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New Orleans Jazz and the Blues

Vic Hobson

The blues in its relationship to jazz has been described by Wynton Marsalis as "the roux in the gumbo," an essential ingredient in the authentic jazz mix, but little is known of how the blues became a part of jazz.[1] Paul Oliver has raised some interesting questions:

> The role of ragtime, because the published compositions are specifically datable, is less contentious, while the presence in New Orleans of known black brass marching bands in the 1880s and 1890s is well documented. But what is the evidence of the presence of blues in New Orleans as an idiom distinct from jazz which could have exercised an influence upon it? Did New Orleans have a vocal blues tradition? If so, who were its exponents? If not, were its musicians first exposed to blues within the city (and if so, how?) or were they in contact with it while on tour, or in some other way? Were the New Orleans musicians the first to play blues-inflected jazz, or was it developed in another context altogether? The questions still remain. If there was any solid information on this subject it seems to have eluded most jazz historians, though the recollections of various jazz musicians have been cited by some and must be similarly re-examined.[2]

There are a number of assumptions that Oliver makes which this paper will explore. One of these is that the blues "exercized an influence" on jazz, and that jazz musicians needed to be "first exposed to blues" or have come into "contact" with the blues. This assumes that the blues is an external influence on jazz rather than an integral part. Buddy Bolden, who was musically active between 1895 and 1907, has been called "the first man of jazz." His contemporaries claim that he played music that has, at least retrospectively, been called "blues."[3] This would suggest that the blues was a part of the music that would become known as jazz from its earliest days.[4]

One difficulty in exploring these issues, as Oliver notes, is the lack of "solid information." This is not confined to jazz historians. There is little "solid information" about the blues *anywhere* before 1912. Despite a widespread belief that the blues was performed as rural folk music in the early years of the twentieth century, the *Journal of American Folklore* first reported on a "blues" by name in 1915.[5] Part of the reason for the scarcity of solid information is that recording

[1]Ken Burns and Lynn Norvick, prod., *Jazz* (London: BBC, 2001).
[2] Paul Oliver, "That Certain Feeling: Blues and Jazz … In 1890?" *Popular Music* 10, no. 1 (1991): 18.
[3]Donald M. Marquis, *In Search of Buddy Bolden: First Man of Jazz* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1978; reprint, 2007).
[4]Charles Edward Smith, "The Bolden Cylinder," *Saturday Review*, December 1957 (Hogan Jazz Archive).
[5]This was to report on a song sung to the commercial tune of "The Dallas Blues" (1912). W. Prescott Webb, "Notes on Folk-Lore of Texas," *Journal of American Folklore* 28, no. 109 (1915).

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technology was in its infancy, and the new medium was little used to record the early years of jazz and the blues.[6] Sheet music, on the other hand, was a well-developed medium which clearly impacted on the emerging repertoire of the jazz bands of New Orleans. Sheet music, tents shows, and the repertoire of the emerging African American vaudeville shows also influenced the repertoire of rural songsters, although perhaps less directly. This does at least seem to provide some solid information on the development of the blues.[7]

Paul Oliver: "Were the New Orleans Musicians the First to Play Blues-inflected Jazz?"

Another source of information on the blues in New Orleans and rural Louisiana is oral history interviews conducted by the Hogan Jazz Archive in the late 1950s and 1960s. The Archive holds interviews with around 150 jazz musicians who were born before 1900 and who were able to shed light on the musical environment of the early days of jazz.[8] Many of these musicians were born outside New Orleans, having spent their formative years on Louisiana plantations. This provides an interesting comparison with the musical experiences of a similar generation who were born in New Orleans. Naturally, with the passage of time, many recollections may become confused and dating events, in particular, is difficult. There is also the possibility that some of those interviewed may have been more interested in enhancing their reputations rather than in providing a straightforward factual account of events. Despite these caveats, the transcripts provide a consistent picture of the repertoires of the country string bands and brass bands and the relationship of the blues to the emerging jazz band repertoire in New Orleans.

There are, of course, many problems related to the use of oral histories. One problem is that the oldest informants, some of whom were born *c.*1870, were of considerable age by the time they came to be interviewed. The problem of failing memory and difficulties about recalling dates and events was compounded when interviewers asked questions about the blues. Sometimes the informant provided a title, and by cross-referencing with sheet music, recordings and other sources, it is possible to make a judgment as to what they mean.

Albert Glenny (born in 1870, New Orleans) was asked whether blues existed when he was first playing. He replied, "Blues? Oh they used to play blues, but they used to play the real blues. They don't play no blues now."[9] Asked to perform a "real blues," Glenny sings "I'm Alabama Bound." He is then asked, "Did that have a name; this song you just sang?"

[Glenny]: That's the blues.
[Ertegun]: That's the blues!

[6]There is a longstanding legend that Buddy Bolden may have recorded around the turn of the century, but the cylinder has never been found.
[7]Lynn Abbott and Doug Seroff, *Ragged but Right: Black Travelling Shows, "Coon Songs" and the Dark Pathway to Blues and Jazz* (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2007).
[8]This is only a fraction of the total collection.
[9]Albert Glenny, "Interview Transcript, March 27, 1957," edited by Richard B Allen and Nesuhi Ertegun (New Orleans, LA: William Ransom Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University).

[Glenny]: That's your real blues. Now, they got that "St. Louis Blues" you understand.
[Ertegun]: That came later.
[Glenny]: Yeah, that comes later. What I'm talking about. That's the old time blues I'm talking about.
[Allen]: What year was that old times blues?
[Glenny]: It was in 1804–1904.
[Allen]: 1904 they were playing that here?
[Glenny]: Yes, sir.[10]

Whether "I'm Alabama Bound" was considered a "real blues," or even a blues at all, in 1904 is open to question, but by 1909 it certainly was. In 1909 the theater pianist Robert Hoffman, who was based in New Orleans, published a piano score for "I'm Alabama Bound" subtitled "The Alabama Blues."[11] A year later, vocals were added by John J. Puderer, the proprietor of the Music Shop on Canal Street, New Orleans.[12] This is the first known reference to the *blues* as a description of a type of music.

By the turn of the century, Glenny was a 30-year-old bass player who was playing with many of the musicians who would pioneer jazz. His age and experience ensured that he was well placed to assess the changing musical trends of the period. If "I'm Alabama Bound" was performed in New Orleans in 1904, as Glenny says, then it seems likely that the tune was in circulation in New Orleans before it was published by Hoffman.

Jelly Roll Morton claimed to have written "I'm Alabama Bound" sometime around 1905 after leaving the Gulf Coast for Alabama.[13] It is unlikely that he did go to Alabama at this time because he was just 15 years old. He did, however, spend weekends at his grandmother's house on the Gulf Coast, and this is where he did some of his earliest playing.[14]

Elements of the song may have been in circulation before 1909, in Texas. A song that makes reference to "I'm Alabama Bound" was sung by Henry "Ragtime Texas" Thomas —a singer of a much older generation than most of the country singers to record in the 1920s.

> Yes I'm going away, and it won't be long
> Just sure as the train leaves out the yard, she's Alabama bound
> I'm going away, and it won't be long
> Just ease your train eleven days, I'm Alabama bound

[10]Ibid.
[11]"Alabama Bound" (1909), by Robert Hoffman (New Orleans, LA: William Ransom Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University); Lynn Abbott and Doug Seroff, "'They Cert'ly Sound Good to Me': Sheet Music, Southern Vaudeville, and the Commercial Ascendancy of the Blues," *American Music* 14, no. 4 (1996).
[12]"I'm Alabama Bound" (1910), by Robert Hoffman and John Puderer (Performing Arts Reading Room, Library of Congress); Mrs Robert George Hoffman, "Interview Transcript, January 25, 1975," in *Oral History Files*, edited by Tad Jones (New Orleans, LA: William Ransom Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University); Abbott and Seroff, "'They Cert'ly Sound Good to Me': Sheet Music, Southern Vaudeville, and the Commercial Ascendancy of the Blues."
[13]"Transcript of the 1938 Library of Congress Recordings of Jelly Roll Morton," edited by John Szwed (2006), 3.
[14]Lawrence Gushee, "A Preliminary Chronology of the Early Career of Ferd "Jelly Roll" Morton," *American Music* 3, no. 4 (1985).

> Says the boat's up the river, and she won't come down
> I believe to my soul, pretty mama, she's water bound
> I look to the east, and I look to the west
> If she heads to the south, great God, she's Alabama bound.[15]

"Ragtime" Thomas was of the songster generation—a generation of singer guitarists who performed an older repertoire that pre-dated the appearance of the 12-bar blues. The distinction denotes a number of features, one being that ragtime tunes were usually studied rather than improvized. Samuel Charters argues, "Thomas seems to have been almost a pure songster. Once he'd learned a song he didn't change it, even if he'd only half learned it at the beginning."[16]

"I'm Alabama Bound" became a very popular song among folk singers and many versions were collected by folklorists throughout the South. Newman I. White noted,

> He [the "Negro"] loves to be "goin' down the road." Very commonly he is "Alabama bound" on a mule, but this is merely a conventional particular expression of a general state of mind—he does not commonly travel on a mule nor does he show a special preference for Alabama except as a popular refrain.[17]

It is not clear whether "I'm Alabama Bound" started as a rural folksong and entered the circus shows and vaudeville or whether the song began on the stage and was subsequently adopted by rural songsters. White noted that the first time he heard "I'm Alabama Bound," it was "sung by white men on the vaudeville stage."[18] "I'm Alabama Bound" continued to be popular among rural singers, and John and Alan Lomax list this song as a blues in *American Ballads and Folk Songs* (1934).[19]

Donaldsonville, St James Parish

Donaldsonville is a city in the lower Mississippi valley that was established by William Donaldson in 1806. A train service linked Donaldsonville to New Orleans by 1871. Donaldsonville provided a cultural focus for the region and itself developed a strong band tradition. Claiborne Williams (born in 1868) was particularly influential in organizing the Donaldsonville bands.

John Joseph was born in Jamestown, St James Parish, about 11 miles from Donaldsonville *c.*1878. He says he began playing string bass at around the age of 11.[20] William Russell asked in 1958, "Did those bands up in the country ever play any blues at all?" In the interview transcript, Joseph says he "didn't know much about blues;" it was not until he came to New Orleans that he heard the blues.

> [Russell:] For a minute I want to ask about some of the old tunes, when you first heard them. Pieces like "Careless Love": when did you first hear that?

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[15]Michael Taft, *Blues Lyric Poetry: An Anthology* (New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1983), 268.
[16]Samuel B. Charters, *The Country Blues* (London: The Jazz Book Club, 1959; reprint, 1961), 190–95.
[17]Newman I. White, *American Negro Folk Songs* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1928), 291.
[18]Ibid., 28.
[19]John A. Lomax and Alan Lomax, *American Ballads and Folk Songs* (New York: Macmillan 1934).
[20]John Joseph, "Interview Transcript, November 24, 1958," edited by William Russell, Richard B. Allen and Nesuhi Ertegun (New Orleans, LA: William Ransom Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University).

When did you play it?
[Joseph:] "Careless Love"? When I came down here, that was the first time I heard it. That's pretty old, too.
[Russell:] When you first came to New Orleans, around 1906?
[Joseph:] Around 1900, 1906, yes.
[Russell:] Do you remember "Pallet on the Floor" [Make Me a Pallet on the Floor"]?
[Joseph:] Yes, I know all them things around that time.[21]

He tells William Russell, "Buddy Bolden is the first man that ever played a blues for dancin'. And later on Edward Clem, ya heard of him?"[22] Richard Allen continues to question John Joseph about the "blues for dancing:"

[Allen]: Oh! Before they started dancing to blues, what did people do? Did they sing them or did they play them on the instruments or—
[Joseph]: They used to sing them; some of the women down there used to sing them blues, you know.
[Allen]: Uh-huh
[Joseph]: And I dis-remember that old woman down there that used to sing them blues; I just dis-remember her name. But she used to sing the blues; she was a good songster, too.
[Allen]: Some woman like Ann Cook or—
[Joseph]: That's what I'm talking about! You know Ann Cook?[23]

We are apparently being told that Ann Cook (born Frazenville, Louisiana, *c.*1888) was singing the blues in New Orleans, and this was before Buddy Bolden became the first musician to introduce the blues "for dancing" to the repertoire of the emerging jazz bands. Perhaps more generally (given Allen's leading questions), we are told that women sang the blues before bands played the blues for dancing in New Orleans. This is consistent with what a number of other sources say. Manuel Manetta (born Algiers, Louisiana, 1889), a pianist and musical educator, said, "Women who sang mostly blues" were "Mary Thacker, Alma Hughes and Ann Cook." He goes on to say that "Ann Cook was around during the time of Buddy Bolden" and that "she was a frequenter of the Funky Butt Hall."[24] He also mentioned Mary Jack the Bear and Mamie Desdunes who was "a madam who had a house on Villere Street."[25] From what Jelly Roll Morton said, there is some evidence to support the view that Mamie Desdunes was among the first of the women blues singers.[26]

Talking about a time *c.*1901, Morton recalled that Mamie Desdune lived next door to his godmother in the Garden District. "This is the first blues, I no doubt heard in my life. Mamie Desdunes, this was her favorite blues, she hardly could play anything else more, oh, but she really could play this number."[27]

[21]Ibid.
[22]Ibid.
[23]Ibid.
[24]Manuel Manetta, "Interview Digest, March 28, 1957," edited by William Russell *et al.* (New Orleans, LA: William Ransom Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University), 12. Ann Cook was suggested by Richard Allen.
[25]Manuel Manetta, "Interview Digest, March 28, 1957," edited by Robert Campbell William Russell, Nesuhi Ertegun and Richard B. Allen (New Orleans, LA: Hogan Jazz Archive): 13, spelled as "Desdume" in the Digest.
[26]Gushee, "A Preliminary Chronology of the Early Career of Ferd 'Jelly Roll' Morton."

I stood in the corner, my feet was dripping wet,
I asked every man I met …
Can't give me a dollar, give me a lousy dime,
Just to feed that hungry man of mine …

"Although I had heard them previously I guess it was Mamie first really sold me on the blues."[28]

Lawrence Gushee has located Morton's baptismal certificate, which makes it possible to put this in context. Morton was probably born in October 1890, and would have been around 11 years old in 1901.[29] But there is other evidence as to when Mamie Desdunes sang her blues.

On March 25, 1879, Clementine Walker gave birth to Mary Celina Desdunes and the birth record gives the father as "Rudolphe L."[30] Mamie probably spent her early years with her mother Clementine and grandparents, Ophelia and John Walker, at 2123 Toledano Street in the Garden District of New Orleans. By 1900, Mamie can be found in the census living at 2328 Toledano Street, and she is still registered at this address in 1901 in the City Directory.[31]

Laura Hunter, Jelly Roll's godmother, in 1901 was living at the corner house on 2706 South Robertson Street and 2621 Fourth Street.[32] Mamie was not a close neighbor at this time; they lived several blocks apart. It would be useful to confirm if these two women did ever live next door to each other as Morton claimed; it would certainly help in dating this recollection.[33]

Another way to date this recollection is from the lyrics that Morton sang. When Morton recorded a commercial version of "Mamie's Blues," he sang:

Two nineteen, done took my babe away,
Two nineteen took my babe away,
Two seventeen will bring her back some day.[34]

[27]1688 "Mamie Desdoumes' Blues," Washington, DC, May 21–July 1938, Circle 60, *Brian Rust, Jazz Records 1897–1942* (Chigwell: Storyville, 1969; reprint, 1975), 1167; *Jelly Roll Morton: The Complete Library of Congress Recordings by Alan Lomax*, (Cambridge, MA: Rounder Records Corp., 2006).

[28]Alan Lomax, *Mister Jelly Roll: The Fortunes of Jelly Roll Morton, New Orleans Creole and "Inventor of Jazz"* (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1950), 20–21. I have attempted to find out who holds the copyright for "Mamie's Blues." The Roy J. Carew Co. (Tempo Music) do not know. Morton's legal representative Thomas M. Hunt has not responded to enquiries. Part of the explanation may be contained in a letter Morton sent to Roy Carew on December 23, 1939. "Mamie Desdume, wrote Mamie's Blues in the late 90s. I don't like to take credit for something that don't belong to me. I guess she's dead by now, and there would probably be no royalty to pay, but she did write it." Folder 105, MSS 507 (Williams Research Center, Historic New Orleans Collection).

[29]Gushee, "A Preliminary Chronology of the Early Career of Ferd 'Jelly Roll' Morton."

[30]New Orleans, Louisiana Birth Records Index, 1790–1899, vol. 74, 79 (Ancestry.com); R. L. Desdunes was author of Rodolphe Lucien Desdunes, *Our People and Our History: Fifty Creole Portraits*, translated by Sister Dorothea Olga McCants (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1911; reprint, 1973).

[31]Gushee, "A Preliminary Chronology of the Early Career of Ferd 'Jelly Roll' Morton," 392.

[32]2706 South Robertson Street (the 1900 census); 2621 Fourth Street (Soards City Directory).

[33]Unfortunately, further searches have proved inconclusive. By 1905, Laura Hunter was recorded in the City Directory as living at 1619 Magnolia. I have not found another address for Mamie Desdunes until 1910 (census), when she was living at 2414 Clara Street.

The jazz writer Charles Edward Smith had been in the studio for the recording. He reported Morton as saying,

> These were two fast trains; the first took the gals out on the T&P.R.R. [Texas and Pacific] to the sportin' houses on the Texas side of the circuit, Dallas, Texarkana, et cetera. The 2:17 on the S. P., through San Antonio and Houston brought them back to New Orleans.[35]

The 2:19 also appeared in Richard M. Jones's "Trouble in Mind." Jones was also from New Orleans, a fact which adds weight to the Morton recollection that the train was associated with the city.

> I'm gonna lay my head, on some lonesome railroad iron
> Let that 2:19 train, babe, satisfy my mind.[36]

In January of 1901, Anthony F. Lucas struck oil in Beaumont, Texas. In the following decade the population of Beaumont doubled as the Gulf Oil Corporation, the Texas Oil Company (Texaco) and Humble (Exxon), established pipelines and built refineries.[37] This rapidly changed the financial fortunes of the state. Under such circumstances, one can see why the prostitutes of New Orleans would have travelled to Texas.

There are a number of other reasons to believe that "Mamie's Blues (2:19 Blues)" is a very early blues associated with New Orleans. Another early jazz musician to recall Mamie Desdunes and her blues was the cornet player William "Bunk" Johnson. He told the authors of *Jazzmen* that he and Buddy Bolden were "the first ones that started jazz" in New Orleans.[38] Bunk probably exaggerated his role and also his age; hence, his recollection's need to be treated with some caution. In 1949 Bunk was interviewed by Alan Lomax, who was researching *Mister Jelly Roll*.[39] Bunk recalled that he

> knew Mamie Desdunes real well—played many a concert with her singing those same blues—good-looking—quite fair—nice head of hair—a hustlin' woman—a blues-singing poor gal—used to play a pretty passable piano around them dance halls on Perdido Street—When Hattie Rogers or Lulu White would put it out that Mamie was going to be singing at their place, the white men would turn out in bunches and them whores would clean up.[40]

[34]R2573 "Mamie's Blues", New York, December 16, 1939, General 4001, Commodore Music Shop 587, Vogue V-2122, Jazz Section 695, Rust, *Jazz Records 1897–1942*, 1168.

[35]MSS 506, Folder 202, (Historic New Orleans Collection); William Russell, *'Oh, Mister Jelly': A Jelly Roll Morton Scrapbook* (Copenhagen: Jazz Media, 1999).

[36]Richard M. Jones: 101681-1 "Trouble in Mind" Chicago, August 5, 1936, Bluebird B-6569, Rust, *Jazz Records 1897–1942*, 911; Bertha "Chippie" Hill: 9510-B "Trouble in Mind" Chicago, February 23, 1926, Okeh 8312, American Record Company 6-12-70, Conqueror 8937, Vocalion 04379, Hot Jazz Club of America 614, Association Française des Collectionneurs de Disques du Jazz—104, Jazz Unlimited 3,ibid., 793. Words and music by Richard M. Jones © Copyright 1926, 1937, UNIVERSAL MUSIC CORP. Copyright renewed. All rights reserved. Used by permission. Reprinted by permission.

[37]Roger Wood, *Texas Zydeco* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2006), 67.

[38]Frederic Ramsey Jr. and Charles Edward Smith, *Jazzmen* (London: Sedgwick & Jackson, 1939; reprint, 1958). Front matter.

[39]Lomax, *Mister Jelly Roll.*

[40]Excerpt from Bunk Johnson interview with Alan Lomax March 1949. Mss 559 Box 33B. As far as I'm aware the recording of this interview, which was done on tape, does not survive. Nor have I been able to locate a complete

Bunk Johnson told the *Jazzmen* authors that he was born in 1879, which would have made him just two years younger than Buddy Bolden. But on a number of occasions he admitted to a large difference in their respective ages. When he (allegedly) joined Bolden's band, he remembered, "They were all men; I was the only young one in the Band, in short pants."[41] Throughout his life, and long before he was interviewed for *Jazzmen*, he gave contradictory dates of birth, in the range 1879 to 1889.[42] He said he was playing at the age of 15. If he was born as late as 1889, he could still have played with Mamie Desdunes in 1904 or 1905.

Another reason to believe that "Mamie's Blues" is an old blues associated with New Orleans comes from Perry Bradford. As a vaudevillian, composer and arranger, he would go on to write "Crazy Blues," beginning the blues craze on phonograph records in the 1920s. Speaking of his early career, Bradford said:

> I joined Allen's New Orleans Minstrels in my home town, Atlanta, Georgia, in the fall of 1907. We played a two week stand in New Orleans at the fairgrounds during the Mardi Gras in 1908 […] Every night some of our boys and girls would go slumming aroun' to all the saloons, honky-tonks and dives, and to what the natives called the top-sporting houses, where no coloreds were allowed. This classy love-joint is where I first met Tony Jackson, whom the Creoles were acclaiming as the King piano man. But Tony was playing and singing songs that had drifted down from the north on down into New Orleans.[43]

Tony Jackson certainly had an extensive repertoire, and was recalled as the man "who knew a thousand songs."[44] Jelly Roll Morton considered him to be the "World's Greatest Single-Handed Entertainer. Playing all the classes of music in the style they was supposed to be played in, from blues to opera."[45] Morton also recalled a 12-bar blues that Jackson played called "Michigan Water Tastes Like Sherry Wine."

> Yes, Michigan water tastes like sherry,
> I mean sherry, crazy 'bout my sherry,
> Michigan water tastes like sherry wine,
> Yes, Michigan water tastes like sherry wine.

Perry Bradford said that he left Allen's New Orleans Minstrels in Vinita, Oklahoma. This would have been after 1908 (according to his previous chronology); he then went to Knoxville, Tennessee, and Chicago. In Chicago he entered a piano-playing contest.

> I was short of money in Chicago and old "Mojo" seemed to whisper in my ear, "Sing and play your blues." The first one I sang did it. I saw all the pimps with their gals and I remembered the verse of the blues that I started with.

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transcript. This excerpt is punctuated differently from the version that appears in *Mister Jelly Roll*. I think it likely that at some time Ramsey may have had access to the original tape or an alternative transcript. Bill Russell may also have had access to the full interview.

[41]Frederic Ramsey and Charles Edward Smith, *Jazzmen* (New York: Harcourt, 1939), 24–25.

[42]Mike Hazeldine, "Bunk Johnson: The Story So Far," *New Orleans Music* 14, no. 1 (2008).

[43]Perry Bradford, *Born with the Blues* (New York: Oak Publications, 1965), 32.

[44]Typescript "Jelly Roll Morton and his Library of Congress Recordings," by R. J. Carew *c.*1949–Feb 1950, "Carew, Roy," MSS 519, folder 158 (Williams Research Center, Historic New Orleans Collection).

[45]Lomax, *Mister Jelly Roll*, 248.

My gal walked the streets in the rain and wet
This is what she said to every man she met.
I don't want your nickle [*sic*] just give me a lousy dime
So I can feed this hungry pimp of mine.[46]

This is the opening lyric that Morton had used in his Library of Congress recording of "Mamie's Blues." According to Perry Bradford's recollection he was singing the same song after visiting New Orleans for the 1908 Mardi Gras, but it seems likely that Bradford may have dated this event somewhat later than it actually occurred.[47] From Lynn Abbott's and Doug Seroff's research of the pages of the *Indianapolis Freeman*, we learn that Perry Bradford joined Allen's New Orleans Minstrels in the summer of 1903.[48] According to a biography of Perry Bradford that appeared in the *Chicago Defender* in 1922, he arrived in Chicago in 1906.[49]

The recollections of Jelly Roll Morton, Bunk Johnson, Perry Bradford and Manuel Manetta, combined, make a compelling case that "Mamie's Blues" was played by pianists in New Orleans in the early years of the twentieth century. This alone does not indicate that the 12-bar form of the blues was played by the emerging jazz bands of the city. The first reason to doubt that Bolden played the 12-bar blues was that although a good number of those interviewed for the Hogan Jazz Archive remembered Bolden playing "Funky Butt" (also known as "Buddy Bolden's Blues"), "Pallet on the Floor," and "Careless Love," there was no identifiable 12-bar blues reported in Bolden's repertoire. The only reference was in *Jazzmen*. The *Jazzmen* authors simply stated, "Among the blues Buddy had to play every night were *Careless Love Blues* and *2:19 Took My Babe Away*."[50] There was no indication of where they got this information.

Jazzmen was a collection of essays written by nine different authors. It fell to Frederic Ramsey Jr to bring together the material for publication. Charles Edward Smith was in New Orleans for Mardi Gras in 1939. While there he interviewed Willie Cornish, the only (undisputed) surviving member of Bolden's band. Willie Cornish had provided Smith with a photograph of Bolden's band, and Willie Cornish was in the photograph. This was the only firm evidence that the *Jazzmen* authors had to substantiate that Bolden existed. Willie Cornish was the only informant who had certain first-hand knowledge of Bolden and his repertoire.

Frederic Ramsey's papers reveal that Charles Edward Smith had recorded in his interview notes with Willie Cornish in 1939 that, "Two blues you had to know: 'Careless Love Blues' and '2:19 Took My Babe Away'."[51] While this is not proof absolute, it is perhaps as near as we can get, to use Paul Oliver's term, to "solid information" about Bolden's

[46]Bradford, *Born with the Blues*, 34.
[47]Footnote 99, Abbott and Seroff, *Ragged but Right: Black Travelling Shows, 'Coon Songs' and the Dark Pathway to Blues and Jazz*, 409–10.
[48]Ibid., 229.
[49]March 4, 1922, *Chicago Defender*, ibid., 410; He also said that he was in New Orleans at the Temple Theater, which opened in 1909. He may have conflated a number of visits into one event, or perhaps it was a different theater. In any event, the contemporaneous reports are usually more reliable than memory.
[50]Ramsey Jr and Smith, *Jazzmen*, 13. The "2:19 Took My Babe Away" is also described as Bolden's "Original Payoff Blues", 266.
[51]MSS 559, Box 16C (Historic New Orleans Collection).

repertoire. It would be another two decades before the Hogan Archive began collecting interviews, and these interviews would be conducted after *Jazzmen* had been published and the legend of Buddy Bolden had become established. This was not the case for Willie Cornish. He remembered "The 2:19 Took My Babe Away" in early 1939. This was before Jelly Roll Morton recorded either of his versions of "Mamie's Blues (2:19 Blues)."

This seems to provide a conclusive answer to Oliver's question about whether the New Orleans musicians were the first to play blues-inflected jazz. The answer seems to be that they were. Unless evidence comes to light from an earlier date, this is not only the earliest evidence of "blues-inflected jazz," it is also the earliest evidence of the 12-bar blues being performed by a jazz band.

Paul Oliver: "What is the Evidence of the Presence of Blues in New Orleans, as an Idiom Distinct from Jazz which could have Exercized an Influence upon it?"

This is really two interrelated questions. The first question is whether the 12-bar form of the blues, as a distinct idiom, was known on the plantations of rural Louisiana during the period that Bolden was musically active. The second issue is whether the 8- and 16-bar blues songs such as "Careless Love" and "Pallet on the Floor" were known in rural Louisiana. If either of these forms of the blues were known, it is possible that this could have exercized an influence on the emerging jazz bands.

Deer Range and Magnolia Plantations were situated near Vidalia on the Mississippi River in Louisiana. These plantations were originally home to a number of prominent musicians who later moved to New Orleans: they included Chris Kelly, Jim Robinson, Sidney Brown and Sunny Henry.

Jim Robinson was born at Deer Range on December 25, 1892, the youngest of four boys—all of whom played music. Robinson was asked if he remembered any music, other than church music, when he was young:

> Oh yeah, they had at my home, they had one of the best brass bands in the world—I mean in the country, understand—at my home, because Percy Humphrey's father—grandfather—Percy Humphrey's grandfather taught that band, that Deer Range Band. And the Magnolia band too—he's the one taught Sunny Henry and them fellows.[52]

The local bands in the country were sometimes visited by bands from the city. One such band was Tom Albert's band from Algiers. Later in the interview, Jim Robinson was asked, "Would there be much difference between the Deer Range Band and the Magnolia Band, and say Tom Albert's Band?" Robinson replied, "Well, I didn't find no difference, because they was all playing the same type of music," which included "six-eight [marches], one-step, quick-step—they'd play all different kinds of music."[53]

Brass band music was not the only music played at Deer Range. Robinson also said they had guitar players. "Oh, they had plenty of guitar players around there; they had

[52]Jim Robinson, "Interview Transcript, December 10, 1958," edited by Richard B. Allen William Russell, Bill Simmons (New Orleans, LA: William Ransom Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University), 3.
[53]Ibid., 6.

plenty of fellows play guitar, you know," and they would play "blues and different things, songs."[54] He goes on to say, "Oh, yeah, some of them could sing. [unintelligible] Some of them used to have a harmonica [fastened] to a little piece of wire over their mouth, understand […] They'd play the harmonica and play the guitar, too." The songs he remembered these guitarists playing from this period were "Steamboat Bill" and "Casey Jones." These are not generally considered as blues songs, but they may help in dating Robinson's recollections.

The events surrounding the legend of Casey Jones have been long established. John Luther (Casey) Jones was a railroad engineer who died in a railroad accident on April 30, 1900.[55] The first known reference to the song "Casey Jones" appeared in the *Railroad Man's Magazine*, in March 1908. On April 7, 1909, T. Lawrence Seibert and Eddie Newton obtained copyright for "Casey Jones (The Brave Engineer)" based upon a song they reportedly heard while passing through New Orleans. "Hummed by some Negro boys … it occurred to Seibert that this song could be easily revamped into a comedy number."[56] The lyrics they used were virtually identical with the 1908 lyrics printed in *Railroad Man's Magazine*.[57]

"Steamboat Bill" first appeared as sheet music in 1910 with words by Ren Shields and music by the Leighton Brothers.[58] This song quickly became a favorite on the vaudeville theater circuit. Miss Brady could be found singing "Steamboat Bill" at The Monogram, Chicago, December 17, 1910, and a month later, Elmore Taylor sang "Steamboat Bill" at The Houston Theater, Louisville, Kentucky.[59] "Steamboat Bill" is probably a commercial reworking of "Casey Jones," rather than an independent song.

Both of these songs were in circulation *c.*1910. This could perhaps explain the apparent inconsistency in Robinson's subsequent answers. Richard Allen then questioned Robinson about the specific nature of the blues that guitarists on the plantations played.

> [Allen]: And the blues, what kind of blues?
> [Robinson]: Oh, there wasn't much blues then, at the time then.
> [Allen]: What about the blues?
> [Robinson]: There wasn't much of a blues then, understand; didn't nobody fool with blues that much at that time.
> [Russell]: Not as many blues then as now?

[54]Ibid., 21.
[55]"Railroaders Hear Straight Story on Casey Jones' Famous Ride;" Norm Cohen, "'Casey Jones': At the Crossroads of Two Ballad Traditions," *Western Folklore* 32, no. 2 (1973): 77–103.
[56]James J. Geller, *Famous Songs and Their Stories* (New York, 1931), 231; ibid., 79.
[57]"Casey Jones (The Brave Engineer)" (1909) by Eddie Newton and T. Lawrence Seibert, © E202519 (Performing Arts Reading Room, Library of Congress).
[58]"Steamboat Bill" (1910), by Ren Shields, and the Leighton Brothers, (New York: F. A. Mills; St Louis Mercantile Library).
[59]*Indianapolis Freeman*, December 17, 1910 (Newspaper & Current Periodical Reading Room, Library of Congress); *Indianapolis Freeman*, January 28, 1911 (Newspaper & Current Periodical Reading Room, Library of Congress).

> [Robinson]: No, not like now, uh-uh. Blues ain't been long; just a few years been out. [People was playing the blues not like today; it wasn't proper like in the time I come up in? [*sic*]][60]

Perhaps when Robinson says that guitarists played "blues and different things" on the plantation, he was using the term to describe blues ballads or 8- and 16-bar blues.[61] When he was asked to be specific about "what kind of blues," he then explained that the 12-bar blues had "just a few years been out." It is interesting to compare this with a slightly older informant from the same plantation. Charles "Sunny" Henry (born November 17, 1885) was asked about his formative years on Magnolia Plantation, and if they had any blues in those days? Henry replied, "No, I don't remember no blues."[62] It seems likely that he is talking specifically about the 12-bar blues.

Raceland, Louisiana

One informant who, on the surface of things, does seem to suggest that the 12-bar form of the blues may have been known in rural Louisiana while Bolden was musically active is Punch Miller. Miller said that he was born on May 10, 1894.[63] He was raised on a sugar plantation at Raceland, Louisiana. He recalled hearing songs like "Oh, You Beautiful Doll," "Take Your Hands Away," "Grizzly Bear," "Everybody's Doing It," "I Ain't Had Nothing in a Long Time," and "I Whipped My Girl with a Singletree. You Might of Heard Her Hollin', 'Don't Murder Poor Me'." He further said, "people didn't take these songs though and put them into jazz tunes; wasn't anybody to fix [write?] anything like that."[64] He also said, "In the country they didn't do much singing, just played; they didn't sing the blues much."[65] But there were, according to Miller, guitarists in Raceland who played the blues. Among the best blues pickers in his neighborhood were Joseph Phillips (who hailed from Natchez, Mississippi) and Lonnie Johnson.[66]

> [Miller:] I'll tell you another fellow I worked with a long time. Course we all called him Rooster. Well his name is Lonnie Johnson. You heard of him?
> [Allen:] Oh yeah.
> [Miller:] Me and him play together up an' down Bayou Lafourche. Long time ago —just guitar and trumpet. Lonnie Johnson, you know; but we all called him Rooster.

[60]Robinson, "Interview Transcript, December 10, 1958." The bracketed sentence is included as is the Hogan Archive transcript. Having listened to this recording and consulted with Lynn Abbott at the Archive, it seems that the editors of the transcript were unsure of what Robinson said. In particular, it is difficult to tell if he said "proper" or "popular."
[61]Ibid.
[62]Charles "Sunny" Henry, "Interview Transcript, Jan 8, 1959," edited by Richard B. Allen and William Russell (New Orleans, LA: William Ransom Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University).
[63]Punch Miller's real name was Earnest Burden. He may also have been born a year later, in 1895.
[64]Punch Miller, "Interview Digest, August 20, 1959," edited by Richard B. Allen (New Orleans, LA: William Ransom Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University).
[65]Ibid.
[66]Ibid.

> [Allen:] Well, where's he from?
> [Miller:] Somewhere—out from Memphis—not in Memphis—a little small place —Tennessee City, or something like that.[67]

Taken at face value, it seems unlikely that this is Lonnie Johnson from New Orleans. Johnson was a musically literate jazz guitarist who would go on to work with Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington, Eddie Lang and many other jazz musicians. He started out playing violin with his father and brother in New Orleans before taking up guitar. By 1917, he was touring with a review in Europe, and spent much of his life as a professional musician. In 1925, he entered a weekly blues singing contest in St. Louis. He won for eighteen consecutive weeks. The Okeh Company awarded him an 11-year recording contract.[68] Unlikely though it seems, it is likely that this was Alonzo "Lonnie" Johnson.[69]

Punch Miller claimed to have been born in 1894, and Lonnie Johnson told Paul Oliver,

> Early days of the blues—as far back as I can get is 1914. That's when I was at home in New Orleans and my family was alive then […] I used to play piano for a while, but only blues, no popular songs. Then I bought my guitar. I bought it in 1917.[70]

By the time Lonnie Johnson owned a guitar, Punch Miller was apparently 23 years old.

There is considerable doubt about when Lonnie Johnson was born. Paul Oliver in *Conversation with the Blues* says that Johnson was born on February 8, 1894. In Oliver's entry for Johnson in the *Grove Dictionary of Jazz* he gives February 8, 1889. Valerie Wilmer interviewed Johnson in 1963 and reported, "Contrary to the stories that circulate, Lonnie is not 74 years old. He is 63." This would indicate he was born *c.*1899, and Helen McNamara interviewed Johnson and also gave 1899.[71]

> Lonnie Johnson told Valerie Wilmer,
>
> When I was fourteen years old I was playing with my family. They had a band that played for weddings—it was schottisches and waltzes and things, there wasn't no blues in those days, people didn't think about blues.

This could perhaps argue for an earlier date of birth. There is nothing to suggest that the blues, in the sense of the 12-bar blues, was established much before 1912, but a later date of birth is also possible. There is some evidence that the blues did not begin to impact significantly on the emerging jazz bands of New Orleans (particularly those that relied on notation) until after the publication of "The St. Louis Blues" (1914).

Stock arrangements for "The Memphis Blues" (1912) and "Jogo Blues" (1913), both by W.C. Handy, were not available when the piano scores were published. A stock arrangement was available for "The St. Louis Blues" when it appeared in 1914, and this may explain, in part, why the "The St. Louis Blues" figures prominently in the

[67]My transcription of the audio CD, Punch Miller, "Summary of Interview," edited by Richard B. Allen. "Mac" Fairhurst (New Orleans, LA: William Hogan Archive, Tulane University, Sept. 1, 1959).
[68]Paul Oliver, *Conversation with the Blues* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 84; 122.
[69]Thanks to Dean Alger for his advice on this question.
[70]Oliver, *Conversation with the Blues*, 84.
[71]*Toronto Telegram*, Saturday April 5, 1969 (Lonnie Johnson, Vertical File, Hogan Jazz Archive).

recollections of early New Orleans jazz musicians. In around 250 interviews that I have surveyed, there are 45 references to "The St. Louis Blues" and just six to "The Memphis Blues." Another factor may be that "The St. Louis Blues" was a song, whereas "The Memphis Blues" and "The Jogo Blues" were published without lyrics.

The band that Lonnie Johnson's father led was a reading band that played for weddings and other social functions. It may be that they were not required to play blues compositions before 1914. If Lonnie Johnson were born in 1899, he could still have been playing this older repertoire of waltzes and schottisches around this time. The other thing that argues for a later date of birth is that (based upon 1894 as a date of birth) Lonnie Johnson would have been 20 years old before he began playing the piano and 23 before he owned a guitar.

On the other hand, it could be argued that Lonnie Johnson was simply confused about when he started playing guitar. Pops Foster says that he saw Lonnie Johnson playing guitar with his father and brother in New Orleans, but without saying when. Pops goes on to say, "Lonnie was the only guy we had around New Orleans who could play jazz guitar. He was great on jazz guitar." If he was playing jazz guitar with his family by 1917, this would still have been well ahead of his contemporaries. I can see no reason to suppose that this recollection was much earlier than this. It cannot be much later either because Lonnie's father died in the influenza epidemic of 1918.

Punch Miller (real name Earnest Burden) said he was born in 1894. According to the digest,

> Punch plowed out in the country and made sugar cane. He would get lonesome on the farm and always wanted to leave there from when he was a little kid. It never was in his mind to stay there. He would sing some kind of blues or something to himself when he was plowing. When they were cutting the sugar cane, almost everyone would be singing. He would sing something like: "I want to leave this place and find a better home."[72]

His chance came in June 1917 when he registered for service in the First World War. In an interview, August 20, 1956, he said he was only 16 or 17 when he went into the Army and adjusted his date of birth by a year to get away from home. He then went on to say that he was actually born in 1895 and that he deliberately misled the Registration Board by saying he was born in 1894. If this were true, then he was drafted in 1913, which, of course, he wasn't.[73] Punch Miller was evidently not that good at mental arithmetic and erred on the side of caution. If he was really born in 1894, then he would have been 23 years of age before he finally left Raceland.

One final piece of evidence that tends to confirm these later dates of birth for both Lonnie Johnson and Punch Miller is the repertoire they played. In an interview on September 1, 1959, Miller is reported as saying, "They played together for about three years, just two kids. Played old numbers like "Beautiful Doll" and "Take Your Hands Away," lots of blues." "Beautiful Doll" was a popular song with music by

[72]Miller, "Interview Digest, August 20, 1959," 3.

[73]Punch Miller (Earnest Burden) registered for the draft at Raceland on June 5, 1917, giving his date of birth as May 10, 1894. His "age in years" is accordingly given as 23. Ancestry. Com.

Violinsky and words by Al B. White, published in Chicago in 1912. "Take Your Hands Away," music by Henry Smith and words by Sam Lewis, was published in New York in 1908.[74] It is clear from this that if Lonnie Johnson and Punch Miller did work together, playing on the Bayou Lafourche for around three years, this was after 1912. Perhaps it was between 1915 and 1917 which (allowing a reasonable margin of error) would be compatible with Lonnie Johnson saying he didn't own a guitar before 1917. If we accept this later date, it also explains why they played "lots of blues." By this period, Handy's "The Yellow Dog Rag" (1914) and "Joe Turner's Blues" (1915) had supplemented earlier blues compositions.

Willie and George "Pops" Foster

Willie Foster was born December 27, 1888, in McCall, just a few miles from Donaldsonville, Louisiana. Willie Foster first learned to play mandolin and violin. At the age of 12 he took up the guitar, and with his younger brother, George, they would play for banquets on plantations. In a 1969 interview, George (now known as "Pops") remembered that the bands in which they played were "small, sometimes consisting of guitar, violin and bass, or mandolin, guitar and bass." He also says, "you played old numbers like 'Chicken on a Reel,' slow blues, alley blues, old straight blues, waltzes, tangos, [unintelligible]."[75] What exactly "Pops" Foster means by "slow blues," "alley blues," and "old straight blues" is unclear. It does at least suggest that Foster is attempting to distinguish between different types of blues.

It is difficult to date this recollection precisely. Willie Foster said that when he left McCall, he gave up playing for a while. He also said that he began playing again at the age of 18; by this time he was living in New Orleans and was playing with the Tulane Band. If this is correct, then this is likely to be from a time before 1908. The inclusion of "Chicken Reel" in Foster's repertoire may help to date this recollection. "Chicken Reel" was a dance tune associated with the buck and wing dance that was popular on the vaudeville stage. An item in the *Indianapolis Freeman* of September 28, 1907 reported from a show in White City, that a performer was "still singing 'Chicken' and doing his buck and wing turn." "Chicken Reel" appeared in sheet music in 1910, subtitled the "Performer's Buck." [76]

Willie Foster was asked if he had heard any blues on the plantation when he was young. He replied that "that's where the blues come from" and from the railroad workers and songsters. He says "Frankie and Johnny" came out while he was growing up.[77] Asked if he remembered the song "Stack O' Lee," Foster said he did,

[74]Sheet Music Collection (Hogan Jazz Archive).
[75]George "Pops" Foster, "Interview Digest, Reel B, Track 2, 1969," edited by Tom Stoddard (New Orleans, LA: William Ransom Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University). This is taken from the audio tape rather than the digest.
[76]Joseph M. Daly, "Chicken Reel, or, Performer's Buck" (Boston, MA: Daly Music Publishing, 1910): University of Colorado Digital Sheet Music Collection; Chicken Reel," American Standard Orchestra, Edison Cylinder 10490, Allen Koenigsberg, *Edison Cylinder Records, 1889–1912* (New York: Stellar Productions, 1969).
[77]Willie Foster, "Interview Digest, January 21, 1959," edited by William Russell and Ralph Collins (New Orleans, LA: William Ransom Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University), 11.

but he didn't know if the song was about a real person. He said that the song was the first thing that he played on guitar, and the song came from the railroad.[78] Cecil Brown has researched the events surrounding this legendary figure. On Christmas Night 1895, in Bill Curtis's Saloon on 1101 Morgan Street—at the center of the vaudeville and vice district of St Louis—Lee Shelton shot William Lyons in a dispute over Shelton's Stetson hat. William Lyons's death certificate states "Homicide" and named "Shelton Lee" as the defendant, recording him as "alias 'Lee Stack'." On July 15, 1896, Shelton went on trial, but the jury was unable to return a verdict. At his second trial, he was convicted and sent to jail for 25 years.[79]

"Frankie and Johnny (Albert)" was a song that probably began to circulate after the shooting of Al Britt (Albert) by his lover Frankie Baker in St Louis in 1899.[80] Both of these songs were what have become known as blues ballads: third-person narratives, rather than first-person blues. While it is possible that some of these ballads were sung in the 12-bar form, there is little to suggest that the 12-bar blues, as a medium of self-expression, was sung on the plantations while Bolden was musically active. On the other hand, eight and 16-bar blues such as "Careless Love" and "Pallet on the Floor" may have been played in the rural environment.

Kid Ory and the Woodland Band

Edward "Kid" Ory was born about 30 miles outside of New Orleans on Woodland sugar plantation in LaPlace on Christmas Day 1886.[81]At around the age of seven, he made himself a banjo, a guitar, and a bass and played with other local kids; they called themselves the Woodland Band. By around the age of 10, Ory had made enough money from playing fish fries to buy real instruments. His band at this time consisted of himself on valve trombone, Lawrence Duhé, Joe "Stonewall" Mathews, "Bull" White, Alfred Lewis on bass, and drummer Eddy Robertson.[82] One of the tunes that Ory recalled playing at the time was "Make Me a Pallet on the Floor."[83]

An early mention of the song can be found in a report from Pine Bluff, Arkansas, sent to *The Indianapolis Freeman* by the Dandy Dixie Minstrels in 1906. "The Texas Teaser, Bennie Jones, sang 'Make Me a Pallet on Your Floor' with howling success."[84] The 16-bar melody is also found in 1908 in Blind Boone's "Southern Rag

[78]There are also reports of blues ballads being sung by roustabouts who worked on the Mississippi River. W. C. Handy, *Father of the Blues* (London: Sedgwick & Jackson, 1941; reprint, 1961).
[79]Cecil Brown, *Stagolee Shot Billy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 21–37.
[80]John R. David, "Frankie and Johnnie: The Trial of Frankie Baker," *Missouri Folklore Society Journal* VI (1984).
[81]John McCusker, "Ory Baptismal Certificate," *Jazz Archivist: A Newsletter of the William Ransom Hogan Jazz Archive* IX, no. 2 (1994); John McCusker, "Le Monde Creole: The Early Life of Kid Ory," *Jazz Archivist: A Newsletter of the William Ransom Hogan Jazz Archive* XX (2007).
[82]Lawrence Duhé, "Interview Digest, 1960," edited by George Brown (New Orleans, LA: William Ransom Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University); Morris French, "Interview Digest, June 24, 1960," edited by Richard B. Allen and Marjorie T. Zander (New Orleans, LA: William Ransom Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University).
[83]Edward "Kid" Ory, "Interview Transcript, April 20, 1957" (for *Life Magazine*), edited by Nesuhi Ertegun and Robert Campbell (New Orleans, LA: William Ransom Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University), 8.
[84]Jane Bowers and William Westcott, "Mama Yancey and the Revival Blues Tradition," *Black Music Research Journal* 12, no. 2 (1992), 175.

Medley no. 1." This was one of five *Strains from the Alleys* published by the Allen Music Company of Columbia, Missouri.[85] A further version of the song was reported by Howard Odum, sung by a visiting singer in Lafayette County, northern Mississippi.[86] "Make Me a Pallet on the Floor" is also a tune that Jelly Roll Morton recalled being played in New Orleans.

> This one of, this was one of the early blues that was in New Orleans, I guess, many years before I was born. The title is "Make Me a Pallet on the Floor." A pallet is something that—you get some quilts—in other words, it's a bed that's made on a floor without any four posters on 'em.

Whether this song was performed before Morton was born is open to question, but it could have been sung around New Orleans in the mid 1890s.

Kid Ory probably learned "Make Me a Pallet on the Floor" from Buddy Bolden or one of the other visiting bands. Ory did not move permanently to New Orleans until 1908, but he did visit the city often before this time. Bolden also performed in the countryside. Ory remembered that Bolden and his band would regularly pass through LaPlace and play from the baggage car of a train on the Yazoo and Mississippi Valley Railroad. The train would stop and the band would play to attract passengers for Baton Rouge. The band would play for an afternoon dance in Baton Rouge before returning to LaPlace at around 8 pm.

These visits appear to have influenced the repertoire of other bands. He recalled visiting bands led by Dave Peyton and Charlie Galloway. He said that Peyton and Galloway played "mostly all Buddy Bolden tunes."[87] What is puzzling is that he claimed that at fish-fries (which he played at as a child) his band played "'Make Me a Pallet On the Floor,' 'I Think I Heard Buddy Bolden Say,' and quite a few more that I can't recall, you know, old numbers."[88] Taken at face value, what Ory is saying is that the Woodland Band, Charlie Galloway and Dave (possibly Henry) Peyton were all playing Bolden's repertoire before, or at much the same time as, Bolden became musically active.[89] It could perhaps be that songs such as "Make Me a Pallet on the Floor," "Careless Love," and "Funky Butt" (the folk song that was associated with "I Thought I Heard Buddy Bolden Say") were in general circulation around the turn of the century. It could be that Peyton, Galloway and Ory were playing these folksongs at this time, and that Bolden's contribution was to convert these folksongs into "the blues for

[85]Ibid., 175 (this is also reprinted in *Ragtime Rarities*, edited by Trebor Jay Tichenor, New York: Dover, 1975, 33–37).

[86]Howard Odum, "Folk-Song and Folk-Poetry as Found in the Secular Songs of the Southern Negroes (Concluded)," *Journal of American Folklore* 24, no. 94 (1911): 396.

[87]Ory, "Interview Transcript, April 20, 1957 (for Life Magazine)." This is probably Henry Peyton [sometimes called Billy Peyton, Ferrand Clementin, "Interview Digest August 2, 1973," edited by Richard B. Allen (New Orleans, LA: William Ransom Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University). Ory does say in the interview that he was not sure of Peyton's first name. There was also Dave Peyton, a piano player and arranger who worked with Ory in Chicago. This may (in part) explain Ory's confusion.

[88]Ory, "Interview Transcript, April 20, 1957 (for Life Magazine)."

[89]Marquis, *In Search of Buddy Bolden: First Man of Jazz,* 40. Marquis identifies two brothers William and Henry Peyton, both of whom were musicians, in Donald M. Marquis, "The Bolden—Peyton Legend—a Re-Valuation," *Jazz Journal* 30(1977): 24.

dancing." One tune that was certainly in circulation at the turn of the century was Ben Harney's "The Cake Walk in the Sky" (1899). This was a tune that featured the distinctive descending melody of "I Thought I Heard Buddy Bolden Say."[90] Another song that may have been in circulation before Bolden played it was "Careless Love," which W. C. Handy recalled from his childhood in Florence, Alabama.[91] It is therefore possible that Galloway and Peyton could have played these tunes before Bolden did.

Galloway and Peyton

Louis Jones (born 1874) was a barber who moved to New Orleans in 1894 and subsequently became friends with Buddy Bolden. He remembered an accordionist called Peyton, an older man than Buddy Bolden, playing "rag music" downtown before Bolden was playing. He remembered that he played at the Custom House and Franklin in the Big Twenty-Five and also at the Little Twenty-Five on Poydras and Franklin. He describes the band as "something like a string band" with a "cornet player, bass fiddle, trombone and accordian [*sic*]"[92] Richard Allen asked, "Did Peyton play blues, at all?" Jones replied, "Yeah, he used to play blues too," but that "he didn't become famous for his blues like Buddy Bolden did."[93]

John Joseph also remembered Peyton, saying he knew him well, and that he played a "wind-jammer" accordion, with buttons rather than keys, and that he would play the melody.[94] Willie Parker says that Peyton "could play the double row" accordion.[95] Eddie Dawson also remembered an accordionist whom he called "Lee Payton," who worked with a guitarist as a duo at the Big Twenty-Five who played a large accordion that "people called a 'flutetina'."[96]

Eddie Dawson played guitar in Charlie Galloway's band for "two or three years." Galloway was a string bass player. He goes on to say that the older uptown bands, which included Galloway's, were called "ragtime" bands, "and that later bands of the same type were called 'Dixieland' bands."[97] He says that Galloway worked "mostly

[90]Vic Hobson, "Buddy Bolden's Blues," *Jazz Archivist: A Newsletter of the William Ransom Hogan Jazz Archive* XXI (2008).

[91]"Careless Love" may have its origin in Irish folksong. The lyrics are suggestive of Irish folksong and Howard Odum collected a version from a white singer under the title "Kelly's Love." Howard Odum, "Folk-Song and Folk-Poetry as Found in the Secular Songs of the Southern Negroes," *Journal of American Folklore* 24, no. 93 (1911): 286.

[92]Louis Jones, "Interview Transcript, Jan 19, 1959," edited by Richard B. Allen and William Russell (New Orleans, LA: William Ransom Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University). Hugh "Hughie" Rankin may have been Payton's guitarist. Eddie Dawson, "Interview Digest, April 5, 1972," edited by Richard B. Allen (New Orleans, LA: William Ransom Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University).

[93]Jones, "Interview Transcript, Jan. 19, 1959."

[94]John Joseph, "Interview Transcript, November 26, 1958" (New Orleans, LA: William Ransom Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University).

[95]Willie "Old Man" Parker, "Interview Transcript, November 7, 1958," edited by Richard B. Allen (New Orleans, LA: William Ransom Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University).

[96]Eddie Dawson, "Interview Digest, June 28, 1961," edited by William Russell and Ralph Collins (New Orleans, LA: William Ransom Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University).

[97]Eddie Dawson, "Interview Digest August 11, 1959," edited by William Russell and Ralph Collins (New Orleans, LA: William Ransom Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University).

in the country" along the route of the Southern Pacific and Texas and Pacific Railroads.[98] Galloway, he said, played a variety of music including "waltzes, schottisches, mazurkas, quadrilles, ragtime and blues."[99] It would be interesting to know when Eddie Dawson was playing with Galloway's band, as he goes on to say that the first time he heard a "band play the blues" was when he heard Buddy Bolden playing at Miss Betsy Cole's lawn in New Orleans.[100]

The extent to which the blues existed as a "distinct idiom" before it became a part of jazz is open to question. It seems possible that Galloway and Peyton may have played songs such as "Careless Love" and "Pallet on the Floor" at much the same time, or maybe before, Bolden, but these songs do not appear to have been known to those living on the Louisiana plantations. Most say that they first came to know these songs when they came to New Orleans, and the exceptions like Kid Ory probably learned these songs from visiting New Orleans musicians.

The Rag Men of New Orleans

Other sources that Kid Ory gave for Buddy Bolden's tunes, included the rag collectors of New Orleans.

> [Ory:] Then "I Thought I Heard Buddy Bolden Say," that was his number too. And he had lots of tunes from the ragman, used to blow a toy horn. The guy used to play a tune, and Bolden used to get ideas of a tune from that.
> [Ertegun:] I don't under[stand].
> [Campbell:] The ragman, used to come around and buy old rags?
> [Ory:] To buy old rags, yeah.
> [Ertegun:] He used to play tunes, you mean?
> [Ory:] Yeah, on the—something like the kids use for Christmas, toy horn, you know.[101]

Jelly Roll Morton also spoke of the ragmen.

> The "rags-bottles-and-bones men" [totters; scrap collector-traders] would take some of these Christmas horns and take the wooden mouthpieces off it and play more blues on them than any of these guys in these parts of the country ever thought of—real low down dirty blues, too, I mean. They couldn't play but in one key, though.[102]

According to Tom Brothers, Louis Armstrong's earliest musical influence was a "rags-bottles-and-bones" man named Larenzo, who held him "spellbound" with talk about music.[103] He also credited Armstrong's later mentor, Joe Oliver, as having shown

[98]Dawson, "Interview Digest, June 28, 1961."
[99]Dawson, "Interview Digest August 11, 1959."
[100]Ibid. He also says that "Rabbit" Brown and Walter Preston (born 1888 Ancestry.com WWI Draft Card) were among two of the earliest blues guitar players in New Orleans.
[101]Ory, "Interview Transcript, April 20, 1957" (for *Life Magazine*).
[102]"Transcript of the 1938 Library of Congress Recordings of Jelly Roll Morton," 184.
[103]Thomas Brothers, *Louis Armstrong's New Orleans* (New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2006), 2.

Armstrong "how to bring the blues sensitivity of the ragman's tinhorn to a cornet, just as Bolden had done 15 years earlier."[104]

The extent to which Bolden was influenced by tinhorn men, or, conversely, the tinhorn men were influenced by "King" Bolden, is open to question; there is no reliable evidence of what, exactly, the tinhorn men of New Orleans played. A number of street songs were transcribed by the New Orleans folklorist R. Emmet Kennedy. Born on January 11, 1877, in Gretna, Louisiana, Kennedy began collecting African American folk-song as a child. He went on to transcribe a number of the traders' songs that were sung by the street merchants of New Orleans, including: "the Blackberry Woman," "the Butter Milk Man," "the Charcoal Man," "the Chimney Sweeper," "the Clothes-pole Man" and "the Potato Cake Woman."[105] The function of these melodies was to announce the traders' presence, and the songs they sang were therefore melodically distinct. The melodies, as transcribed by Kennedy, do contain some examples of intervals that are not usually found in diatonic melodies, but there is not a consistent use of blue notes.[106]

If Buddy Bolden did get some of his blues tunes from the ragmen of New Orleans, it would follow that these ragmen would have been playing the blues at the same time as Bolden was musically active. There is no clear evidence that this was the case. Among the oldest of those interviewed to mention the ragmen and their tinhorns was Johnny St. Cyr (born New Orleans, 1889). St. Cyr said that the old bottle dealers could play as much on their horns as the cornet-playing waffle man "Buglin' Sam."[107] A younger informant, Ed "Montudi" Garland (born New Orleans, 1895) recalled that "a man who dealt in old bottles, rags, et cetera, had a tinhorn on which he tried to play everything the bands played"; whereas John Wiggs (born New Orleans, 1899) reported that, when he was around seven or eight years old, the tinhorn men were "the most gifted people in the world for playing the blues."[108] George Lewis (born New Orleans, 1900) recalled that "Any Rags, Any Bottles, Any Bottles Today" was a rag man's song, and that the kids would bring the rag men bottles, bones and rusty nails in exchange for candy."[109] As there is little to suggest that any of these reports predate a period when Bolden was already playing the "blues for dancing" (sometime before June 1907), it is possible that the tinhorn men of New Orleans were imitating "King Bolden" rather than it being the other way around.

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[104]Ibid., 70.

[105]R. Emmet Kennedy, *Mellows: A Chronicle of Unknown Singers* (New York: A. and C. Boni, 1925), 20–23. Similar street cries are reported by Lafcadio Hearn from his time in New Orleans (1877–87). Hearn was not musically literate and relied on others to transcribe what he heard, and would send copies to the folklorist Henry E. Krehbiel. S. Frederick Starr, *Inventing New Orleans: Writings of Lafcadio Hearn* (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2001), 98–106.

[106]The term "Blue Note Melody" was first used in W. C. Handy's "The Memphis Blues" 1913 reprint to describe the alternate use of minor and major thirds.

[107]Johnny St Cyr, "Interview Digest, August 27, 1958," edited by William Russell (New Orleans, LA: William Ransom Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University).

[108]Ed "Montudi" Garland, "Interview Digest, April 16, 1957" (New Orleans, LA: William Ransom Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University).; John Wiggs, "Interview Digest August 26, 1962," edited by William Russell and Betty Hyman (New Orleans, LA: William Ransom Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University).

[109]George Lewis, "Interview Digest, October 22, 1968" (New Orleans, LA: William Ransom Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University).

Paul Oliver: Did New Orleans have a Vocal Blues Tradition? If So, Who were its Exponents?

The underlying assumption that Oliver makes is that a vocal blues tradition (in the sense of guitar-playing songsters) is a necessary prerequisite for jazz blues to develop. Quite evidently, the blues was played by Bolden before 1907. Either the assumption is flawed or there was a more established vocal blues tradition than had previously been realized.

Born in Lakeland, Louisiana, in 1898, and brought to New Orleans at around the age of two months, Lemon Nash was not of Bolden's generation. On the other hand, as a singer and player of the banjo, ukulele and guitar, and as a solo entertainer, Nash is one of the few New Orleans musicians to be interviewed by the Hogan Jazz Archive who was in the mold of the traditional bluesman.

Nash claims that the first blues to which he paid any attention was "See See Rider" [*sic*] and this was sung by an Native American woman called Anna, who, he believed, came from Oklahoma. He claims that he heard her sing this song when he was a "small, small boy."[110] From the context of the tape recording, it seems to relate to a time before "The St Louis Blues" (1914). Asked to perform "See See Rider," Lemon Nash says, "I'm gonna play it like it really goes, not like they got it on the record."[111] He proceeds to play a 12-bar blues. The conversation then switches to medicine shows, which could suggest that Anna the Native woman was working with a medicine show. He does later reveal that around 1917, he worked on a medicine show with "Big Chief Indian and Western Cowboy."

Other songs that Nash heard at an early age were "Who Stole the Lock off the Henhouse Door," "Big Rock Candy Mountain," "Casey Jones," "Steam-boat Bill," "Winter Night" [or Nights?], "Junk Man's Rag," "Shots and Shells Are Ringing on the Battlefield" and "Sailing, Sailing." He also says that he was about eight years old when he heard "The St. Louis Blues."[112] In fact, however, Lemon Nash would have been around sixteen-years old when "The St. Louis Blues" was published.

In a later interview, Nash talks about the music that was played at Spano's "tunk" (i.e. honky-tonk), a bar which was located at Liberty and Perdido Streets. This is interesting because a number of those interviewed talk of the blues being played in the bars of New Orleans by piano players, but often with no particular reference to which specific songs were played.

> A piano player and a man beating with sticks on a chair provided music there; they played old tunes: "Stack-O-Lee," "Winter Night," "Junk Man Rag," "Basin Street [Blues]," "St Louis Blues," "[It's a] Long Way to Tipperary," "Yes, We Have No Bananas," "Steamboat Bill," "Casey Jones" and others then popular numbers [*sic*].[113]

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[110]Lemon Nash, "Interview Digest, September 28, 1960," edited by Richard B. Allen and Marjorie T. Zander (New Orleans, LA: William Ransom Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University) (audio tape).
[111]Ibid. (audio tape).
[112]Lemon Nash, "Interview Digest October 3, 1959," edited by William Russell, Richard B. Allen and Harry Oster (New Orleans, LA: William Ransom Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University).
[113]Lemon Nash, "Interview Digest, June 20, 1961," edited by Richard B. Allen and Russell Levy (New Orleans, LA: William Ransom Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University).

Given the inclusion of "The St. Louis Blues" (1914), and Nash's birth date, it seems likely that this recollection dates from around the time of World War I at the earliest. When Nash was asked later in the interview to sing a blues as would have been sung at Spano's around 1913 (which he said was "before his time") he plays and sings a 12-bar blues "Went to the Station." Later in the interview he also plays and sings "Keep on Drinking." This is a blues that Nash claimed could "make a blind man catch a freight train." This was a line he claimed to have learned from Blind Lemon Jefferson, saying he "knew Jefferson in New Orleans."[114]

Clarence "Little Dad" Vincent

Clarence "Little Dad" Vincent (born Baton Rouge, 1899) was living in New Orleans before his first birthday. He took up the guitar at around the age of 14, and he also played banjo and mandolin. Vincent tended to work with bands rather than work as a solo songster.

Little Dad recalled slipping into a bar room where Joe Oliver and "Old Man Humphrey" were playing, and being asked, do you "reckon you can play a piece with us?" He agreed, providing that they play something simple like a blues. This "started him playing with bands."[115] In the course of his interviews a number of early New Orleans guitarists are mentioned, including: Henry Martin, Bud Scott, Henry Royal, "Stonewall" Mathews, Philip Nickerson, Lorenzo Staultz and Johnny St. Cyr. Most of these guitarists are principally known for their work with bands.

Vincent also recalled Richard "Rabbit" Brown, who used to sing and play guitar alone, in a manner that is more associated with the songsters of the period. He says that "Rabbit played all the funny kind of songs—make-up songs."[116] Brown (born *c.*1880) was recalled by Eddie Dawson who also recalled Walter Preston, another songster of a similar generation.[117] Rabbit Brown was one of the very few New Orleans songsters to record. He was in his late forties by the time he entered a recording studio in 1927.[118]

Eddie Morris

Eddie Morris was born in Algiers in 1896. Although he is best known for his trombone-playing with Punch Miller, Kid Rena and Buddy Petit in the 1920s, he revealed to

[114]Ibid.

[115]Clarence "Little Dad" Vincent, "Interview Digest," edited by Richard B. Allen and PRC (New Orleans, LA: Hogan Jazz Archive, November 17, 1959).

[116]Clarence "Little Dad" Vincent, "Interview Digest, November 17, 1959," edited by Richard B. Allen and PRC (New Orleans, LA: William Ransom Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University).

[117]Dawson, "Interview Digest August 11, 1959." Dawson estimated Preston to be fifty years old when he was drafted for World War I. Walter Preston is also mentioned as playing banjo in Steve Angrum, "Interview Digest, August 8, 1961," edited by William Russell and Ralph Collins (New Orleans, LA: William Ransom Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University); Paul Barbarin, "Interview Transcript, January 7, 1959," edited by William Russell and Richard Allen (New Orleans, LA: William Ransom Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University); John Casimir, "Interview Transcript, January 17, 1959," edited by Richard B. Allen (New Orleans, LA: William Ransom Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University).

[118]Kevin Fontenot, "Times Ain't Like They Used to Be: Rabbit Brown, New Orleans Songster," *Jazz Archivist: A Newsletter of the William Ransom Hogan Jazz Archive* XIII (1998–99).

William Russell that his first instrument was guitar. He says that he "used to go around, you know and pick the blues and things for people to dance."[119] His guitar cost two dollars and seventy-five cents, and they could be bought from a shop on Rampart Street which had them hanging up outside.[120]

It seems from further questioning that playing the blues was principally a barroom activity.

> Well, I'll tell you: a heap of times them fellows mostly would play blues and things and get around them barrooms what like that liquor […] Well, I hardly see maybe but two or three of them on the street singing, but I don't know 'em.[121]

Another songster is recalled by Hypolite Charles who says that Tom Anderson hired the singer Willie Jackson to sing with his band. Jackson is remembered as a singer of "comic renditions of opera tunes in blackface at a New Orleans ice cream parlor."[122] He would sometimes perform with a partner, Nooky Johnson.[123] Joseph "Fan" Bourgeau (born 1891) remembered Jackson singing at Tom Anderson's. Known as "New Orleans Willie Jackson," he went on to make a number of blues recordings in the 1920s.[124]

The evidence for a vocal blues tradition that influenced the emergence of jazz is limited. Most of the New Orleans guitarists played with the bands, and there appear to have been relatively few independent songsters.

Conclusions

Paul Oliver raised some interesting questions in relation to how the blues became a part of jazz. But there is, I would argue, a fundamental assumption that underpins Oliver's questions. This was that the country blues, as performed by rural songsters, predated the appearance of the blues in the repertoire of the emerging jazz bands of New Orleans. There has long been evidence to the contrary. The recordings that Jelly Roll Morton made for the Library of Congress contain a number of blues, including 12-bar blues, which Morton claimed were played from around the turn of the twentieth century. Given the perceived unreliability of Morton's dating of events, it is understandable that these recollections have been treated with some skepticism. Bunk Johnson also spoke of how, as a kid, he would "go into a barrel house and play 'long with them piano players 'til early in the mornin'. We used to play nutin' but the blues."[125] Given the doubts about Bunk's date of birth, this too needs to be treated with some caution.

[119]Eddie Morris, "Interview Transcript, February 12, 1960," edited by William Russell (New Orleans, LA: William Ransom Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University).
[120]Ibid.
[121]Ibid.
[122]Colin Larkin, *Guinness Who's Who of Blues*, 2nd edn (Enfield: Guinness, 1995).
[123]Hypolite Charles, "Interview Digest, April 13, 1963," edited by Richard B. Allen (New Orleans, LA: William Ransom Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University).
[124]Joseph Bourgeau, "Interview Digest, September 24, 1956," edited by William Russell and Ralph Collins (New Orleans, LA: William Ransom Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University).
[125]Nat Shapiro and Nat Hentoff, *Hear Me Talkin' to Ya: The Story of Jazz by the Men Who Made It* (London: Penguin Books, 1955; reprint, 1962), 23.

Along with Bunk Johnson and Jelly Roll Morton, many of those interviewed for the Hogan Jazz Archive spoke of Buddy Bolden playing "blues." While references to Buddy Bolden playing "the blues for dancing" do seem to suggest that a blues-inflected jazz was beginning to develop in the early years of the twentieth century, the precise nature of that music has been open to interpretation. It is only when reliable informants speak of specific song titles that we can begin to make a judgment. It is clear that the blues in the sense of "Careless Love" and "Pallet on the Floor" were performed by Bolden, and probably also by Ory, Galloway and Peyton. What has been in doubt is whether the 12-bar form of the blues was played by Bolden. My own view is that Willie Cornish's recollection, when combined with the other less reliable evidence, does confirm that "The 2:19 Took My Babe Away" was played by Bolden. If this is the case, then this would predate evidence of the 12-bar blues in the repertoire of rural songsters by some years.

The evidence suggests that the blues, in all its forms, was an integral part of the emergence of jazz, and not an external influence to which the emerging jazz bands were "exposed." What follows from this is that we need to redefine the questions. How did the blues develop within jazz? Was the development of jazz, in this early period, confined to New Orleans? How does the blues relate to ragtime and other popular music of the period? What was the role of Buddy Bolden in the development of jazz? There is perhaps a limit to how much can be gleaned from history alone; these questions are also musicological. I am currently working on a book which explores both the historical and musicological development of the blues in New Orleans. I am much indebted to Paul Oliver for raising such interesting and fruitful questions.

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Abstract

Based on questions raised by Paul Oliver, this article argues that the blues was integral to the development of jazz rather than an external influence.

The blues scale of Winthrop Sargeant and Gerhard Kubik and their relation to blues tonality are considered in relation to "Careless Love" and "Pallet on the Floor." "I'm

Alabama Bound" is also considered. This was a repertoire common to rural songsters and the emerging jazz bands of New Orleans.

The 12-bar blues of piano players and the relationship between the blues of Mamie Desdunes and the "2:19 Blues" is explored, as is the role of New Orleans songsters.

This essay draws on the oral history files of the Hogan Jazz Archive, Library of Congress, and the Historic New Orleans Collection. In particular the Papers of Frederic Ramsey Jr. and the interview conducted by Charles Edward Smith with Willie Cornish for Jazzmen (1939) confirm that Buddy Bolden played the 12-bar blues in the early years of the twentieth century. From this it is safe to conclude that the blues in all its forms was present in New Orleans around the turn of the century and was integral to the emergence of jazz.

Search lists

A list: Paul Oliver, Winthrop Sargeant, Gerhard Kubik, "Careless Love," "Pallet on the Floor," "Alabama Bound," "Mamie's Blues" "2:19 Blues," "I'm Alabama Bound," Frederic Ramsey Jr., Charles Edward Smith, Buddy Bolden, Jelly Roll Morton, Albert Glenny, Willie "Bunk" Johnson, Perry Bradford, W. C. Handy.

B list: Henry "Ragtime Texas" Thomas, Mississippi John Hurt, Charlie Galloway, Henry Peyton, Tony Jackson, Richard M. Jones, Richard "Rabbit" Brown, Nooky Johnson, New Orleans Willie Jackson, Lemon Nash, Lonnie Johnson, Punch Miller (Earnest Burden), Kid Ory, John Joseph, Manuel Manetta, Jim Robinson, Charles "Sunny" Henry, Willie and George "Pops" Foster, Eddie Dawson, Johnny St. Cyr, Ed Montudi, John Wiggs, George Lewis, Clarence "Little Dad" Vincent, Eddie Morris, Hypolite Charles, Joseph "Fan" Bourgeau, R. Emmet Kennedy.