

# THE RECORDINGS OF HELEN GROSS

## An Annotated Tentative Personnelo - Discography

### HELEN GROSS

001 **HELEN GROSS** Choo Choo Jazzers New York, Apr. 09-23, 1924  
 Helen Gross – voc;  
 Thomas Morris – cnt; Bob Fuller – clt;  
 Louis Hooper – pno

31561	He's Never Gonna Throw Me Down	Ajax 17037,	Document DOCD-5477
31564	Hard Luck Blues	Ajax 17037,	Document DOCD-5477
31565	Eavesdropper's Blues	Ajax 17036,	Document DOCD-5477
31567	Haunted House Blues	Ajax 17036,	Document DOCD-5477

This very probably is Thomas Morris, certainly not Bubber Miley. This tpt/cnt player does not belong to the Johnny Dunn influenced group of players, but plays "Western style".

**DB:** as received but definite Tom.

Notes:

- RR 77-6, RR 86-6: *Bubber Miley, Bob Fuller, Louis Hooper (this as to the reliability of musicians' memories!).*
- W. Bryant, *Ajax Records: personnel per Hooper: Bubber Miley, c; Bob Fuller, cl; Louis Hooper, p.*
- BGR\*4: *Bubber Miley, c; Bob Fuller, cl; Louis Hooper, p; unknown effects*
- Rust\*6: *Tom Morris, c; Bob Fuller, cl; Louis Hooper, p.*

002 **HELEN GROSS** Choo Choo Jazzers New York, May 18-26, 1924  
 Helen Gross - voc  
 Bob Fuller - clt; Louis Hooper - pno

31585	Better Give Your Sweetie What She Needs	Ajax 17042,	Document DOCD-5511
31587	I Wanna Jazz Some More	Ajax 17042,	Document DOCD-5511
31588	Foolish Woman's Blues	Ajax 17050,	Document DOCD-5477
31590	Strange Man	Ajax 17050,	Document DOCD-5477

Kidd in RR 77 lists Hooper as "probably". Obviously Hooper himself was not certain on his own style and presence. I (KBR) am not accomplished in judging piano players, so I'd prefer to leave Hooper's presence as listed. But I think to hear Hooper here, although the piano playing might be a bit stronger on the first coupling than on the second. There are no Joe Davis effects in these titles as given. And there is no Bubber Miley as per Hooper on Ajax 17050.

Notes:

- RR 77-6: *Bob Fuller, probably Louis Hooper (first two titles); Bob Fuller, Louis Hooper, Joe Davis. Note: Joe Davis provides the 'effects' on Ajax 17050 (sic-KBR). He is heard in other records in brief speaking roles (second two titles)*
- W. Bryant, *Ajax Records: personnel per Hooper first coupling: Bob Fuller, cl; prob Louis Hooper, p. second coupling: Bubber Miley, c; Bob Fuller, cl; Louis Hooper, p.*
- BGR\*4: *Bob Fuller, cl; Louis Hooper, p; Joe Davis, effects*
- Rust\*6: *Bob Fuller, cl; Louis Hooper, p; Joe Davis, effects*

003 **HELEN GROSS** Choo Choo Jazzers New York, Jun. 21-26, 1924  
 Helen Gross – voc;  
 Bob Fuller - clt; Porter Grainger - pno

31594	Ghost Walkin' Blues	Ajax 17051,	Document DOCD-5477
31596	My Man Ain't Yo' Man	Ajax 17051,	Document DOCD-5477

Personnel very probably correct as given.

Notes:

- RR 77-6: *Fuller, Grainger.*
- W. Bryant, *Ajax Records: personnel per Hooper: Bob Fuller, cl; Louis Hooper, p.*
- BGR\*4: *Bob Fuller, cl; Porter Grainger, p; Joe Davis, effects*
- Rust\*6: *Bob Fuller, cl; Porter Grainger, p; Joe Davis, effects*

004-1 **HELEN GROSS** Choo Choo Jazzers New York, Jun. 21-26, 1924  
 Helen Gross – voc;  
 Louis Metcalf – tpt; Bob Fuller - clt;  
 Louis Hooper - pno  
 31609 Rockin' Chair Blues Ajax 17046, Document DOCD-5477  
 31611 Sorrowful Blues Ajax 17046, Document DOCD-5477

Bob Fuller OK. The trumpet player has similarities to Bubber Miley, but shows more rhythmic freedom and slurs in many notes that I do not know from Miley – and another vibrato. He might indeed be Metcalf with his somewhat squeezed notes as listed by Rust\*6. And he shows only little Dunn influence. This might be Metcalf's first recording.

I do not hear anything reminding me of Cliff Jackson and after repeated listening I would name Hooper as pianist. I think to hear Hooper here with his flat left hand (no oom-pah) and his use of blues/boogie devices.

Notes:

- RR 77-6: not listed
- W. Bryant, Ajax Records: no personnel per Hooper.
- BGR\*4: Bubber Miley, c; Bob Fuller, cl; Cliff Jackson, p.
- Rust\*6: Bubber Miley, c; Bob Fuller, cl; Cliff Jackson, p.

004-2 **HELEN GROSS** Choo Choo Jazzers New York, Jun. 21-26, 1924  
 Helen Gross – voc;  
 unknown (Louis Metcalf?) – tpt; unknown - pno  
 31613 What'll I Do? Ajax 17049, Document DOCD-5477

"What'll I Do?" might possibly be accompanied by different musicians. The trumpet player is not necessarily identical to Metcalf. Piano shows no personal traces. No clarinet here. This tune is not a waltz as given in Rust, but has a four-four rhythm.

Notes:

- RR 77-6: not listed
- W. Bryant, Ajax Records: no personnel per Hooper.
- BGR\*4: Bubber Miley, c; Bob Fuller, cl; Cliff Jackson, p.
- Rust\*6: Bubber Miley, c; Bob Fuller, cl; Cliff Jackson, p.

004-3 **HELEN GROSS** Choo Choo Jazzers New York, Jun. 21-26, 1924  
 Helen Gross – voc;  
 Bob Fuller - clt; Louis Hooper - pno  
 31616 Neglected Blues Ajax 17071, Document DOCD-5477  
 31620 Conjure Man Blues Ajax 17082 not on LP/CD

Bob Fuller OK. Again I do not hear anything reminding of Cliff Jackson and would name Hooper as pianist (see Bryant, Ajax Records !). The second title is not available on CD and could therefore not be checked.

Notes:

- RR 86-6: Bob Fuller, cl; unidentified, p.
- W. Bryant, Ajax Records: personnel per Hooper: Bob Fuller, cl; Louis Hooper, p (first title); no personnel (second title)
- BGR\*4: Bubber Miley, c; Bob Fuller, cl; Cliff Jackson, p.
- Rust\*6: Bubber Miley, c; Bob Fuller, cl; Cliff Jackson, p.

005 **HELEN GROSS** Choo Choo Jazzers New York, Jul. 11-24, 1924  
 Helen Gross – voc;  
 Louis Metcalf - tpt; Cliff Jackson – pno  
 31633 If You Can't Ride Slow And Easy Ajax 17077, Document DOCD-5477

This is the same trumpet as on a couple of other Ajax recordings where Metcalf is identified, thus Lois Metcalf. I cannot find any undeniable elements of Cliff Jackson's piano playing which is marked by his very strong rhythm and his frequent changing of the meter. Yet, after repeated listening and comparing this player's style to that of the suddenly surfaced name of Mike Jackson, Cliff might in fact be the pianist, yet with a youthful style of his.

Notes:

- RR 86-6: acc by cnt & p.
- W. Bryant, Ajax Records: personnel per Hooper): Louis Metcalfe, c; Louis Hooper, p.
- BGR\*4: Louis Metcalf, c; Cliff Jackson, p.
- Rust\*6: Louis Metcalf, c; Cliff Jackson, p.

006 **HELEN GROSS** Choo Choo Jazzers New York, Aug. 16-27, 1924  
 Helen Gross – voc;  
 Louis Metcalf - tpt; Mike Jackson – pno;  
 unknown male voice - speech  
 31649 Ticket Agent, Ease Your Window Down Ajax 17060, Document DOCD-5477

This probably is the same trumpet as before on a couple of other Ajax recordings where Metcalf is identified, thus Louis Metcalf. But individual traces are not as easy to recognize as before. In my ears this definitely is not Cliff Jackson on piano. Instead, I found a remark in W. Bryant, Ajax Records, for Ajax 17060 that Mike Jackson is supposed to be the pianist. This statement is listed as "per Hooper". In this publication this remark is attributed to the flip-side of this recording, thus Rosa Henderson's 'Hard-Hearted Hammah', but is said to be wrongly placed and should belong to 'Ticket Agent, Ease Your Window Down'. The pianist heard here likes to double the beat with his right

hand while playing on-the-beat chordal four/four rhythm with his left hand. He shows a tendency to play melodic strains in a slight sixth/eighth phrasing.

Rust\*6 lists this title under Ajax 17050!

Notes:

- RR 86-6: *Louis Metcalf, cnt; prob Cliff Jackson, pno.*

- W. Bryant, *Ajax Records: no personnel per Hooper*

- BGR\*4: *Louis Metcalf, c; Cliff Jackson, p; unknown male speech*

- Rust\*6: *Louis Metcalf, c; Cliff Jackson, p. (as personnel for session. But after the title 'Ticket Agent ...' Rust shows - cBM, meaning that Bubber Miley would be playing)*

007	<b>HELEN GROSS</b>	Choo Choo Jazzers	New York,	Aug. 16-27, 1924
	Helen Gross – voc;			
	Bob Fuller - clt;			
	<i>L. Hooper</i> - pno; unknown - dms			
31651		Chicago Monkey Man Blues	Ajax 17062	not on LP/CD
31654		These Dogs Of Mine	Ajax 17062	not on LP/CD

Document's CD booklet says that both titles "remain undiscovered". Accordingly I was unable to listen and judge. But as BGR\*4 gives a drummer in their personnel – very extraordinary with these Ajax recording sessions – someone might yet own this recording.

Notes:

- RR 86-6: *not listed*

- W. Bryant, *Ajax Records: no personnel per Hooper*

- BGR\*4: *Bob Fuller, cl; prob Louis Hooper, p; unknown d.*

- Rust\*6: *Bob Fuller, cl; ? Louis Hooper, p, unknown d.*

008	<b>HELEN GROSS</b>	Choo Choo Jazzers	New York,	Aug. 16-27, 1924
	Helen Gross – voc;			
	unknown ( <i>Ernest Elliott</i> ?) – clt;			
	<i>(Sterling Conaway)</i> – uke (1); unknown – kazoo (1);			
	<i>(Porter Grainger)</i> – pno (2); unknown – speech, effects (2)			
31682		Death Letter Blues	Ajax 17067,	Document DOCD-5477
31684		Crap Shootin' Blues	Ajax 17067,	Document DOCD-5477

The titles have personnels as given above.

'Death Letter Blues' has a rather stiff clarinet player and ukulele and kazoo players. To identify Sterling Conaway as ukulele player is beyond my possibilities and his presence has to be questioned. I know him as a very busy banjo player in the Clef Club tradition – with many chords and glissandos – what can not be detected here. The ukulele accompaniment is far too sober and simple to be seen as by Conaway. What is the source of his name here?

Porter Grainger is not easy to be recognized and identified, and thus I have to question the reason for his being named. Fuller - if it is he -very stiff and uncreative here. Is this really Fuller on these sides? Only, if he wanted to be particularly simple on these sides.

Concludingly I would like to accentuate my opinion that almost none of the hitherto listed musicians are present: this clarinetist is much too primitive to be Fuller, Conaway plays in a very different manner, and only the pianist might be as named. After hearing Viola McCoy's session of Sep. 18-22, 1924 I see the possibility of Ernest Elliott's presence on these two sessions.

Notes:

- RR 77-6, 86-6: *not listed*

- W. Bryant, *Ajax Records: no personnel per Hooper*

- BGR\*4: *Bob Fuller, cl; prob Porter Grainger, p (2); unknown chimes & whistle(2); unknown kazoo (1); Sterling Conaway, uke (1); two unknown males, speech (2)*

- Rust\*6: *Bob Fuller, cl; ? Porter Grainger, p; unknown chimes, whistle, kazoo where used; Sterling Conaway, uke (1); two unknown males, speech (2)*

009	<b>HELEN GROSS</b>	Choo Choo Jazzers	New York,	Sep. 18-22, 1924
	Helen Gross – voc;			
	unknown ( <i>Ernest Elliott</i> ?) - clt; unknown - pno			
31700		Bloody Razor Blues	Ajax 17071,	Document DOCD-5477
31701		Bloody Razor Blues	Ajax 17071	not on LP/CD

Same clarinet player as on session 008 and thus too primitive to be Fuller? He may possibly be Ernest Elliott. I hear some similarities to Elliott, but he very often starts his phrases with upward slurs to the first note. This is not here – except for the very last note of matrix 31700. On the other side the "sour" sound is apparent as is the very simple rhythm – he never plays eight notes, only quarter and half notes. This then would be hints to Elliott.

Also, the pianist is not Hooper. Piano playing reminds me of Clarence Williams!

Notes:

- RR 77-6, 86-6: *Bob Fuller, cl; Louis Hooper, pno.*

- W. Bryant, *Ajax Records: personnel per Hooper: Bob Fuller, clarinet; Louis Hooper, piano.*

- BGR\*4: *Bob Fuller, cl; Louis Hooper, p.*

- Rust\*6: *Bob Fuller, cl; Louis Hooper, p.*

010	<b>HELEN GROSS</b>	Kansas City Five	New York,	Oct. 28, 1924
	Helen Gross – voc;			
	<i>Bubber Miley</i> – tpt; <i>Charlie Irviss</i> – tbn; unknown – clt;			
	Louis Hooper – pno; Elmer Snowden – bjo; unknown - bell			
9813-A		Undertaker's Blues	Ed unissued	on LP/CD ?

9813-B	Undertaker's Blues	Ed unissued	on LP/CD ?
9813-C	Undertaker's Blues	Ed unissued	on LP/CD ?

*Note: one of the takes listed has been issued on Document DOCD-5477*

As this side seems to have been made on the same date as the session of Rosa Henderson (Edison Oct. 28, 1924), the same personnel is assumed to be responsible. My remarks as to the brass player's state of consciousness as before may therefore be considered (booze?). (Can this be a reason for rejecting this 'Undertaker's Blues' by the Edison company?) It is certainly Irvis on trombone (see trombone phrase at 3:14 min) as well as Miley on trumpet. The banjo player sounds a bit dry for Snowden. The bell player might be anyone, particularly the singer herself, but probably not Joe Davis as he was not on the Edison bill.

Notes:

- BGR\*4: unknown, c; prob Jake Frazier, tb; prob Bob Fuller, cl; prob Louis Hooper, p; prob Elmer Snowden, bj, unknown, chimes.  
 - Rust\*6: ? Bubber Miley, c; Jake Frazier, tb; Bob Fuller, cl; Louis Hooper, p; ? Elmer Snowden, bj.

011	<b>HELEN GROSS</b>	Choo Choo Jazzers	New York,	Nov. 23- Dec. 03, 1924
	Helen Gross – voc;			
	Rex Stewart – cnt; unknown ( <i>Jake Frazier or Herb Gregory</i> ?) – tbn (1,2); Bob Fuller – clt (3);			
	Louis Hooper – pno			
31755	Last Journey Blues	Ajax 17090,	Document DOCD-5477	
31757	Bitter Feelin' Blues	Ajax 17086,	Document DOCD-5477	
31759	Workin' Woman's Blues	Ajax 17133,	Document DOCD-5477	

I feel certain for Rex Stewart, Bob Fuller and Louis Hooper. But I do not think that this is Jake Frazier here on trombone. This is a different player stylistically. I do not know this man from any other recordings and can therefore not attribute a name. But I would like the reader /listener to consider that Rex Stewart had a drinking and trombone playing buddy named Herb Gregory with whom he used to spend his days and go jamming. These trumpet/trombone partnerships were common in Harlem at the time. Unfortunately we do not have any documented example of Gregory's playing – we even do not know if he ever recorded at all – but this might possibly be this man.

Notes:

- RR 86-6: Rex Stewart, cnt; Jake Frazier, tbn; Louis Hooper, pno. Bob Fuller, clt for Frazier on 31759.  
 - W. Bryant, Ajax Records: personnel per Hooper: Rex Stewart, c; Jake Frazier, tb; Bob Fuller, cl; Louis Hooper, p  
 - BGR\*4: Rex Stewart, c; Jake Frazier, tb (1,2); Bob Fuller, cl (3); Louis Hooper, p.  
 - Rust\*6: Rex Stewart, c (1,2); Jake Frazier, tb (1,2); Bob Fuller, cl (3); Louis Hooper, p. (Stewart plays on all three titles!)

096	<b>HELEN GROSS</b>	Choo Choo Jazzers	New York,	Mar. 25-Apr. 01, 1925
	Helen Gross – voc;			
	unknown – tpt; unknown ( <i>Jake Frazier</i> ?) – tbn;			
	Louis Hooper – pno;			
	unknown - speech			
31840-E	Dark Man (You Ain't Gonna Darken My Life)	Ajax 17133,	Document DOCD-5477	

I certainly do not believe that this unsecure trumpet/cornet player is Rex Stewart. This player's tone is not as sharp and brilliant as Stewart's, and the playing lacks Stewart's "high atmospheric" pressure. Stewart was much more into Louis Armstrong's style at this time (see Rosa Henderson session March 20, 1925)! Guessing intuitively I would opt for Thomas Morris.

Although Jake Frazier is not one of the most accomplished trombonists in the Harlem period, he is not as simple or primitive as this trombonist. At least he owns a distinct style which cannot be detected here. Or was it just booze ?

Louis Hooper probably is the pianist.

Notes:

- RR 86-6: Rex Stewart, Jake Frazier, Louis Hooper.  
 - W. Bryant, Ajax Records: personnel per Hooper: Rex Stewart, cornet; Jake Frazier, trombone; Louis Hooper, piano.  
 - BGR\*4: Rex Stewart, c; Jake Frazier, tb; Louis Hooper, p; unknown male, sp.  
 - Rust\*6: Rex Stewart, c; Jake Frazier, tb; Louis Hooper, p.