

THE RECORDINGS OF CHARLIE 'SMITTY' SMITH

An Annotated Tentative Personnel - Discography

SMITH, Charlie 'Smitty' or 'Fat Smitty', piano, bandleader

No personal data known

STYLISTICS

STYLE

His style is not that of the famous Harlem Stride school, but not very far from it. The main difference obviously is the reticent left-hand rhythm in contrast to the heavy "oom-pah" of the New York Stride players. So, it might be seen as a middle-way between Western ("Chicago") and Eastern ("New York") styles.

Thus, 'Smitty' Smith plays a very simple both-handed piano style, restricted on the chords of choruses, playing chords with the left hand alternating with the same – or similar – chords with his right hand, on each beat of the chords, thus feeding the ensemble or the soloists with a very simple carpet of chords. There is no differing between left-hand bass notes and right-hand treble notes as with James P. or Fats Waller. There just is a strict "oompa-oompa-oompa" of left- and right-hand rhythm, described and named thus by Count Basie enthusiastically in his book 'Good Morning Blues'.

The only instances 'Smitty' Smith plays soloistically (in band breaks), he alternates his ground "oompa-oompa oompa-oompa" rhythm into some "oompa-oomoom paoom-oompa oompa-oompa oomoom-paoom oompa-oompa by interchanging four and three measure phrases.

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: Charlie 'Smitty' Smith
- Probable, generally agreed, but not documented identifications are listed in italics, thus: *Charlie 'Smitty' Smith*
- 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: (*Charlie 'Smitty' Smith*)

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.

- All recording sessions from the discographies comprising J.C. Johnson with their documented or assumed personnel have been listed. Only discographies or articles in the author's collection have been used.

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.

My aim in presenting Mr. Charlie 'Smitty' Smith, pianist and long-time bandleader at Smalls' Sugar Cane Club, is to show one of the very many musicians of Harlem in the 1920s/30s who were not part of the top league but – with their own individual playing – contributed distinctly to the historic and fascinating music of the coloured people of New York, thus being part of the musician's community that enabled Harlem to become one of the centres of America's culture in the 1900s.

It was his bad luck that his work as a pianist was un-significant and that his work preserved on record was mostly attributed to pianist Willie 'The Lion' Smith for the last decades of jazz research, so that all Rusts list him for one Perry Bradford session only.

For the interested listener and collector he might still be an un-interesting pianist of the early Harlem period, but Count Basie's recollections of this musician may well show that 'Smitty' knew his profession and was a n important part of the Harlem scene for some years. And it is also to show that Willie 'The Lion' Smith recorded very little in the first half of the 1920s.

CHARLIE 'SMITTY' SMITH

001 THOMAS MORRIS PAST JAZZ MASTERS	New York,	Feb. 1923
unknown, Thomas Morris – cnt; <i>John Mayfield</i> – tbn; unknown – alt;		
Charles 'Smitty' Smith – pno; unknown – bjo; unknown – bbs; unknown - dms		
71306-A E Flat Blues No. 2 (Memphis, Tennessee)	OK 8055,	Chronological Classics 823
71307-B Original Charleston Strut	OK 8055,	Chronological Classics 823

This first session under Morris' name produced two titles: E Flat Blues No. 2 (key of Eb) and Original Charleston Strut (key of F / Bb / F). "E Flat Blues" is a normal 12-bar blues with 2-bar introduction and a short coda. On chorus 2 and 3 we hear a muted trumpet/cornet solo. Then we have two ensemble chorus and again two chorus with breaks on bars 2 and 4 with someone shouting: "Hey!" "Original Charleston Strut" (key in F / Bb / F) is a tune obviously derived from "Weary Blues" with five 12-bar chorus / verse in F (strain A), then three 16-bar chorus in Bb (strain B), and again three 12-bar chorus in F (strain A).

Composer credits for both numbers are "Morris".

Depart from RUST the personnel is: 2 trumpets, trombone, alto sax, possibly tenor sax, piano, banjo, brass bass and drums.

Now, what do we hear?

Both tunes bear a remarkable New Orleans flavour insofar as the tunes are known today as belonging to this city's tradition. "E Flat Blues" is very similar to a New Orleans brass band tune known as "Whoopin' Blues" as recorded by the Eureka Brass Band and the Young Tuxedo Brass Band in the fifties, and probably more often later on. And "Original Charleston Strut" is derived, as I have said, from "Weary Blues". - It has first to be mentioned that "Lonesome Journey Blues" of April '23 is a solo piece for trumpet/cornet. (I shall further on only use the term trumpet for a trumpet or a cornet being heard. Thomas Morris is always listed to have played cornet! Yet, on a photo of him wearing a straw hat – on the Fountain LP and the Classics CD – he holds a trumpet as far as I can identify!) As I assume that the bandleader cum trumpet player spares such a feature for himself, it can safely be considered this to be a solo number for Mr. Morris, the band leader. Moreover, the trumpet cum mute style heard here goes well with other known Th. Morris recordings. So, this special trumpet sound is understood to be Morris'.

This solo trumpet player's – I'd call him tpt II – playing is opposed to the other trumpet player present, who plays mainly without mute throughout and in a rather "straight" style (tpt I). As you always have Bubber Miley and Thomas Morris listed as trumpeters in the discos (Bub Miley always played trumpet, not cornet!) I believe, that in the early days of discographical effort the "muted" player has been mistaken to be Miley and the other one accordingly to be Morris. Tpt I sometimes uses a straight-mute when playing third parts above Th. Morris (at the end of "Lonesome Journey Blues").

For me, though, it is absolutely clear, that the "muted" player – tpt II – is Morris playing second parts and solos, and the other trumpet player, whose identity I am unable to find out, is the lead man. And I never hear anything which reminds me of Miley! To my ears, Morris' playing is characterized by a lot of (mainly!) use of a 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. G. Bushell in his book "Jazz From The Beginning" attributes this latter quality to the lack of basic training: "Like Thomas Morris. He had some great ideas, but no lip – it just splattered all over the place." Further and most obvious examples of this lack of security you can hear on the sides by "Waller with Morris' Hot Babies".

Miley - throughout his career - played in that military derived, triplet dominated staccato style of Johnny Dunn, which was common in Harlem before the advent of Louis Armstrong in late 1924. But this is not the style by this player here!

Therefore, my conclusion is that Miley's name ought to be cancelled from the discos!

The New Orleans flavor crops up also when you listen to the first trumpet player who plays a strong swinging open lead on "Original", completely different from Morris' playing in the first tune. Although Morris does not play in that Johnny Dunn oriented "square" style as Miley used to do, he nevertheless is far apart from the "western" style of tpt I.

So, we have to leave the lead trumpet player - tpt I - as unknown.

- Also, the trombone player plays in a New Orleans tailgate style completely different from Charlie Irvis' legato melodic playing. RUST 6th edition still lists him as Irvis, whereas I have somewhere seen John Mayfield of Clarence Williams Blue Five fame. This certainly is a much better possibility. Or is he somebody else, of whom I shall speculate below?

- I hear a legato playing alto saxophonist in a style uncommon for early Harlem music, who definitely is not Ernest Elliott!

There may be a tenor saxophonist, heard only with difficulty, if at all, in the ensemble. In one two-bar break at the end of "Original Charleston Strut" there is a saxophone heard playing low notes in "slap-tongue" style. This could possibly be Ernest Elliott as listed, but I have to bear in mind that Garvin Bushell in his book 'Jazz from the Beginning' says that he never (!) heard Ernest Elliott play saxophone. And he should have known! Later recordings will show yet, that he nevertheless did!

I am quite uncertain about the saxophone(s). To me it sounds like alto throughout both numbers. The break in A6 of "Original" could be played by alto as well as by tenor (I have asked a proficient alto sax player about this). It is in the range of either variant. So, do we have alto and tenor, or do we hear an alto that is played very low at some places, especially at the end of "Original", or is it someone playing a C-melody-sax? Saxophone players, please, comment! My conclusion: it is only alto saxophone throughout, and not Elliott.

- In the first number we can hear piano-"comping" which ascertains my conclusion for Charles "Smitty" Smith.

- The style of the banjo player is typical Harlem of the first half of the twenties, doubling time in "E Flat Blues No. 2" as you can hear it in many recordings under Johnny Dunn's name, so, perhaps Sam Speed or John Mitchell?

- The tuba player is listed nowhere, as far as I know. A surprise for this early time is his definite four-to-the-bar rhythm on "Original", which was absolutely uncommon in early Harlem music and again points to New Orleans jazz.

- The drummer then with his cow-bell breaks in paradiddle could be from either sphere.

These observations give rise to a provocative and most daring question: Can it be that some of Piron's men (tpt I, tbn, alt, bbs) were hired by Thomas Morris?

Can anybody tell me when the Piron band arrived in New York? Their earliest documented engagement in New York was in May 1923. But, were they in New York already in February?

There was a strong link of the Piron band to Thomas Morris, as the Piron band was managed by Clarence Williams (see foto in P. Bradford, 'Born with the Blues', where the Piron band is named Williams' Jazz Kings!) and Williams used Th. Morris as trumpet player in his recording bands.

Engelbert Wengel from Frankfurt, Germany, a noted specialist for New Orleans Jazz, though, does not think that these men are from the Piron band, but he agrees to the New Orleans flavor.

Notes:

- Ch. Delaunay, *New Hot Discography*, 1948: not listed

- Rust*2: Tom Morris, Bubber Miley (cnt); Charlie Irvis (tbn); unknown (ten); Willie "The Lion" Smith (pno); Buddy Christian (bjo)

- Rust*3: Tom Morris -Bubber Miley -c; Charlie Irvis -tb; unknown -ts; unknown -p; unknown -bj; unknown -d. Contrary to previous statements and suggestions, the pianist on these records is neither Willie "The Lion" Smith (who denies all knowledge of them and in any case was not in New York at the time) nor Clarence Williams.

- Rust*4: Tom Morris -Bubber Miley -c; Charlie Irvis -tb; unknown -ts; unknown -p; unknown -bj; unknown -d.

- Rust*6: Tom Morris, Bubber Miley, c; Charlie Irvis, tb; ?Ernest Elliott, ts; ?Willie "The Lion" Smith, p; unknown, bj; unknown, d.

Tunes:

71306-A E Flat Blues No 2 (Memphis Tennessee) Key of Eb OKeh
(Intro 2 bars ens)(Chorus A1 12 bars ens)(Chorus A2 12 bars tpt II muted)(Chorus A3 12 bars tpt II muted)(Chorus A4 12 bars ens)(Chorus A5 12 bars ens)(Chorus A6 12 bars ens, break voc bars 2 + 4)(Chorus A7 12 bars ens break voc bars 2 + 4)(Coda 1 bar tpts)

71307-B Original Charleston Strut Key of F / Bb / F OKeh
(Chorus A1 12 bars strain A ens break bjo bars 5+6)(Chorus A2 12 bars strain A ens break dms bars 5+6)(Chorus A3 12 bars strain A ens)(Chorus A4 12 bars strain A ens)(Chorus A5 12 bars strain A ens break tpt bars 5+6)(Chorus B1 16 bars strain B ens)(Chorus B2 16 bars strain B tpt II obligato tbn)(Chorus B3 16 bars strain B tpt II obligato tbn) (Chorus A6 12 bars strain A ens break alt (or ten ?) bars 5+6)(Chorus A7 12 bars strain A ens)(Coda 2 bars ens - dms)

002 THOMAS MORRIS PAST JAZZ MASTERS

New York,

Apr. 1923

unknown, Thomas Morris - cnt; John Mayfield - tbn; (Happy Caldwell?) - ten;

Charles 'Smitty' Smith - pno; (Will 'Splivey' Escoffery?) - bjo

71531-C Lonesome Journey Blues

OK 4867,

Chronological Classics 823

71532-B When The Jazz Band Starts To Play

OK 4867,

Chronological Classics 823

This second session under Morris' name again produced two numbers: Lonesome Journey Blues (key of G) and When The Jazz Band Starts To Play (key of Bb / Eb / Bb). Composer credits for both numbers are "Morris".

In parts depart from RUST the personnel is: 2 trumpets, trombone, tenor sax, piano, banjo. NO brass bass and drums.

"Lonesome Journey Blues" again is a normal 12 bar blues, which is a solo number for the band leader. He plays 4 chorus tpt solo, after which there are two 8 bar strains by the ensemble in call-and-response fashion.

"When The Jazz Band Starts To Play" is kind of a stomp tune of Morris' own authorship. The same tune has been recorded by Thomas Morris And His Seven Hot Babies with the title "Ham Gravy" in 1926. Verse II is very similar to the chorus of Charlie Johnson's recording of "Birmingham Black Bottom" (second strain), which might be a clue to Morris' assumed presence on this recording session.

Now again, what do we hear here?

The New Orleans flavour is gone in parts, just because there is no singing alto sax anymore, the four-to-the-bar tuba is gone, and the two tunes do not bear any particular New Orleans influence.

- Tpt II - Morris - plays "Lonesome Journey Blues" as his solo tune. There is no other trumpet soloist. Tpt I plays lead trumpet throughout in the ensembles.

At the end of the second blues chorus in "When The Jazz Band" there is some confusion about the trumpet players. In my estimation, Morris, who soloed on open horn on the two preceding blues chorus, grabs his mute for the last two Verses II, whereas tpt I plays open horn further on.

- The trombone player may be the same as before.

- The few instances where the tenor sax can be heard (at the end of 'Lonesome Journey Blues' and in a slap-tongue break and in ensemble in '... Jazz Band ...') its player shows a very different approach to reed playing than Elliott. There is no up- and down slurring, no thin and sour tone, no repeated phrases, instead a full-bodied tenor sax by a man whose main instrument the tenor probably was, and who obviously was under influence of the young Coleman Hawkins. And we have neither heard Elliott on tenor nor even slap-tongue playing as yet!

Which makes me wonder whether Bushell's comment re Elliott's saxophone playing simply meant "tenor saxophone" - not alto, as we have sufficient proof of Elliott playing the alto! So: no Elliott here again!

As tenor player Happy Caldwell comes to mind as he was with Mamie Smith at the time, Hawkins' successor, and certainly under his spell! Also, this would be Caldwell's style as performed later, also with Morris' Seven Hot Babies.

I have named Escoffery on banjo because of this player's style and because of Escoffery's membership in Charles Smitty Smith's band.

- In "When The Jazz Band" we can hear a pno solo, which stylistically fits exactly to what is played by Charles "Smitty" Smith in the pno breaks "Hold 'Er, Deacon" by the Blue Rhythm Orchestra (see my June Clark Discography). To my ears these 6 and 4 bars of soloing are sufficient proof of "Smittie's" presence.

- The style of the banjo player seems to be a little more straightforward than that on the Feb. 1923 session. But this might also be caused by the band leader's demands. I see the possibility that this is a different player. I have named Escoffery on banjo because of this player's style and because of Escoffery's membership in Charles Smitty Smith's band.

There are neither tuba nor drums on this session!

Notes:

- Ch. Delaunay, *New Hot Discography*, 1948: not listed

- Rust*2: Tom Morris, Bubber Miley (cnt); Charlie Irvis (tbn); unknown (ten); Willie "The Lion" Smith (pno); Buddy Christian (bjo)

- Rust*3,*4: Tom Morris -Bubber Miley -c; Charlie Irvis -tb; unknown -ts; unknown -p; unknown -bj

- Rust*6: Tom Morris, Bubber Miley, c; Charlie Irvis, tb; ?Ernest Elliott, ts; ?Willie "The Lion" Smith, p; unknown, bj

Tunes:

71531-C Lonesome Journey Blues Key of G (or Ab ?) OKeh
(Intro 4 bars ens)(Chorus A1 12 bars tpt II tpt/tbn obligato)(Chorus A2 12 bars tpt II tpt/tbn obligato)(Chorus A3 12 bars tpt II tpt/tbn obligato)(Chorus A4 12 bars tpt II tpt/tbn obligato)(Chorus A5 12 bars ens)(Chorus B1 8 bars ten - ens) (Chorus B2 8 bars tpt - ens)

71532-B When The Jazz Band Starts To Play Key of Bb / Eb / Bb OKeh
(Intro 4 bars ens)(Verse I strain A AA 16 bars ens)(Verse II strain B AA' 16 bars ens middle break tbn)(Verse II strain B AA' 16 bars pno 6 bars / middle break 2 bars ten / pno 4 bars / ens 4 bars)(Chorus A1 12 bars tpt II solo)(Chorus A2 12 bars tpt II solo)(Verse II

003 THOMAS MORRIS PAST JAZZ MASTERS

New York,

May 1923

Bubber Miley, Thomas Morris – cnt; unknown – tbn; unknown – alt (or cms);

Charles ‘Smitty’ Smith – pno; unknown – bjo;

71582-B

Just Blues, That’s All

OK 8075,

Chronological Classics 823

71583-C

Bull Blues (E Flat No. 1 Blues)

OK 8075,

Chronological Classics 823

This third session again produced two numbers: Just Blues, That’s All (key of Eb) and Bull Blues (Eb Flat No.1 Blues) (key of Eb). Composer credits for both numbers are again "Morris".

The personnel is: 2 trumpets, trombone, alto sax or possibly C-melody sax, piano, banjo. NO brass bass and drums.

"Just Blues, That’s All" is a normal 12 bar blues, which again is a solo number for the band leader (tpt II). He plays 3 chorus tpt solo, after which there are an alto solo (tonally similar to soprano sax here), two ensemble chorus with pno passages in the first four bars and chorus tpt II against the ensemble in call-and-response fashion. In the piano parts in Chorus A1 up to A3 you can hear exactly what William "Count" Basie understood by "comping".

"Bull Blues" bears a second title: "E Flat No.1 Blues" or "E Flat Blues No. 1". RUST (and following him the Fountain sleeve and the Classics booklet) gives this second title as E Flat No. 1 Blues, the Natchez sleeve gives E Flat Blues No. 1, as it would be appropriate, when referring it to E Flat Blues No. 2 of the Feb. 1923 session. Thematically this tune has no relation to E-Flat No. 2 of Feb. 1923.

This tune is played mostly in ensemble style and bears some resemblance to the style of Oliver’s Creole Jazz Band, who’s first recordings of April 1923 might have been published at exactly the time of this Morris session and thus be of influence.

This blues is akin to "Tin Roof Blues" and "Jazzin’ Babies Blues"

Again, what do we hear?

- Tpt II - Morris - plays "Just Blues, That’s All" as his solo tune. There is no other trumpet soloist on this item. Tpt I plays lead trumpet throughout in the ensembles. He is very much in the background on this session, but at the end of Bull Blues, where Morris plays the lead part (Chorus 6 and Coda), elements of Miley’s playing become apparent in the upper trumpet part. So, I would assume that it is Miley here playing tpt I!

- This trombone player bears a certain resemblance with Charlie Irvis. But, from my knowledge of Irvis’ style, I do not think that it is him.

- Very probably not Elliott although listed in the past! We hear a saxophone player here whose tone reminds me of a soprano saxophone and I assume it to be an alto. But certainly, the pitch of this instrument would allow it to be a C-melody saxophone as well. No idea, who it could be

- Decidedly Charlie "Smitty" Smith! The piano solos in "Just Blues", Chorus A5 and A6 are unmistakable. And here you can hear someone shout: "Play it, Mister Smith!"

- The style of the banjo player certainly is straightforward and swinging to a degree. Maybe Buddy Christian?

- There are neither tuba nor drums on this session!

Notes:

- Ch. Delaunay, *New Hot Discography, 1948*: not listed

- Rust*2: Tom Morris, Bubber Miley (cnt); Charlie Irvis (tbn); unknown (ten); Willie "The Lion" Smith (pno); Buddy Christian (bjo)

- Rust*3,*4: Tom Morris -Bubber Miley -c; Charlie Irvis -tb; unknown -ts; unknown -p; unknown -bj

- Rust*6: Tom Morris, Bubber Miley, c; Charlie Irvis, tb; ?Ernest Elliott, ts; ?Willie "The Lion" Smith, p; unknown, bj

Tunes:

71582-B Just Blues, That’s All Key of Eb

OKeh

(Intro 4 bars ens)(Chorus A1 12 bars tpt II muted)(Chorus A2 12 bars tpt II muted)(Chorus A3 12 bars tpt II muted) (Chorus A4 12 bars alt)(Chorus A5 12 bars pno 4 bars / ens 8 bars)(Chorus A6 12 bars pno 4 bars "play it, Mr. Smith" / ens 8 bars)(Chorus A7 12 bars tpt II - ens)(Chorus A8 12 bars tpt II - ens)(Coda 2 bars pno / ens)

71583-C Bull Blues (E Flat Blues No.1) Key of Eb

OKeh

(Intro 8 bars ens)(Chorus A1 12 bars ens)(Chorus A2 12 bars ens)(Chorus A3 12 bars ens breaks in bars 2 + 4 tpts) (Chorus A4 12 bars ens)(Chorus A5 12 bars tbn - alt tpts obligato)(Chorus A6 12 bars ens breaks in bars 2 + 4 brass)(Coda 4 bars ens break

004 THE GULF COAST SEVEN

New York,

May 17, 1923

Gus Aiken – tpt; Eugene „Bud“ Aiken – tbn;

Garvin Bushell – clt; Rollen Smith – ten;

Charlie ‘Smitty’ Smith – pno; John Mitchell – bjo

81021-3

Fade Away Blues

Col A-3916,

Timeless CBC 1-073

81022-3

Daybreak Blues

Col A-3916,

Timeless CBC 1-073

Evaluation of this session and its personnel starts with a big disillusion and overthrow on my side! For a long time now, I was convinced that the trumpet player on this session had to be Johnny Dunn – and not Gus Aiken as listed – because stylistically it is so much in the Dunn mixture of heroic and military triplet phrasing and staccato power and because Aiken was expected to be far from New York at the time. Yet, a recently acquired pile of Record Research issues – No. 75! – brought unexpected clarity: it must be Gus Aiken on trumpet here! Storyville 1996/7, p. 189, 232 informs us that Aiken was in Cuba with Gonzelle White’s show from mid May (at last 25th) until mid December 1923.

This made me (KBR) doubt Aiken’s presence on this session, the more so as his departure has not been exactly documented. But Walter C. Allen in Record Research 75 p.9 unpretentiously says: "Aiken recalled recording *Daybreak Blues* and *Fade Away Blues*". And: Johnny Dunn was in England from early May 1923 until September 1923 with Will Vodery’s Orchestra.

This certainly sets the matter straight and it has to be Aiken. But then Aiken delivers a perfect copy of Dunn’s very personal style! So much so that Garvin Bushell in his 'Jazz from the Beginning' p. 158 says: "That cornet has to be Johnny Dunn!" And he should have known! (M. Rader’s and my own article on Gus Aiken in the FROG Yearbook Vol. 3 denies Aiken’s presence on this one and Bradford’s session of May/June 1923 (P. B. Jazz Phoobs) and has thus to be corrected! Repeated listening after this most unexpected new situation certainly shows a much more flexible time of the trumpet player, a mellower tone and a jazzier phrasing, yet still remaining a very expert copy of Dunn’s style.

As often when Gus Aiken can be heard on record, he is accompanied by a technically proficient and well tasted trombone player who plays in a no-nonsense and sober style, with good knowledge of harmonies and very melodious. This is Gus’ brother Eugene ‘Bud’ Aiken who also used to play expert trumpet when required. Bushell says of him: "Bud Aiken ... playing is clean and not boisterous – Buddy was never boisterous." And this is exactly what you hear on these titles. There seems to have been a custom of pairing trumpet and trombone players in the twenties. The Aiken brothers obviously are an example, as are June Clark and Jimmy Harrison, later Tommy Ladnier and Harrison, Rex Stewart with Herb Gregory, Bubber Miley with Charlie Irvis and Louis Metcalf with Tricky Sam Nanton. Rex Stewart vividly describes this custom in his beautiful book 'Boy Meets Horn' and 'Jazz Masters of the Thirties'.

In his book Garvin Bushell does not deny or even question his own presence on these sides. And aural evidence shows that he is the clarinet player. Insofar lately offered and issued personnels are probably correct. But the saxophone player imposes a severe problem. He does not

show Elliott's tonal and phrasing characteristics and stays very unobtrusively in the background, appearing only in harmony with the clarinet in one chorus of each title. At other times he stays very much in the background and can only vaguely be heard. He does not play clarinet as listed! Bushell says: "*That's an alto saxophone in the middle duet. But I never heard Ernest Elliott play saxophone. Maybe it was Herschel Brassfield.*" In my (KBR) opinion a tenor saxophone is played on these titles. That Elliott also played saxophone cannot be denied following some documented recordings with Bessie Smith, King Oliver and others. And Elliott's recordings on alto (!) show a rather "sour" style which is not apparent here. Brassfield was in England at the time of this session, together with Johnny Dunn, as was Rollen Smith, so they must be omitted. This leaves an unknown tenor sax player who cannot be identified at the moment.

The very fundamental piano player is not Bradford as might be expected, and seems not to be Leroy Tibbs as well. If we are right to hear Tibbs on Edith Wilson's recordings of January and May 1922 and later, our man here shows nothing of functional band piano playing as by Tibbs, but delivers a steady and seemingly unstructured carpet of piano sound. Most interestingly, Perry Bradford's Jazz Phools session of May/June 1923 comprises Charlie "Smitty" Smith as pianist. This man is documented as being the pianist of June Clark's band at "Smalls' Sugar Cane Club" and is perfectly characterised by Count Basie in his book 'Good Morning Blues' as a great "comper" which does not mean anything else but that he was great in accompaniment, not solo work. This is exactly what we hear. And so, I would like to name Charlie Smith as probable piano player for this session. "Smitty" Smith can also be heard on Thomas Morris' Past Jazz Masters and June Clark's band aka Blue Rhythm Orchestra and Gulf Coast Seven of November 1925. Bradford is named by John Mitchell for this session, but Bradford's style is easy to identify and must be ruled out here.

This leaves the banjo player. And he is unmistakably the young and virtuoso John Mitchell with his dated banjo artistry, very much in the Johnny Dunn style of tremolos and double-time.

Walter C. Allen in his article on this session (RR 75) asks: "*Does anyone hear two trumpets on Col A-3916?*" This question certainly has to be denied, but there are instances in the tunes where Aiken plays muted trumpet breaks which are immediately carried on by the clarinet player playing growl, thus very much sounding like the trumpet.

The whole performance is so much in Johnny-Dunn-style and with Dunn personnel, that it must be concluded that Bradford had been surprised by Dunn's departure for England together with his trombonist in early May, although they had probably been firmly booked for the session. Luckily Bradford was able to find a perfect replacement in the Aiken brothers to retain the Dunn mode of playing and cash in on it.

And it shows the very promising abilities of the Aiken brothers which later would not be accomplished, partly because of Bud Aiken's much too early death in 1927, and partly by Gus Aiken's way into mediocrity in later years.

Notes:

- Ch. Delaunay, *New Hot Discography 1948: Personnel unknown.*

- Rust*2 (corrected): Johnny Dunn (cnt); ? Herb Flemming (tbn); Herschel Brassfield (clt, alt); Bob Fuller (clt/sop); Perry Bradford or Leroy Tibbs (pno); ? Sam Speed (bjo).

- Rust*3, *4, *6: Gus Aiken -c; Bud Aiken -tb; ?Garvin Bushell -cl; Ernest Elliott -cl -ts; Leroy Tibbs -p; John Mitchell -bj.

- RR 73: John Mitchell, when interviewed by Harold Flakser and Carl Kendziora, Jr. named: Johnny Dunn, Gus Aiken, trumpets; Earl Granstaff, trombone; Hershal Brassfield and Rollen Smith, reeds; Perry Bradford, piano; John Mitchell, banjo.

- RR 75: Walter C. Allen's personnel: prob Gus Aiken, poss Bud Aiken; prob Garvin Bushell, poss Ernest Elliott, prob Perry Bradford, John Mitchell.

- Storyville 1996/7 p. 189: Laurie Wright's statement as to Gus Aiken's departure to Cuba: "*they had definitely sailed by the middle of May (Chicago Defender of 26/5/23)*" has to be questioned after W. C. Allen's statements! This departure should be seen as after May 17 and before May 25. And this would also change the recording date of the adjacent P. Bradford's Jazz Phools Paramount session from May/June to late May.

005 PERRY BRADFORD'S JAZZ PHOOLS

New York, c. May 18-20, 1923

Johnny Dunn – cnt; Bud Aiken – tbn;

Garvin Bushell – clt, alt; unknown – ten;

Charles 'Smitty' Smith – pno; Samuel Speed – bjo

1429-1	Fade Away Blues	Pm 12041,	Timeless CBC 1-073
1429-2	Fade Away Blues	Pm 12041,	Frog DGF 56
1429-3	Fade Away Blues	Pm 12041,	Document DOCD-5353
1430-1	Daybreak Blues (Original Bugle Blues)	Pm 12041,	Biograph BLP-12007(LP)
1430-2	Daybreak Blues (Original Bugle Blues)	Pm 12041,	Frog DGF 56
1430-3	Daybreak Blues (Original Bugle Blues)	Pm 12041,	Timeless CBC 1-073

This session obviously has to be seen in relation to the first Gulf Coast Seven session for Columbia, organised by Perry Bradford and certainly executed under his guidance. The two recorded tunes are Bradford's and the same ones as with the Gulf Coast Seven (see my article on the Gulf Coast Seven in Names&Numbers 69). And obviously and aurally the band personnel are the same, too. This then unquestioningly has to change the hitherto listed recording date(s). As Gus Aiken left New York for an extended tour to Cuba at last on May 25, this session has to be predated before this day (Dunn was in England by this date)! As Columbia's Gulf Coast Seven recording session of the same two titles seems to be better documented and dated May 17, 1923 I tend to date this latter Paramount session on the same day (same personnel!) or only on an insignificantly different date. The unknown saxophonist, who certainly is neither Brassfield nor Rollen Smith, who both were in England at the time together with Dunn, might possibly be found in the ranks of Gonzell White's 'Real Jazzers of Jazz', the band Gus Aiken was about to leave for Cuba with, namely Harvey Lankford or Amanzie Richardson. But this is only my own guess-work.

Notes:

- Ch. Delaunay, *New Hot Discography 1948: Gus Aiken (tp); Bud Aiken (tb); Garvin Bushell (cl); Brassfield (cl & as); Perry Bradford (p); "Speed" (bjo).*

- Rust*2: Johnny Dunn or June Clark? (cnt); Jimmy Harrison (tbn); "Smitty" (clt); Herschel Brassfield (clt/alt); Charles Smith (pno); Samuel Speed (bjo)

- Rust*3: Gus Aiken – c; Bud Aiken – tb; Garvin Bushell – Herschel Brassfield – cl-as; Charles Smith – p; Samuel Speed – bj.

- Rust*4, *6: Gus Aiken – c; Bud Aiken – tb; Garvin Bushell – cl-as; Charles Smith – p; Samuel Speed – bj.

- JAZZ INFORMATION 1-35 p.2: "*Les Zacheis of Cedar Rapids, Iowa, writes that with the help of Dave Caughren he has obtained the correct personnel (sic!) of the Paramount/Claixonola records by Perry Bradford's Jazz Phools. For 'Charleston South Carolina' – 'Hoola Boola Dance' (Claxtonola 40309) and 'Daybreak Blues' – 'Fadeaway Blues' (National 12255), also issued on other labels, this personnel was given by Perry Bradford himself: Gus Aiken, trumpet; Garvin Bushell, clarinet; Brassfield, clarinet and sax; (for other records, Bradford has given "Brass" Field, drummer; which is correct?) "Speed", bano; Bradford, piano. Johnny Dunn is definitely not on these sides. According to Bradford, Dunn was in Europe when they were made.*"

- Bushell/Tucker p. 158: *Fade Away Blues: "If that's Gus Aiken, he's playing Johnny Dunn's patterns note for note. Day Break Blues: That's not Johnny (Dunn), but he sure plays like Johnny. This date puzzles me, because I don't recall Gus playing so much like Johnny. There's a saxophone in there, so there had to be two reeds."*

- RR 75 p.9: "Aiken recalled recording *Daybreak Blues* and *Fade Away Blues*". Gus Aiken was in Cuba from Mid-May until End-December 1923. Johnny Dunn was in England from early May 1923 until September 1923 with Will Vodery's Orchestra. Against our recent opinion, the above testimony obviously shows that Aiken was still at hand for these two sessions recording *Fade Away Blues* and *Daybreak Blues*! But then Aiken delivers a perfect copy of Dunn's very personal style!

Discernible differences of takes:

1429-1: first 4 bars of 5th chorus: clt plays very restrained trying to find his part which he hits on bar 5
 1429-2: first 4 bars of 5th chorus: clt plays arranged part in harmony with tenor from the beginning
 1429-3: first 4 bars of 5th chorus: clt enters on bar 3
 1430-1: bar 9 of first strain B (after 4 12-bar blues chorus): clarinet in harmony with tenor
 bar 1/2 of second strain B: tpt starts with short legato notes from first beat on
 1430-2: bar 9 of first strain B (after 4 12-bar blues chorus): clarinetist struggles for finding his part
 bar 1/2 of second strain B: tpt starts on second beat, short pause on first beat
 1430-3: bar 9 of first strain B (after 4 12-bar blues chorus): clarinet in harmony with tenor
 bar 1/2 of second strain B: tpt plays long legato notes with little jump in the middle from 1st beat on

006 **THOMAS MORRIS PAST JAZZ MASTERS**

New York, Aug. 07, 1923

Bubber Miley, Thomas Morris – cnt; unknown – tbn; unknown – clt;

Charles 'Smitty' Smith – pno; unknown – bjo; unknown – bbs

71739-B Those Blues OK 4940, Chronological Classics 823

71740-B Beaucoupe de Jazz (Lots Of Jazz) OK 4940, Chronological Classics 823

This fourth session again produced two numbers: 'Those Blues' (key of F / Bb / F) and 'Beaucoupe de Jazz' (key of F / Bb). Composer credits for the first number is "Miley", for the second number again "Morris".

The personnel is: 2 trumpets, trombone, clarinet, piano, banjo and tuba.

"Those Blues" is a composition by Bubber Miley and has nothing to do with a normal 12 bar blues. Only in Verse II the first 12 bars (of unusual 28 bars!) remind us of a blues chorus.

"Beaucoupe de Jazz (Lots Of Jazz)" is a Morris composition and is of the "Weary Blues" type again.

And finally, what do we hear?

- Tpt II - Morris - plays a much lesser role on these two items than on the former ones! Tpt I plays lead trumpet throughout in the ensembles, very secure and in the Dunn influenced style we know of Bubber Miley. So, I feel certain that it is definitely Miley here on this coupling.

Further proof may be that "Those Blues" is Miley's tune.

- Other than with the former session, this trombone player bears no resemblance with Charlie Irvis. No idea, who it could be.

Maybe he can be identified by his "laughing" trombone parts?

- Now we have a clarinet instead of a saxophone player here. RUST lists him as ?Ernest Elliott. In my memory Elliott is a clarinet player with a very antiquated style. But here we have a clarinet player with a very jazzy style. Listen to the middle break in Verse I B1 of "Beaucoupe de Jazz". It is laid back playing, with a harsh tone, almost like Johnny Dodds. And listen to his ensemble playing. Other than I have written in my article on these recordings in Names & Numbers 49, where I have named Elliott as the possible clarinetist, I do not think now that we have Elliott on clarinet here. This player does not have the smears and slurs so typical for Elliott, our man here definitely has better pitch and is able to play sixteenth notes and runs. But I still maintain that he is a first-class player and very Dodds-ish. Unfortunately, no name comes to mind or has ever been assumed other than Elliott. Just an after-thought: Albert 'Happy' Caldwell??

- Just piano comping, therefore certainly Charlie Smith.

- The banjo is straightforward and swinging. Maybe Buddy Christian?

- On this session we have a tuba player again, who at times - when required - plays four-to-the-bar. But comparing his playing with that of his colleague's on the first coupling, this player's style seems stiff and not swinging. No idea of his identity.

Notes:

- Ch. Delaunay, *New Hot Discography*, 1948: not listed

- Rust*2: Tom Morris, Bubber Miley (cnt); Charlie Irvis (tbn); unknown (clt); unknown (ten); Willie "The Lion" Smith (pno); Buddy Christian (bjo); unknown (bbs)

- Rust*3,*4: Tom Morris -Bubber Miley -c; Charlie Irvis -tb; ?Ernest Elliott -cl; unknown -ts; unknown -p; unknown -bj; unknown -bb

- Rust*6: Tom Morris, Bubber Miley, c; Charlie Irvis, tb; ?Ernest Elliott, cl, ts; ?Willie "The Lion" Smith, p; unknown, bj, unknown, bb

Tunes Structures:

71739-B *Those Blues* Key of F / Bb / F OKeh

(Intro 8 bars ens)(Verse I 16 bars AA ens middle break probably tpt I Miley)(Verse II 28 bars AA' ens)(Chorus A1 16 bars AB clt end break brass)(Chorus A2 16 bars AB ?tpt I Miley)(Verse II 28 bars AA' ens)(Coda 2 bars ens)

71740-B *Beaucoupe de Jazz* Key of F / Bb OKeh

(Intro 4 bars ens)(Chorus A1 16 bars AABA ens)(Verse I B1 16 bars AA' ens with tpt II lead middle break clt)(Verse I B2 16 bars AA' ens middle break tpt II)(Chorus A2 16 bars AABA ens)(Bridge 4 bars ens modulation to Bb)(Chorus C1 16 bars AABA ens)(Chorus C2 16 bars AABA ens tpt II lead)

007 **VIOLA McCOY** the Choo Choo Jazzers

New York, Sep. 18-22, 1924

Viola McCoy, Billy Higgins – voc;

Bob Fuller – clt;

Charles 'Smitty' Smith or (Louis Hooper?) – pno

31696 I Don't Want Nobody (That Don't Want Me) Ajax 17069, Document DOCD-5660

31699 Keep On Going Ajax 17066, Document DOCD-5417

No individual playing of any of the participants can be distinguished on the first title. The clarinetist can be heard playing a certain arpeggio at different places of the tune. This certainly is too little to identify Bob Fuller. The pianist almost is exclusively heard playing four/four rhythm with both hands with very little alteration. On the second title there are some more recognizable bits, but both musicians are very restrained. Yet, Fuller and Hooper might be responsible and present, yet, it has to be noted that the pianist's style as displayed here is totally untypical of Louis Hooper's playing. As shown below Miss McCoy had just finished an engagement accompanied by 'Smith's Five Harmony Kings', the forerunner of 'June Clark's Creole Stompers', led by pianist Charles 'Smitty' Smith, whose simple and effective playing has been characterized by nobody less than Count Basie as a 'lot of good comping' and accompanying, without much ambition to soloing. This pianist might be a serious alternative to Louis Hooper on these sides!

Notes:

- RR 77-6, 86-6: not listed
- W. Bryant, Ajax Records: no personnel per Hooper
- BGR*4: Bob Fuller, cl; Louis Hooper, p
- Rust*6: Bob Fuller, cl; Louis Hooper, p
- Storyville 1998/99, p.188: "In June she was recording in New York City, but by early July the Defender (19/7/24 6/3) showed her at Jack's Cabaret, Saratoga Springs, N.Y.. She appears to have played a lengthy season, for the same paper (2/8/24 5/2) noted that she would be at Jack's Cabaret acc. Smith's Five Harmony Kings: June Clark, c; James Harrison, tb; Bennet Carter, sax; Charles Smith, p; & James Carson, d. until 1 September."
- Bob Hitchens, Choo Choo Jazzers, VJM 175: Bob Fuller (cl) Louis Hooper (p)

008 **BLUE RHYTHM ORCHESTRA** New York, Oct. 29, 1925
 June Clark – cnt; Jimmy Harrison – tbn;
 Buster Bailey – clt; Leonard Fields - alt;
 Charlie 'Smitty' Smith – pno; Will "Splivy" Escoffery – bjo
 106358 Keep Your Temper PA 36364, Per 14545, Frog DGF 73

Because of the obvious correlation of this and the following sessions I have taken my liberty to discuss both sessions 008 and 010 together under the session 010 date.

Please, note, that 'Keep Your Temper' on Frog DGF 71 does in fact play the 'Keep Your Temper' of the Gulf Coast Seven session of Nov. 05, 1925. The Blue Rhythm Orchestra 'Keep Your Temper' has then been correctly reissued on Frog DGF 73 as shown here!

009 **ORIGINAL BESSIE BROWN** New York, c. Nov. 04, 1925
 Bessie Brown – voc;
 Charlie "Smitty" Smith - pno
 106379 Them "Has Been" Blues PA 32156, Document DOCD-5456
 106380 Papa De Da Da PA 32156, Document DOCD-5456

This piano accompanist is very akin to Clarence Williams, but he plays phrases that are distinctly different from Williams' style and thus this session is not listed as a Clarence Williams session in Tom Lord, Clarence Williams. And rightly so. This player is a stronger pianist than Clarence, but equally rooted in ragtime – the New Orleans way. Lacking special pianistic knowledge, I feel unable to search for this pianist among his known contemporaries.

But it must be mentioned that on this day – 4. November 1925 – the Blue Rhythm Orchestra aka June Clark and his Creole Band recorded two titles in numerical sequence for Pathé Actuelle. The pianist of this band is Charlie 'Smitty' Smith, a modest and largely unknown pianist of early Harlem times. He is described as one of the best "compers" – i.e. accompanist without soloistic ambition – by Count Basie in his book 'Good Morning Blues'. And accordingly, his very few soloistic spots on record do not allow a competent estimation of his pianistic abilities. But because of his most probable presence in the recording studio I see the probability of his cooperation, although his known style from the Blue Rhythm Orchestra recordings is not absolutely congruous with what we here on these two sides.

Notes:

- BGR*2: probably Clarence Williams pno
- BGR*3,*4: unknown pno
- Rust*3: Fletcher Henderson ? -p.
- Rust*4,*6: unknown -p.

010 **BLUE RHYTHM ORCHESTRA** New York, c. Nov. 04, 1925
 June Clark – cnt; Jimmy Harrison – tbn;
 Buster Bailey – clt; Leonard Fields – alt;
 Charlie 'Smitty' Smith – pno; Will "Splivy" Escoffery - bjo
 106381 Santa Claus Blues PA 36350, Per 14531, Frog DGF 71
 106382 Hold 'Er, Deacon PA 36364, Per 14545, Frog DGF 71

The quotations below make me conclude that these sides of the Blue Rhythm Orchestra are in fact by June Clark's Creole Stompers, augmented by Buster Bailey on clarinet, if it is he. The below mentioned characteristics of the alto player and the piano player are easily recognized on the records, so that the personnel should be thus:

- June Clark: aurally the cornet player is the same man as on the Gulf Coast Seven and not ?-- Thomas or (presumably Big Charlie Thomas), as given in 'Rust, Jazz Records'. Clark owns a fat tone and a very fiery approach and attack, although sometimes retarding the opening- notes of some phrases (lip trouble? or uncertainty what to play next?), whereas --- Thomas has a lighter tone, uses a more lyrical style with high interval-jumps, very much like L. Armstrong at that time. Furthermore, Clark owns a rather erratic approach to time/rhythm, which results in a kind of hectic succession of notes.
- Jimmy Harrison: interesting to hear Harrison's new concept of trombone-playing, like a second cornet as cited below. And mind his tone, vibrato, and attack, completely unlike any other trombone player at that time.
- Buster Bailey: although there is no source for this suggestion known to me, the style seems to be Bailey's. Bailey is not known to have been a permanent member of the group. But do we really know? There is no soprano-sax to be heard anywhere.
- Leonard Fields: this man's playing is exactly as cited below in 'Sources'. There is no soprano-sax to be heard anywhere. If the alto-player is indeed Len Fields, this should have some consequences to the personnels of the Clarence Williams Blue Five of 12-15-1925 and ca. 01-22-1926 and Clarence Williams Stompers of 01-04-1926, maybe even to D. Ellington a.h. Orch. of 04-01-1926! Mentioning his name at the appropriate places in Tom Lord 'Clarence Williams' seems quite reasonable! (See my Leonard Fields listing!)
- Charlie 'Smitty' Smith: 'Rust' and all other discographies list Willie "The Lion" Smith as pianist. This pianist here shows nothing of "The Lion's" characteristics. The pno breaks at the end of 'Hold 'Er Deacon' with their simple "oom-pah" would exactly apply for "Smitty" Smith as quoted below. Therefore, and because Clark's piano player at the time was "Smitty" Smith I think that "Smitty" is much more probable than "The Lion". Maybe "the Lion's" name was listed in early discographical times because "Keep Your Temper" is "the Lion's" tune and "Smitty" was practically unknown!
- Will 'Splivy' Escoffery: RUST and all other discographies list Buddy Christian. To me Buddy Christian does not seem to be the banjo player on these sides, comparing this man's style to that more straight-forward approach of Buddy Christian on the Clarence Williams Blue Five or the Gulf Coast Seven session of Nov. 05, 1925 (see below). Most probably this man is the said "Splivy" Escoffery (see below) as

mentioned in 'Jazz Information' No.II/16 of 1941 as regular member of the June Clark band. He plays in that Ragtime derived banjo style common in Harlem in the early days as opposed to the straight 4/4 "Western" style of Buddy Christian. William "Splivey" Escoffery, who is not listed in RUST 6th ed., may yet be found in the RUST Artist index under "Spivey, -- (bj) having made recordings with Eliza Christmas Lee and with Lavinia Turner in 1921. He might even be the same man, who played bjo/gtr in Duke Ellington's first group at Armstrong High School in Washington DC in 1916, although named William Escoffery here (Lawrence, D. Ellington and his World, p. 12).

Now, just look at the notes below re the personnels as listed in the various editions of Rust! That's what I would call some development!

Notes:

- VJM VLP 5 (LP) Cover text: probably Louis Armstrong and another (cornets); Charlie Irvis (trombone); Buster Bailey (clarinet and soprano saxophone); unknown (alto saxophone); probably Clarence Williams or Dan Parish (piano); Buddy Christian (banjo),
- Rust*2: June Clark ? (tpt); Jimmy Harrison ? (tbn); Buster Bailey (clt, sop); Prince Robinson (ten); Willie "The Lion" Smith (pno); Buddy Christian (bjo)
- Rust*3: ? --- Thomas -c; Jimmy Harrison -tb; Buster Bailey -cl -ss; Don Redman -cl -as; Clarence Williams or Willie "The Lion" Smith -p; Buddy Christian -bj
- Rust*4: June Clark or --- Thomas -c; Jimmy Harrison -tb; Buster Bailey -cl -ss; Prince Robinson -ts; Willie "The Lion" Smith -p; Buddy Christian -bj
- Rust*6: Charlie Thomas -c; Jimmy Harrison -tb; Buster Bailey -cl -ss -as; Prince Robinson -ts; Willie "The Lion" Smith -p; Buddy Christian -bj

Recorded Tunes:

Keep Your Temper Key of F / Bb / Eb / Bb Pathé Actuelle, Perfect
 (Intro 8 bars ens)(A1 Chorus 32 bars ABAC alt + ens)(Bridge 4 bars ens)(B1 Chorus 16 bars AA' (tbn 6 bars, reeds 2 bars, tbn 7 bars, ens 1 bar))(B2 Chorus 16 bars (clt 6 bars, reeds 2 bars, clt 7 bars, ens 1 bar))(Bridge 4 bars ens)(C1 Chorus 32 bars AA' (clt 28 bars, ens 4 bars))(Vamp 2 bars ens)(B3 Chorus 16 bars (ens 6 bars, reeds 2 bars, ens 8 bars))

Santa Claus Blues Key of Eb Pathé Actuelle, Perfect
 (Intro 4 bars ens)(A1 Chorus 32 bars ABAC tbn + ens, tbn middle break)(B1 Verse 16 bars ens)(A2 Chorus 32 bars alt + ens, alt middle break)(A3 Chorus 32 bars ens, cnt middle break)

Hold 'er Deacon Key of C Pathé Actuelle, Perfect
 (A1 Chorus 20 bars ens, clt breaks)(B1 Verse 16 bars ens)(Bridge 4 bars ens)(A2 Chorus 20 bars alt + ens)(A3 Chorus 20 bars ens, ens middle break, bjo breaks)(A4 Chorus 20 bars ens, pno middle break, pno breaks)(A5 Chorus 20 bars ens, tbn middle break, cnt + tbn + alt breaks)

Sources:

- "Small's Sugar Cane Club: Pianist Charlie Smith had a band at the Sugar Cane in 1923. Cornetist June Clark took it over and featured Jimmy Harrison, trombone; Benny Carter, C-melody-sax; Jazz Carson, drums; Prince Robinson, sax; Will "Splivy" Escoffery, banjo; and a fellow named "Stone" on clarinet." (booklet to ,The Sound of Harlem', Columbia C3L33)
- "June Clark and Jimmy Harrison used to have a band uptown at Connor's on 135th street, and all of us used to practically live in there. June was very good, but he couldn't read. They used to play some great jazz together. When Jimmy was in Fletcher's band later on, he was the best around." (Don Redman/Frank Driggs: Martin Williams, ,Jazz Panorama')
- "Most likely we met at Smalls' Sugar Cane on Fifth Avenue. That would be about right because I also met Jimmy Harrison and June Clark there. They were the only musicians in town playing "Western" style with the exception of Happy Caldwell, who had grown up under the influence of Joe Oliver and Louis Armstrong. Hap started teaching me the Western "get-off" style of playing, which had a heavy accented back beat on the second and fourth bars. When you soloed, it was called "taking a Boston". (Rex Stewart, ,Boy Meets Horn', p. 65)
- "Bamboo Inn: June Clark's Creole Stompers: Clark, cornet; Jimmy Harrison, trombone; Len Fields, alto sax; Harrison Jackson, tenor sax; Charlie Smith, piano; Buddy Christian, guitar; Bill Benford, bass; Joe "Jazz" Carson, drums, January 1926." (booklet to ,The Sound of Harlem', Columbia C3L33).
- "During the fall of 1925 the most exciting jazz band in Harlem, according to the many musicians who heard it, was June Clark's Creole Stompers at Ed Small's Sugar Cane Club (up until October 22nd when Small's Paradise opened on Seventh Avenue with Charlie Johnson's band). The main attraction was the brass duo of Clark and trombonist Jimmy Harrison, who modeled their choruses after the two-cornet style of King Oliver and Louis Armstrong." (booklet to ,The Sound of Harlem', Columbia C3L33)
- "I remember that in the early 'twenties, "Smalls'" was located on the south-west corner of 135th Street and 5th Avenue. Trumpeter June Clark was the band-leader and Leonard Fields (sax) and Jimmy Harris (sic) (trombone) were in the band, but I don't remember the other names. I do remember that Basie was across the street with a four-piece combo." Freddie Skerritt ('Storyville' 95, p.183)
- "Leonard Fields was on alto; I never heard anybody play like him, he was really fast and used to do double and triple tongue work on the saxophone." Bobby Booker's Life Story ('Storyville' 101, p.176)
- "We would go to cabarets and dances to hear the better players as Jimmy Harrison, trombone; Leonard Fields, alto sax;" Leslie Carr Looks Back ('Storyville' 139, p. 28)
- "I used to go into Small's Sugar Cane Club quite often..... They had a piano player that they were just crazy about. His name was Smitty, and he was also known as Fat Smitty. He knew all the songs and all the keys and everything, and he played a lot of comp. No matter how much piano anybody else played, nobody could comp for June and Jimmy like Smitty could. So far as they were concerned, he was it. Smitty would just be there with that oompa, oompa, oompa right there behind those cats, laying it on heavy. Oompa, oompa, oompa. That's what made Smitty so great. That's why those guys liked to play with Smitty so much. Oompa, oompa, oompa. Beautiful. Just beautiful." (Count Basie/Albert Murray: 'Good Morning Blues')

011 GULF COAST SEVEN

New York,

Nov. 05, 1925

June Clark – cnt; Jimmy Harrison – tbn;

Leonard Fields – alt; Harrison Jackson – clt, ten;

Charlie 'Smitty' Smith – pno; Will "Splivy" Escoffery or Buddy Christian – bjo; Joe "Jazz" Carson – dms

141245-4 Santa Claus Blues

Col 14107-D,

Frog DGF 32

141246-3 Keep Your Temper

Col 14107-D,

Frog DGF 32

Comparing these titles to the Blue Rhythm Orch. titles above, this is the same band with a few changes.

- June Clark: same man as last session.

- Jimmy Harrison: same man as last session.

- Leonard Fields: same man as last session.

- Harrison Jackson: RUST and all other discographies list Prince Robinson. I hear alt and ten/clt on these sides. The style of the tenorsax player is rather pedestrian and shows nothing of Prince Robinson's style on the Washingtonians of Sep. 07, 1925 (4 forceful bars in middle of alto chorus) or of his playing later on. So, this man here, whose clarinet playing is a little better than his tenor playing, may be the said Harrison Jackson. He later became a lawyer.

- Charlie Smith: same man as last session.
- Buddy Christian: seems logical. This man's style is that more straight-forward and light approach of bjo playing on the Cl. Williams Blue 5 of Buddy Christian.
- Joe "Jazz" Carson: you hear the appropriate cymbal-crashes at the right places which could have been executed by any drummer. There is no reason to doubt "Jazz" Carson, though. There seems to be some confusion about this drummer's name. The first Rosenberg/Williams draft names him as: "Jazz" Carson Williams. This then is changed to "Jazz" Joe Carson in the second draft, possibly after rechecking the name with June Clark. (*Louis Metcalf, RR46/4: "I remember Eddie Carson on drums (with Marge Creath in St. Louis! – KBR). He was Josephine Baker's father."*)
- I do not hear any tuba notes!

As I have constantly observed during my/our large research project on the recordings of Clarence Williams (N&N 58 – 61) it was common among composers/publishers to hire musicians from working bands for their own units playing and recording their recent compositions/publications. But very seldom did they hire more than two musicians of one distinct band. Often partnerships of trumpet / trombone players were engaged as cited above. Maybe it was not wanted to transpose the distinct sound of a working band on to the recording unit with another leader's name?! Not so Bradford. He engaged complete bands, even containing the band's leader as a playing member. So, Bradford hired one of the hottest bands in Harlem of the year 1925, residing at "Smalls' Sugar Cane Club" on 2212 Fifth Avenue, forerunner of "Smalls' Paradise". He had a photograph made of this band with himself leaning on the piano ('Pictorial History of Jazz' p. 129 and 'Born with the Blues' p. 147) which obviously was intended as a promotional photo for further use as a Bradford recording unit. So, it seems that Bradford had future plans with them. But only a handful of records resulted out of this combination, as I have shown in my comprehensive article on June Clark, which will be issued in the FROG Yearbook Vol. 4 later this year. Yet, a most interesting point should appropriately be added here: The band – June Clark's! – recorded two titles of their very own repertoire in their own arrangement here. In all other instances of the Gulf Coast Seven output the tunes and titles are Perry Bradford's!

Notes:

- Rust*2: June Clark ? (cnt); Jimmy Harrison (tbn); Buster Bailey (clt, alt); Prince Robinson (ten); Willie "The Lion" Smith (pno); unknown (dms)

- Rust*3,*4,*6: June Clark -c; Jimmy Harrison -tb; Buster Bailey -cl -ss -as; Prince Robinson -ts; ;Willie "The Lion" Smith -p; Buddy Christian -bj; ? Bill Benford -bb; "Jazz" Carson -d.

Tunes Structures:

Santa Claus Blues Key of Eb Columbia
(Intro 4 bars ens)(B1 Verse 16 bars ens)(A1 Chorus 32 bars ABAC tbn + ens, tbn middle break)(A2 Chorus 32 bars alt + ens, alt middle break)(A3 Chorus 32 bars ens, cnt middle break)(C1 ½ Chorus 16 bars AC ens, clt breaks)

Keep Your Temper Key of F / Bb / Eb / Bb Columbia
(Intro 8 bars ens)(A1 Chorus 32 bars ABAC alt + ens)(B1 Chorus 16 bars AA' (tbn 6 bars, reeds 2 bars, tbn 7 bars, ens 1 bar))(B2 Chorus 16 bars (ten 14 bars, ens 2 bars))(B3 Chorus 16 bars AA' (clt + ens 28 bars, ens 4 bars))(Vamp 2 bars ens)(B4 Chorus 16 bars (ens 6 bars, clt 2 bars, ens 8 bars))(B4 Chorus 16 bars ens, cnt middle break)

012	LOUISE VANT	Perry Bradford's Mean Four	New York,	c. Jan. 04, 1926
	Louise Vant – voc;			
	June Clark – cnt; Jimmy Harrison – tbn ;			
	Charles 'Smitty' Smith – pno; Will "Splivy" Escoffery – bjo			
	73890-A	I'm Tired Of Everything But You	OK 8275,	Doc DOCD-5353
	73891-A	I Would Be Where I Am If You Hadn't Gone Away	OK 8275,	Doc DOCD-5353
	73892-B	Do Right Blues	OK 8293,	Doc DOCD-5353

Once again, a Perry Bradford session, this time with cnt and tbn only, no alt, but pno and additional bjo.

- June Clark: same as above session

- Jimmy Harrison: same as above session

- Perry Bradford: same as above session, but the discos are in doubt and therefore add a question-mark after Bradford's name.

After Rosenberg/Williams draft Perry Bradford claimed that it was this band that was photographed, but lacking any signs of Bradford's individual stylistics and the retained and essential 'comping' this must be Charles 'Smitty' Smith here.

- banjo: I hear correspondence with the banjoist of the 'Blue Rhythm Band' player, therefore 'Splivy' Escoffery. Will 'Splivey' Escoffery was banjo player with the June Clark band at the time, and this banjo player's style is compatible to Escoffery's known playing. This definitely is not the style of Buddy Christian, who can be heard on the Gulf Coast Seven (pseudonym of the Clark band!) session of Nov. 05, 1925 (see also Names&Numbers 69 p 16).

The singer is terrible! (KBR)

Notes:

- Rust*3,*4,*6: unknown -c; unknown -tb; ? Perry Bradford -p; unknown -bj

BGR*2,*3,*4: unknown, cnt; unknown, tbn; pres Perry Bradford -pno; unknown, bjo

Tunes Structures:

I'm Tired Of Everything But You Key of Eb OKeh
(Intro 8 bars ens)(A1 Verse 16 bars voc + ens)(B1 Chorus 32 bars AA' voc + ens)(B2 Chorus 32 bars (ens 16 bars, voc + ens 16 bars))

I Would Be Where I Am If I Hadn't Gone Away Key of F OKeh
(Intro 4 bars ens)(A1 Verse 16 bars voc + ens)(B1 Chorus 20 bars AABA' voc + ens)(B2 Chorus 20 bars ens)(B3 Chorus 20 bars voc + ens)(Coda 2 bars voc + ens)

Do Right Blues Key of Bb OKeh
(Intro 4 bars ens)(A1 Chorus 12 bars voc + ens)(A2 Chorus 12 bars voc + ens)(A3 Chorus 12 bars voc + ens)(A4 Chorus 12 bars cnt)(A5 Chorus 12 bars tbn)(A6 Chorus 12 bars voc + ens)(Coda 2 bars ens)

013	BUDDY CHRISTIAN'S CREOLE FIVE		New York,	c. Mar. 23, 1926
	Harry Cooper – tpt; John Mayfield – tbn; Albert 'Happy' Caldwell – clt;			
	Charlie 'Smitty' Smith – pno; Buddy Christian – bjo; unknown – dms;			
	Louise Vant – voc (1,2)			
	74057-A	Sunset Blues	OK 8311,	Hot'n Sweet 151222
	74058-A	Texas Mule Stomp	OK 8311,	Hot'n Sweet 151222
	74059-A	Sugar House Stomp	OK 8342,	Hot'n Sweet 151222

Louise Vant performs as band singer here with Buddy Christian's Creole Five. This certainly is a beautiful band and it is worthy of note that no unequivocal and coherent personnel have been suggested up to now (Dec. 2016).

The cornet/trumpet player certainly – for all I know – is not Thomas Morris. Chris Hillman in his record review of the Herwin 107 LP 'New Orleans Sounds in New York 1924 – 1926' (Jazz Journal Okt. 1975) writes: "I am certain that the Creole Five cornetist is Harry Cooper." And I shall gladly follow Mr. Hillman's well-founded and correct identification. Comparison with what can be heard on the Seminole Syncopators and the Harry's Happy Four show us that Cooper is our man here.

But the other musicians obviously need new consideration. On trombone I hear the trombonist of Clarence Williams Blue Five of 1923, a man playing a partly legato and partly staccato style. He must be John Mayfield, and to my ears this is clearly recognizable. The clarinetist – ever since the advent of discography – identified as Bob Fuller to my ears is most probably Albert Happy Caldwell, playing in a modernized Johnny Dodds derived style. The pianist shines in pure comping without any soloistic ambition, and only behind the singer he plays some three to four figures which I know from Charlie Smith, at this time pianist of the June Clark Creole Stompers at Smalls' Sugar Cane Club. This band recorded under the pseudonyms of Blue Rhythm Orchestra and the Gulf Coast Seven.

The strong banjo is played by the leader, Buddy Christian, banjo player and pianist from New Orleans. Only on 'Sugar House Stomp' 14 cymbal strokes can be heard at appropriate places – no other drum features – and it has to be asked whether a drummer was participating on this last title of the session or somebody of the recording staff, or perhaps one of the other band players. But, as the cymbal strokes are choked by hand, no other participating musician would have been able to fulfil this special task and still playing on his own instrument.

Notes:

- Rust*2: Tom Morris ? (cnt); Jake Frazier ? (tnb); Bob Fuller (clt); Louis Hooper or Mike Jackson (less likely Clarence Williams)(pno); Buddy Christian (bjo); unknown (dms)

- Rust*3: ? Charlie Gaines -t; ? Charlie Irvis -tb; Bob Fuller -cl; Louis Hooper (or poss Mike Jackson) -p; Buddy Christian -bj; unknown -d; Louise Vant -v (1,2)

- Rust*4,*6: ? Tom Morris -c; ? Jake Frazier -tb; Bob Fuller -cl; ? Porter Grainger (part composer of the first two titles) or Louis Hooper or Mike Jackson -p; Buddy Christian -bj; unknown -d; Louise Vant -v (1,2)

- BGR*2: poss Tom Morris (or any one of the three cnts from earlier L. Vant sessions); poss Jake Frazier or Charlie Irvis, tb; Bob Fuller, cl; poss Louis Hooper or Mike Jackson, p; Buddy Christian -bj; unknown, d; Louise Vant, v (1,2)

- BGR*3,*4: poss Tom Morris, c; poss Jake Frazier or Charlie Irvis, tb; Bob Fuller, cl; poss Louis Hooper or Mike Jackson, p; Buddy Christian -bj; unknown, d; Louise Vant, v (1,2)

This is what our listeners group of some years ago had to say about the personnel of these sides:

JO: The overall character of Sugar House Stomp resembles the Five Musical Blackbirds output, although this may simply reflect the input of Fuller and Hooper on both sessions.

Hooper: "The name Buddy Christian means something to me although I can't recall him." (Record Research 77, June 1966).

Again, Harry Cooper's Pathé session with Ellington this same month sounds inconclusive to me... Nor do I hear very much similarity on Cooper's own records of the previous year (on Frog DGF 69).

Comparing the cornet work on instrumental choruses at the end of *Sunset Blues* to that on *Who's Dis Heah Stranger* (session 059) following the comedic speech: it seems like the same musician. Also perhaps illustrative: a comparison between *Sugar House Stomp* and *The Mess* (session 069, 39962-3).

I'd recommend: *Thomas Morris* – cnt

DB: I well rehearsed this in my studies of Big Charlie. I found no evidence in contemporary Cooper that it was him – quite the reverse. This player shows some Louis influence which I do not associate with Tom but the fragile tone is quite similar. I think this really belongs with the Big Charlie issue as yet another unknown early Louis stylist.

MR: The cornet sounds wobbly enough to be Morris at times, but is definitely consistent with Cooper's work. I think this was discussed at least on RedHotJazz (Yves Francois) and the consensus was that this is Cooper.

014 **MARY STAFFORD**

New York, c. Mar. 30, 1926

Mary Stafford – voc;

June Clark – cnt; Charlie Green – tbn;

Leonard Fields – alt; Harrison Jackson – ten, clt;

Charlie "Smitty" Smith or (Perry Bradford) – pno; (Buddy Christian) – bjo;

Perry Bradford – voc (1)

106749 Ain't Got Nobody To Grind My Coffee In The Morning

PA 7502, Per 102,

Archeophone 6006

106750 Take Your Finger Off It

PA 7502, Per 102,

Archeophone 6006

Bradford had already recorded for this label with Mary Jackson and his P.B Jazz Phools in October 1923 leading a very competent unit of musicians from the West. His former association to this label might have led to a new recording contract as accompanist to this and the next blues lady. But it might easily have been June Clark's association to Pathe Actuelle Blue Rhythm Orchestra sessions of October/November 1925 that brought this unit into the recording studio.

Accordingly, we hear a contingent from June Clark's band of the time – June Clark and his Creole Band.

– June Clark: all Clark's characteristics clearly audible!

– trombone: and Clark obviously has his new trombonist with him, namely the very famous – and rightfully so – but difficult and tough Charlie Green, who had just left the Fletcher Henderson band to go on his own. He did not stay long with Clark, but was soon on his way to his hometown Omaha because of marital problems. Green had a tremendous technique, great improvisational abilities connected with a certain earthiness, which made him a dream partner for Bessie Smith. Yet with her he mainly displayed his roughness and earthiness, but should not be depreciated because of it. He could do much more than that on the slide-horn. For me this sounds very, very much like Green with his gruff tone and playing on the Hendersons and Bessies.

– alto sax: Leonard Fields? Although Len Fields comes to mind, this might possibly not be him, this man here lacking part of Fields' "correct" and singing style and tone. On the other hand, he plays a lot of chordal arpeggios, which could suggest Fields. I am not certain at all but dare to name Fields because of his still belonging to the band.

– clarinet/ tenor sax: I assume Harrison Jackson on the Bb pitched reeds here. For a short couple of months this otherwise obscure musician was tenor saxophonist and clarinetist with the Clark band in late 1925 and early 1926. He did not stay long with the band, and probably for musical reasons he left the music business for good to become a lawyer. He can probably be heard on the Gulf Coast Seven session of Nov. 05, 1925 (see N&N 69 p 16) and these two PA sessions here, but his performances are not at all convincing. Buster Bailey certainly is far off the mark for this mediocre reed playing, and I wonder how his name could creep into the Rust editions. The clt playing definitely is not Buster Bailey's style (Bailey was much more virtuoso!), but typical for a saxophonist's clarinet playing. Furthermore, it is rather pedestrian and reminds of the clt playing on the Gulf Coast Seven. So, Harrison Jackson comes to mind, who still was a member of Clark's Creole Stompers.

- piano: on piano we certainly hear Bradford, recognizable from his treble figures which I call tinkle-tinkle-plink, very obvious at the end of the second title's verse. Yet, there are little recognizable and attributable characteristics of this pno player, except for some ninth chords, which are also used in some prearranged ensemble parts. (see next session of Caroline Johnson).

- banjo: The banjo player plays straight four-to-the-bar no-nonsense banjo and might therefore be Buddy Christian, who was successor of Will 'Splivey' Escoffery in the Clark band.

There is a strange moment in the clarinet solo of 'Take Your Fingers Off It': in bar 12 the clarinet plays two quarter-notes (Gb – F) which are immediately repeated by another player, probably the alto sax, that I had not on my list before. There is a great muddle of sound behind the singer, and it seems that there is not only a tenor sax cum clarinet in the personnel, but also a restrained alto sax, whose player then has to be Len Fields. And after close listening Mr. Field's arpeggiated playing becomes apparent.

Notes:

- Rust*3,*4,*6: unknown c; unknown tb; Buster Bailey cl; unknown p; unknown bj

- BGR*2,*3: unknown c; unknown tb; Buster Bailey cl; unknown p; unknown bj

- BGR*4: unknown c; unknown tb; unknown cl; unknown p; unknown bj

Tunes Structures:

Ain't Got Nobody To Grind My Coffee In The Morning Key of Ab Pathé Actuelle, Perfect

(Intro 4 bars ens)(Vamp 2 bars ens)(Verse 12 bars voc + ens)(Chorus A1 34 bars AA' voc + ens)(Chorus A2 34 bars AA' voc + ens)

Take Your Fingers Off It Key of Eb Pathé Actuelle, Perfect

(Intro 4 bars ens)(Vamp 2 bars ens)(Verse 16 bars voc + ens)(Chorus A1 18 bars ABCA' voc + ens)(Chorus A2 18 bars ABCA'

clt)(Chorus A3 18 bars ABCA' voc + ens)

015 CAROLINE JOHNSON

New York,

c. Mar. 30, 1926

Caroline Johnson (Alta Brown?) – voc;

June Clark – cnt; Charlie Green – tbn;

Leonard Fields – alt; Harrison Jackson – clt;

Charlie 'Smitty' Smith or (Perry Bradford) – pno; (Buddy Christian) – bjo;

Perry Bradford – voc (1)

106751 Georgia Grind

PA 7503, Per 103,

Doc DOCD-5514

106752 Mama Stayed Out The Whole Night Long (But Mama Didn't Do No Wrong) PA 7503, Per 103, Doc DOCD-5514

These two titles by Caroline Johnson – whose real name might be Alta Brown – with their matrix numbers consecutive to the session listed above were obviously recorded on the same day, what made me adapt the recording date of the latter session to the former.

The whole performance starts with a singer who undoubtedly is not Miss Johnson. After some careful listening it becomes apparent that this is Perry Bradford himself with his very own unsecure and frail pitch singing one chorus of 'Georgia Grind' in Eb, the band then modulating to C for Miss Johnson's performance. The rest of the tune then stays in C.

Very clearly this is the same band/personnel as before. I would like you to hear and enjoy June Clark's heroic cornet playing. He certainly was one of the greatest cornet/trumpet players of the 1920s, and it is unbelievable that he could disappear into oblivion in the late 20s – at least as a musician.

- June Clark: All Clark's characteristics clearly audible again!

- trombone: although the trombone player is more subdued than on the previous session, he nevertheless seems to be Green with his gruff tone and playing.

- alto sax: although almost inaudible, there is an alto player here who has to be Leonard Fields.

- clarinet/tenor sax: obviously same player as previous session, doubling ten on both titles, thus possibly Jackson

- piano: as the singer in the first chorus of "Georgia Grind" is certainly Perry Bradford, it can be assumed that he is also acting as piano player. Bradford seems to have used a somewhat arpeggiated style, which can also be heard on Bradford's Gang of April 21, 1926.

But the pno break at the end (Coda) of 'Mama Stayed Out ...' is very much in the kind of Charlie Smith's breaks heard in "Hold 'Er, Deacon" of the Blue Rhythm Orch., and 'When The Jazz Band ...' and 'Just Blues ...' by Thomas Morris' Past Jazz Masters. I therefore tend to assume it is Smith on piano here, just as on the Mary Staffords above. And, if I am right that it is the personnel of the Clark band of early 1926 here, Smith's presence naturally is of greater probability.

- banjo: unknown, but very probably as above

- male voc: this is certainly P. Bradford singing the first chorus with his characteristic frail and shaky intonation (compare with his session of his Jazz Phoools of April 21, 1925).

Notes:

- Rust*3,*4: unknown c; unknown p; or, according to some sources: unknown c; unknown tb; unknown cl; unknown as; unknown p; unknown bj

- Rust*6: ? Tom Morris c; unknown tb; unknown cl; unknown as; unknown p; unknown bj; unknown male voc(1)

- BGR*2,*3: acc by either unknown c; unknown p; or, according to some sources: unknown c; unknown tb; unknown cl; unknown as; unknown p; unknown bj

- BGR*4: unknown c; unknown tb; unknown cl; unknown as; unknown p; unknown bj; unknown male voc(1)

Tunes Structures:

Georgia Grind Key of Eb / C Pathé Actuelle, Perfect

(Intro 4 bars ens – clt)(Chorus A1 12 bars voc (Bradford) + ens key of Eb, modulation to G7)(Chorus B1 12 bars voc + ens key of

C)(Chorus B2 12 bars voc + ens)(Chorus B3 12 bars voc + ens)(Chorus B4 12 bars voc + ens)

Mama Stayed Out The Whole Hight Long (But Mama Didn't Do No Wrong) Key of Eb Pathé Actuelle, Perfect

(Intro 4 bars ens)(Vamp 2 bars ens)(Verse 20 bars voc + ens)(Chorus A1 18 bars AABA' voc + ens)(Chorus A2 18 bars AABA' voc + ens)(Coda 4 bars pno – ens)

SOURCES:

The George Hoefler Papers, Rutgers University

Count Basie / Albert Murray, GOOD MORNING BLUES, p.71-73: *"Before Smalls' Paradise opened over on Seventh Avenue between 134th and 135th streets, there was a Small Sugar Cane Club a few blocks down Fifth Avenue from Leroy's. That is where I used to go to listen to a hell of a combo that June Clark had in there with the great Jimmy Harrison on trombone. I'm pretty sure that I first met June through Dougie, because both of them were cornet and trumpet players from Long Branch. Anyway, I used to go into 'Smalls' Sugar Cane' quite often, and we got to know each other, and that's how I got to play in There with them from time to time.*

I never did actually work in there on a regular basis because they had a piano player that they were just crazy about. His name was Smitty, and he was also known as Fat Smitty. He knew all the songs and all the keys and everything, and he played a lot of comp. No matter how much piano anybody else played, nobody could comp for June and Jimmy like Smitty could. So far as they were concerned, he was it. But he used to get sick a lot. I don't really know, but I think he had asthma. Or maybe something else. But anyway, June used to find me, and I would go on with them as Smitty's temporary replacement.

And of course, I knew that they didn't want anybody running all around all over the keyboard. That's not what you heard when you went down to Smalls' to listen to them. Smitty would just be there with that oompa oompa oompa right there behind those cats, laying it on heavy. Oompa oompa oompa oompa. That's what made Smitty so great. That's why those guys liked to play with Smitty so much. Oompa oompa oompa oompa. Beautiful. Just beautiful.

That kind of comping went out a few years ago. If you play that kind of comp behind somebody now, the cat will look back at you, as if to say, What the hell is this? But I learned a lot from what Fat Smitty used to lay down behind June and Jimmy, and so did a whole lot of other piano players around Harlem in those days. Of course, stride was the big thing. So that was my thing too. But as a show-band musician, knowing how to lay down a good comp came in very handy because playing behind those acts was a very important part of your job. You might get a chance to get in a stride chorus or so every now and then. But you were always comping for those acts.

I guess June must have heard me playing up at Leroy's because that first time he came up to me and said he was looking for me. That's how I got my big chance to go in there and sit in and play that gig with those two fabulous guys and that great little band. I forget the name of the boy, who played banjo, and there was a saxophone player from Kentucky, which is also where Jimmy Harrison was from; and the drummer was called Jazz. His last name was Carson, and he was also known as Cripple Jazz because there was something wrong with his legs, but that didn't stop him from being a bitch of a drummer. He and I became pretty good friends, and later on we used to work on a few other gigs together.

Naturally I considered myself very lucky to have the chance to go in there and fill in with that band. Because you didn't just come down there and sit in and play along with those guys like you could do in a lot of other places. Those cats were too bad for that. You could get yourself very embarrassed trying to mess around with the kind of stuff they were playing. Most musicians just went in there to listen and learn something. Anybody that got up there with that pair better sure know what he was doing, because they didn't show anybody any mercy on the bandstand. The only guy I remember that used to come in the Sugar Cane and cut it along with June Clark and Jimmy Harrison in those days was Rex Stewart. Old Rex was still in his teens at that time, but he was already playing a lot of cornet.

June and Jimmy were known to be just about the hottest, toughest brass team in town. June was a first-rate cornet and trumpet man, and Jimmy Harrison was doing trumpet notes on the trombone that you couldn't believe until you heard him and saw him at the same time. Sometimes when he and June really got into something it sounded like they had two trumpets in there. Most trombone players didn't tangle with him. They were no contest for him.

I got a chance to work with June again some time later on when he was working downtown on Fourteenth Street and Seventh Avenue at a place called the Dreamland or maybe it was the Tango Gardens or some place like that. By that time, the Sugar Cane had closed, because Smalls had opened his big new place called Smalls' Paradise over on Seventh Avenue between 134th and 135th streets and was using a different kind of band because he was featuring floor shows and dancing, and it was another kind of thing over there. The Sugar Cane was one of those cozy downstairs neighborhood spots like Leroy's and the Nest and places like that. But Smalls' Paradise was in competition with places like Connie's Inn and the Cotton Club.

Anyway, June was working downtown, and I think he came and got me because Smitty was having another one of his attacks, and I was available because I was out of Leroy's for the time being. So I went down to the Dreamland. But that turned out to be a different scene in more ways than one.

But the thing about it was that you had to take those things and read them right off from the go. And that was a little rough for me because I still hadn't learned to sight-read yet. I could play it. I could play anything I could hear. I could listen to the first chorus and play it. Sometimes I could get by because I would figure out the first chorus and go on from there. But when they started modulating, and those mothers did modulate, that was a problem. As long as it was one of those stocks of just one sheet, anything was okay, because I could put my ear down on that, since all the changes were just about the same. But then they were beginning to make a lot of arrangements for combinations, and they started changing keys and using special choruses and special effects, like hitting chimes for the break. That tricked me. So I came to work one night and June Clark told me that another piano player was going to work at it for a little while. And that is how I found out about Joe Turner, the fabulous piano player from Baltimore, Eubie Blake's hometown.

After a couple of days, June came by my apartment. I remember that I had bought a new suit and I was putting it on, and he sat there awhile, and I finally asked him what he was doing over there at that time, and that was when he told me. He said Joe Turner was coming into the group, and he gave me some money and said I didn't have to show up. Which meant I was fired. Joe Turner had taken the job."

Storyville 47, p 169, Interview Harrison Smith: *"I had the first ten Black Pattis that were rolled off the press, and I gave them to a girl named Alta Brown who recorded as Caroline Johnson. Her name was Alta (sic!) Brown, and she was an ex-member of the Dixie Jubilee Singers. She made a record with Fats (Waller) for Gennett called 'Mama's Gonna Stay Out All Night Long', or some crazy thing. (Caroline Johnson cut this title for Pathe-Actuelle 7503 backed by Georgia Grind – see Godrich-Dixon – no personnel given – D.S-B). But you see that was the aftermath of a session. They recorded these spiritual songs for a little church in Harlem called Little Mount Zion Baptist Church. So they recorded the spiritual selections, and afterwards Fats got the organ jumpin' because he was thirsty and wanted to get out and get a shower of booze, and she fell in line and cut the only blues she ever recorded. She was a girl from Panama ... A very beautiful girl."*

As can be seen above, the quoted title was not recorded with Fats Waller, but accompanied by the above named band. The Waller sessions were held on April 16th and April 24th, for Gennett. So Harrison Smith must have mixed the whole thing up. But now we know her real name and that she was a very beautiful girl (see session 013)!