# THE RECORDINGS OF
# GEORGE McCLENNON

## An Annotated Tentative Personnelo - Discography

McCLENNON, George, clarinetist born: Charlotte, North Carolina, ca. 1890 – 1891; died: Chicago, Sep. 22, 1937
Adopted as son by Bert Williams, he emulated the famous comedian on stage until his death. Started stage career in 1910 with his wife, Daisy, who soon became known as Black Beauty. McClennon rose to prominence as famous 'Barrel Jumper' in the 'Keep Shufflin`' show. Later he joined Chinese Walker and formed Chinese comedian act titled Walker and McClennon that toured best vaudeville circuits. After spending years on major circuits George created a single act, using his clarinet and cork, doing a 'tailspin' that provoked much laughter. His biggest engagement came when he was general M.C. at Regal Theatre, later produced and staged shows at the Plantation Café in Detroit. After many successful months at the Motor City nitery (sic – KBR), McClennon joined Armstrong and band playing Broadway and other great spots, ending his career at Regal Theatre where he became ill. (Record Research 66, Victoria Spivey, Stomping McClennon)

STYLISTICS

STYLE
McClennon was a vaudeville artist whose main features were his comedy sketches in the succession of Bert Williams (who was his adopting father) together with his 'gas-pipe' clarinet renditions, often combined with 'tailspin' practices or other comical motions. On his recordings he exclusively performs in novelty 'gas-pipe' style (slap-tonguing, dirty and growl techniques and 'freak' and funny laughing phrasing), although he might have been able to perform in classic jazz style which, yet, is not documented on record.

TONE
He owns a very flexible and strong tone

VIBRATO
His vibrato is of little amplitude, but medium fast to fast.

TIME
His time is exact and secure in its limited shape of playing.

PHRASING
McClennon´s phrasing is very simple in his use of chordal sequencies and rhythmical shaping of his melodies.

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

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.

GEORGE McCLENNON

001 **HARLEM TRIO** New York, Apr. 1923
George McClennon – clt; unknown – pno; (*Buddy Christian*) – bjo
71511-A Clarinet Laughing Blues OK 8072, Jazz Oracle BDW 8022
*Composer credits: 71511 (George McClennon)*

As the alternate takes of this title obviously were recorded on different dates and with different personnel, I have installed an additional recording session for the hitherto un-reissued E-take (below).
This is the first instance of McClennon on record. Why his trio performances were recorded under the name "Harlem Trio" I do not know. The CD booklet says that "these two sides were almost certainly recorded at different sessions". Close listening will reveal a very distinct difference of sound. The – E take in other cases marks the re-recording of a certain title some days after the initial attempt. So, this may apply to our recordings, too. But I hear distinct differences between these two takes which might even indicate that two different pianists and banjo players were involved: take – A is played in "simple" 12 bar blues changes whereas the piano player on – E uses enlarged and more fashionable blues changes. Furthermore, the pianist in – A plays a constant dotted quaver rhythm, boring and much less interesting and expert than the pianist in – E who plays a rhythmically varied and harmonically more modern and pleasing accompaniment, but still maintaining that dotted quaver rhythm, yet in a reduced manner. Yet the identity of Eddie Heywood, Sr. can not be recognized from his playing here compared to his later recordings. I therefore suggest that the session was repeated because of the inadequacy of pianist in take – A. The banjo player delivers a very functional and rudimentary beat without any embellishments. He is much more in the foreground in take – A than in – E and might even be different persons, in this case possibly Buddy Christian on take – A. It also is his banjo sound on this side/take. Thus, take -E might be recorded with some other banjo player.
*Notes:*
- *Rust*2,*3: George McClennon (clt); Eddie Heywood ? (pno); unknown (bjo)*
- *Rust*4,*6: George McClennon -cl; Eddie Heywood -p; unknown -bj*

002 **HARLEM TRIO** New York, Apr. 1923
George McClennon – clt; Eddie Heywood, Sr. – pno; unknown – bjo
71511-E Clarinet Laughing Blues OK 8072, Jazz Oracle BDW 8022
*Composer credits: 71511 (George McClennon)*

For the evaluation of this alternate take of 'Clarinet Crying Blues' see my annotations above!
*Notes:*
- *Rust*2,*3,*4,*6: not listed*

003 **GEORGE McCLENNON´S JAZZ DEVILS** New York, May 09, 1924
*Harry Cooper* – cnt; (*John Mayfield)* – tbn;
George McClennon – clt*; Joe Garland* – alt;
*Clarence Williams* or (*Graham Jackson*) – pno; *Bernard Addison* – bjo; *Happy Williams* – dms
72512-B Box Of Blues OK 8143, Jazz Oracle BDW 8022
72513-B Dark Alley Blues OK 8143, Jazz Oracle BDW 8022

For this session Rust*6 lists this personnel: Prob. Thomas Morris – cnt; Charlie Irvis – tbn; G. McClennon – clt; Bob Fuller – alt; Clarence Williams – pno; Buddy Christian – bjo; unknown - dms. The Jazz Oracle CD booklet follows this statement. Tom Lord´s *Clarence Williams* (1976) lists the same with some reservations and the following statement: "*Rust is the only previous source to list this as a Clarence Williams session. His listing is undoubtedly a result of a Record Research (i.e. 66) article. Williams mentioned Morris and Irvis. Since Rust´s listing (Rust*3?), it´s felt that the identity of the cornetist is not absolutely certain. The alto player here is aurally the same man as on Virginia Liston´s OK 8138 (January 7, 1924). The estimation of the date is from Rust."*
Deviating from what I have written in my article on the recordings of George McClennon in Names&Numbers 67, I am caused to see – and hear – this recording session from a very different side:
- Having delt with Harry Cooper´s trumpet style of the early twenties I am convinced that he is our man on this McClennon session, harmonizing with his known appearances in style, tone, rhythm, use of mutes, and vibrato. This is not – as believed about 8 years ago – Thomas Morris. Recognizing this, it is only significant to check Cooper´s association at this time: the Seminole Syncopators: he recorded with them in New York just two weeks earlier.
- And according to their personnel the alto saxophonist could well be the young Joe Garland who had been added to the Seminole Syncopators at about this time, when they went back home to Atlanta after their recording session of April 24, 1924 (above). Comparing our altoist here with Garland´s style and performing on 'Sailing On Lake Ponchartrain' of the session of August 30, 1924 clearly shows corresponding of style, rhythm and performance. He cannot be compared with Prince Robinson as on the Virginia Liston session above, who is much more elegant and swinging.
- I believe to recognize the trombonist as John Mayfield – not Charlie Irvis! – of Clarence Williams Blue Five fame. He was not part of the Seminole Syncopators!
- The pianist might well be Clarence Williams, but as we probably find other members of the Seminole Syncopators below, he may also be their bandleader Graham Jackson. But: we do not hear this player´s technical and harmonic tricks as heard on the August 30 session.
- The very busy banjo player very probably then is Bernard Addison with his double-strokes and arpeggiated parts.
- The drummer might accordingly also come from the Syncopators, thus Harry 'Happy' Williams. The cymbal sound seems to be identical.
In my years-long researching the music of the Harlem bands I have recognized a couple of procedures recording-bands were put together, and here we might find just one of these: a young band coming from out of nowhere, leaving an impression on listeners passed on to band-leaders without a working band, but having a recording contract, and needing a band for a recording session. This might be exactly what had happened here. Unfortunately, we do not have proof that the Syncopators still had been in New York at this date. But the performance on record seems to prove.

This is what I have written in 2013 (I revoke herewith, with the exception of my remarks on trombonist and pianist!):

*- Trumpet/cornet: In an attempt to sort out all the 'impossibles' in the discographically listed appearances of Thomas Morris, I have – together with our expert listening group – not been able to deny Morris´ presence here. This tpt/cnt player shows all the characteristics of Morris as listed in my article in Names& Numbers 49/23: "Morris´ playing is characterized by a lot of (mainly) use of mute (plunger?), the tendency to repeat short simple phrases three or four times in a row, a blues-oriented playing, frequent use of blue-notes and a rather unsecure tone and pitch". So, for me this is certainly Morris.*
*Trombone: The trombonist certainly is not Irvis. Irvis owns a mainly linear style of playing which cannot be heard here. This man here plays rather vertical phrases. His assured playing marks an experienced player who seems to come from the South. He frequently uses an end phrase in his solos which is familiar from Kid Ory´s playing with Armstrong, Oliver or Morton. Yet I feel unable to put a name to him. In the light of John Lindsey´s assumed presence on the following recording session I am inclined also to take this man in consideration.*
*Alto sax: The proposed presence of George Scott on alto-sax might seem highly speculative but will be explained in the sessions of August and September 1926. I only maintain that he is the same player as on the named sessions. But I do not hear a distinct correspondence to the Victoria Liston session player as stated by Lord above.*
*Piano: Clarence Williams was an important A&R man for OKeh records in New York. In this function he introduced George McClennon to records. Judging from the simple piano pounding in 4/4 rhythm Clarence very certainly is the man on piano.*
*Banjo: I have no name to propose for the banjo player. Concerning this I have to lament the non-existence of a detailed study of Harlem banjo styles! Only that the banjo player tremolos very much which is completely untypical of Buddy Christian or other banjoists from Clarence Williams´ stable. Accordingly, Christian can simply be ruled out.*
*Drums: I hear frequent woodblock playing in the background and from the sound and pitch of the cymbal crashes I would suggest Piron´s drummer Louis Cottrell, also because I hope to show that the Piron band had very strong hands in this and the next sessions.*
*Last but not least: McClennon´s piping clarinet has not to be proved. He is always there.*
*<u>Notes:</u>*
*- Record Research 66: prob Tom Morris (cnt); Charlie Irvis (tbn); George McClennon (clt); unknown (alt); Clarence Williams (pno); Buddy Christian (?)(bjo); unknown (dms)*
*- Rust*2: Tom Morris (cnt); Charlie Irvis (tbn); George McClennon (clt); unknown (alt); Clarence Williams (pno); Buddy Christian (?) (bjo); unknown (dms)*
*- Rust*3: Tom Morris -c; Charlie Irvis -tb; George McClennon -cl; ?Bob Fuller -as; Clarence Williams -p; ?Buddy Christian -bj; unknown -d*
*- Rust*4,*6: probably: Tom Morris -c; Charlie Irvis -tb; George McClennon -cl; Bob Fuller -as; Clarence Williams -p; Buddy Christian -bj; unknown -d*

004 **GEORGE McCLENNON´S JAZZ DEVILS** New York, c. May 14, 1924
Seymour Irick – tpt; John Lindsay – tbn;
George McClennon – clt; (*Joe Garland*) – alt;
Clarence Williams – pno; unknown – bjo; (*Louis Cottrell*) – dms

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| 72524-B | New Orleans Wiggle | OK 8150, | Jazz Oracle BDW 8022 |
| 72525-B | Michigan Water Blues | OK 8150, | Jazz Oracle BDW 8022 |

This George McClennon session is nowhere else assumed to include Irick but in the CD booklet of the Canadian Jazz Oracle CDBDG 8022 'George McClennon', and subsequently used in an article on Seymour Irick on the excellent website on www.yestercenturypop.com, I only very recently came into knowledge of this assumption. But having listened, I whole-heartedly have to agree to this very fine identification. This then makes me revoke my assignation of a larger part of this personnel to the Armand Piron band as published in my article on McClennon in Names&Numbers 67.
Before discussing this recording session, the reader is reminded that the Armand Piron band from New Orleans spent considerable time in New York in the hope of hitting the big time there. We know that Clarence Williams as A&R man for OKeh was busy to book the Piron band in New York. What would be more reasonable than that he tried to present the band on the OKeh label when the band was preparing for the Roseland engagement and connect them to other stars of his stable? From a photograph in Perry Bradford´s book 'Born With The Blues' we know that Williams promoted the band under the name 'Williams´ Ten Jazz Kings'. So, when you look at the titles recorded here and listen to the music it becomes quite obvious that musicians of the Piron band might be responsible here.
They certainly were in New York from November 1923 until June 1924 when they recorded for a couple of labels. In May/June 1924 they played a two-week engagement at Roseland Ballroom (the first coloured band there) and were an immediate hit. But they are also thought of being present from at least May 1923 on, when they had been engaged into the fashionable Cotton Club for some time. Clarence Williams, former business partner of Piron and his A&R man in New York, tried to find work for the band and also used their men for a couple of his own recordings, mainly under the 'Clarence Williams´ Harmonizers' name.
With the Jazz Oracle booklet in mind, we have to look a little closer:
- Trumpet: Yes, this definitely is Seymour Irick, as first noted by the Jazz Oracle people on their George McClennon CD, possibly here trying to adept to a more Southern style.
- Trombone: If we accept all what is said above, it is easy to accept John Lindsay as trombonist here. Lindsay was trombone man in the Piron band at the time. This trombonist here plays a rather weird rhythmical figure in the repeated strain C of the recording which is not typical for Lindsay I have been told, but – as his playing is nearly identical in all three strains – this seems to be written down for him or have been part of the used arrangement and may therefore not be used as a counter-evidence. He does not play this part in Piron´s recording of 'New Orleans Wiggle'. A most remarkable trombone break is played in strain B of 'New Orleans Wiggle', as it appears identically in King Oliver´s 'Chattanooga Stomp' of October 15, 1923. (For this very recording session Ed Atkins has invariably been listed by everybody as trombonist – although with a question-mark – but this similarity or even identity should be reconsidererd with regard to Lindsay´s possible presence on the Olivers, and not simply been explained as "common currency for New Orleans players" as by a very well-known discographer.) What we hear is entirely in Lindsay´s limited range of trombone-playing in the Piron band.
- Alto sax: The alto player would accordingly then be Louis Warnick of the Piron band, if we kept the Piron relation. But his playing is definitely different from Warnick´s style as known from the Piron sides. Particularly, Warnick continually displays a very short and fast vibrato with little altitude, what is not heard here from our altoist. Instead, I believe to hear the same manner of playing heard on George McClennon´s session of May 09, 1924, thus five days before. And on this session, I assume the young Joe Garland to be the altoist. He just then was joining the Seminole Syncopators of Atlanta, then in New York (see my George McClennon article elsewhere on this website)
- Piano: The piano player can only be heard soloing in the short breaks in 'Michigan Water Blues'. These are straight renditions and played in perfect Clarence Williams style and rhythm. The tune is his own composition. Therefore – and because of the overall typical 4/4 pounding of both pianist´s hands – definitely Clarence Williams!
- Banjo: The banjo player with all his 'tremoloing' is very different from all I know of Charles Bocage of the Piron band (although he certainly could do it and even shows it somewhere on the Piron sides in a couple of breaks), and from Buddy Christian as well, so that I

would like to leave him unknown. He sounds more like a New York man. He very often tremoloes, starting on measures one – or three – of a bar which sounds a bit military or classical, what is rather uncommon for jazz banjoists of the time.
- Drums: The drummer can only be heard with a single cymbal crash at the end of the second title. But because of Cottrell being Piron´s drummer he should be seen as a probability. The cymbal sound is compatible with Cottrell´s on the Pirons, and it is Cottrell´s habit to play woodblock on the C-strain or the last chorus of a tune.

This is what I thought and wrote about this trumpeter in my earlier article:
"*So, for me, it is very certainly Peter Bocage on tpt/cnt with his distinct New Orleans flavour and inner rhythm. Bocage was an immensely experienced musician from his many years of duty in the Crescent City. He could play 'legitimately', i.e. the music, and he could get hot and play all those sensitive rhythmical variations typical for musicians from the south. He also used mutes to get hot intonation and heat into the climaxes of the tunes. This can easily be heard here. He sounds a bit rougher than on the Piron recordings, but he is out of the restrictions of written music here and can let loose. Interesting to hear that he changed functions with the alto player on 'New Orleans Wiggle' as on the Piron recording. On the first strain of the McClennon recording the trumpet holds the chord tone and the alto completes the phrase whereas the Piron recording has this figure the other way around. This enables Bocage to play a very fast and expertly executed triplet break at the end of the first strain which is not on the Piron side. I am unable to follow the McClennon CD booklet attributing this fine trumpet part to the very little known (Lem Fowler) trumpet player Seymour Irick. His style is much too stiff and too much Ragtime derived than our man´s here."* That said and written in 2013, I decidedly revoke!
<u>Notes:</u>
- *Record Research 66, p.5: probably Tom Morris (cnt); Charlie Irvis (tbn); George McClennon (clt); unknown (alt); Clarence Williams (pno); Buddy Christian (?)(bjo); unknown (dms)*
- *Rust*2: Tom Morris (cnt); Charlie Irvis (tbn); George McClennon (clt); unknown (alt); Clarence Williams (pno); Buddy Christian (?) (bjo); unknown (dms)*
- *Rust*3: unknown -c (possibly 2); ?John Lindsay -tb; George McClennon -cl; unknown -as; ?Clarence Williams -p; ?Buddy Christian -bj; unknown -d*
- *Rust*4,*6: ?2 -c; probably: John Lindsay -tb; George McClennon -cl; unknown -as; Clarence Williams -p; Buddy Christian -bj; unknown -d*
- *Jazz Oracle CD BDW 8022, CD-booklet personnel: possibly Seymore Irick; poss John Lindsay (tb); George McClennon (clt); unknown (as); poss Clarence Williams (p); poss Buddy Christian (bjo); unknown (d, woodblocks)*

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| 005 **HARLEM TRIO** | | New York, | Jul. 16, 1924 |
| George McClennon – clt; | | | |
| unknown (*Eddie Heywood, Sr.*) – pno; unknown – bjo | | | |
| 72668-A | The Funny Blues | OK 8158, | Jazz Oracle BDW 8022 |
| 72669-A | The Poor Man´s Blues | OK 8158, | Jazz Oracle BDW 8022 |

The series of the Harlem Trio continued after a year´s lapse. We hear McClennon´s rather simple clarinet playing in typical fashion again. Piano player Eddie Heywood´s presence has to be doubted as his characteristics can not be noticed, possibly because McClennon plays without giving room to his accompanists. But comparing this player´s style to Heywood´s shows that his presence is very doubtful. The banjo player plays a simple 4/4 accompaniment without individual traces. … and drags terribly at the start of the first title.
<u>Notes:</u>
- *Record Research 66: including George McClennon featured (clt)*
- *Rust*2,*3: George McClennon (clt); Eddie Heywood ? (pno); unknown (bjo)*
- *Rust*4,*6: George McClennon -cl; Eddie Heywood -p; unknown -bj*

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| 006 **HARLEM TRIO** | | New York, | Sep. 30, 1924 |
| George McClennon – clt, bcl; | | | |
| *(Edgar Dowell)* – pno; unknown – bjo | | | |
| 72863-B | Muddy Water Blues | OK 40220, | Jazz Oracle BDW 8022 |
| 72864-B | I Ain´t Gonna Blame It On The Blues | OK 40220, | Jazz Oracle BDW 8022 |
| *Composer credits are: 72863 (Geo. McClennon); 72864 (Geo. McClennon)* | | | |

We hear a pianist here different from the two fore-going 'Harlem Trio' sides. These earlier sides may well enclose Eddie Heywood in their personnel.
But here, we find a pianist playing a moderate ragtime/stride style, very similar to the player on the subsequent session. Accordingly, he might be Edgar Dowell, as assumed below (see next session below). My assumptions re Edgar Dowell are based on the fact that Dowell is named as pianist for the following session in Record Research 66, and the deduction from being composer of the next session´s both titles – and stylistically in contrast to Eddie Heywood on the first 'Harlem Trio' sides (c. July 16, 1924).
As the composer credits on the labels of the next session´s titles name Edgar Dowell, I am inclined to believe this pianist to be present here as well.
The banjo player again plays very functional without being discernible.
Rust*6 lists Eddie Heywood for all Harlem Trio sides!
<u>Notes:</u>
- *Carey, McCarthy, Jazz Directory, Vol. 4: George McClennan (clt; unknown (p); unknown (bj)*
- *Rust*2,*3: George McClennon (clt); Eddie Heywood ? (pno); unknown (bjo)*
- *Rust*4,*6: George McClennon -cl; Eddie Heywood -p; unknown -bj*

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| 007 **HARLEM TRIO** | | New York, | Oct. 18, 1924 |
| George McClennon – clt, bcl; | | | |
| *Edgar Dowell* – pno; unknown – bjo | | | |
| 72922-A | Bass Clarinet Blues | OK 8189, | Jazz Oracle BDW 8022 |
| 72923-B | Meddlin´ With The Blues | OK 8189, | Jazz Oracle BDW 8022 |

Storyville 152-80: "*Perhaps not surprisingly and contrary to Rust, the featured instrument on the Harlem Trio´s 'Bass Clarinet Blues' is bass clarinet. But there´s also an odd sound quality on this side which I think I can explain."*

Storyville 153-120: "*No response at all on this one (above - KBR), so let me tell you what I (Laurie Wright – KBR) think. The label names George McClennon as the clarinet soloist and, like most collectors, I have thought of him only as the leader of a small band on the OKeh label and occasionally with others. It was only when delving through my newspaper files that I came across a short piece about him with a photograph which revealed that he was a vaudeville artist who specialised in trick clarinet work and a feature of his act was playing three clarinets simultaneously. Armed with this information, I would suggest that on 'Bass Clarinet Blues' he is playing a clarinet and a bass clarinet together, which accounts for the odd sound quality. The tune and range is very simple, but on the reverse he is all over his instrument and the odd sound quality is absent.*"
And again, we hear another pianist (continued eighth-triplet rhythm in the right hand). As the composer credit on the labels name Edgar Dowell, I am inclined to believe this pianist present, although I have no knowledge of his stylistic characteristics. Record Research 66, by the way, names Dowell for this session, but this seems not to have found its way into the discographies! The banjo player again plays very functional without being discernible.
Rust*6 lists Eddie Heywood for all Harlem Trio sides!
*Notes:*
- *Record Research 66: including George McClennon featured (clt); Edgar Dowell (pno); unknown (bjo)*
- *Rust*2,*3: George McClennon (clt); Eddie Heywood ? (pno); unknown (bjo)*
- *Rust*4,*6: George McClennon -cl; Eddie Heywood -p; unknown -bj*

008 **GEORGE McCLENNON** New York, c. May 02, 1925
George McClennon – clt*;*
Eddie Heywood, Sr. - pno

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| 73343-B | Cut Throat Blues | OK 8314, | Jazz Oracle BDW 8022 |
| 73344-B | Larkin Street Blues | OK 8314, | Jazz Oracle BDW 8022 |

The piano introduction of the first title already shows Heywood´s style very clearly. Furthermore, he is named as composer of the second title on the label. Very beautiful piano playing in a southern style in contrast to the Harlem school. These two sides are great examples of a very underrated pianist.
*Notes:*
- *Record Research 66: including George McClennon (clt); Eddie Heywood (pno)*
- *Rust*2,*3,*4,*6: George McClennon (clt); Eddie Heywood (pno)*

009 **GEORGE McCLENNON´S JAZZ DEVILS** New York, May 07, 1925
*(June Clark)* – tpt; (*Joe Williams)* – tbn;
George McClennon – clt; (*Leonard Fields)* – alt;
Eddie Heywood, Sr. – pno; (*Will 'Splivey' Escoffery*) – bjo

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| 73359-A | Home Alone Blues | OK 8236, | Jazz Oracle BDW 8022 |
| 73360-B | Anybody Here Want To Try My Cabbage? | OK 8236, | Jazz Oracle BDW 8022 |

For a long time now, I held the opinion that June Clark´s band out of Smalls´ Sugar Cane Club had been hired here to back McClennon. Later insights make me think that the band here is a mixture of the Clark and Heywood bands.
June Clark had ties with George McClennon, having worked with him in 1922 in show business, and I see the strong possibility of his presence here. June Clark was an extremely forceful player seemingly bursting with inner power and drive. He possessed a fat tone, very strong, loud and urgent. Probably resulting from his relationship with Louis Armstrong, he tried to get a similar quality of tone and thus later ruined his lip. He uses a rather wide irregular vibrato, which is a crucial criterion for Clark´s playing. His vibrato starts immediately with the beginning of the tone and, not, as very often the case with other trumpet players, developing out of a straight tone, loosening up into a "terminal" vibrato. Furthermore, he always plays just a split second before the beat, thus sounding hectic and erratic.
- Trumpet/Cornet: Judging from the above-mentioned stylistics this could easily be a subdued June Clark. On "Anybody Here …" this trumpet player attempts to play growl trumpet with astonishing results, providing proof that he really is a top rank man.
- Trombone: At times, the trombone player, although very much in the background, sounds faintly like Harrison (tone, attack, vibrato), but this man´s 12 bar solo in "Anybody Here …." is just too crude to be by Harrison! Repeated listening reveals a strong similarity to E. Heywood´s trombonist on his Jazz Six session of October 1926, i.e. Jonas "Sweet Papa" Walker! Consultation with my listening friends supports my assumption here and makes Walker´s presence very certain. Gunther Schuller in "Early Jazz" asserts that Jonas Walker from St. Louis was an important influence on Charlie Irvis and Tricky Sam Nanton and "*to be the first to apply New Orleans 'freak' sounds to his instrument*" (Schuller). ADDITION 25-01-2024: After frequent listening to these sides and those of the subsequent sessions, I now am convinced that the trombonist on these sides is not Jonas 'Sweet Papa' Walker as assumed before because of his relationship to Eddie Heywood, Sr. and his trombone style, but the enigmatic Joe Williams, documented only with his three sides made with Bessie Smith on August 24/25, 1928, where he can be heard and recognised with a somewhat evolved style.
- Clarinet: George McClennon He is the leader, and you hear his gas-pipe clarinet all the time. As he seems not to be a distinguished part of the ensemble, I assume, that he just hired part of the Clark band playing their own repertoire, with him participating somehow. He does not sing!
- Alto sax: No definite style discernible. But the sweet and singing tone seems to be the same as with the Blue Rhythm Orch., which made me think of Len Fields, but other characteristics of Fields (arpeggios, double tongue work, etc.) are lacking. However, in "Home Alone Blues" this musician starts a solo with a 3-bar sequence not obeying the changes but staying harmonically in the tonic, which can be heard elsewhere in Fields´ playing and seems to be a characteristic though negative part of his style. Yet, Fields did not join the Clark band before the summer of 1925, replacing Benny Carter! I do not dare to think of Carter!
- Piano: Eddie Heywood Sr. His name is credited on the record label as the piano soloist. He is clearly the same man accompanying McClennon on earlier recordings (May 02, 1925). Listen to his octave runs which obviously are characteristic of his style!
- Banjo: unknown No suggestion as to the banjo player´s identity! He plays a rather unusual and dated 6/8 style, not heard before on McClennon´s recordings. He may thus be Will 'Splivey' Escoffery from June Clark´s band – or possibly also Bernard Addison from the Seminole Syncopators, in case they had been in New York at this date.
There are no drums as given in Rust*6!
*Notes:*
- *Record Research 66, p.5: probably Tom Morris (cnt); Charlie Irvis (tbn); George McClennon (clt); unknown (alt); Clarence Williams (pno); Buddy Christian (?)(bjo); unknown (dms)*
- *Rust*2: Tom Morris (cnt); Charlie Irvis (tbn); George McClennon (clt); unknown (alt); Clarence Williams (pno); Buddy Christian (?) (bjo); unknown (dms); George McClennon (vcl)*

*- Rust*3,*4,*6: unknown -c; unknown -tb; George McClennon -cl, v; unknown -as; ?Eddie Heywood -p; unknown -bj; unknown -d*

010 **GEORGE McCLENNON´S JAZZ DEVILS** New York, Jun. 11, 1925
George McClennon - voc;
*(June Clark)* – tpt; (*Joe Williams)* – tbn;
unknown – alt, clt;
(*Eddie Heywood*) – pno; (*Bill Benford?*) - bbs

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| 73425-D | Everybody But Me | OK 8337, | Jazz Oracle BDW 8022 |
| 73426-C | Bologny | OK 8337, | Jazz Oracle BDW 8022 |

George McClennon was adopted by the great comedian Bert Williams in his childhood. Consequently, he also started a stage career very early. On these titles here he attempts some kind of a Bert Williams copy.
The band plays a rather subdued straight accompaniment, with some hot tones here and there, but mainly playing written parts. Therefore, identification of the musicians is nearly impossible, but the overall sound is very similar to the sides of May 07, 1925, and I cautiously tend to ascribe these sides to June Clark and Joe Williams as before. The tuba player might then be Bill Benford.
Furthermore, the accompanying trumpet player uses triple-tongue at the end of "Bologny", which is also used on "Stolen Kisses" of the session of June 18, 1926.
*Notes:*
*- Record Research 66, p.5: probably Tom Morris (cnt); Charlie Irvis (tbn); George McClennon (clt); unknown (alt); Clarence Williams (pno); Buddy Christian (?)(bjo); unknown (dms)*
*- Rust*2: Tom Morris (cnt); Charlie Irvis (tbn); George McClennon (clt); unknown (alt); Clarence Williams (pno); Buddy Christian (?) (bjo); unknown (dms); George McClennon (vcl)*
*- Rust*3,*4,*6: unknown -c; unknown -tb; George McClennon -cl, v; unknown -as; ?Eddie Heywood -p; unknown -bj; unknown -d*

011 **GEORGE McCLENNON´S JAZZ DEVILS** New York, c. Jun. 18, 1926
*June Clark* – cnt; *Joe Williams* – tbn;
George McClennon – clt; *Leonard Fields* or *Joe Garland* – alt, bar;
unknown – pno; (*Will 'Splivy' Escoffery*) – bjo; (*Bill Benford*) – bbs

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|---|---|---|---|
| 74177-A | Stolen Kisses | OK 8329, | Jazz Oracle BDW 8022 |
| 74178-A | While You´re Sneakin´ Out Somebody Else Is Eazin´ In | OK 8329, | Jazz Oracle BDW 8022 |

Again, this seems to be June Clark, maybe now with Joe Williams on tbn, who was his partner after Charlie Green had left his band in c. May 1926. This is a fantastic and inspiring band if we concentrate on the band and ignore Mr. McClennon, but his playing obviously was the taste of the day.
- Trumpet/Cornet: June Clark - There are a lot of Louis Armstrong´s phrases and licks in this trumpet player´s style, which makes me cite pianist Joe Turner: "…. *Then I joined the red hot band of trumpeter June Clark, who was a carbon copy of Louis Armstrong. June and Jimmy Harrison were known as the greatest brass team of that wonderful period." If any record of this period is "a carbon copy of Louis Armstrong*", then it is this one. For me June Clark in full flight.
- Trombone: Joe Williams - If this is the Clark band, the trombonist might be Charlie Green´s successor in the Clark band, Joe Williams. We only know 3 recordings of his, accompanying Bessie Smith, but he was a trombone player with a reputation in Harlem. He played with a series of name bands, i.e. Willie Gant´s band at Smalls Paradise, Billy Fowler and others, and even subbed for Charlie Green with the Henderson band because of their similarity of style. The style seems to be more Williams´ ("*an extra touch of tension and nastiness*" G. Schuller, Early Jazz) than Green´s, judging from the Bessie Smith recordings, but they have often been confused (on Williams see also Storyville 87/98). However, it is not known when exactly Williams succeeded Green in the Clark band!
- Clarinet, vocal: George McClennon, who else.
- Alto sax, baritone sax: Leonard Fields or Joe Garland - Maybe this is still Leonard Fields, but no characteristics discernible, except for the tone. Joe Garland played with June Clark, presumably after Fields left, and he is known to have played bar and alt before concentrating on ten.
- Piano: Eddie Heywood´s characteristics (octave runs) are not discernible as before. If this really is the Clark band, the pianist at this time could be Charlie "Smitty" Smith as on the Blue Rhythm Orchestra recordings.
- Banjo: unknown - The Jazz Oracle CD says "possibly Buddy Christian". Maybe there is a Buddy Christian specialist somewhere, who might comment? But because for stylistic reasons I tend to "Splivey" Escoffery, the Clark band´s original banjo player.
- Tuba: unknown, but possibly Bill Benford who was tuba player for some time in the June Clark band.
*Notes:*
*- Record Research 66, p.5: probably Tom Morris (cnt); Charlie Irvis (tbn); George McClennon (clt); unknown (alt); Clarence Williams (pno); Buddy Christian (?)(bjo); unknown (dms)*
*- Rust*2: Tom Morris (cnt); Charlie Irvis (tbn); George McClennon (clt); unknown (alt); Clarence Williams (pno); Buddy Christian (?) (bjo); unknown (dms); George McClennon (vcl)*
*- Rust*3,*4,*6: unknown -c; unknown -tb; George McClennon -cl, v; unknown -as; ?Eddie Heywood -p; unknown -bj; unknown -d*

012 **MARGARET CARTER** New York, Aug. 1926
Margaret Carter – voc;
Big Charlie Thomas – cnt; Charlie Irvis – tbn;
Happy Caldwell – clt; (*George McClennon*) – clt, alt;
Mike Jackson – pno; Buddy Christian - bjo

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| 107041 | I Want Plenty Grease In My Frying Pan | PA 7511, | Timeless CBC 1-030 |
| 107042 | Come Get Me Papa, Before I Faint | PA 7511, | Timeless CBC 1-030 |

Most unfortunately Laurie Wright did not have the opportunity to continue his interview with Happy Caldwell published in Storyille 99. Thus, we do not know Happy´s possible statements as to this and the next session and have to rely on our own judgement and that of our listening companions. (Both this and the consecutive session have to be seen as one, following the sequence of matrix numbers and the recording company.) Both sessions have been reissued in John R.T. Davies´ famed 'Big Charlie Thomas' CD on Timeless and have therefore been – and still are – subject of much controversy. But, what do we hear:
Unequivocal is Buddy Christian´s presence as banjoist and probable organizer of the session.

On trumpet/cornet we hear the mysterious 'Big' Charlie Thomas as faintly remembered by Eva Taylor and on this basis identified in a remarkable series of recordings in Harlem in 1926. Against any contradiction I am sure of this player´s identity whatever his actual name might have been.
There is little heard from the trombone here, but the trombone break in the ensemble instrumental chorus of 'I Want Plenty Grease ...' definitely is Charlie Irvis and has nothing in common with anything heard from Jake Frazier on record.
Both reed players play clarinet in the second title, exclusively in pre-set arranged simple riffs. There is no ad-lib by any of the clarinettists here. In 'I Want Plenty Grease …' only one clarinet can be distinguished, playing ad-lib and with a distinct Dodds influence in this style. This stylistic element might lead to Happy Caldwell regarding Preston Jackson´s statements as to his stylistic ambitions early on in Chicago. Only that he is much more secure here than on the October 1923 sides.
The other reedman delivers a restrained obligato to the musical proceedings, obviously on alto saxophone, without identifiable individual elements.
The pianist takes a back seat in little differenciated accompaniment, using modest treble figurations in his right hand or simply pounding four-four rhythm with both hands. This might be a hint as to Mike Jackson´s assumed presence here which corresponds to what I know of Jackson´s style.
*Notes:*
*- T. Lord, Clarence Williams: Margaret Carter (vcl); unknown (cnt); Charlie Irvis (tbn); unknown (clt); Bob Fuller (clt, alt); poss Louis Hooper, or less likely Clarence Williams (pno); Buddy Christian (bjo).*
*- BGR*2: Margaret Carter –v; unknown –c; Charlie Irvis –tb; unknown –cl; Bob Fuller –cl -as; Louis Hooper –p; Buddy Christian –bj.*
*- BGR*3,*4: Margaret Carter –v; unknown –c; Charlie Irvis –tb; unknown –cl; Bob Fuller –cl -as; Louis Hooper –p; Buddy Christian –bj.*
*- Rust*3: Margaret Carter –v; probably Tom Morris –c; Jake Frazier –tb; Happy Caldwell –cl; Bob Fuller –ss; Mike Jackson –p; Buddy Christian –bj.*
*- Rust*4: Margaret Carter –v; probably Tom Morris –c; Jake Frazier –tb; Happy Caldwell –cl; Bob Fuller –ss; Mike Jackson –p; Buddy Christian –bj.*
*- Rust*6: Margaret Carter –v; probably Tom Morris –c; Jake Frazier –tb; Happy Caldwell –cl; Bob Fuller –ss; Mike Jackson –p; Buddy Christian –bj.*

013 **BUDDY CHRISTIAN`S JAZZ RIPPERS** New York, early Aug. 1926
Big Charlie Thomas – cnt; Charlie Irvis – tbn;
Happy Caldwell – clt; (*George McClennon*) – clt;
Mike Jackson – pno; Buddy Christian – bjo, voc

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| 107043 | South Rampart Street Blues | PA 8518, | Timeless CBC 1-030 |
| 107044 | The Skunk | PA 8518, | Timeless CBC 1-030 |

These two sessions seem to be the only jazz sessions by Pathe Actuelle of Afro-American musicians in early August 1926 and can therefore be assumed to have been recorded in direct succession. Although there are known examples of changing personnel in the run of recording sessions in the history of jazz, we can consider both personnels identical. So, only this is to add here:
On 'South Rampart Street Blues' the clarinet soloist – who certainly is not the player assumed to be Happy Caldwell - plays in a distinct "freak" or even "gas-pipe" style, and it seems that both reed players are on clarinet now. Rust*6 names George McClennon as second reed man. Comparing these clarinet sounds with George McClennon´s documented recordings at least show a most striking similarity. It is this "freak" player who commands all proceedings in the first title, the other clarinettist – Caldwell? – staying in the background. On 'The Skunk', the "freak" player plays the very simple melody, almost sounding like an alto sax because of his sharp tone. Caldwell – if it is he – obviously has difficulties to play a decent jazzy ad-lib part over the ensemble, possibly pre-set in parts. But this may be explained by the fast pace the band takes.
In this respect, Rust´s possibility of George McClennon becomes quite reasonable and I am cautiously following. There is not any instance of Bob Fuller on these sides. But this would mean that most probably we also hear McClennon on the Margaret Carter sides, on alto in the first title and in the second one on clarinet together with Caldwell.
One of the clarinet players on the Jazz Rippers is a musician of much greater calibre than McClennon. Rust*3 lists Happy Caldwell instead and indeed the clarinettist on the Buddy Christians shows a more southern/Chicago approach. Only in one instance he is tempted to deliver one short "laughing" phrase akin to McClennon. But everything else he plays is of quality, jazz-wise and swinging. Caldwell recorded with Young´s Creole Jazz Band in Chicago in late 1923 and is therefore a much better choice for the clarinet soloist on the Buddy Christians Jazz Rippers.
Charlie Thomas on trumpet/cornet is certain. Again, the trombonist is very restrained playing only ensemble parts as arranged.
The singer in 'The Skunk' seems to be Mr. Buddy Christian himself as he is accompanied by the two clarinets and the trombone, the trumpet/cornet starting his solo into the vocal. Buddy Christian was a most respected pianist in his New Orleans days, and it is thus not surprising that he recorded his own compositions here. 'The Skunk' is easily recognized as a composition for solo piano.
The band´s pianist´s only task is comping and delivering a simple chordal four beat rhythm.
*Notes:*
*- Storyville 59, p. 173: "After some extensive listening I think I can offer a reasonable identification for the second clarinet player on those Buddy Christian Pathe sides (PA 7518). I believe it is none other than George McClennon. I arrived at this conclusion from making an exhaustive research through all my Fuller, Morris and Christian records. And what clinched it was listening to OK 8134 and OK 8397 (Pigfoot) by McClennon´s Jazz Devils. The same ideas were used on these records for the clarinet as on South Rampart Street Blues, and the same Creole-type sounds are heard. Also, it is interesting to note that McClennon was recording in New York in August 1926 …. the same time that the Pathe sides were cut. Now since Fuller is one of the composers of South Rampart Street, he might have invited his old friend McClennon to sit in and recreate the same effect that they had produced on OK 8143 two years earlier."*
*- Rust*2: pers. similar to: Tom Morris? (cnt); Jake Frazier? (tbn); Bob Fuller (clt); Clarence Williams (pno) definite; Buddy Christian (bjo); unknown (dms)*
*- Rust*3: probably Tom Morris –c; Jake Frazier –tb; Happy Caldwell –cl; Bob Fuller –ss; Mike Jackson –p; Buddy Christian –bj.*
*- T. Lord, Clarence Williams: unknown (cnt); Charlie Irvis (tbn); unknown (clt); Bob Fuller (clt, alt); poss Louis Hooper, or Clarence Williams (pno); Buddy Christian (bjo).*
*- Rust*4: probably Tom Morris –c; Jake Frazier –tb; George McClennon –cl; Bob Fuller –ss; Mike Jackson –p; Buddy Christian –bj.*
*- Rust*6: probably Charlie Thomas, c; Charlie Irvis, tb; George McClennon, cl; Bob Fuller, cl, ss; Mike Jackson, p; Buddy Christian, bj.*

014 **GEORGE McCLENNON´S JAZZ DEVILS** New York, Aug. 1926
*R.Q. Dickerson* – tpt; *De Priest Wheeler* – tbn;
George McClennon – clt, voc; *George Scott* – alt;

*(Earres Prince)* – pno; *Charlie Stamps – bjo*; *Jimmy Smith* – bbs

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|---|---|---|---|
| 74320-B | Pig Foot Blues | OK 8397, | Jazz Oracle BDW 8022 |
| 74321-B | Disaster | OK 8406, | Jazz Oracle BDW 8022 |

Storyville 95 of June 1981 brought the following point in 'Afterthoughts': "*436. Reed-man George Scott told Johnny Heinz in 1950, or thereabouts, that he had made records with The Missourians, Clarence Williams, Viola McCoy, George McClennon, Original Cotton Club Orchestra, Elmer Snowden, Chas. Matson, Mamie Smith and Ma Rainey. Johnny says that at the time George told him this (he wrote the artists down for John) he had barely heard of some of the names but, that in checking the list against the discographies subsequently, has noted that Scott is seldom listed but that Ernest Elliott is shown against all of the above at some time or another! George Scott was clearly referring to issued records as he added that her had made a couple of sides with Bessie Smith with Robert Taylor on trumpet, but that he thought these were unissued."* And Storyville 129 brought in 'Afterthoughts': "*Juan Carlos Lopez (I certainly would like to thank him! KBR) writes that in following up 'Afterthought 436 in issue 95, he has uncovered some interesting links: a) the melody played twice after the clarinet solo in McClennon´s 'Pig Foot Blues' is the same as the brass section chorus in 'Scotty Blues' by The Missourians. b) The coda of the latter is also used on McClennon´s 'Cotton Club Stomp'. c) On this the chorus after the piano/clarinet duet uses the same riff as played behind the clarinet solo on ' Scotty Blues'. d) Aurally DePriest Wheeler plays the trombone solo on 'Cotton Club Stomp' (not the Ellington tune! KBR) which uses the same pattern as in Missouri Moan. e) Aurally Scott is the alto player in the McClennons and even the brass bass sounds familiar and might be Smith."*
So, what is there to add? It is amazing that the booklet writer on the Jazz Oracle CD did not follow these obvious hints. Aural comparison then conclusively shows us the personnel of this and the following session. And: Record Research 66 of February 1965 clearly states: "possibly contingent of Andy Preer´s Cotton Club Orchestra."
- Trumpet: as Wheeler and Scott were members of the Cotton Club Orchestra at the time an obvious candidate for the trumpet chair must be R.Q. Dickerson. As our man here certainly is not Harry Cooper and not Sidney De Paris, Dickerson remains as favourite. And comparing our man´s work here with the Cotton Club Orchestra and even the Jasper Taylor Original Washboard Band recordings shows us that he is the trumpet player here. (In Storyville 2002/3 this trumpet part even is attributed to a man as far off the mark as Thomas Morris!)
- Trombone: Certainly, DePriest Wheeler as on the Cotton Club Orchestra, Missourians and Cab Calloway sides. No doubt.
- Clarinet, vocal: George McClennon, who else.
- Alto sax: As we have seen above: George Scott. But this man here is aurally definitely the same man as on the McClennon session May 09, 1924 (the same rhythmically stiff phrasing and simple arpeggios although a little bit developed further). I now have to look for his further appearances!
- Piano: As Eddie Heywood´s characteristics (octave runs) are not discernible it only seems feasible to look for the Cotton Club Orchestra´s pianist: Earres Prince (?). But there are no distinctive characteristics discernible.
- Banjo: can be heard faintly in bars 5/6 of the clt solo chorus of (1), thus presumably Charly Stamps (?).
- Tuba: Sounds just like Jimmy Smith of Cotton Club Orchestra, Missourians and Cab Calloway fame.

<u>Notes:</u>
*- Record Research 66: probably Tom Morris (cnt); Charlie Irvis (tbn); George McClennon (clt); unknown (alt); Clarence Williams (pno); Buddy Christian (?)(bjo); unknown (dms)*
*- Rust*2: Tom Morris (cnt); Charlie Irvis (tbn); George McClennon (clt); unknown (alt); Clarence Williams (pno); Buddy Christian (?)(bjo); unknown (bbs); George McClennon (vcl)*
*- Rust*3,*4,*6: unknown -c; unknown -tb; George McClennon -cl -v; unknown -as; ?Eddie Heywood -p; unknown -bj; unknown -bb*

015 **GEORGE McCLENNON´S JAZZ BAND** New York, Sep. 29, 1926

*R.Q. Dickerson* – tpt; *De Priest Wheeler* – tbn;
George McClennon – clt, voc; *George Scott* – alt;
*(Earres Prince)* – pno; *Jimmy Smith* – bbs

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|---|---|---|---|
| 74375-B | Narrow Escape | OK 8406, | Jazz Oracle BDW 8022 |
| 74377-B | Cotton Club Stomp | OK 8397, | Jazz Oracle BDW 8022 |

Aurally this is the same personnel as before only, that there is no banjo player here. So, the same remarks as before. And it certainly sounds the same.

<u>Notes:</u>
*- Record Research 66: "possibly contingent of Andy Preer´s Cotton Club Orchestra. The tp or cornet has a Tommy Ladnier blues approach to his soli and ensemble work."*
*- Rust*2: Tom Morris (cnt); Charlie Irvis (tbn); George McClennon (clt); unknown (alt); Clarence Williams (pno); Buddy Christian (?)(bjo); unknown (bbs); George McClennon (vcl)*
*- Rust*3,*4,*6: unknown -c; unknown -tb; George McClennon -cl -v; unknown -as; ?Eddie Heywood -p; unknown -bj; unknown -bb*

<u>Sources:</u>
Booklet to Jazz Oracle CD BDW 8022 George McClennon,
Booklet to Azure CD AZ-CD-13 Piron´s New Orleans Orchestra,
Charters / Kunstadt, Jazz A History of the New York Scene,
Walter C. Allen, Hendersonia,
Gunther Schuller, Early Jazz,
Tom Lord, Clarence Williams,
Brian Rust, Jazz and Ragtime Records 2nd, 3rd, 5th, 6th editions,
Record Research 66, February 1965.

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18-05-2021
05-01-2025