewhere in 1931 he seems to have joined Billy Fowler's band playing southern dance work. Bennett playing third trumpet and doing "Louis Armstrong's 'Ain't Misbehavin', ending on high F as Louis did" (George Winfield Story).

He also was with Eubie Blake's band as 3rd trumpet for the show *Singing The Blues* in September/October 1931, but left before the show reopened, being replaced by George Winfield.

In November 1931 Clyde Bernhardt joined Marion Hardy's Alabamians and found there Walter Bennett as second trumpet and occasional singer, Doc Cheatham being first trumpet. C. Bernhardt: "Bennett also played "damn good piano and backed me for the session" (see session of spring 1932 below).

He was with the Savoy Bearcats in 1932 and stayed until 1933 (W.C.Allen).

This is in contrast to Freddie Skerritt's story in STORYVILLE 66, that Bennett was part of Bud Harris and his Rhythm Rascals from the end of 1932 until 1933!

Together with Al Sears Walter "Jock" Bennett was a member of the Eli Rice band, doing dance dates in Wisconsin in 1934 until 1937.

Nothing seems to be known of him in the following years until 1942, when he joined Fletcher Henderson's band in September until ca. June 1943 as first trumpet man. "He played lead horn, high notes, was "tremendous" according to fellow musicians and doubled on piano" (W.C.Allen).

In 1961 he was not listed in Local 802 Directory, and nothing else seems to be known.

Obviously one of the great unsung musicians of jazz history!

There are band photos of the Bud Harris Rhythm Rascals 1932 with Jock Bennett in STORYVILLE 66/218 and in STORYVILLE 79/26.

Walter "Jock" Bennett is not to be mistaken for Theodore "Cuban" Bennett, who also was a great trumpet player, as musicians reported. But he, a cousin of Benny Carter, never made any recordings and remained in obscurity all his musical life.

WALTER BENNETT

STYLE

Walter Bennett plays in a clear and melodic style which does not show any influences of early Harlem trumpet playing. Instead, he uses a style adjoined to Louis Armstrong's "Western" style. He is a staccato player and likes to play in upper register, but often rather untidy, yet with a hot approach.

TONE

As can be judged from the sound of the recordings, his tone obviously was fat and voluminous.

VIBRATO

He uses a wide and shallow uneven vibrato, medium fast.

TIME

Bennett often plays fast phrases a bit hasty and with little off-beat.

PHRASING

His phrasing is rather simple, often in double-time. He likes to end phrases with short downward arpeggios.

This personnelo-discography is based on RUST, JAZZ AND RAGTIME RECORDS 1897 - 1942.

Personnels are taken from this source, but modified in the light of earlier or subsequent research or on the strength of my own listening, discussed with our listening group or other interested collectors.

- Documented, most certain and aurally absolutely obvious identifications are listed thus: **Walter Bennett**
- Probable, generally agreed, but not documented identifications are listed in italics, thus: *Walter Bennett*
- Not attributable identifications – although the musician in question might be an otherwise well-known person – are listed thus: **unknown**
- If a possible identification for an otherwise unknown musician is suggested by the author without the possibility to prove the factual evidence, it is listed thus: (*Walter Bennett*)

When feeling certain without a musician's documented presence, I have not refrained from altering Rust's statements without using italics. In any case, my statements are open to discussion and I would appreciate any contribution - pro or contra!

As always in my discographies on this website I have written recording sessions with their headings, dates, titles and names of musicians in italics, whenever I am convinced that the eponymous musician of this discography is not part of the accompanying group of this session! Documented names of musicians if known – in recording ledgers or on record labels – are listed in bold letters.

This discography still is - and will certainly be - a work in progress for a long time, if not eternally. Yet, on the way to a definite discography of all jazz recordings before 1942 - which certainly will never be possible - it is intended to fill some gaps that have not been treated before.

WALTER BENNETT

001	SAM MANNING	Blue Hot Syncopators	New York,	Feb. 1926
	Sam Manning – voc;			
	<i>Walter Bennett</i> – tpt; unknown – clt; unknown – sax;			
	unknown – pno; (<i>Gerald Clark</i>) – bjo; unknown – tom-tom (2)			
74031-B	Keep Your Hands Off That	OK 8302,	Jazz Oracle	BDW 8028
74032-B	Go, I've Got Somebody Sweeter Than You	OK 8302,	Jazz Oracle	BDW 8028

Just recently (04-2020) I received Dave Brown's suggestion to check the identity of the trumpet player on this session. And I found my pencil note in the CD booklet of some years ago suggesting Walter Bennett to be the trumpet player. On re-listening it became apparent that this man must be the very same one to whom I had dedicated a whole list (and an article in Names&Numbers 52) of recordings. The instrumental features of this very interesting trumpet player are just the same as described above, only, that this session had been cut two years before the next one following, which would explain the few and small technical and tonal discrepancies recognisable. But his entire stylistic concept, his way of phrasing and timing and his tonal qualities are the same as on the recordings listed below. So, for me, without any doubt: Walter Bennett.

There is a somewhat pedestrian clarinetist, an alto or C-melody saxophonist (see CD booklet), a slightly unsecure pianist, a strong and effective banjo player who is tentatively named Gerald Clark by the authors of the CD booklet – certainly because of Clark's relationship to the New York group of Carribean musicians (see Houdini and Clark's Night Owls, sessions 12/13 below). As the CD booklet remarks, the Chinese tom-tom in the second title might be played by Sam Manning himself as all other players are busy playing their appropriate instruments.

Notes:

- *Rust*2: not listed*
- *Rust*3,*4,*6: Sam Manning -v; unknown c; unknown as; unknown p; unknown bj.*
- *BGR*2,*3,*4: not included/listed*

002 **JOSEPHINE HALL** New York, c. Sep. 28, 1928
 Josephine Hall – voc;
 unknown instrumental group possibly comprising *Walter Bennett* – tpt; *Mabel Horsey* – pno
 GEX-2084 Good Things Come To Those Who Wait Gnt unissued not on LP/CD

This recording is listed here because of its sequence of matrix number and its recording date. It can therefore be assumed that the personnel could be the same or similar as on the following recordings.

Notes:

- *Rust*3: prob Horsey's Hot Five: unknown c; unknown tb; unknown cl; unknown vn; ?Mabel Horsey -p.*
- *Rust*4,*6: unknown instrumental group.*
- *BGR*2,*3,*4: prob acc by Horsey's Hot Five: unknown, cnt; unknown, tbn; unknown, clt; unknown, vln; Mabel Horsey, pno*

003 **ALBERTA JONES** New York, c. Sep. 28, 1928
 Alberta Jones – voc;
 Walter Bennett – tpt; J. C. Higginbotham – tbn (2);
Mabel Horsey – pno
 GEX-2085 Wild Geese Blues Gnt 6642, Document DOCD-1004
 GEX-2086 Red Beans And Rice Gnt 6642, Document DOCD-1004

I have also checked Alberta Jones' *My Slow And Easy Man* and *Where Have All The Black Men Gone?* Gennett 6535, but the trumpet player definitely is not Walter Bennett! This obviously is J.C. Higginbotham's first recording. Ullo Bela, trombonist and noted specialist on Higginbotham, confirmed Higginbotham's presence after analysing his playing on the second title.

Notes:

- *Rust*3: ?Horsey's Hot Five: unknown c; unknown tb; unknown cl; unknown vn; ?Mabel Horsey -p.*
- *Rust*4,*6: Horsey's Hot Five: ?Walter Bennett, c; ?J.C. Higginbotham, tb; ?Mabel Horsey, p; unknown, bj.*
- *BGR*2,*3,*4: unknown orchestra (prob Horsey's Hot Five): unknown, cnt; unknown, tbn; unknown, clt; unknown, vln; prob Mabel Horsey,pno.*

Tunes:

GEX-2085 Wild Geese Blues key of Bb Gennett
 (Intro 4 bars ens)(Chorus 1 12 bars blues voc + ens)(Chorus 2 voc + ens)(Chorus 3 voc + ens)(Chorus 4 voc + ens)(Chorus 5 voc + ens)

GEX-2086 Red Beans And Rice key of Bb Gennett
 (Intro 4 bars tpt/tbn/pno)(Chorus 1 12 bars blues voc + tpt)(Chorus 2 voc + tpt)(Chorus 3 tbn)(Chorus 4 voc + tpt)(Chorus 5 voc + tpt / tbn joining at end)

004 **RUBY GOWDY** New York, c. Sep. 28, 1928
 Ruby Gowdy – voc;
 Walter Bennett – tpt; J. C. Higginbotham – tbn; Omer Simeon – clt;
Mabel Horsey – pno
 GEX-2087 Florida Flood Gnt 6708, Document DOCD-5510
 GEX-2088 Breath And Britches Blues Gnt 6708, Document DOCD-5510

I have also checked Ruby Gowdy's *Moanful Wailin' Blues* Gennett 6570, but the trumpet player definitely is not Walter Bennett!

Notes:

- *Rust*3: unknown orchestra (prob Horsey's Hot Five: unknown c; unknown tb; unknown cl; unknown vn; Mabel Horsey -p.*
- *Rust*4,*6: unknown orchestra (prob Horsey's Hot Five: ?Walter Bennett, c; ?J.C. Higginbotham, tb; ?Darnell Howard, cl, vn; ?Mabel Horsey, p; unknown, bj).*
- *BGR*2,*3: unknown orchestra (prob Horsey's Hot Five: unknown cnt; unknown tbn; unknown clt; unknown vln; Mabel Horsey -p.)*
- *BGR*4: unknown, c; unknown, tb; unknown, cl; prob Mabel Horsey, p.*

Tunes:

GEX-2087 Florida Flood Blues key of Db Gennett
 (Intro 4 bars ens)(Chorus 1 12 bars blues voc + clt)(Chorus 2 voc + tpt)(Chorus 3 voc + tbn/tpt/clt 2 bars each)
 (Chorus 4 voc + tbn/tpt/clt 2 bars each / ens at end)

GEX-2088 Breath And Britches Blues key of C Gennett
 (Intro 4 bars ens)(Chorus 1 12 bars blues voc + tpt)(Chorus 2 voc + tbn)(Chorus 3 voc + clt)Chorus 4 voc + pno)
 (Chorus 5 voc + tpt / ens at end)

005 **HORSEY'S HOT FIVE** New York, c. Sep. 28/29, 1928
 Walter Bennett – tpt; J. C. Higginbotham – tbn; Omer Simeon – clt, alt;
 unknown – vln (in parts played like a bjo!) (*Clarence Black ?*);
Mabel Horsey – pno
 GEX-2089-A Weeping Blues Gnt 6722, Arcadia 2008 (LP)
 GEX-2090 Waitin' For You Blues Gnt 6722, Arcadia 2008 (LP)
 GEX-2091-A Take It Now Gnt unissued not on LP/CD
 GEX-2092-A Too Long Blues Gnt unissued not on LP/CD

This group of Gennett recordings with consecutive matrix numbers might very well have been recorded on one day. I therefore assume that the accompanists are always part of the last recorded Horsey's Hot Five. This might also apply to the unissued Josephine Hall session, of which nothing seems to be known.

- The trumpet player is Walter Bennett, following RUST 6* and my own ears. He is the same musician as the one on Bennett's *Swamplanders* and on the *Houdinis*.

- On the second title of the Alberta Jones session suddenly a very familiar sounding trombonist appears. RUST 6* lists him as ? J.C. Higginbotham and my ears do certainly support this assumption. I have consulted Ulrich Bela, noted trombonist of Hamburg, Germany, author of a very comprehensive compilation of Higginbotham solos and their analyses. According to Bela, this trombonist here is almost beyond any doubt Higginbotham, as suggested. Use of notes, tone etc. indicate Higginbotham. (His analyses are in my hands and will gladly be shared with interested persons on request.) As far as I know are these Higginbotham's first recordings ever! After Chilton, Higginbotham came to New York on a visit in September 1928 and was signed by Luis Russell for his band when heart sitting in at the Savoy Ballroom with the Chick Webb band.

- The clarinetist/altoist is listed as ?Darnell Howard in RUST 6*. My ears tell me, that this musician is definitely Omer Simeon! I would like the reader (and listener) compare the clarinet playing with Simeon's playing on his own recordings of August 1929, the Dixie Rhythm Kings and on the Helen Savage sides, but not on the Morton Red Hot Pepper sides. When comparing this player here to Simeon's playing on the Jelly Roll Morton Red Hot Peppers, it should be kept in mind, that Morton requested his musicians to play along his own prescribed lines, which were mainly dominated by his thinking as a piano player. Listen to Simeon's solo on *Black Bottom Stomp*, and it will easily be seen and acknowledged, that here the clarinet solo phrases are typical piano lines, and not Simeon's typical own. Furthermore it should be noted, that the Morton Victor recordings are made using a much advanced technical equipment, resulting in a much fuller clarinet tone on the Victors, whereas his tone on the Gennetts is rather thin. Yet it is exactly Simeon's own individual phrasing, not Howard's, who owned a somewhat erratic time.

It might be interesting to note that Simeon left New York on September 30th, where he had been playing with George Howe's and later Luis Russell's band at the Nest Club to join Erskine Tate's band at the Metropolitan Theater in Chicago in October 1928.

- There is no bjo on the Horsey Hot Five sides. Instead, we hear a violin player (soloing on *Weeping Blues*), who at other instances plucks his violin just like a banjo, which obviously caused RUST to list one. Understandably RUST ascribed the violin to the alleged Darnell Howard, who was a violin player as well, but, as I said, the clarinet player is certainly Simeon and Howard was not in New York at the time. So, who is the violinist? On Anthony Barnett's suggestion I have compared Clarence Black's playing on Richard M. Jones' *Tickle Bridges Blues* with the violinist here. Black's playing on *Tickle Bridges Blues* is to my ears much more essential and down-to-earth than the violin player's on the Horseys with the triple phrasing he uses in his solo. The violin sound is impossible to compare because of the inherent differences in recording technic. So, I am unable to judge.

- The piano player seems to be the same on all three sessions, thus Mabel Horsey (Horsey's Hot Five!). We hear competent piano comping, tending to the New York/Harlem direction, but not very distinct and impossible to assign. Who does know anything about her. There is nothing in the accessible literature!

These three (or four?) sessions were not dealt with in STORYVILLE'S "The Other Take" !

Notes:

- Rust*2,*3: unknown cnt; unknown tbn; unknown clt; unknown vln; Mabel Horsey (pno).

- Rust*4,*6: ?Walter Bennett, c; ?J.C. Higginbotham, tb; ?Darnell Howard, cl, vn; ?Mabel Horsey, p; unknown, bj).

Tunes:

GEX-2089-A *Weeping Blues* key of Eb Gennett

(Intro 6 bars ens)(Chorus 1 12 bars blues ens)(Chorus 2 ens)(Chorus 3 vln)(Chorus 4 ens)(Chorus 5 ens)

GEX-2090 *Waitin' For You Blues* key of Eb Gennett

(Intro 4 bars ens)(Chorus 1 32 bars AB tpt 16 bars / clt 16 bars)(Chorus 2 tbn 16 bars / ens 16 bars)

006 J. C. JOHNSON AND HIS FIVE HOT SPARKS

Long Island City,

c. Feb. 1929

Walter Bennett – tpt; *Isiah Robinson* – tbn; unknown (poss. *Albert Nicholas*) – clt, alt;

J. C. Johnson – pno; *Charlie Vincento* or *Bernard Addison* – bjo

346	Texas Man	QRS unissued,	Frog DGF 60
347	Crying For You	QRS R-7064,	Frog DGF 60
348	Red-Hot-Hottentot	QRS R-7064,	Frog DGF 60

For many years this extraordinary recording session was limited to two issued sides, *Crying For You* and *Red-Hot-Hottentot*, the latter being one of the all-time hits of Classic Jazz. Davies and Wright in their "The Other Take" expressed their opinion that there might have been a third title for this session when following the rule of QRS recording three sides sessions. And, surprisingly enough, this third title *Texas Man* was released on the late David French's phantastic FROG label in 2005!

- Again, trumpet player Walter Bennett is clearly identified when comparing with the other items discussed. RUST 6* lists him as "possibly", having him listed as Jabbo Smith in earlier issues.

- The trombonist has been assumed to be Roy Palmer in RUST 2*, but had never been identified thereafter. Just recently in VJM 154 John Collinson pointed out, that he had compared this trombonist with the player on the Bennett's Swamplanders. In STORYVILLE 32, p. 80 the Swamplanders' trombonist is named as Isiah Robinson (see below). Collinson concludes that both men are identical and poses the question as to this man's origin. I whole-heartedly agree with him and have therefore named Robinson as a good possibility. More about Robinson at the Bennett's Swamplanders session below.

- The clarinet player. RUST 2* says George James, leaving him unknown in later editions. (G. James did not reach New York until three years later with Louis Armstrong). Omer Simeon has been listed somewhere. And there certainly is some kind of similarity. But, as far as I can find out, Simeon was in Chicago at this time. So, who else? This man here plays a very beautiful clarinet (and alto), very much in the tradition we use to call Creole style. A mature musical personality with a big tone, very fluent, probably Albert system clarinet, pointing to New Orleans! Will New Orleans specialists, please, listen!? (As I have come to acknowledge in my Thomas Morris article in Names & Numbers 49: there seem to be a lot more connections between New Orleans and Harlem in the twenties than we know!) When searching through the ranks of New York/Harlem clarinet players, absolutely nobody comes to mind with this man's characteristics. Furthermore: there seems to have been a group of musicians in Harlem, of caribbean descent, who may have made up part of the personnels dealt with here (see cover text to COLLECTORS ITEMS LP 015). As Davies and Wright said in STORYVILLE 23: "The clarinet/alto saxist on Sparks and Revellers is a jazz musician of the first water..... one hell of a musician!" And they are absolutely right! Even more so, when you listen to *Texas Man*, the third title, which had been unknown to Davies and Wright in 1969. The clarinet player is absolutely superb here, and I am unable to understand that such a great musician is unknown or unidentifiable! It is unbelievable, that such a fantastic player should be unknown and remain unknown! But I don't know anybody comparable.

ADDENDUM N&N 53: From Mr. W. Leif of Winterthur, Switzerland comes a letter suggesting Albert Nicholas as clarinet/alto player on the J.C. Johnson's Five Hot Sparks (and the Moonlight Revellers accordingly). Mr. Leif has kept his suggestion for 40 years now and I for my part find this opinion intriguing. (As Nicholas arrived in NYC from his long East Asia tour on Nov. 09, 1928, he certainly was in town as a member of the Luis Russell Band. The first recordings of this band including Nick (under Allen's name) are from July 16, 1929. He might have liked to be asked to record in the meantime by J.C. Johnson, who hailed from Chicago and might have known Nicholas from there.)

- This is J.C. Johnson's record date, and there is nothing to assume, that he is not the piano player, although Mabel Horsey had been named as such on the Biograph LP 12005 and in RUST 3*. To strengthen this fact, I like to point out, that "Lucky" Roberts said in STORYVILLE 20, p. 62 about Johnson: "He did better with his Five Hot Sparks playing RED HOT HOTTENTOT on QRS." So certainly J.C. Johnson.

- RUST 3* names Ikey Robinson as banjo player, RUST 6* names Charlie Vincento. It has to be pointed out, that Vincento was banjo player with Houdini and Clark's Night Owls two years later, and it may very well be him playing here. But in STORYVILLE 2002/3, p. 56, Ikey Robinson said, that "I made a record with J.C. Johnson with a group called the Hottentots". Robinson might have mixed up the group's name with the recorded title here. But I admit, that I do not know who should have precedence here. I know too little of Vincento and what I hear is not what I have learned to expect from Robinson. So I prefer to name them both in italics! But there certainly is some similarity of this player's style to the guitar playing on the Wabash Trio sides, mainly the use of major chord and alternately diminished chord for two measures each. So, can this player here possibly be Addison, who certainly started out on bjo (see photo of Seminole Syncopators!)?

Notes:

- Rust*2,*3: unknown cnt; unknown tbn; unknown clt; unknown vln; Mabel Horsey (pno).

- Rust*4: possibly Walter Bennett -c; J.C. Higginbotham -tb; Darnell Howard -cl,-as; Mabel Horsey, p; Ikey Robinson -bj.

- Rust*6: possibly Walter Bennett -c; unknown -tb; unknown -cl,-as; Mabel Horsey, p; Charlie Vincento -bj.

Tunes:

346 Texas Man key of Eb QRS
(Intro 5 bars (!) ens)(Verse 12 bars ens)(Chorus 1 22 bars AABA' ens)(Chorus 2 clt)(Chorus 3 tbn 4 bars/ clt 2 bars/ tpt 2 bars/ tbn 4 bars/ ens 10 bars)(Chorus 4 alt)(Chorus 5 ens)

347 Crying For You key of Eb QRS
(Intro 4 bars ens)(Chorus 1 12 bars ens)(Chorus 2 bjo)(Chorus 3 clt)(Chorus 4 tbn)(Chorus 5 tpt / ens)

348 Red-Hot-Hottentot key of Eb QRS
(Intro 4 bars ens - tbn)(Chorus 1 32 bars AA' ens / clt)(Vamp 6 bars ens)(Verse 16 bars tbn - clt)(Chorus 2 alt)(Chorus 3 tpt)(Chorus 4 ens)(Coda 4 bars clt - ens)

007 **WABASH TRIO**

New York,

Mar. 1929

Walter Bennett – tpt;

J. C. Johnson – pno; Bernard Addison – gtr

3382-	Hoppin' 'Round	GG 1711,	Ristic 26 (LP)
3383-A	Lone Western Blues	GG 1714,	Frog GDF 73
3383-B	Lone Western Blues	GG 1714	not on LP/CD
3384-A	Coal Black Blues	GG 1710,	Historical Records 12 (LP)
3384-B	Coal Black Blues	GG 1710,	Frog DGF 73

In lack of the original 78 records and without specification of matrix numbers on my LPs, I have designated the two different takes as given here, take -1 (presumably!) being the musically less accurate one contained on HISTORICAL 12, take -2 (presumably), executed with more security, contained on RISTIC 26. But: this is MY own personal definition! The case might easily be the other way 'round! Please, be careful! To be on the safe side, I have put the self assigned take numbers in brackets! Laurens Hertzdahl of The Netherlands, author of a very substantial article on the Memphis Jazzers and Levee Syncopators sessions (see below), and who is expert in Grey Gull recordings, told me in a letter: "It's very difficult to identify different takes with Grey Gull related recordings. The letters A and B in the wax do not refer to the takes used and alternate takes can only be detected by aural comparison. To prevent confusion I would like to advise to use numbers indicating a different take instead of letters A and B."

This is a very beautiful recording session with a trio comprising trumpet, piano and guitar. For me, this is a very interesting and demanding combination which is seldom heard. I only know of one other record with an instrumentation like this: The Harlem House Rent Stompers, recorded August 28, 1929. Obviously, this combination needs a virtuoso piano player, and you really can hear one on the Wabashes as well as on the Harlems.

- Trumpet player is Walter Bennett, and he seems to have secured his relationship to J.C. Johnson after the very successful recording session of the Hot Sparks.

- Of the piano player Davies and Wright said: "The piano playing is thoroughly competent throughout, and usually exciting when clearly heard. The style is thoroughly New York - based in stride, though not developed in this direction to the level achieved by James P.. There is no doubt in our minds that this is J.C. Johnson himself." I can only agree with their statement, and would only like to point out, that J.C. Johnson was not a native New Yorker but came from Chicago in 1923 (Chilton). Thus his musical influences might have been different from the ordinary New York pianist?! Be that as it may, I hear a very rewarding and virtuoso player. Dig his introduction to *Coal Black Blues* and hear what I mean!

- I certainly do not doubt the presence of Bernard Addison here. The introduction to Hoppin' 'Round is just what I would expect from Addison: strong solo work combining chordal and single-string playing. Yet, on Coal Black Blues the guitarist plays a solo chorus in single-string throughout, which apparently made the Storyville team thinking of Bobby Leecan. Nevertheless do I think it is Bernard Addison in his formative years. Beautiful. Davies and Wright name him a "top line musician" and are certainly right so.

Notes:

- Rust*2,*3,*4,*6: Louis Metcalfe (cnt); J.C. Johnson (pno); Bernard Addison (gtr).

Tunes:

3382- Hoppin' 'Round key of Eb Grey Gull
(Intro 8 bars gtr 4 bars / pno 4 bars)(Chorus 1 32 bars AB tpt)(Chorus 2 pno)(Chorus 3 gtr)(Chorus 4 ens / pno middle break)

3383- Lone Western Blues key of Eb Grey Gull
(Intro 8 bars tpt 2 bars / gtr 2 bars / pno 4 bars)(Chorus 1 24 bars AA'BA' ens)(Verse 18 bars pno)(Chorus 2 22 bars AABA' gtr)(1/2 Chors 3 14 bars BA' ens)

3384-(1) Coal Black Blues key of Eb Grey Gull
(Intro 12 bars pno)(Vamp 4 bars tpt)(Chorus 1 12 bars blues ens)(Chorus 2 pno)(Chorus 3 gtr)(Chorus 4 ens)

3384-(2) Coal Black Blues key of Eb Grey Gull

same as 3384-A

Discernible differences of takes:

3384-(1) last bar of intro: pno chord on measure 3, then 2 consecutive eighth notes (Bb - C) leading to chorus 1

3384-(2) last bar of intro: pno chord on measure 3, then quarter pause

008 **THE MOONLIGHT REVELLERS**

New York,

Aug. 1929

Walter Bennett – tpt; Isaiah Robinson – tbn; unknown (poss. Albert Nicholas) – clt, alt;

<i>J. C. Johnson</i> – pno; <i>Charlie Vincento</i> – bjo		
3606-A	Alabama Shuffle	GG 1775, Ristic 26 (LP)
3607-A	Memphis Stomp	GG 1786, Ristic 26 (LP)
3607-B	Memphis Stomp	VD 1786 not on LP/CD
3608-	Baby Knows How (Someone To Love Me)	GG 1767, Ristic 26 (LP)

The front line of this session is very probably exactly the same as that one of the Five Hot Sparks. Yet, these recordings here lack a great part of the fire and tension of the former session. Davies and Wright in their article describe the trombonist as "incompetent" because of an overdose of alcohol. I would go one step further and assume that the whole session is marred by alcohol abuse, and I think that the bottle has been passed around extensively. The Storyville team also list an additional guitar player whom I am unable to hear.

Take -B of Memphis Stomp has been reported to exist some few years back, but unfortunately I missed to write down the source. Sorry! Take numbering after RUST 6* (see L. Hertzdahl's letter below!)

- Very probably Walter Bennett, but subdued and unsecure because of the booze?!

- On trombone we hear the same man as on the Hot Sparks, but here very crude and uncertain, for instance in the intro of Memphis Stomp, where he nearly smashes the whole thing. The bottle! But, if the trombonist on the Swamplanders is Robinson, I do not see any reason to deny his presence here.

- The least intoxicated musician on this session is probably the clarinet/alto player, whose identity I urgently would like know. As Davies and Wright write: "... like the earlier reed man (*this one here*) must have been very well known at the time the records were made."

Certainly right, but: who knows about these sessions, who remembers them or who has reminisced on them or who did ask the obvious questions at all? This clarinet player really is fantastic, urgent, melodic and technically superb. Listen to his chromatic ascending triplets in the middle break in chorus 3 in *Alabama Shuffle*!

ADDENDUM N&N 53: From Mr. W. Leif of Winterthur, Switzerland comes a letter suggesting Albert Nicholas as clarinet/alto player on the J.C. Johnson's Five Hot Sparks (and the Moonlight Revellers accordingly). Mr. Leif has kept his suggestion for 40 years now and I for my part find this opinion intriguing.

- There is no piano solo on these titles, and therefore Johnson has to be questioned. Assuming alcohol abuse Johnson might have restrained to an accompanying role on the whole session, but nowhere can one hear at least a single attempt to use his virtuosic strains heard as on the two former sessions. So, this man here might be another pianist. Maybe one of the next two sessions?

- No banjo solos here. This man is very fond of playing trills, just as Vincento does on the Houdinis. So, it may be him. Yet, this man is not as profound as the banjo player on the Hot Sparks. RUST 6* does not suggest a name.

Notes:

- Rust*2: unknown cnt; unknown tbn; unknown clt, alt; unknown ten; J.C. Johnson (?) (pno); unknown bjo.

- Rust*3, *4, *6: unknown c; unknown tb; ?George James -cl -as; unknown ts; ?J.C. Johnson -p; unknown bj.

Tunes:

3606-A Alabama Shuffle key of Eb Grey Gull

(Intro 4 bars ens)(Chorus 1 32 bars AA' ens)(Chorus 2 clt 16 bars / tpt 16 bars)(Chorus 3 ens - clt breaks)(Chorus 4 ens - bjo breaks)(Coda 4 bars ens)

3607-A Memphis Stomp key of Eb Grey Gull

(Intro 8 bars ens)(Verse 16 bars ens)(Chorus 1 32 bars AA' ens)(Chorus 2 ens 8 bars / clt 8 bars / ens 8 bars / tpt-tbn 8 bars)(Chorus 3 alt 16 bars / tpt 16 bars)(Chorus 4 tbn 8 bars / clt 6 bars / tpt 2 bars / ens 16 bars)

3607-B Memphis Stomp Grey Gull

not inspected, but presumably same as 3607-A (exists in possession of Mr. Hertzdahl)

3608- Baby Knows How (Someone To Love Me) key of Eb Grey Gull

(Intro 4 bars ens)(Verse 12 bars ens)(Chorus 1 32 bars AABA ens)(Chorus 2 ens middle 8 alt)(Chorus 3 ens middle 8 tbn)(Chorus 4 alt 16 bars / tpt 8 bars / ens 8 bars)(Coda 4 bars ens)

009 MEMPHIS JAZZERS

New York,

Nov. 1929

Walter Bennett – tpt voc (2); *Alberto Socarras* – alt, clt (2); *Walter Edwards* – clt, alt;

Porter Grainger – pno

3741-A	Don't Know And Don't Care	GG 1797,	Jazz Oracle BDW 8038
4742-B	Ev'rybody Dance	GG 1816,	Jazz Oracle BDW 8038
4743-B	Miss Golden Brown	GG 1805,	Jazz Oracle BDW 8038
4744-A	In Harlem's Araby	GG 1804	not on LP/CD
4744-B	In Harlem's Araby	GG 1804,	Jazz Oracle BDW 8038

The inclusion of this and the following session may come as a surprise to everybody interested in the recordings of classic jazz in New York in the twenties, even more so to people interested in the Grey Gull group of recordings. For all these years collectors have assembled dates and personnels on classic jazz recordings since the late thirties, much has been suspected of who is playing here. RUST in his early years suggested no one less than King Oliver as trumpet player here, later changing his mind as to Mike Mosiello on trumpet - this for a comparison! - and when reading Lp or CD cover text on these sessions, the reader is astonished at how these assumptions all fit together.

On the history of placing and classifying these two sessions I would like to point out to Laurens Hertzdahl's most interesting article in VJM (www.vjm.biz/newpage4.htm), which nevertheless does not bring us further on except for the fact, that Mosiello is at least very questionable!

Interestingly Mr. Hertzdahl says: "Some collectors attribute the trumpet playing to Louis Metcalf who recorded on other Grey Gull sessions (e.g. The Wabash Trio)." They are exactly right, only, that Metcalf is not on Wabashes, but Bennett. It certainly is a severe mistake to rely on RUST in all his editions and take it for granted when trying to find out personnels of the early period of jazz. This is not to diminish his efforts and his work!

Take numbering again after RUST 6*.

- when listening to my Bennett compilations it happened, that I immediately afterwards by chance had the Memphis Jazzers on my CD player, and when listening to these titles, it dawned on me, that I heard very familiar trumpet phrasing, which I had just heard before. And after repeated listening I, for my part, became certain that this was Walter Bennett on trumpet here. It is the same tone, vibrato, phrasing and time as before. Only that on these two sessions Bennett also plays muted trumpet, which may irritate the listener. Maybe he had a good connection with the Grey Gull people after the Wabash and Moonlight recordings? After all, what a better compliment can you think of than having him taken for King Oliver by RUST?!

Assigning the Memphis Jazzers to Walter Bennett, we have a completely new direction as to the reed players! First: forget Sannella. And second: we hear two different reed players, one playing mostly clarinet, the other one mostly alto sax.

- The clarinetist, who also doubles on alto (or ten?) on *Miss Golden Brown* chorus 1, owns a rather harsh tone and a simple phrasing. I think to hear traces of caribbean tone scales as on the Houdinis. So, Walter Edwards of the Houdinis could be a possibility here, as

obviously he was part of a group of caribbean musicians residing in New York, taking part in recording sessions by Houdini and Sam Manning. Yet, I certainly cannot be sure and would like to invite interested collectors/ musicians to compare and let me know their conclusions!

- The alto player has knowledge of - for the time - advanced harmonies and seems to be much more technically accomplished than the clarinetist. He plays all the alto solos (and perhaps the low toned clarinet solo on *Ev'rybody Dance*). I see the possibility, that this man is Alberto Socarras, who also plays alto on the Swamplanders' *Big Ben*, and I think to hear his characteristic wooden and not swinging time. Instrumental technique and accomplishment and harmonic knowledge would be fitting to Socarras. As before, please, listen and let me know your conclusions! There certainly could be a connection to W. Edwards and other caribbean musicians, as Socarras came from Cuba.

- As nobody knows the piano player, it has been the rule to list Porter Grainger because he is listed as composer of all four titles recorded at this session. Hertzsdahl writes: "The piano style is confident and strong, suggestive of Grainger's known style (hear him accompanying Ethel Waters on her 1924 Vocalion recording of *Pleasure Mad* or accompanying Lena Wilson on her Victor recording of *Tain't Nobody's Business I I Do* to get a good idea of his abilities). I have nothing to add.

For sceptics: my assumptions and suggestions re the reed players may be wrong, but they at least are much nearer the truth than anything listed before. If they should not be the real thing, I nevertheless do not feel ashamed!

Notes:

- Rust*2: Mike Mosiello (tpt); Andy Sanella (clt, alt); unknown (alt); Porter Grainger (?) (pno); unknown (Negro?) (vcl).

- Rust*3, *4, *6: Mike Mosiello -t; Andy Sanella -cl -as; unknown -as; ?Porter Grainger -p (composer of all four numbers recorded at this session); unknown negro -v.

Tunes:

3741-A	<i>Don't Know And Don't Care</i>	key of Eb	Grey Gull
<i>(Intro 4 bars ens)(Verse 16 bars ens)(Chorus 1 28 bars AB alt (AS))(Chorus 2 tpt)(Chorus 3 clt (WE) / ens)</i>			
4742-B	<i>Ev'rybody Dance</i>	key of Eb	Grey Gull
<i>(Intro 4 bars ens)(Verse 1 16 bars ens)(Chorus 1 16 bars AA' ens)(Chorus 2 alt (AS))(Verse 2 ens)(Chorus 3 clt (WE))(Chorus 4 voc (WB?))(Chorus 5 ens)(Coda 4 bars ens)</i>			
4743-B	<i>Miss Golden Brown</i>	key of F	Grey Gull
<i>(Intro 4 bars ens)(Verse 16 bars ens)(Chorus 1 32 bars AABA saxes)(Chorus 2 tpt 16 bars / alt (AS) 16 bars)(alt. Chorus 1 12 bars blues tpt)(alt. Chorus 2 12 bars clt (WE))(Chorus 3 32 bars ens)</i>			
4744-A	<i>In Harlem's Araby</i>	pres key of Eb/Cm	Grey Gull
<i>listed by RUST, but not inspected. (exists in possession of Mr. Hertzsdahl). Presumably same as 4744-B</i>			
4744-B	<i>In Harlem's Araby</i>	key of Eb / Cm	Grey Gull
<i>(Intro 4 bars pno)(Verse 16 bars ens)(Chorus 1 16 bars AA alt (AS))(Chorus 2 tpt)(alt. Chorus 1 16 bars minor clt (WE))(alt. Chorus 2 clt (WE))Vamp 4 bars pno)(Verse 16 bars ens)(Chorus 3 alt (AS))(Chorus 4 tpt 8 bars / ens 8 bars)</i>			

010 LEVEE SYNCOPATORS

New York,

c. Jan. 17, 1930

Walter Bennett – tpt; Alberto Socarras – alt; Walter Edwards – ten, clt;

Claude Austin – pno; unknown - bjo

3843-A	The Rackett	GG 1843,	Jazz Oracle BDW 8038
3843-B	The Rackett	GG 1843,	Jazz Oracle BDW 8038
3844-A	The Harlem Stomp Down	GG 1836,	Jazz Oracle BDW 8038
3844-B	The Harlem Stomp Down	GG 1836,	Jazz Oracle BDW 8038

This is the second enigmatic Grey Gull session (see Memphis Jazzers above), and again I hope to have found out part of the solution. All I have said for the Memphis Jazzers session applies also for this one. L. Hertzsdahl, a profound connoisseur of Grey Gull recordings, writes in his letter to the author: "I'm convinced that both the Levee and the Memphis Jazzers sides have the same sidemen." To this I again have nothing to add.

In RUST*6 this recording session is listed under Grey Gull Studio Bands!

- Trumpet player again certainly Walter Bennett.

- Clarinet player - and tenor sax - possibly Walter Edwards.

- Alto sax possibly Alberto Socarras.

- A big problem is the piano player. L. Hertzsdahl writes: "The identity of the piano player on the Levee sides is still a mystery. The composer credit on my copy of *Harlem Stomp Down* and *The Rackett* is Claude Austin, however there is not a trace to be found of this musician anywhere. He was not a member of the musicians union so this name could have been an invention of a Grey Gull executive to cover something up, maybe to prevent royalty claims." So I follow Hertzsdahl and Rust and list Claude Austin as a possibility.

Barclay Draper in STORYVILLE 87, p. 95: "*The leader who gave me the job (1926) was Claude Austin, a very popular and good pianist. We also played at Herman's Inn on 145th Street. Claude Austin was a composer, arranger, and a very fine person. He eventually settled in South America and married a wealthy senorita.*"

Another proof of this man's existence is his participation in a recording by singer Happy Holmes on Victor 21075 together with Thomas Morris. This recording is not listed in Rust but in Godrich/Dixon and may therefore have been overlooked for long.

- This personnel includes a banjo player, but as this man plays rhythm banjo throughout, a name cannot be attributed. We have to leave him unknown.

This identification of the composer of the tunes recorded by the Levee Syncopators as an Afro-American pianist and bandleader will certainly strengthen my suggestion that the Levee Syncopators (and the Memphis Jazzers accordingly) are groups of Afro-American musicians and not, as for a long time suggested, groups containing white musicians Mike Mosiello and Andy Sannella.

Notes:

- Rust*2: unknown tpt; unknown clt, alt; unknown alt; Claude Austin (?) (pno); unknown bjo.

- Rust*3, *4, *6: Mike Mosiello -t; unknown -cl -as; Andy Sanella -as; ?Claude Austin -p; unknown -bj..

Tunes:

3843-A	<i>The Rackett</i>	key of C / Bb / C	Grey Gull
<i>(Intro 8 bars ens)(Chorus 1 32 bars AA' ens 16 bars / saxes 16 bars)(Verse 24 bars ens)(Chorus 2 (Bb) alt 8 bars / tpt 6 bars / ten 10 bars / tpt 6 bars / 2 bars belonging to bridge)(Bridge 2 bars ens)(Chorus 3 ens)(Coda 2 bars ens)</i>			
3843-B	<i>The Rackett</i>	key of C / Bb / C	Grey Gull
<i>same as 3843-A</i>			
3844-A	<i>The Harlem Stomp Down</i>	key of F	Grey Gull
<i>(Intro 4 bars clt - ens)(Chorus 1 32 bars AABA ens)(Verse 16 bars ens)(Chorus 2 tpt)(Chorus 3 clt 16 bars / alt 8 bars / ens 8 bars)</i>			
4844-B	<i>The Harlem Stomp Down</i>	key of F	Grey Gull

same as 3844-A

Discernible differences of takes:

3843-A chorus 2 bars 10 - 14 tpt + alt

3843-B chorus 2 bars 10 - 14 tpt only

3844-A chorus 3 bars 25 - 27 (last eight bars of tune) clt playing low notes in ens

3844-B chorus 3 bars 25 - 27 (last eight bars of tune) clt playing sequence of 10 high quarter notes (f'')

011 **BENNETT'S SWAMPLANDERS**

New York,

Sep. 05, 1930

Walter Bennett – tpt; Isiah Robinson – tbn; Albert Socarras – clt, alt, flt;

J. C. Johnson – pno; unknown – gtr, bjo; unknown – bbs;

unknown (*J.C. Johnson?*) – voc (2)

150767-2 Big Ben

Col 14557-D,

Frog DGF 32

150768-2 You Can't Be Mine And Somebody Else's Too

Col 14557-D,

Frog DGF 32

150769-2 Jet Black Blues

Col 14662-D,

Frog DGF 32

Walter Bennett appears as band leader here, and these recordings should be regarded as reference for all the other items listed.

- On trumpet unequivocally Walter Bennett!

- Isiah "Trombone Ike" Robinson is listed here for the first time, I think. RUST 6* still leaves him unknown. Yet STORYVILLE 32 - December 1979 - bears a remark in "Afterthoughts", that Graham Russell talked to Isiah "Trombone Ike" Robinson, who said that he made the title Big Ben with "Cuban" Bennett.

Now, there are some problems here. First, "Cuban" Bennett is NOT Walter Bennett! Walter Bennett's nickname was "Jock", whereas "Cuban" Bennett, being Benny Carter's cousin, was a highly regarded trumpet player in Harlem in the twenties. But he never recorded, living a restrained life dominated by alcohol, playing little clubs and obviously lacking any ambition. So, Robinson probably got the two Bennetts mixed up. And second: you won't find a trombonist by the name of Isiah Robinson listed anywhere in Harlem. But: when reading Daniel Hardie's EXPLORING EARLY JAZZ the other day, I came across a Isaiah Robinson as member of the Camellia Orchestra of 1917 in New Orleans being lead by Wooden Joe Nicholas. Searching further I found the name in Rose/Souchon FAMILY ALBUM. Listed here is Isaiah (sic) "Big Ike" Robinson as member of several bands, working with Chris Kelly until the latter's death in 1927, having retired in 1937. Halas, there is no mention of him having made trip(s) to New York. But, if we consider him as the possible trombonist, he must have stayed in Harlem for some time, or, alternately, must have made several trips to be recorded with the Hot Sparks (Feb. 1929), the Swamplanders (September 1930) and possibly the Revellers (August 1929). This New Orleans trombone player was apparently known under two nicknames: "Trombone Ike" and "Big Ike", respectively.

But this trombone player's style here reminds me very much of a New Orleans man, and it is therefore not surprising, that Davies and Wright say, that "both tone and style are very like those of Roy Palmer. However, it seems unlikely that Palmer would have been on the East coast at the time." So, Robinson is a very interesting and likely possibility, and it should be kept in mind, that he, Robinson, as a New Orleans musician, must have had some intimate knowledge of little known Harlem musicians (naming "Cuban" (!) Bennett) that he probably can only have gathered in Harlem himself!

- Who else could have played a flute like that in Harlem of the late twenties? So, for a long time now, Socarras has been listed as the reed man here. Citing Davies / Wright article: "The Swamplanders clarinet/sax is also a fine musician, but is possessed neither of the same attack nor of the same warmth of tone displaying traits associated with classical training; the story is quite different, though, when he takes to flute on *You Can't Be Mine* and ripples his way through with incredible technique, beautiful tone, and a wonderful sense of music which goes so far beyond the reed work that in spite of reconciliation between reed and flute styles we are inclined to the belief that this may not be the same man." Yet, certainly he is, and the reader is referred to an excellent article on Alberto Socarras in STORYVILLE 90. Re his traits of classical training: it is this feature that obviously makes his time so wooden and unswinging. He had not grown up in jazz surroundings in Cuba.

- On piano J. C. Johnson seems to be undisputed. He also seems to be the vocalist on *You Can't Be Mine*, which is his own composition. In my ears this is a great song, which has been undeservedly little recorded, except for Billie Holiday, Ella Fitzgerald and Fats Waller in one of his Yacht Club broadcasts.

- Bernard Addison has been formerly listed as guitarist. This man here plays banjo at least in the first title. I am unable to decide what he plays on the other two titles: maybe some sort of dobroe or any kind of banjo-guitar hybrid? I do not question Addison's identity here. It has been questioned if Addison played banjo at all. He did, as can be seen in a photo of the Seminole Syncopators on the cover of Collector's Items LP 006. *ADDITION: In Storyville 78/235 L. Wright says that Addison being played these sides he disclaimed his presence saying only that it was "nice work". So, the guitar player's identity remains unknown!*

- Last the tuba player: Davies/Wright say: "Also a fine musician is the brass bass player on the Swamplanders who may well be none other than Cyrus St. Clair whose fullness of tone and delicately precise attack have made him - in our book at least - one of the finest, if not THE finest, performer of all time on this instrument." As much as I would like to follow two experts as these two, I am completely unable to do so here. What they say about St. Clair is absolutely right in my eyes, but this man here does not have a beautiful cloudy tone like St. Clair, and he does not play rhythmically assured as St. Clair does, and in the middle break of chorus 1 of *Big Ben* he nearly makes the rhythm collapse. I would leave this man listed as unknown.

Notes:

- D. Mahony, *Columbia 13/14000-D Series: instrumental group, possibly a J.C. Johnson unit.*

- Rust*2: *Louis Metcalfe (tpt); J.C. Higginbotham (tbn); Ernest Elliott (clt); J.C. Johnson (pno); Bernard Addison (?) (gtr); unknown (bbs); unknown (vcl).*

- Rust*3, *4, *6: *Walter Bennett -t; unknown -tb; Albert Socarras -cl -f; J.C. Johnson -p; Bernard Addison -g; unknown -bb; unknown -v.*

Tunes:

150767-2 *Big Ben* key of Eb Columbia
(Intro 8 bars tpt / alt)(Chorus 1 32 bars AA' ens)(Verse 16 bars alt)(Chorus 2 tpt)(Chorus 3 clt)(Chorus 4 tbn 14 bars / ens 18 bars)(Coda 2 bars clt)

150768-2 *You Can't Be Mine And Somebody Else's Too* key of F Columbia
(Intro 8 bars flt)(Verse 10 bars ens)(Chorus 1 32 bars AA' flt - tpt)(Chorus 2 voc - flt)(Chorus 3 tpt 24 bars / ens 8 bars)

150769-2 *Jet Black Blues* key of Eb Columbia
(Chorus 1 12 bars blues ens)(Chorus 2 ens)(Chorus 3 tbn)(Chorus 4 clt)(Chorus 5 tpt - ens)

012 **WILMOTH HOUDINI** Gerald Clark's Night Owls

New York,

Feb. 16, 1931

Wilmoth Houdini – voc;

Walter Bennett – tpt; Walter Edwards – clt, ten;

Berry Barrow – pno;	Joshy Paris – gtr;	Gerald Clark - cuatro;	Charlie Vincento – bjo;	Al Morgan – sbs	
E-36077-A	No Mo' Bench And Board		Br 7192,	Arhoolie CD 7010	
E-36078-A	Sweet Papa Willie		Br 7201,	Arhoolie CD 7010	
E-36079-A	Honey, I'm Bound To Go		Br 7201,	Arhoolie CD 7010	
E-36080-A	The Cooks In Trinidad		Br 7192,	Arhoolie CD 7010	

For my comment, see next session below.

Notes:

- Rust*3,*4,*6: acc by Gerald Clarks Night Owls: Walter Bennett -c; Walter Edwards -cl -ts; Berry Baro -p; Joshy Paris -g; Charlie Vincento -bj; Al Morgan -sb.

Tunes:

<u>E-36077-A</u>	<u>No Mo' Bench And Board</u>	<u>key of F</u>	<u>Brunswick</u>
(Chorus 1 16 bars AB ens)(Chorus 2 voc)(Chorus 3 tpt)(Chorus 4 voc)(Chorus 5 clt)(Chorus 6 voc)(Chorus 7 ens) (Chorus 8 voc)(Chorus 9 ens)			
<u>E-36078-A</u>	<u>Sweet Papa Willie</u>	<u>key of F</u>	<u>Brunswick</u>
(Chorus 1 16 bars AB ens)(Chorus 2 voc)(Chorus 3 tpt)(Chorus 4 voc)(Chorus 5 clt)(Chorus 6 voc)(Chorus 7 ens) (Chorus 8 voc)(Chorus 9 ens)			
<u>E-36079-A</u>	<u>Honey, I'm Bound To Go</u>	<u>key of F</u>	<u>Brunswick</u>
(Chorus 1 16 bars AB ens)(Chorus 2 voc)(Chorus 3 tpt)(Chorus 4 voc)(Chorus 5 clt)(Chorus 6 voc)(Chorus 7 ens) (Chorus 8 voc)(Chorus 9 ens)			
<u>E-36080-A</u>	<u>The Cooks In Trinidad</u>	<u>key of F</u>	<u>Brunswick</u>
(Chorus 1 16 bars AB ens)(Chorus 2 voc)(Chorus 3 tpt)(Chorus 4 voc)(Chorus 5 clt)(Chorus 6 voc)(Chorus 7 tpt) (Chorus 8 voc)(Chorus 9 ens)			

013 WILMOTH HOUDINI	Gerald Clark's Night Owls	New York,	Aug. 01, 1931
Wilmoth Houdini – voc;			
Walter Bennett – tpt; Walter Edwards – clt, ten;			
Berry Barrow – pno; Joshy Paris – gtr; Gerald Clark - cuatro; Charlie Vincento – bjo; Al Morgan – sbs			
E-37021-A	Arima Tonight – Sangre Grande Tomorrow Night	Br 7219,	Arhoolie CD 7010
E-37022-A	Black But Sweet	Br 7219,	Arhoolie CD 7010
E-37023-A	I Need A Man	Br 7224,	Arhoolie CD 7010
E-37024-A	Stop Coming And Come	Br 7224,	Arhoolie CD 7010

These are some charming sides of a mixture of Caribbean calypso and jazz. Houdini was a calypso singer from Trinidad who spent his working life in New York, recording a lot of sides of his native music. Although some more of his sides have jazz (or jazz related) accompaniment, these sides here - accompanied by Gerald Clark's Night Owls - have a strict jazz flavour in the persons of Walter Bennett with his very fiery and exciting trumpet and the rock steady and swinging beat of Al Morgan's string bass.

The personnel for these sides seem to be undisputed and is listed in the different editions of RUST from the 3rd edition on, albeit in a somewhat garbled form. The above listed personnel is in accordance with all LP or CD editions and needs not to be discussed.

The four titles of the first recording session (Feb. 16, 1931) are a little too uniform and lack variety. They are all in the same key and have the same structure and order. So it seems that not much of a preparation has gone into them.

The second bunch is not much varied either, but here at least we have different keys and some discriminate structure in the form of an additional banjo chorus or two consecutive ensemble choruses in *I Need A Man*. It is very interesting to listen to the trumpet player tackle with the chords here, as the cadence of Eminor/A7/Dmajor is not very common in jazz (except for the Henderson band?) and Bennett has considerable difficulty in finding the appropriate notes. (But he struggles heroically!)

In *Stop Coming* the whole structure is messed up in that the clarinet plays a seven bar (!) introduction (Houdini starting to sing too early), and Houdini dropping three bars of chorus 3. But it has to be admitted, that the chordal structure of the tune is so simple and the number of bars in a chorus so unusual, that the musicians were forced to count the bars, and this obviously did not prove to work. So later on (alternate choruses) they seem to have dropped the structure altogether, finding themselves in a 12 bar structure until the end.

John Cowley in his cover notes to Barbados Blues / Collectors Items LP 015 points out, that band leader Gerald Clark came from Trinidad, studied medical sciences at Howard University, Washington, DC, before gravitating into New York and becoming part of this city's black musical environment. As band leader at the Savoy Ballroom he obviously employed Walter Bennett as trumpet player at some time. Bennett himself is said to have been "almost certainly a West Indian migrant." This at least has to be questioned.

Notes:

- Rust*3,*4,*6: acc by Gerald Clarks Night Owls: Walter Bennett -c; Walter Edwards -cl -ts; Berry Baro -p; Joshy Paris -g; Charlie Vincento -bj; Al Morgan -sb.

Tunes:

<u>E-37021-A</u>	<u>Arima Tonight – Sangre Grande Tomorrow Night</u>	<u>key of G</u>	<u>Brunswick</u>
(Chorus 1 16 bars AA ens)(Chorus 2 voc)(Chorus 3 clt)(Chorus 4 voc)(Chorus 5 tpt)(Chorus 6 voc)(Chorus 7 clt / ens)			
<u>E-37022-A</u>	<u>Black But Sweet</u>	<u>key of F minor</u>	<u>Brunswick</u>
(Chorus 1 16 bars AA ens)(Chorus 2 voc)(Chorus 3 clt)(Chorus 4 voc)(Chorus 5 tpt)(Chorus 6 voc)(Chorus 7 clt / ens)			
<u>E-37023-A</u>	<u>I Need A Man</u>	<u>key of D</u>	<u>Brunswick</u>
(Chorus 1 16 bars AB ens)(Chorus 2 ens)(Chorus 3 voc)(Chorus 4 clt)(Chorus 5 voc)(Chorus 6 tpt)(Chorus 7 voc)(Chorus 8 bjo)(Chorus 9 ens)			
<u>E-37024-A</u>	<u>Stop Coming And Come</u>	<u>key of F</u>	<u>Brunswick</u>
(Intro 7 bars clt)(Chorus 1 20 bars A voc)(Chorus 2 clt)(Chorus 3 17 bars voc)(Chorus 4 20 bars tpt)(Chorus 5 voc)(alt. Chorus 1 12 bars clt / tpt)(alt. Chorus 2 voc)(Coda 4 bars ens)			

014 CLYDE BERNHARDT		New York,	spring 1932
Clyde Bernhardt – voc;			
Walter Bennett – pno			
	Some Of These Days	demo rec. unissued	not on LP/CD
	Waitin' For The Evenin' Mail	demo rec. unissued	not on LP/CD

About these recordings Clyde Bernhardt said in his book 'I REMEMBER':

"Some time in the spring of 1932, Walter Bennett and I went down to the Wurlitzer Music Store on West 42nd Street, off Sixth Avenue. They had a recording booth in the back and I thought I might make a demonstration record to see how my voice sounded. Bennett also played damn good piano and backed me for the session. The studio and a two-sided disc cost me about three bucks. I did two numbers: *Some of These Days*, that I sang with Oliver's band, and *Waitin' for the Evenin' Mail*, a hot blues Sissle and Blake used to do. The record sounded better than I thought it would. I took the demo home and played it over and over on my record player, then tossed it in the drawer." 'Nuff said!

015 **FLETCHER HENDERSON AND HIS ORCHESTRA**

Walter Bennett, Council Dixon, Maron Hazel – tpt;

Walter Harris – tbn;

Riley Hampton, Specs Thomas – alt; Nelson Peterson, Leo Williams – ten; Grover Lofton – bar;

Linton Garner – pno;

William McMahon – sbs; Bill Smalls – dms

I'm Coming Virginia

Little Coquette

Fort Snelling, Minn. Dec. 25, 1942

Broadcast Coca-Cola Spotlight Band

air check

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Walter C. Allen in HENDERSONIA said about Bennett: "Walter "Jock" Bennett (trumpet) replaced John Micheaux in September 1942, when the latter went into the Army. Bennett was an old-timer whom Fletcher knew from way back. He took over the lead book, was not a hot soloist. Walter Harris and Linton Garner recalled him as a tremendous high-note player: "they had to throw away the old arrangements when he left." Boonie Hazel, who joined later, found him a nice guy but uncommunicative of his skills: "He knew things about his trumpet I could never get him to tell me a heck of a first trumpet player."

Unfortunately, I have been unable to locate a copy of these titles and therefore cannot comment.

It has to be added, that there is a recording of calypso singer Sam Manning accompanied by Blue Hot Syncopators on Okeh 8302: 74031-B *Keep Your Hands Off That* and 74032-B *Go, I've Somebody Sweeter Than You* recorded in February 1926, with unknown personnel, where I have the feeling that this might be some earlier recordings of Walter Bennett and some of his later companions. These titles are on Jazz Oracle BDW 8028.

The Tunes:

Big Ben is the same as Memphis Stomp

Hoppin' 'Round is the same as Red-Hot-Hottentot

Crying For You is the same as Jet Black Blues, Coal Black Blues, Weeping Blues

Texas Man is the same as Lone Western Blues, similar to Baby Knows How

You Can't Be Mine is similar to Alabama Shuffle

References:

John R.T. Davies, Laurie Wright, *The Other Take*, Storyville 23

Rainer Lotz, *The Musical Spillers*, Storyville 152

Peter Carr, *You Don't Know Me, But ... George Winfield's Story*, Storyville Publications

David Griffiths, Al Vollmer, *Freddie Skerritt Tells His Story*, Storyville 66

Sheldon Harris, Clyde Bernhardt, *I Remember*, University of Pennsylvania Press

W.C.Allen, *Hendersonia*, Jazz Monographs No. 4

John Cowley, liner notes to *Collectors Items LP 015*

Laurens Hertzdahl, letter to the author

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K.-B. Rau

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WALTER „JOCK“ BENNETT

STORYVILLE 152/60,67 (*The Musical Spillers*): Among the musicians who worked with him were many who made a name on their own in the fields of Ragtime, and Jazz: **Walter "Jock" Bennett** (solo trumpeter with Fletcher Henderson's band), Rex Stewart was possibly a member of the *Musical Spillers* between 1921 and 1923, perhaps replacing Walter Bennett, after which he joined Elmer Snowden.

On the other hand, trumpeter **Walter A. "Jock" Bennett's** career is much lesser known. He reportedly hails from Pittsfield, Mass., or Chicago and is reputed to have recorded with J.C. Johnson (1929), with Bennett's *Swamplanders* (1930), and with *Wilmouth Houdini* (1931). He played with Fats Pichon (1931), Allie Ross (1931), the *Savoy Bearcats* (1932-33), Eli Rice (1934-37), and Fletcher Henderson (1942-44). **Bennett** played lead horn, high notes, and doubled on piano; according to fellow musicians he was "tremendous". It is reported by Isabele Taliaferro that Bennett received his first musical experience and training with Spiller. This may well have taken place much earlier in Chicago.

STORYVILLE 44/64 (Clyde Bernhardt) : Jack Butler, he joined Marion Hardy's Alabamians. Doc Cheatham and Eddie Malory left the band, so they replaced them with Jack Butler and another boy named **Jock Bennett**, who was a very good trumpet player.

I REMEMBER (Clyde Bernhardt, Sheldon Harris, p. 104, 105) : When I got with the Alabamians late in November (1931), Jack Butler was on first trumpet – he was known as Jacques after he went to Paris; Walter "Jock" Bennett was on second with some singing; Artie Starks, from Fort Worth, first alto and clarinet; and Warner Seals, tenor and some singing.

.....
Some time in the spring of 1932, Walter Bennett and I went down to the Wurlitzer Music Store on West 42nd Street, off Sixth Avenue. They had a recording booth in the back and I thought I might make a demonstration record to see how my voice sounded. Bennett also played damn good piano and backed me for the session. The studio and a two-sided disc cost me about three bucks.

I did two numbers: *Some of These Days*, that I sang with Oliver's band, and *Waitin' for the Evenin' Mail*, a hot blues Sissle and Blake used to do.

The record sounded better than I thought it would. I took the demo home and played it over and over on my record player, then tossed it in the drawer.

STORYVILLE 66/223 (list of bands to Freddie Skerritt story) : Bud Harris and his Rhythm Rascals, including **Jock Bennett**, End 1932 - 1933

STORYVILLE 68/62,63 (Frank Driggs) : In the Bud Harris photo (Storyville 66/218), I believe that **Jock Bennett** is next to George Winfield, then Nat Story,

STORYVILLE 79/28 (Story's Story) : Bud Harris This unit featured Al Sears on tenor sax, Bingie Madison, tenor and clarinet, George Winfield, the redoubtable **Jock Bennett**, Danny Barker

STORYVILLE 2000-1/174 : The band used for the experiment was Marion Hardy's Alabamians, a Negro Orchestra.
Members of the band were: Adolph Cheatham and **Walter Bennett**, trumpets.

STORYVILLE 32/80 (244) : In a conversation with Graham Russell, Isiah (sic) "Trombone Ike" Robinson said that he made the title "Big Ben" with "**Cuban**" **Bennett**.

(This quotation has to be seen carefully, because "Big Ben" has been made by Walter "Jock"(!) Bennet and not "Cuban", who never recorded. Maybe Isiah Robinson has mixed up these two persons after so many years, and Walter Bennett has been meant. Considering this, I have also included this quotation here.)

YOU DON'T KNOW ME, BUT ... George Winfield's story : In 1931. Billy Fowler formed a band for Southern dance work. The band was : Ray Carn, 1st trumpet; George Winfield, 2nd trumpet; **Jock Bennett**, 3rd trumpet;
..... and **Jock Bennett** did Louis Armstrong's 'Ain't Misbehavin', ending on high F as Louis did.
..... **Jock Bennett** and Sears joined Eli Rice, who was doing dance dates all through Wisconsin.
..... **Walter "Jock" Bennett** was (Eubie) Blake's 3rd trumpeter but left before the show opened

HENDERSONIA : **Walter "Jock" Bennett** (trumpet) replaced John Micheaux in September 1942, when the latter went into the Army. Bennett was an old-timer whom Fletcher knew from way back. He took over the lead book, was not a hot soloist. Walter Harris and Linton Garner recalled him as a tremendous high-note player: "they had to throw away the old arrangements when he left." Boonie Hazel, who joined later, found him a nice guy but uncommunicative of his skills: "He knew things about his trumpet I could never get him to tell me a heck of a first trumpet player."

STORYVILLE 23/184-187 (The Other Take) :

The cornetist (*sic*) of the Sparks session compares very exactly with Walter Bennett on the Houdini & Clark's Night Owls sides of two years later. A hard, fat, dirty tone with suspect pitching born of attempts to play beyond available power and a tendency to finish phrases in faster tempos with a poorly controlled shake which may well have led to earlier identifications as Jabbo Smith who used a lip trill to the same attractiv ends but was possessed of a thinner, far clearer tone. While the Revellers cornet is tonally very similar to that on the Sparks, and identical to that on the Swamplanders, the phrasing is very much more like that on the Wabash, although the tone of the latter is cleaner and far more open. We observed that the forcing and uncertainty of pitching diminishes from session to session until quite stable on the Swamplanders. A few months later Walter Bennett appears with consummate power and certainty of pitch on the Houdinis. The trombone player on the Sparks has a thickness of tone usually found in a musician who does not play very often. Both tone and style are very like those of Roy Palmer; even more like Palmer is the solo on BABY KNOWS HOW. However, it seems unlikely that Palmer would have been on the East coast at the time. On the Revellers sides the man is incompetent most of the way to an extraordinary degree suggestive of an overdose of alcohol. On the Swamplanders the same basic tone is there, though a little more sonorous, and capability seems more in line with the Sparks.

The clarinet/alto saxist on Sparks and Revellers is a musician of the first water ... one hell of a musician! For anyone to mistake him for Simeon would be understandable; his tone is very similar – his phrasing every bit as agile. But presumably Simeon was in Chicago ... and was more advanced in his development of harmonic lines. The Swamplanders clarinet/sax is also a fine musician, but is possessed neither of the same attack nor of the same warmth of tone Displaying traits associated with classical training; the story is quite different though, when he takes to flute on YOU CAN'T BE MINE and ripples his way through with incredible technique beautiful tone, and a wonderful sense of music which goes so far beyond the reed work that in spite of reconciliation between reed and flute styles we are inclined to the belief that this may not be the same man.

The piano playing is thoroughly competent throughout, and usually exciting when clearly heard. The style is thoroughly New York – based in stride, though not developed in this direction to the level achieved by James P. . There is no doubt in our minds that this is J. C. Johnson himself.

It is certain that the banjoist on the Sparks is not the guitarist on the Wabash. Sparks banjoist is very definitely a powerhouse rhythm man not given to play single string work. The banjoist on Revellers and Swamplanders is not equipped with the same driving force and tends to be slightly more adventurous with punctuation. The guitarists on Wabash and Revellers appear to be different men, though this is not necessarily so since the differences may be dictated by differences in role. On the Revellers the guitar is confined to straight rhythm work,

whereas much more is demanded on the Wabash, where the style encompasses most of the possibilities of the instrument – at times sounding like Addison or Bud Scott, and st others very much like Bobby Leecan. Whoever he is, he is a top line musician and, like the earlier reed man and the flautist, must have been very well known at the time the records were made.

Also a fine musician is the brass bass player on the Swamplanders who may well be none other than Cyrus St. Clair whose fullness of tone and delicately precise attack have made him – in our book at least – one of the finest, if not THE finest, performer of all time on this instrument. Here also we hear the attributes of St. Clair though with fewer than usual of those turns of phrase which hallmark his work. The vocalist on the YOU CAN'T BE MINE is likely to be Johnson himself, but we have not heard his earlier vocal records, and cannot make comparison.

THEODORE "CUBAN" BENNETT

STORYVILLE 31/23 (Don Albert and his Ten Pals) : Alcorn says that Billy Douglas often talked about the legendary **Cuban Bennett** who is considered one of the greatest trumpet players of all time by many Eastern musicians. Bennett, a cousin of Benny Carter, cared little about professional playing; consequently, he never recorded. Perhaps Douglas's recordings are the only clue to Bennett's style. (*see B. Waters below*)

STORYVILLE 32/80 (244) : In a conversation with Graham Russell, Isiah (sic) "Trombone Ike" Robinson said that he made the title "Big Ben" with "**Cuban**" Bennett.
(*This quotation has to be seen carefully, because "Big Ben" has been made by Walter (Jock !) Bennet and not "Cuban", who never recorded. Maybe Isaiah Robinson has mixed up these two persons after so many years.*)

STORYVILLE 66/215 (Freddie Skerritt tells his story) : Benny Carter was about my age, and I used to go to his home. I lived on 64th and Benny lived on 61st or 62nd. When I played at the Rhythm Club, Benny used to come in, just playing saxophone, no other instruments. Ward Pinkett, who was one of my best friends, used to come along, and **Cuban Bennett** as well. We'd have little jam sessions, and no-one would want to follow Cuban.

STORYVILLE 101/182 (Bobby Booker's life story) : I was closer to **Cuban Bennett** than anybody. He had a bad time with his wife. I believe that she got him on that whiskey. I lived in a building on 129th Street and 7th Avenue and there was a dancing school in the basement, and he'd be in there all night playing and all day drinking that liquor. Guys would come in from everywhere and he hardly had a good trumpet – it was an old raggedy horn – but he'd outplay everyone who came in there. He just knew all the correct chord changes. He, Louis Hunt, who used to play with Chick Webb, and Louis Metcalf, those three fellows could run more changes than anyone else I ever heard.

STORYVILLE 1998-9 (Gene Mikell) : Or like **Cuban Bennett** in New York. Oh yeah, that was Benny's cousin, Benny Carter's cousin. He was one of the inspirations for Benny when he was studying saxophone, because you see, Benny always wanted to play trumpet. **Bennett** was around here for a while, but he was a fellow who played strictly for kicks, you know. He was more or less like Otto was with Duke, a good man but you gotta get him while he was there because he may not be there tomorrow. But he was a good trumpeter, he was just a natural born musician. He had a different sound on the horn, he and Rex Stewart, that was a gifted guy, because Rex never did a whole lot of studying. It's just up here, you know, he just played the way he felt; what he heard.

Berger, Berger, Patrick, BENNY CARTER p.9 : One cousin was **Theodore „Cuban“ Bennett**, five years older than Benny. Cuban became a trumpeter in New York in the 1920s, widely admired among musicians but little known to the public because he preferred not to record or to play in big bands or even to venture beyond a few Harlem clubs he liked. Dicky Wells, Roy Eldridge, and Rex Stewart recalled his advanced musical ideas and modern style. To Benny Carter he was an inspiration because of his professional ability and fame among Harlem musicians during the younger man's own formative years. Cuban Bennett died at sixty-three in 1965 in McDonald, where the event was front-page news.
Same, p. 56 : Carter joined one (band) organized by Earl Hines. Cuban Bennett played in it. Hines recalls him as "one of the fastest trumpet players I ever heard."

D. Griffith, HOT JAZZ From Harlem To Storyville, p. 76 (Bill Dillard) : We had a fellow named **Cuban Bennett**. He died so young, too soon, because he drank so much whiskey. Right there at the Rhythm Club, Cuban would pick up his horn and start playing a different style. He had a more melodic style of playing for that era. In that era, we played choppy and fast, but he played beautiful arpeggios, and he had a terrific ear for modern chord structure that sort intrigued everybody. At least the trumpet players of that era gave him a lot of credit. He was not reliable to book on a job, because maybe he would get there or maybe not. If he got there, he would be drunk before the job was over. He never had any stability: you just could not rely on him.

Danny Barker, A LIFE IN JAZZ, p. 114 : Then it was a trumpet battle: Bobby Stark, Rex Stewart and Cuba Bennett. **Cuba Bennett** was the most highly respected trumpet player at that time in New York City. He is a cousin of Benny Carter, and the great bandleaders boasted with authority that he could play more beautiful and complex solos than anyone in the whole world. When he played anyone in the street and on the sidewalks rushed in. He was terrific. I'll never forget it, as I had never heard a trumpet played like that. He was everything they claimed he was. While I was listening someone said, "That cat is only pressing on the second and third valve." I never saw much of him after that as he went to Camden, New Jersey, to live. But anytime trumpet players were discussed, Cuba Bennett was spoken of with reverence. I must have heard this about a hundred times from different musicians who had passed through Camden, New Jersey, on tours: "We passed through Camden, so we stopped at that gin joint where Cuba hangs out at. He still plays great. He's got a family and you couldn't pull him out of Camden for a million dollars."

Benny Waters, THE KEY TO A JAZZY LIFE, p. 77 : He (*Billy Douglas*) was something like **Cuban Bennett** in that he didn't get known at all. Cuban was as far ahead of his time too, it was simply a pleasure just to sit and listen to him play a song, all those beautiful changes that he made, nobody in New York had an approach like he did. He didn't sound like Louis Armstrong and that made him great too. He was a cousin of Benny Carter. I heard him many times at the Rhythm Club. I heard him play on the floor there! He sounded better from there, drunk, than many of the guys sounded sober! I don't care how much he drank, he still sounded pretty, something like Ben Webster.... If he could get the horn on his mouth, and make a sound come out, it would sound good. He was one of those natural players and he was so modern, he was just as modern in his day as the most modern player is today. He had a better tone than most guys, he just didn't have all those high notes like Louis or Cat Anderson or Maynard Ferguson. Everything he had was within the rang (*sic*) of the horn, he didn't stretch it. He made a lot of stuff down in the horn which is hard too."