

THE RECORDINGS OF RUBY GOWDY

An Annotated Tentative Personnel - Discography

GOWDY, Ruby, singer

no personal details known.

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: **Ruby Gowdy**
- Probable, generally agreed, but not documented identifications are listed in italics, thus: *Ruby Gowdy*
- 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: (*Ruby Gowdy*)

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.

RUBY GOWDY

001 **RUBY GOWDY** New York, c. Jul. 11, 1928
Ruby Gowdy – voc;
unknown – tpt; unknown – alt;
(*Porter Grainger*) – pno
GEX-2006 Moanful Wailin' Blues Gnt 6570, Document DOCD-5510

Miss Gowdy is accompanied here by a trio consisting of trumpet, alto sax, and piano.

The pianist – judging from his style – might well be Porter Grainger with his moderate and unaffected stride playing.

Trumpet and alto sax players can not be identified. They may have been engaged from a second-class theatre or vaudeville band, not from a jazz unit. Both players use extensive rows of triplets without any pronounced “hot” and “off-beat” phrasing, throughout in un-eventful long and little structured lines. Wrong notes are frequent. They are not experienced jazz players.

- *Carey, McCarthy, Jazz Directory Vol.4: not listed*
- *BGR*2,*3,*4: prob unknown, tpt; unknown, alt; unknown, pno.*
- *Rust*3,*4,*6: prob unknown -t; unknown -as; unknown -p*

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

This group of Gennett recordings with consecutive matrix numbers (Josephine Hall, Alberta Jones, Ruby Gowdy, Horsey's Hot Five – see also 'Walter Bennett' elsewhere on this website under “Soloists”) might very well have been recorded consecutively on one day. I therefore

assume that the accompanists are always part of the last recorded Horsey's Hot Five. This might also apply to the unissued Josephine Hall session, of which nothing seems to be known.

- The trumpet player is Walter Bennett, following RUST 6* and my own ears. He is the same musician as the one on Bennett's Swamplanders and on the Wilmoth Houdini and Gerald Clark's Night Owls.

- On the second title of the Alberta Jones session suddenly a very familiar sounding trombonist appears. RUST 6* lists him as ?J.C.

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

- The clarinetist/altoist is listed as ?Darnell Howard in RUST 6*. My ears tell me, that this musician is definitely Omer Simeon!

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

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

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

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

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

Notes:

- Carey, McCarthy, *Jazz Directory Vol.4*: not listed

- BGR*2,*3: unknown orchestra (prob Horsey's Hot Five: unknown cnt; unknown tbn; unknown clt; unknown vln; Mabel Horsey -p.)

- BGR*4: unknown, c; unknown, tb; unknown, cl; prob Mabel Horsey, p.

- Rust*3: unknown orchestra (prob Horsey's Hot Five: unknown c; unknown tb; unknown cl; unknown vn; Mabel Horsey -p.

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

Tune Structures:

GEX-2087 Florida Flood Blues key of Db Gennett

(Intro 4 bars ens)(Chorus 1 12 bars blues voc + clt)(Chorus 2 voc + tpt)(Chorus 3 voc + tbn/tpt/clt 2 bars each)(Chorus 4 voc + tbn/tpt/clt 2 bars each / ens at end)

GEX-2088 Breath And Britches Blues key of C Gennett

(Intro 4 bars ens)(Chorus 1 12 bars blues voc + tpt)(Chorus 2 voc + tbn)(Chorus 3 voc + clt)Chorus 4 voc + pno)(Chorus 5 voc + tpt / ens at end)

K.-B. Rau
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