

THE RECORDINGS OF MARY STRAINE

An Annotated Tentative Name-Discography

STRAINE, Mary no personal details known.

(Tom Lord, Clarence Williams)

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

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

- Documented, most certain and aurally absolutely obvious identifications are listed thus: *Mary Straine*
- Probable, generally agreed, but not documented identifications are listed in italics, thus: *Mary Straine*
- 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: (*Mary Straine*)

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.

MARY STRAINE

001 BERT WILLIAMS	New York,	Jun. 27, 1919
Bert Williams – comedian speech; unknown – organ; unknown – “congregation” choir encompassing Mary Straine, others		
49643-2 Elder Eatmore's Sermon On Generosity	Col A6141,	Archeophone Records 5002
49644 Elder Eatmore's Sermon On Throwing Stones	Col A6141,	Archeophone Records 5002
002 MARY STRAINE Joseph Smith's Jazz Band	Long Island City, NY,	end Jun. 1922
Mary Straine – voc; (<i>Joe Smith?</i>) – cnt; (<i>George Brashear?</i>) – tbn; (<i>Julian Baugh?</i>) – clt; <i>Lem Fowler</i> or (<i>Fletcher Henderson?</i>) - pno		
-1 I Ain't Got Nothing Blues	BS 14115,	Document DOCD-5342

This cornetist/trumpeter obviously is not the young Joe Smith as identified by W.C. Allen. Instead he sounds very much like a Western trumpet player, reminding me of Tommy Ladnier. This is not Smith's soft tone heard at the succeeding sessions, and there are definite features of Louis Armstrong's style that were never incorporated in Joe Smith's playing. And this is not Johnny Dunn style as would have to be expected from Joe Smith. But the trumpet performance certainly has good jazzy quality. The whole affair reminds me of Ollie Power's 'Play That Thing' of Sep. 1923!

This also includes the trombonist's playing. This trombonist shows similar features to Brashear's, probably resulting from a “Western” origin of the musicians present, but his playing is not stylistically constant as Brashear's in the following sessions. He uses triplets sometimes which cannot be detected in Brashear's playing.

The clarinetist, also, might not be identified as the hitherto mentioned Clarence Robinson, but – if so – with a much harder tone and a more squeaking performance. He sounds as having listened to Johnny Dodds. Following Bo Lindström's noteworthy find of an Ethel Waters interview in the Baltimore Afro-American (see below) we now seem to know the real name of this clarinetist: Julian or Julius Baugh of Chicago.

The pianist probably is not Fletcher Henderson, and might be Lem Fowler as noted by W.C. Allen. So, this again does not seem to be a Joe Smith item, despite of the band name on the label. It does not seem a George Brashear or Clarence Robinson item, either.

Notes:

- W.C. Allen, *Hendersonia*, p. 37: *poss Joe Smith, cornet; George Brashear, trombone; Clarence Robinson, clarinet; Fletcher Henderson or Lem Fowler, piano. "This is an 'orphan' title; although the cornet is in the background, there are snatches of double-timing characteristic of Joe Smith at this time, and the clarinetist is the same man (Clarence Robinson?) as on succeeding dates. This record was advertised as a new release in mid July 1922, but it is possible that it could have been recorded at the end of June by the Jazz Masters; alternatively, it could be by a Lem Fowler unit with the same clarinetist later used by Fletcher Henderson."*

- Bo Lindström: "Most probably George Brashear."

- Bo Lindström, 'Oh Joe, Play That Trombone', *The Life and Music of George L. Brashear*, p.36, *Baltimore Afro-American*, June 16, 1922: *Ethel Water Doesn't Splurge: "The present organization of her Jazz Masters is composed of: Joe Smith, cornet; Fletcher Henderson Jr, piano; Julian Baugh, clarinet; George Brashear, trombone."*

- BGR*2: *Joe Smith, cnt; Henry Brashear, tbn; Clarence Robinson, clt; Fletcher Henderson, pno.*

- BGR*3,*4: *poss Joe Smith, cnt; poss George Brashear, tbn; poss Clarence Robinson, clt; Fletcher Henderson or Lem Fowler, pno.*

- Rust*3,*4,*6: *Joe Smith -c; ?George Brashear -tb; Clarence Robinson -cl; Fletcher Henderson -p.*

003 **MARY STRAINE** Joseph Smith's Jazz Band Long Island City, NY, c. Aug. 1922

Mary Straine – voc;

Joe Smith – cnt; *George Brashear – tbn; (Julian Baugh?) – clt;*

Fletcher Henderson – pno; unknown - bbs

I Wish I Could Shimmy (Like My Sister Kate)

BS 14123,

Document DOCD-5342

The Last Go Round Blues

BS 14123,

Document DOCD-5342

This is Joe Smith in his Johnny Dunn mode. The tone is Smith's, but the style and rhythm are still Johnny Dunn's. Trombonist and clarinetist may well be the named persons from their tones and styles, and Henderson is certainly on piano. The tuba player cannot be identified from what can be heard. As from the recording date he probably is not Ralph Escudero.

Notes:

- W.C. Allen, *Hendersonia*, p. 39: *Joe Smith, cornet; prob George Brashear, trombone; poss Clarence Robinson, clarinet; Fletcher Henderson, piano; poss Ralph Escudero, tuba.*

- Bo Lindström: "Possibly George Brashear".

- BGR*2: *Joe Smith, cnt; prob George Brashear, tbn; Clarence Robinson, clt; Fletcher Henderson, pno; unknown – bbs.*

- BGR*3,*4: *Joe Smith, cnt; prob George Brashear, tbn; Clarence Robinson, clt; Fletcher Henderson, pno; poss Ralph Escudero – bbs.*

- Rust*3: *Joe Smith – c; ? George Brashear – tb; Clarence Robinson – cl; Fletcher Henderson – p; unknown - bb*

- Rust*4,*6: *Joe Smith – c; ? George Brashear – tb; Clarence Robinson – cl; Fletcher Henderson – p; ? Ralph Escudero - bb*

004 **MARY STRAINE** Long Island City, NY, c. Apr. 01, 1923

Mary Straine – voc;

Fletcher Henderson – pno

Chirpin' The Blues

BS 14150,

Document DOCD-5342

Downhearted Blues

BS 14150,

Document DOCD-5342

Miss Straine accompanied by a strong and imaginative Fletcher Henderson on piano in some fancy stride-style.

Notes:

- BGR*2,*3,*4: *Fletcher Henderson, pno*

- Rust*3,*4,*6: *Fletcher Henderson (pno)*