

THE RECORDINGS OF MARGARET JOHNSON

An Annotated Tentative Personnel - Discography

Mike Rowe, booklet of Document DOCD-5436: "She was obviously a star of the vaudeville circuit, mentioned first in Augusta, GA, New York City, and Baltimore in 1922 and as part of the Gonzell White company touring Puerto Rico in 1923. On her return she made her first record under the aegis of Clarence Williams and like the other OKeh artists she was fortunate in having first-rate accompanists, especially Louis Armstrong and Sidney Bechet among others, provided by Williams. Her association with Clarence lasted until 1925 with him providing some material and the rest by Tin Pan Alley teams but more often the prolific Tom Delaney. The splendidly risqué 'Who'll Chop Your Suey' (a rare example of this kind of material in her repertoire) from January 1925 was actually a Sidney Bechet composition. Later that month she was playing in Hillsboro, Texas and then in February she was appearing at the Star Theatre, Pittsburgh. In June came her last session with Clarence Williams when he accompanied on piano alone.

There were further tours of the Eastern States and the South and then she was picked up by Victor for a session in 1926. ...

She may have further adapted her style to the demands of the times; despite the end of her recording career she was still touring and the last glimpse of her is from an intriguing notice in the 'Defender' March 12, 1932 where she is singing with the Blues Master Band in Hartford, Connecticut, a far cry from Augusta Georgia or Hillsboro Texas."

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

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

- Documented, most certain and aurally absolutely obvious identifications are listed thus: Margaret Johnson

- Probable, generally agreed, but not documented identifications are listed in italics, thus: *Margaret Johnson*

- Not attributable identifications – although the musician in question might be an otherwise well-known person – are listed thus: unknown

- If a possible identification for an otherwise unknown musician is suggested by the author without the possibility to prove the factual evidence, it is listed thus: (*Margaret Johnson*)

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

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

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

The following statements and the resulting list of recordings only reflect the opinion of this writer/listener and are open to discussion. More so, discussion is eagerly invited. Corrections, amendments and controversial opinions are much appreciated.

MARGARET JOHNSON

001	MARGARET JOHNSON	Clarence Williams' Blue Five	New York,	c. Oct. 19, 1923
	Margaret Johnson – voc;			
	Thomas Morris – cnt; Charlie Irvis – tbn; Sidney Bechet – sop;			
	Clarence Williams – pno; Buddy Christian – bjo			
71972-B		If I Let You Get Away With It Once You'll Do It All Of The Time	OK 8107,	Doc DOCD-5436
71973-B		E Flat Blues	OK 8107,	Doc DOCD-5436

Thomas Morris, Sidney Bechet, Clarence Williams and Buddy Christian are certain. But, although I am certain that it really is Irvis because of tone, vibrato and legato playing, I miss his 6/8th phrasing which would make his identity clearer.

Notes:

- Storyville 14: Thomas Morris (cnt); Charlie Irvis (tbn); Sidney Bechet (sop); Clarence Williams (pno); Buddy Christian (bjo)

- Lord, Clarence Williams p68: Thomas Morris (cnt); Charlie Irvis (tbn); Sidney Bechet (sop); Clarence Williams (pno); Buddy Christian (bjo) "All sources seem to agree on the personnel."

- Rust*3,*4,*6: Tom Morris –c; Charlie Irvis –tb; Sidney Bechet –ss; Clarence Williams –p; Buddy Christian –bj

- BGR*2,*3,*4: Thomas Morris, cnt; Charlie Irvis, tbn; Sidney Bechet, sop; Clarence Williams, pno; Buddy Christian, bjo

002	MARGARET JOHNSON	Clarence Williams' Harmonizers	New York,	c. Sep. 05, 1924
	Margaret Johnson – voc;			
	<i>Peter Bocage</i> or <i>Thomas Morris</i> , (<i>Joe King Oliver?</i>) – cnt; <i>John Mayfield</i> – tbn;			
	<i>Ernest Elliott</i> - alt;			
	Clarence Williams – pno; Buddy Christian – bjo			
72789-B	I Love You Daddy, But You Don't Mean Me No Good	OK 8230,	Doc DOCD-5436	
72790-B	Nobody Knows The Way I Feel This Mornin'	OK 8262,	Doc DOCD-5436	
72791-B	Absent Minded Blues	OK 8262,	Doc DOCD-5436	

It is very seldom (if at all?) that we hear two trumpets/cornets in early Clarence Williams accompanying groups. But here something unusual must have happened! But probably because of the presence of two cornets Williams wrote some minor arrangements for the four horns present. This is the reason that we do not hear more of the alto saxophone than arranged passages of his part. And from what we can hear nothing substantial can be said about the reed man. He may be Elliott, but lacking any distinct elements of his style as listed in my Elliott investigation heard, the player might also be someone else. But when compared to Elliott's alto playing on the succeeding Clara Smith session it becomes apparent that his skills on the saxophone had improved and become smoother by now, which would coincide with what can be heard here.

The second cornet surprisingly sounds just like Oliver, and has been suggested to be him in earlier years (see notes below!). And this is the unusual case here! Oliver spent some time in September in NY as guest of C. Williams, but nobody knows how long he stayed. He recorded with Butterbeans and Susie on Sep. 12 or 14. When hearing these sides for the first time I immediately felt that the breaks in 'I Love You Daddy' (at 1-23 and 2-32) with their sharp conet tone and the typical phrases had to be Oliver. At that time I did not know that he had been suggested before. Then in 'Absent Minded Blues' at 1-42 he can be discriminated again as Morris enters at about 1-47 (I have to thank Dave Brown for affirmation and sorting out the exact places where Oliver can possibly be heard). I do therefore not have any sincere doubts as to Oliver's presence on these sides! It has equally to be stated that there is absolutely nothing to suggest Bubber Miley on trumpet! Morris is undisputed, but here Peter Bocage's presence should also be considered as the first trumpet sounds somewhat more secure than Morris usually does.

The trombonist again is not Irvis and might rather be John Mayfield because of stylistic reasons and because he was frequently used by Williams at the time.

Clarence Williams undisputed. But we can certainly see again that statements or assertions of the participants of the recording sessions cannot be trusted in any case!

To me the banjo sounds more like Bocage than Christian, just like on the session above.

Notes:

- Storyville 15: *Thomas Morris*, *Bubber Miley* (cnts); *Charlie Irvis* (tbn); *poss Ernest Elliott* (alt); *Clarence Williams* (pno); *Buddy Christian* (bjo)

- Lord, *Clarence Williams* p 98: *Thomas Morris*, *Bubber Miley* (cnt); *Charlie Irvis* (tbn); *poss Ernest Elliott* (alt); *Clarence Williams* (pno); *Buddy Christian* (bjo) "The session includes two cornets, with Morris credited as one. Davies lists the other as King Oliver. TKD (T. Keith Daniel – KBR) has a note that his personnel (which agrees with the one below (above – KBR)) is from Williams on hearing the disc, "however, some authorities, including BALR (who in the world is this? – KBR), believe that Joe 'King' Oliver is one of the trumpet men. It is possible that the session took place during his brief visit to New York." WCA (Walter C. Allen – KBR) thinks the cornet is not Oliver. Clarence Williams (to WCA) identified the cornets as given, below (above – KBR). The alto is agreed upon by most as Elliott. The estimation of the date is from Godrich and Dixon. The preceding matrix is assigned to Ernest V. Stoneman, recorded September 4, 1924. The succeeding matrix is assigned to an unknown foreign-language item, recorded on September 9th."

- L. Wright, *King Oliver* p 42/43: "He stayed with Clarence Williams and Eva Taylor and went to see Jack Kapp to try and secure a recording contract, but to no avail. Whilst in town, the two old friends went down to Jersey City to watch the Harry Wills – Luis Angel Firpo fight (which Wills won) on Thursday, 11 September and, the following day, Clarence invited Joe to make a couple of sides backing Butterbeans and Susie, no doubt to help out with his train fare back to Chicago. The duration of Joe Oliver's stay in New York is not known, but it is unlikely to have been any longer than was necessary to complete the business he had in mind and, on his return to Chicago, he resumed leadership of the band at the Lincoln Gardens." (Oliver had an advertisement in the Chicago Defender which was issued on 6 September 1924 saying: "At Liberty. The celebrated King Oliver's Jazz Band 8 men playing 15 instruments. Open for engagements in or out of Chicago." This would mean that the advertisement had been ordered in the early days of September. As the exact recording date of this session has to be placed between 4 September and 9 September (see above), Oliver's presence might certainly be seen as possible – KBR)

- Rust *3, *4, *6: *Tom Morris*, *Bubber Miley* -c; *Charlie Irvis* -tb; ? *Ernest Elliott*, alt; *Clarence Williams*, pno; *Buddy Christian*, bjo

- BGR *2, *3, *4: *Tom Morris*, *Bubber Miley*, cnt; *Charlie Irvis*, tbn; *poss Ernest Elliott*, alt; *Clarence Williams*, pno; *Buddy Christian*, bjo

- Scherman, Eriksson, *Bubber Miley* discography: *Thomas Morris*, *poss Bubber Miley* (tp); *Charlie Irvis* (tb); *poss Ernest Elliott* (as);

Clarence Williams (p); *Buddy Christian* (bj) "The above personnel, with definitely Bubber Miley on 2nd trumpet, is listed by Dixon-Godrich, Rust and Tom Lord in his Clarence Williams discography. Lord notes that "some authorities believe that Joe 'King' Oliver is one of the trumpet players", but we find this very unlikely. The more prominent of the two sounds like Morris. The other one is more in the background but could possibly be Bubber Miley."

003	MARGARET JOHNSON	Clarence Williams' Blue Five	New York,	Nov. 25, 1924
	Margaret Johnson – voc;			
	Louis Armstrong – cnt; Aaron Thompson – tbn;			
	Clarence Williams – pno; Buddy Christian – bjo			
72996-A	Papa, Mama's All Alone Blues	OK 8185,	Doc DOCD-5436	
72997-A	Changeable Daddy Of Mine	OK 8185,	Doc DOCD-5436	

Armstrong Ok! Thompson stylistically and technically is not on a par with Mayfield, but still better and more distinct as on the Red Onion Jazz Babies. Williams and Christian undoubted.

Notes:

- Storyville 16: *Louis Armstrong* (cnt); *Aaron Thompson* (tbn); *Clarence Williams* (pno); *Buddy Christian* (bjo)

- Lord, *Clarence Williams* p113: *Louis Armstrong* (cnt); *Aaron Thompson* (tbn); *Clarence Williams* (pno); *Buddy Christian* (bjo)

"Even without a reed, it's still the Blue Five. Otherwise, it's the same personnel as the session earlier in the month with some beautiful accompaniment by Louis Armstrong."

- Rust *3, *4, *6: *Louis Armstrong* -c; *Aaron Thompson* -tb; *Clarence Williams* -p; *Buddy Christian* -bj

- BGR *2, *3, *4: *Louis Armstrong*, cnt; *Aaron Thompson*, tbn; *Clarence Williams*, pno; *Buddy Christian*, bjo

004 **MARGARET JOHNSON** Clarence Williams' Blue Five New York, Jan. 07 - 08, 1925
 Margaret Johnson – voc;
 Bubber Miley - tpt; *Charlie Irvis* – tbn; Sidney Bechet – sop;
 Clarence Williams – pno; Buddy Christian – bjo
 73081-A Who'll Chop Your Suey (When I'm Gone)? OK 8193, Hot'n Sweet FDC 5109
 73082-B Done Made A Fool Out Of Me OK 8193, Hot'n Sweet FDC 5109

For this session Louis seems not to have been on hand, and Clarence's second choice obviously was Bubber Miley. The trombonist certainly is not Aaron Thompson, but Charlie Irvis with his strong legato trombone. And what would have been more reasonable than that Miley brought his Ellington colleague along when they were free.

Notes:

- *Storyville 16: Bubber Miley (cnt); Aaron Thompson (tbn); Sidney Bechet (sop); Clarence Williams (pno); Buddy Christian (bjo);*
 - *Lord, Clarence Williams p122: Bubber Miley (cnt); Aaron Thompson (tbn); Sidney Bechet (sop); Clarence Williams (pno); Buddy Christian (bjo)* "For the first session of the new year Clarence uses Bubber Miley, rather than Louis. According to WCA, Louis, in Fletcher Henderson's band, was still in New York and would stay there until late June, 1925. Perhaps Louis wasn't available, or perhaps Clarence didn't want to completely discard his former sideman. Bechet holds a strong lead on both sides, especially on the first composition, his tune, with its provocative title. Most sources have listed Irvis as the trombonist, however, Rust lists Aaron Thompson."
 - *Rust*3,*4,*6: Bubber Miley -c; Aaron Thompson -tb; Sidney Bechet -ss; Clarence Williams -p; Buddy Christian -bj*
 - *BGR*2,*3,*4: Bubber Miley, cnt; Aaron Thompson, tbn; Sidney Bechet, sop; Clarence Williams, pno; Buddy Christian, bjo* "This session is stated to have begun late on 7 January and continued into the early hours of 8 January."

005 **MARGARET JOHNSON** New York, c. Jun. 1925
 Margaret Johnson – voc;
Clarence Williams - pno
 73418-B Nobody's Blues But Mine OK 8220, Document DOCD-5436
 73419-B I'm A Good-Hearted Mama (But I Got A Trifling Man) OK 8230, Document DOCD-5436
 73420-B Nobody's Blues But Mine OK 8220, Document DOCD-5436

Clarence Williams as accompanist is documented on the OK labels and is easy to identify.

Notes:

- *Storyville 17: Clarence Williams (pno)*
 - *Lord, Clarence Williams p 131: Clarence Williams (pno)*
 - *Rust*3,*4,*6: Clarence Williams -p*
 - *BGR*2,*3,*4: Clarence Williams, pno*

006 **MARGARET JOHNSON** Black And Blue Trio New York, Jul. 09, 1926
 Margaret Johnson – voc;
 unknown – clt (2); unknown – concertina (3,4);
 Henry Palmer or (*Phil Worde*) – pno (2); unknown – bjo, pno (4); unknown - sbs
 35756 Honey, Don't Go Away Vic unissued not on LP/CD
 35757-1 What Kinda Love Is That? Vic 20982, Document DOCD-5436
 35758-1 Folks In New York City Ain't Like Folks Down South Vic 20178, Document DOCD-5436
 35759-1 My Man's Done Done Me Dirty Vic 20178, Document DOCD-5436

This piano player certainly is not Worde as known, suggested we hear Worde on the Sara Martin sides of November 17, 1925 (OK 8292, 8304). The name Henry Palmer may be the more probable one. (As to Rust*6 below: at the end of 'What Kind Of Love Is That?' we hear a banjo solo spot which is immediately finished by banjo and piano! In 'Folks In New York City' no piano can be heard, while in the last title the banjo stops playing, a piano starts, then stops again, and the banjo is heard again. In my eyes there should be two men playing piano at this session, one of them doubling on banjo.) As clarinet and concertina can never be heard simultaneously, both instruments might be played by one musician.

Notes:

- *B. Rust, Victor Master Book Vol. 2: unknown cl, p, bj, b (first two sides) or by the Black And Blue Trio (concertina, bj, b, with extra p audible)(third and fourth).*
 - *BGR*2,*3,*4: unknown cl; unknown concertina; Henry Palmer p; unknown bj; unknown sb. The Victor files state that the 'Trio' comprised four men and evidently therefore one of them must double two instruments.*
 - *Rust*3,*4,*6: unknown cl, concertina, p, bj, sb. Phil Worde is given composer credit for at least two titles, and may thus be the pianist, but as the piano and banjo are not heard together, he may be the banjoist, too.*

007 **MARGARET JOHNSON** New York, c. Oct. 07, 1926
 Margaret Johnson – voc;
 Bob Ricketts – pno
 74392-A Down Yonder Blues OK 8418, not on LP/CD
 74393-A Mama, Papa Don't Wanna Come Back Home OK 8405, Document DOCD-5436
 74394-A Everything That Happens Just Pleases Me OK 8405, Document DOCD-5436
 74395-A Heavy Burden Blues OK 8418, not on LP/CD

Bob Ricketts as accompanist is documented on the labels of OK 8405.

Notes:

- *Rust*3,*4,*6: Bob Ricketts -p*
 - *BGR*2,*3,*4: Bob Ricketts, pno*

008 **MARGARET JOHNSON** Black And Blue Trio New York, Oct. 20, 1926

Margaret Johnson – voc;

Thomas Morris – tpt; *Happy Caldwell* – clt, sop;

Mike Jackson – pno

36846-1	When A 'Gator Hollers, Folks Say It's A Sign Of Rain	Vic 20333,	Document DOCD-5436
36846-2	When A 'Gator Hollers, Folks Say It's A Sign Of Rain	Vic uniss. on 78,	Document DOCD-5436
36847-2	Graysom Street Blues	Vic 20333,	Document DOCD-5436

Thomas Morris and Mike Jackson are obvious on these sides. But the clarinetist definitely is not Bob Fuller. He shows definite similarities to Johnny Dodds' playing in tone, vibrato and phrasing. Much more than any other clarinet player in New York at this time. There is nothing that reminds of Fuller. Thus, I am convinced that we hear Happy Caldwell here. And from Caldwell's own testimony we know of his inclination towards Johnny Dodds. He plays very beautifully here!

Notes:

- *Rust**3,*4,*6: *Tom Morris* -c; *Bob Fuller* -cl; *Mike Jackson* -p

- *BGR**2: *Tom Morris*, cnt; *Bob Fuller*, clt; *Mike Jackson*, pno

- *BGR**3,*4: *Tom Morris*, c; *Bob Fuller*, cl, ss; *Mike Jackson*, p

Notable differences of takes (*):

36846-1: bar12 of 3. Chorus (voc) upbeat to clt solo (ca.1:48): clt plays 1 quarter pause, 1 eighth note F, 1 quarter note F, 1 quarter note Bb, 1 eighth note G

36846-2: bar12 of 3. Chorus (voc) upbeat to clt solo (ca.1:48): clt plays 1 eighth pause, 1 eighth + half note F, 2 eighth notes C# - D

009 **MARGARET JOHNSON** Black And Blue Trio Camden, NJ, Feb. 14, 1927

Margaret Johnson – voc;

Robert Cooksey – har;

Phil Worde – pno; Bobby Leecan - gtr

37680-2	Good Woman Blues	Vic 20652,	Document DOCD-5279
37681-1	Second-Handed Blues	Vic 20652,	Document DOCD-5279
37681-2	Second-Handed Blues	Vic 20652,	Document DOCD-5436
37682-2	Dead Drunk Blues	Vic 20982,	Document DOCD-5279

We probably hear Phil Worde with his retained and sober piano style. This certainly is not Mike Jackson. Cooksey and Leecan are certain.

Notes:

- *B. Rust*, *Victor Master Book Vol. 2: acc. by h, p, g.*

- *Rust**3,*4,*6: *Robert Cooksey*, h; *Bobby Leecan*, g; ?*Phil Worde* or *Mike Jackson*, p.

- *BGR**2,*3,*4: *Robert Cooksey*, hca; *Bobby Leecan*, gtr; prob *Phil Worde* or *Mike Jackson*, pno.

010 **MARGARET JOHNSON** New York, Sep. 08, 1927

Margaret Johnson – voc;

Bob Fuller – clt, sop; Porter Grainger – pno

81424-B	Stinging Bee Blues	OK 8506,	Document DOCD-5436
81425-B	Best Friend Blues	OK 8506,	Document DOCD-5436

Positively Fuller and Grainger.

Notes:

- *Rust**3,*4,*6: *Bob Fuller* -cl; *Porter Grainger* -p

- *BGR**2,*3,*4: *Bob Fuller*, clt; *Porter Grainger*, pno

K.-B. Rau

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