

A FEMINIST PERSPECTIVE ON NEW ORLEANS JAZZWOMEN

Sherrie Tucker
Principal Investigator

Submitted by
Center for Research
University of Kansas
2385 Irving Hill Road
Lawrence, KS 66045-7563

September 30, 2004

In Partial Fulfillment of
#P5705010381

Submitted to
New Orleans Jazz National Historical Park
National Park Service
419 Rue Decatur
New Orleans, LA 70130

This is a study of women in New Orleans jazz, contracted by the National Park Service, completed between 2001 and 2004. Women have participated in numerous ways, and in a variety of complex cultural contexts, throughout the history of jazz in New Orleans. While we do see traces of women's participation in extant New Orleans jazz histories, we seldom see women presented as central to jazz culture. Therefore, they tend to appear to occupy minor or supporting roles, if they appear at all. This Research Study uses a feminist perspective to increase our knowledge of women and gender in New Orleans jazz history, roughly between 1880 and 1980, with an emphasis on the earlier years.

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazzwomen:
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

New Orleans Jazz National Historical Park

Research Study

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women

Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

September 30, 2004

Table of Contents

Acknowledgments	iii
Introduction	1
Why Study Women in Jazz?	1
Congo Square, a case study	3
What does it mean to study Gender?	6
Goals of this Research Study	12
PART I: HISTORICAL AND SOCIAL CONTEXT	21
Time-line: New Orleans Jazzwomen: 1890-1990	22
Historical Overview.....	36
Pre-Jazz New Orleans.....	37
1890s: Emergence of Jazz	48
Redistricting of Storyville	58
Gender and instruments	61
Women and piano in early jazz bands	63
Jazz funerals	72
Religion, women, and jazz.....	79
Great Migration	83
Cabarets and theaters	88
All-woman bands	90
Educators	92
New Orleans Revival	94
Conclusion	99
Bibliography	110
PART II: SELECTED BIOGRAPHICAL ENTRIES	115
Dolly Marie Douroux Adams	116
Lil[lia]n Hardin Armstrong	124
Love Austin.....	139

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazzwomen:
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Louisa “Blue Lu” Barker	158
Emma “Sweet Emma” Barrett.....	168
Wilhelmina Bart de Rouen	187
Connie [Connee] Boswell	191
Neliska “Baby” Briscoe	202
Ann Cook (Johnson)	215
Olivia “Lady Charlotte” Cook.....	222
Ann Cooper	228
Mamie Desdunes.....	236
Yvonne (Miss Dixie) Marther Fasnacht.....	245
Mercedes (Garman) Fields	254
Edna (Mitchell) Francis	262
Bertha Gonsoulin (Bookman)	265
Antonia P. Gonzales	274
Edna Goodson (Johnson).....	283
Ida Goodson	286
Sadie Goodson (Foster, Peterson, Colar).....	290
Edna (Landreaux) Hicks	296
Rosalind Johnson	299
Jeanette Salvant Kimball	302
Margaret (A. V. Marshall Maurice) Kimble	314
Lizzie (Landreaux) Miles (Pajaud)	320
Camille Lucie Nickerson	332
Billie (Goodson) Pierce	337
Olivia L’Ange Porter Shipp.....	349
Camilla Todd (Haynes)	357
More Women in New Orleans Jazz	361
CONTACTS for fees/permissions	364

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazzwomen:
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Acknowledgments

Numerous researchers, archivists, librarians, curators, musicians, and park rangers provided invaluable help with this Research Study. Most especially, I'd like to thank Tami Albin for being such an invaluable research associate, and the University of Kansas Libraries for releasing her to devote her time on this project for a significant portion of the summer of 2002. I am grateful to Tami for her continued generosity in sharing her research skills beyond that period and throughout the two-year span of this project. Special thanks to Julia Goodfox, my research assistant for the summer of 2002, who set up an incredibly efficient database and into it typed hundreds of entries into manageable form. Independent researcher Garnette Cadogan of New Orleans came to the rescue at numerous critical junctures. Roy Tucker brought a genealogist's methodology to bear on this project, greatly enhancing the biographical data on little-known artists. Norman Vickers helped out with Pensacola research. Jazz researcher Maxine Gordon volunteered her assistance in New York. I owe a very special thanks to Kay D. Ray, who shared footage of interviews with New Orleans musicians from her forthcoming film project, *Lady Be Good: Instrumental Women in Jazz*. Kay's film will go a long way toward correcting the omission of women from our historical knowledge of jazz—and she accurately recognizes the importance of New Orleans women throughout the history of jazz.

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazzwomen:
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

More numerous to name are the people who helped with information, finding, suggesting, and checking leads, recommending books, emailing me details and names, dates and ideas. An incomplete list includes: Lynn Abbott, Thomas Brothers, Mark Cantor, Charles Chamberlain, Dooky Chase, Dixie Fasnacht, Susan Fleet, Steven Forster, Lionel Ferbos, Mickey Gill, Tom Jacobsen, Benjamin and Sandra Jaffe, Karl Koenig, Jasmine Mir, Jon Newlin, George Patterson, Bruce Raeburn, Ione Golden Rasmussen, Tom Stagg, Janna Karen Saslaw, Shirley Thompson, Norman Vickers, and many others. Debra Mouton and Avon Howse were tremendously helpful in providing information about their mother, Neliska “Baby” Briscoe. I’d like to thank Peter Hanley for making his amazing research of New Orleans jazz musicians available on line (<http://www.doctorjazz.freeserve.co.uk/portnewor.html>). Jeffrey Taylor and Bruce Boyd Raeburn generously shared unpublished work that was invaluable in understanding complex cultural histories. I am indebted to the oral historians of New Orleans jazz, who had the foresight of including women as sources and subjects: notably, William Russell, Richard Allen, Barry Martyn, Jack Stewart, and Tad Jones.

I was constantly moved by the meticulous care with which New Orleans archives, libraries, and museums curate the city’s history. This research benefits from the generous and knowledgeable assistance of scores of archivists, librarians, and curators: especially that of Bruce Boyd Raeburn, Alma Williams Freeman, and Lynn Abbott at the Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane; and Alfred Lemmon at the Historic New Orleans

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazzwomen:
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Collection, New Orleans Public Library, Susan Tucker at the Newcomb College Center for Research on Women, Heidi Dodson, at the Amistad Research Center, Steve Teeter at the Old Mint, and Sylvester Francis at the Backstreet Cultural Center. Archivists in New York, Washington D.C., Kansas City, Chicago, and my home institution at University of Kansas, Lawrence, were also tremendously helpful. Many thanks to Tad Hershorn at the Institute for Jazz Studies, Rutgers; Debbie Gillaspie at the Chicago Jazz Archive, University of Chicago; Michael Cogswell at the Louis Armstrong Archives, Queens College; and Mary Yearwood at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, the librarians at the Library of the Performing Arts, New York Public Libraries; Chuck Haddix at the Marr Sound Archive at University of Missouri, Kansas City. As always, George Gibbs, Nancy Hawkins, and Jim Smith provided capable support at the Music and Dance Library, University of Kansas. And thanks to Linda and Mitch Burd for fabulous accommodations.

I am indebted to the National Park Service for seeing this Research Study as important and for entrusting me to conduct it, even when it ended up taking more time than I had anticipated. At the National Park Service, I owe a special thanks to Bambi Sears, whose interest in, knowledge about, and commitment to women in New Orleans jazz was always enlightening and inspiring. Thanks to Sarah Courtney Perschall, Bruce Barnes, Matt Hampsey and Demetria Smith-Wilson for their patience with me as I realized again and again how huge this task was going to be. I would especially like to

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazzwomen:
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

thank Margie Ortiz, who conceptualized this research study, effectively conveyed its importance, drafted the description to which I diligently attempted to adhere, and launched me into the archives. Margie, this is for you—and for the women who have been part of the history of New Orleans jazz in so many ways.

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women

Introduction

This Research Study uses a feminist perspective to focus historically on women in New Orleans jazz, and to learn more about how gender factored into the development of jazz in New Orleans. The goal of this study is to increase our knowledge of women involved in New Orleans jazz, roughly between 1880 and 1980, and therefore, to increase our knowledge of New Orleans jazz history.

Why Study Women in Jazz?

If women were so important to the history of New Orleans jazz, why conduct a special study on them? Wouldn't they simply show up in any well-researched survey of New Orleans jazz? Isn't it counter-productive to conduct a separate study?

It would be ideal, of course, if all serious historical inquiries automatically considered women as well as men as historical actors. Yet scholars of women's history have found that this has usually not been the case; and jazz history is no exception. In fact, feminist historians have pointed out that unless researchers ask "where are the

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazzwomen:
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

women?” they are more likely than not to miss significant contributions of women. In order to have a more complete understanding of women and how ideas about gender affected people’s lives, feminist historians have conducted specialized “women’s histories,” not to separate women *out from* history, but to *find them*, and then to expand the boundaries of what counts as history to include new, more complete ways, of understanding history. Because gender—or the array of social meanings associated with femininity and masculinity—have a knack for seeming *natural*, instead of as cultural and historical, it is extraordinarily easy to miss its operations when conducting a research study of an area believed to be a history of men.

During the 1980s, as part of a surge in interest in women’s history (brought on by the women’s movement of the 1960s and 1970s), several books on women in jazz were published that revealed the active presence of countless people, places, and musical activities that had been excluded or minimized in books on jazz history up to that point. Thanks to scholars such as Linda Dahl, D. Antoinette Handy, and Sally Placksin, we now have access to areas of knowledge about jazz history and women’s history that may otherwise still elude us.¹ We now know that women participated on every instrument, in every genre, in every period of jazz history. We also know that they often participated differently, or in different areas, than are ordinarily considered historically important, such as in family bands, all-woman bands, or as dancers or teachers, and that these areas typically became minimized in jazz histories.

According to women-in-jazz historians, several factors have led to the low profile

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazzwomen:
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

or out-and-out absence of women in jazz from jazz history books. Interestingly, the primary reason is *not* that the authors of earlier jazz history books intentionally excluded women. Oftentimes, as in other areas of social life, women did not have access to roles that historians are accustomed to using in their criterion for historical importance.

Women may have been excluded from the most prestigious activities, for example from playing cornet in 1920s jazz bands, but may have been critical players in other areas; for example as singers, non-soloing pianists in 1920s jazz bands, or as cornetists at private parties, in all-woman bands, or in vaudeville shows. They may have been important contributors in even more forgotten areas of jazz history, such as dancers, party givers, club members, or music teachers. Women's careers may not have been documented to the extent as were men's *during the times in which they lived*, so historians relying on evidence such as recordings may be simply replicating the biases of social life, rather than critically including those sex-specific differences as part of the experiences of people, both men and women, in history.

Congo Square, a case study

In 1975, a graduate student named Susan Cavin published one of the earliest scholarly articles calling for more attention to women in jazz history. Her article, entitled, "Missing Women: On the Voodoo Trail to Jazz,"² is perhaps the first to argue that women played roles in jazz history other than that of classic blues singers.

In her article, Cavin urged jazz historians to examine their "benign neglect" of

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazzwomen:
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

women that contributed to the wide-spread belief that only men were important to jazz history. As evidence, she revisited one of the most often-cited origin points of jazz: the dancing and drumming on Congo Square in New Orleans.

Congo Square had long appealed to jazz historians as a unique site of cultural mixing that prepared the stage for early jazz to develop. It was where slaves, free people of color, Europeans, and Native Americans gathered on Sundays to sell and buy goods. Congo Square provided rare opportunities for enslaved Africans and their descendants to congregate and to socialize in a relatively “free” manner. It was a setting whereby African culture (primarily from the Senegal River basin at first; then via Haiti; and increasingly blended with vernacular culture developed in America) survived, transformed, and became uniquely African American, uniquely New Orleanean, and a culturally rich springboard for early New Orleans jazz.³

Cavin reasoned that if the *vodun* (voodoo) related practices of dancing, vocalizing, and drumming on Congo Square in New Orleans in the 1700 and 1800s were critical to the creation of jazz; and if scholars of religions of the African Diaspora were correct in observing that women held powerful roles in West African, Haitian, and African American *vodun* circles, then jazz historians were surely missing a beat when they comfortably asserting masculine pronouns when discussing pre-jazz musicians of Congo Square. The only historian she found who addressed “the sex variable” was Christopher White, who observed that “no research had been done analyzing the sex of drummers of Congo Square.”⁴ Yet in their references to the connection between Congo

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazzwomen:
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Square and jazz, historians consistently closed off the possibility that drummers, or other important participants, could have included women.

In retracing the researchers' steps on the "voodoo trail to jazz," Cavin found evidence—in the same newspaper and colonial reports that other historians had studied—of women's involvement as dancers, spiritual leaders, and even drummers. Benjamin Latrobe had, for instance, reported on a woman drummer in Congo Square in 1819, but jazz historians who had utilized Latrobe's account had not picked up the "sex variable" and one—no doubt unconsciously—even switched the pronoun to "he" while citing that very passage!⁵ Cultural exchange between "African" and "European" "elements" caught the attention of jazz historians who looked to Congo Square, but sex was overlooked as a significant cultural factor.

Cavin wrote: "What these jazz historians do not consider is specifically: *who* were the people involved in voodoo in New Orleans, what segment of the black and white populations were involved in this cultural exchange?"⁶

Furthermore, argued Cavin, if what is important to jazz about Congo Square is the mixing of African and European cultures in an African *vodun* context, then the significance of Congo Square may be *overstated*. Congo Square, after all, was a public space. *Vodun* ceremonies were not held in the open square in the 1800s, but in more secluded areas, and were often presided over by black women of African and/or Haitian descent, as "voodoo queens." These less public gatherings were attended by diverse groups of women, including white women, much to the consternation of local authorities.

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazzwomen:
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

If jazz historians are interested in Congo Square as a culturally complex launch-pad to jazz, argued Cavin, then wouldn't it follow that they would also be interested in those more private spaces where diverse women and men acted as practitioners, clients, or spectators of *vodun*? Much more research would need to be done to develop this hypothesis, she ceded, but reasoned that the task seemed worthy of the attentions of jazz researchers.

While Cavin was clearly addressing *all* jazz researchers, not just the historians of women in jazz, the latter is the group that heeded her call. As noted earlier, in the 1980s, several books on women and jazz were published that continue to serve as important resources for contemporary researchers. The authors of these books, like Cavin, also revisited evidence thought to be important to jazz history, followed up the clues about women's participation, and documented women's existence in jazz. They also asked question, "where are the women?" and allowed the sometimes surprising answers to expand their definitions of what counted as important in jazz history.

What does it mean to study gender?

When Cavin wrote her important article in 1975, it was a bold move to suggest that competent jazz historians may have overlooked women. Twenty-five years later, researchers of women's history are less likely to use terms like "missing women," or even "sex variable," and more likely to focus on "gender." Analysis of gender are interested in studying ideas about masculinity and femininity as socially produced,

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazzwomen:
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

rather than as the natural, inevitable consequences of being born male or female. Such scholars are less likely to try to “add in women” to existing notions of history, and more likely to study how ideas about masculinity and femininity shaped peoples lives.

What Cavin calls the “benign neglect” of jazz historians who omitted women, feminist historians today would analyze as a function of “gender” in common ways of thinking about jazz. If this distinction seems irrelevant, just ask people to describe who comes to mind when they think of the figure of the “jazz musician.” Some people may think of singers, such as Billie Holiday, and perhaps of pianists, such as Mary Lou Williams, but most people will think of iconic jazzmen. If this pattern was simply a matter of “lost women,” then it should have been resolved with the publication of women-in-jazz history books in the 1980s. A gender analysis explains why information about women in jazz hasn’t changed the common understanding of jazz as a masculine and manly preserve.

Contemporary feminist scholars advocate the study gender as a complex, ever-changing, and never acting alone. Ideas about femininity and masculinity intersect with other social categories, like race, ethnicity, class, sexuality, and nationality. Social groups will struggle to define their own identities through these categories, while other social groups define these differently. Social groups will also seek to define each other, often in ways that are to someone’s disadvantage. Through black-face minstrelsy, for example, performances that make black men seem less masculine than white men, and make black women seem less feminine than white women, comprised significant parts

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazzwomen:
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

of the racial stereotyping in such shows. Culture has also been a powerful battleground for those who would affirm and those who would resist constructions of women of color as sexually available and white women as chaste, which have been used to shore up the ideology of white supremacy and white racial purity in the U.S.

To complicate matters, in a culturally diverse setting such as New Orleans, many distinct social groups, each their own changing sets of ideas about gender, relentlessly come into contact with each other. As these strikingly different sets of ideas about gender meet, they affect each other in a variety of dynamic ways. They challenge each other. They vie for dominance. They may influence, even change each other. When a generation seeks to define itself as different from its predecessor, it often turns to new gender definitions as a means for modernizing itself and creating new identities. The flapper of the 1920s, for example, was a new expression of femininity that relied on some markers previously considered masculine—short hair, “boyish” figures, athleticism, drinking, smoking, sexual freedom, etc.—that expressed modern identities for the women and men of the social groups for whom it was important. For white flappers, listening to black music was another form of transgression that served to differentiate them, and their generation, from that of their mothers and fathers.

Music is one of the places where people learn gender, where ideas about masculinity and femininity (intersected with other categories, such as race, etc.) are learned, taught, debated, consolidated, and challenged, as a part of social organization. Some of these musical places may include *styles* of music (for example, in jazz circles,

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazzwomen:
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

“hot” has been widely associated with masculinity, and “sweet” with femininity), instruments (trumpet associated with masculinity, piano with femininity), *musical roles* (instrumentalist, singer, dancer, musician’s spouse, for example). These “norms” will not tell us the whole story, but they will tell us something about how music is operating in a broader struggle over social distribution of power. Historians expect conflict when they study power, and this is no different for historians of gender and music. Knowing the “norms,” will help us to know when someone, or a group of people, is challenging those “norms,” and to track when struggles and change take place.

It behooves us then not only to “write women into jazz,” but to conduct historically and culturally specific research that explores how people use music in their lives, and how these uses participate in the social construction of gender. Such a study may include questions such as: Which sounds, instruments, and musical activities are considered appropriate for women at this particular time and place? Which women? Which musical activities are considered appropriate for men? Which men? Do these “norms” differ across race, ethnicity, class, religion, neighborhood, or other social factors? Do they change over time? This Research Study attempts to bring these insights and questions to bear on a focused consideration of New Orleans jazz history, through a survey of the one hundred year period between 1880 and 1980.

I have already mentioned that ideas about how to study women and gender have changed since Susan Cavin wrote her article in 1975. The same could be said for ideas about how to study New Orleans jazz history. Historians no longer view the cultural

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazzwomen:
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

exchange that led to jazz as simply black and white, or African and European, or even as black and white and Creole, but far more complex, multiple-differentiated, and changing. More attention is paid to specific diverse identities and histories, including those of Haitian, Cuban, Mexican, French, Italian, and Jewish musicians; of Creoles of color, including those with Italian and Spanish, as well as French heritage. Historians are less interested in pinning people down into coherent group identities with predictable abilities and tastes, than they are in studying how these group identities are forged at various levels of society. Such studies, then, must look at everything from laws and census categories that legally classified groups of people from above, to the cultural and social ways that people sought to define and redefine themselves for reasons of heritage, survival, alliance-building, and in response to social, legal, and political restrictions, as well as in how individuals and groups identified themselves.

Complex analyses of racial, ethnic, linguistic, national, religious, and class differences are increasingly deemed necessary for understanding New Orleans jazz history. More historical study of how gender operates in all of these categories will enrich our historical understanding of the many social factors that contributed to the history of New Orleans jazz. Gender complexity is a part of that cultural complexity.

Some scholars believe that one of the defining elements of jazz is its unique capacity for incorporating cultural and aesthetic differences. Olly Wilson, an important scholar of music of the African Diaspora, has argued that cultural variety is not only important to the historical *origins* of jazz, but to the *aesthetics* of jazz and other forms of

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazzwomen:
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

African American music.⁷ According to Wilson, an African American musical tradition exists that it is uniquely characterized its aesthetic approach to cultural variety. He describes this aesthetic as “a common approach to music making in which a kaleidoscopic range of dramatically contrasting qualities of sound (timbre) is sought in both vocal and instrumental music.” In other words, when instruments play in unison, this ideal values individuated simultaneity where the listener can pick out the “distinct” and “contrasting” voices rather than hearing the sound as a blend. When one voice or instrument plays alone, this value of “difference” in sound is heard in the variation of timbre, the usage of speech-like sounds, shadings, moans, etc.⁸

If cultural variety is important to jazz as an endless source of “difference,” then this is another excellent argument for the importance of considering gender difference, along with race difference, class difference, religious difference, language difference, and so forth, when exploring jazz history. How do ideas about “sounding feminine” or “sounding masculine” contribute to timbral variety in jazz aesthetics? How did the roles that women most commonly filled—as vocalists, pianists, educators—contribute to the aesthetics of “difference” in jazz? If cultural variety contributed to the “sound ideal” on which jazz is based, and if culturally-specific ideas about gender comprise one of the ways that people come to understand themselves as distinct “peoples,” then a study of New Orleans jazz must include gender and women.

***A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazzwomen:
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas***

Goals of this Research Study

Just as Susan Cavin's article on women of Congo Square constituted a step toward taking gender seriously as a cultural factor in jazz history, and issued a call for finding ways to re-frame jazz history so that gender and women are visible, this Research Study constitutes a step toward re-thinking New Orleans jazz history from 1880 to 1980 as significantly affected by women's participation and shaped by ideas about gender.⁹ This Research Study, therefore, should not be seen as conclusive or exhaustive, but as a serious step within a vast, largely untapped area of study. This study builds from Cavin's work, and from work not available to her in 1975. Yet this Research Study, too, is a call for more research and more study.

It is an exciting time to re-think New Orleans jazz history through the lens of women and gender. Recent scholarship on women and gender in New Orleans jazz includes Jeffrey Taylor's analysis of the New Orleans piano styles of Chicago pianists Lovie Austin and Lil Hardin Armstrong, in which he argues that without a gender analysis of power and music, we cannot appreciate certain aspects of their musical contributions (i.e. accompaniment) that were defined as "feminine," and routinely devalued by jazz historians. Charles Chamberlain's work on female jazz pianists in New Orleans incorporates a gender analysis of jazz, the piano, and respectability.¹⁰ Laurie Stras has been working on a race and gender analysis of the Boswell Sisters and what they meant at national and local New Orleans levels.¹¹ Lynn Abbott and Doug

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazzwomen:
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Seroff's meticulous revisiting of early vaudeville and minstrelsy provides us with unprecedented data on women in these important sites of early jazz development.¹²

This Research Study also benefits from recent scholarship on gender, race, sexuality, and ethnicity in related topics such as quadroon balls, creolization, Mardi Gras, Storyville (both prostitution industry and anti-prostitution reformers), and tourism in New Orleans. All of these works shed light on women's history, jazz history, and histories of the many ways that people understood, lived, defined, and redefined gender in New Orleans before and during the time when jazz was being developed.¹³

The carefully tended and ever-expanding pool of increasingly available documentation of early jazz in New Orleans archives provides a rich archive for revisiting history with an analytical interest in women and gender. Though New Orleans jazz histories have not generally emphasized women and gender, we are fortunate that serious collectors of New Orleans jazz history, such as William Russell, Richard Allen, Barry Martyn, Jack Stewart, and Tad Jones, have included women in their quest for information. Archivists such as Bruce Boyd Raeburn, Lynn Abbott and Alma Williams Freeman at the Hogan Jazz Archive have made a concerted effort to make knowledge about women in jazz history available. The resources are plentiful for exhibits, educational programming, and future research projects on women in New Orleans jazz. The New Orleans Jazz National Historical Park has already contributed invaluable educational programming on women in jazz at the Visitor's Center, and is poised to stand as a major for preserving, producing, and presenting historical knowledge about

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazzwomen:
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

women and gender in New Orleans Jazz.

The goals of this Research Study included revisiting source materials on New Orleans jazz available in 2004 with a focus on women and gender, as Cavin revisited the sources on Congo Square in 1975, and to compare them with both the written histories of New Orleans jazz in general, and with the women-in-jazz histories written in the 1980s that were not specific to New Orleans. To that end, I attempted to compile a compendium of women's activities as related to New Orleans jazz history.

For the purposes of this study, I have focused on the one hundred year period between the time Cavin left off and the recent past, roughly 1880-1980, with an emphasis on the earlier years. I am well aware that the latter years of this study are short on younger players, privileging histories of the later careers of women born prior to 1935. This imbalance is based on the need to narrow this study to a manageable scope. I prioritized my focus to earlier women, and was less ambitious about more contemporary times, deciding that this material is more readily available, though no less important. There are many women jazz musicians in New Orleans today whose stories need to be collected, and that work is yet to be done

I have defined "New Orleans jazzwomen" as those who contributed to New Orleans jazz history, whether or not they lived in New Orleans. Therefore, I include women like pianist Lovie Austin, who contributed to New Orleans jazz from Chicago; trumpet player Ann Cooper, traveled from Chicago to play in New Orleans; and bassist Olivia Sophie L'Ange Porter Shipp, who was born in New Orleans, but spent her entire

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazzwomen:
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

career in New York; as well as pianists Dolly Adams, Emma Barrett, and Jeanette Kimball, whose lengthy careers were based in New Orleans. I also wanted to include non-musicians, as well as musicians, such as garden party entrepreneur Betsy Cole, religious figures such as Mother Catherine Seals, and jazz fans, jazz club members, and revivalists such as Myra Menville. I also wanted to include educators, church musicians, musicians who worked with jazz musicians, or who were influenced by jazz, but played other musical forms.

Another goal of this Research Study was to put all of this data into a historical and social context that considered gender as one of the factors shaping what different women and men did in New Orleans jazz. This proved enormous as well, considering the complexity of social and historical change, differentiated by race, class, ethnicity, language, family history, neighborhood, and, of course, gender, that occurred in New Orleans between 1880 and 1980. Feminist historian Elsa Barkeley Brown uses the New Orleans term, “Gumbo Ya Ya,” to describe history as “everyone talking at once,” comparing this to jazz. History, she writes is like jazz in that there are “multiple rhythms being played simultaneously. The events and people we write about did not occur in isolation but in dialogue with a myriad of other people and events.” What historians do, then, is “to find ways to “isolate one conversation and explore it, but the trick is then how to put that conversation in a context which makes evident its dialogue with so many others—how to make this one lyric stand alone and at the same time be in conjunction with all the other lyrics being sung.”¹⁴

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazzwomen:
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Barkeley Brown provides an outstanding model for writing about New Orleans jazz women in a historical context, since there were, simultaneously, so many messages, or “lyrics being sung at once,” often conflicting, about what women could or could not do musically; about which women “fell” from pedestals by playing jazz, and which women “succeeded” by becoming recognized as jazz musicians. More challenging was the task of taking the enormous pool of information and analyzing the historical dialogues in detail. For instance, for some women, jazz employment provided upward mobility and increased opportunities, often even an escape route from domestic work, share cropping, or poverty. For others, jazz meant rebelling against religious, familial, or other social restrictions. For others, it meant a serious risk of class status that could affect life chances. For some women, classical piano meant respectability and class status, but racism prevented employment in classical music, and working-class economic status made it necessary to earn a living; for such women, jazz employment could be experienced as a kind of mixed bag. For others, jazz participation became of way of being modern, of participating in new musical forms, new technologies (such as radio, recording, motor vehicle travel), and new gender possibilities at once. These different relationships held by women to jazz in New Orleans co-existed in close proximity facilitated by migration (both out and in), travel, religious diversity, ethnic diversity (and changing definitions, identifications, and legal restrictions). Therefore, it was less likely for New Orleanians to see gender norms as an unchanging fact of life than it would be in a more monolithic cultural setting. Gender

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazzwomen:
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

norms were powerful, but other visions of what social life of women could or should be were always in view. I have sketched what I think are promising possibilities in this Research Study, but I also want to emphasize that the meticulous collection and analyses of specific historical dialogues remains the exciting purview of future researchers, students, historians, educators, and curators.

This Research Study is comprised of two major parts. The first part discusses women and gender and New Orleans jazz in a cultural and historical context. The second part presents biographical research findings on some of the women who have participated in New Orleans jazz historically.

Part One opens with a time-line of New Orleans jazz history through a view-finder that focuses on women's participation. We may not be able to see clearly the historical dialogues that Elsa Barkeley Brown would want us to develop, but we can certainly see that throughout this one hundred year period of New Orleans jazz history, women were well represented among the many people "talking at once."

The time-line is followed by a historical overview of women's participation in New Orleans jazz. While this section in some ways elaborates the time-line, it also becomes more thematically oriented at times, emphasizing particular roles and activities and places in New Orleans jazz history in which women's participation was especially prominent. In some cases, these areas are those that are often seen as marginal to the development of jazz. This Research Study, however, takes a different position on "women-appropriate" spheres of New Orleans jazz history. Rather than seeing these

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazzwomen:
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

areas of jazz history as incidental or unimportant, this study will see areas of women's involvement as places that must be reclaimed for a more complete view of New Orleans jazz history. Like other studies of women's history, the study of women in New Orleans jazz history makes it possible not only to locate women in New Orleans jazz as-we-know-it, but to increase our knowledge of both women and men in entire areas of jazz history that have been historically devalued. These include: church musicians, vocalists, music education, theatrical performance, dancers, and "all-girl" bands. Inevitably, overlaps exist between this chapter and the biographical entries that follow.

Some of the women whose biographies are included in Part Two are already relatively well-known to enthusiasts of New Orleans jazz, and are subject to a fair amount of documentation. These include pianists "Sweet Emma" Barrett and Billie Pierce. Others, such as dancer/entertainer Neliska "Baby" Briscoe, pianist Margaret Kimble, and lawn party entrepreneur Betsy Cole, are relatively unknown, and scarcely mentioned in historical accounts. Some entries, therefore, primarily compile known information, while others present original research. While far from comprehensive, this collection of entries is important in that it assembles historical data on individual lives of a diverse selection of New Orleans jazzwomen. There are many more women whose biographies deserve space in this report, but to include them all is beyond the scope of this project. Given the commitment to researching women in jazz shown by the New Orleans Jazz National Historical Park, my hope is that opportunities will arise for another Research Study at some point that may continue this project. There is more

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazzwomen:
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

than enough information for biographies of many more dozens of women significant to New Orleans jazz. I have included a list of women who should be included, realizing that even that lengthy addendum is incomplete.

Questions I have asked here, and that must be asked in future studies, include: In what ways were women involved in the new musical forms that were so important to New Orleans culture? Which women were involved with which aspects? Which musical sounds, practices, and roles were considered appropriate for women, and which appropriate for men? How did these vary across race, ethnicity, class, language, religion, and New Orleans neighborhoods? How did these change over time? What happened when women, and men, for that matter, made musical choices that conflicted with their society's notions of gender-appropriate music-making? Did changing ideas about gender contribute to the development of jazz? How did ideas about gender affect how musicians, both men and women, participated in jazz at various moments in New Orleans history; as well as how they were perceived, remembered, or forgotten? How do historical ideas about gender and race and other social categories affect how we think about New Orleans jazz today? This research study does not finally answer these questions, but does, I hope, open up some productive directions for other historians to extend the research compiled here, to consider the questions raised, and to produce comparative analyses.

Notes

**A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazzwomen:
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas**

¹ See Linda Dahl, *Stormy Weather: The Music and Lives of a Century of Jazzwomen* (New York: Limelight Editions, 1989); Handy, D. Antoinette. *Black Women in American Bands and Orchestras, Second Edition*. Lanham, Mass. and Kent: Scarecrow Press, 1998, and Sally Placksin, *American Women in Jazz: 1900 to the Present, Their Words, Lives, and Music*. New York: Wideview Books, 1982.

² Susan Cavin, "Missing Women: On the Voodoo Trail to Jazz," *Journal of Jazz Studies* Vol. 3, no. 1, Fall 1975, 4-27.

³ Cavin, "Missing Women"; also Jerah Johnson, *Congo Square in New Orleans* (New Orleans: Louisiana Landmarks Society, 1995).

⁴ Cavin, "Missing Women," 9.

⁵ Cavin, "Missing Women," 14-15.

⁶ Cavin, "Missing Women," 9.

⁷ Olly Wilson, "The Heterogeneous Sound Ideal in African-American Music," *Signifyin(g), Sanctifyin', and Slam Dunking: A Reader in African American Expressive Culture*, ed. Gena Dagal Caponi (University of Massachusetts Press, 1999), 158.

⁸ Wilson, "Heterogeneous Sound Ideal," 160.

⁹ Sherrie Tucker, "Women" in the *New Grove Dictionary of Jazz*, ed. Barry Kernfeld, MacMillan, 2001, 978-984; and "Big Ears: Listening for Gender in Jazz Studies," *Current Musicology* no. 71-73, Spring 2001-Spring 2002, 375-408.

¹⁰ Jeffrey Taylor, "With Lovie and Lil: Rediscovering Two Chicago Pianists of the 1920s" (conference paper), Society for Music Theory, Annual Meeting, Columbus, OH, Nov. 1, 2002; Charles Chamberlain, "The Goodson Sisters: Women Pianists and the Function of Gender in the Jazz Age," *The Jazz Archivist*, vol. XV (2001).1-9.

¹¹ Laurie Stras, "White Face, Black Noise: The Boswell Sisters and the Transmogrification of Minstrelsy," unpublished paper; see Stras's project notes, <http://www.soton.ac.uk/~lastras/projab.htm> (accessed September 28, 2004).

¹² Lynn Abbott and Doug Seroff, *Out of Sight : The Rise of African American Popular Music, 1889-1895* (Jackson : University Press of Mississippi, 2002)

¹³ See Monique Guillory, *Some Enchanted Evening on the Auction Block: The Cultural Legacy of the New Orleans Quadroon Balls* (Ph.D. diss., NYU, 1999); Alecia P. Long, *'The Great Southern Babylon': Sexuality, Race, and Reform in New Orleans, 1865-1920* (PhD. diss., University of Delaware, 2001); Bruce Boyd Raeburn, *New Orleans Style: The Awakening of American Jazz Scholarship and Its Cultural Implications* (PhD. diss., Tulane, 1991); and Shirley Elizabeth Thompson, *The Passing of a People: Creoles of Color in Mid-Nineteenth Century New Orleans* (PhD. diss., Harvard, 2001).

¹⁴ Elsa Barkeley Brown, "Polyrhythms and Improvisations: Lessons for Women's History," *History Workshop Journal* (Spring 1991), 84.

PART ONE: HISTORICAL AND SOCIAL CONTEXT

This section presents a view of one hundred years of New Orleans jazz history (1890-1990) that includes women and gender. As a quick visual tool to begin re-populating the sweep of New Orleans jazz history with women, I provide a time-line of women's jazz activities in a context of historical events that affected them, particularly the women who were born prior to 1935.

The time-line demonstrates that New Orleans jazz history is replete with women, as well as men. From local musical activities, to traveling bands, to migrations to Northern urban centers, the west coast, even Europe; migrations into New Orleans from elsewhere, to recording opportunities—women have been actively present and involved in New Orleans jazz history. The time-line also shows that women musicians did not always act in isolation as “exceptional” women, but worked in historical and cultural contexts with other people, women included, who participated in New Orleans jazz.

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Time-line: New Orleans Jazzwomen: 1890-1990

1877: End of Radical Reconstruction. Federal troops pulled out of the South. Former slave holders regaining positions of power.

1880s Second out-migration of Creoles of color (first was in 1850s) to destinations such as Mexico and Haiti to escape racism and its consequences.

1890: Sam T. Jack's black female revue, *The Creole Show*, tours the Eastern states.

While the players and producers were not New Orleans-based, the popularity of the light-skinned black women performing as "Creoles" offers some insights into national perceptions of "Creole" as an exotic mixed-race female.

1893: Economic depression.

1895 20,000 guidebooks to New Orleans brothels are distributed to tourists.

Late 1890s: Mardi Gras already attracting tens of thousands of tourists each year.

1895-1906 Antonia Gonzales runs a series of high class brothels in Storyville, where she advertises herself as the "only cornet playing madam." Hires Tony Jackson and Jelly Roll Morton. Often plays duets with Jackson..

1896: Plessy v. Ferguson. Case brought by Homer Plessy, a Creole of color who neither identified as white or as black, who challenged the black/white color line.

The court ruled that mandatory segregation was constitutional, and making

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

possible the full force of Jim Crow.

1896 Louisiana sets the national record for lynching in one year.

1890s Thousands of rural black Southerners migrate to New Orleans to escape racist violence and to seek a greater variety of employment opportunities.

1897 Storyville established by City Ordinance. Confines New Orleans's red-light district to a much smaller area than the one that had been in effect since 1857. All prostitutes and "lewd and abandoned" women restricted to this area.

1898: Spanish American War.

1900: Charles race riots in New Orleans.

1900 New Orleans-born Olivia Sophie L'Ange accepts invitation from her sister, vaudeville actress May L'Ange (Kemp) to join her in New York. Changes her name to Porter out of respect for her father who disapproves of women in show business. Olivia becomes a vaudeville pianist, but studies cello, violin, and bass. Later founds the Negro Women's Orchestral and Civic Association (late 1920s-1930s).

1901-6: Jelly Roll Morton hears Mamie Desdunes playing "Mamie's Blues." Is influenced by her piano style, possibly by her approach to blues with habanera rhythm. Mamie Desdunes plays piano and sings in Storyville brothels, including those on Perdido Street, and Lulu White's and Hattie Rogers.

1908: Mary and Billy McBride go on the road with a traveling show they will maintain until 1959, "Mack and Mack" (not to be confused with "Mack's Merry Makers"). Their specialty is New Orleans music. Mary McBride (nee Thacker) was born in

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Algiers, Louisiana, and sang the blues. Mack and Mack bring many New Orleans musicians to Chicago.

1909 Gay-Shattuck Law, Louisiana statute, women could not buy or serve liquors, nor could they go into places that sold liquor unless they were restaurants and hotels that also sold food.

1910s-1920s Singer Ann Cook performs in Storyville, working for Countess Willie Piazza. In 1920s works in South Rampart Street clubs, such as the Red Onion.

1914 Boswell family moves to New Orleans.

1908 Camilla Todd listed as piano teacher. Teaches jazz musicians, including Octave Crosby and Hyppolyte Charles.

1910s-1920s Betsy Cole holds lawn parties uptown, with bands like Kid Ory's with Johnny Dodds, in the Willow and Josephine area, in what is known as Central City, one of New Orleans's oldest working class neighborhoods.

Between 1910 and 1920, the African American population in Chicago increased from forty thousand to over a hundred thousand, with the largest numbers of black migrants traveling by rail from the Mississippi Delta.

1910 Blues singer Edna Landreaux (later Hicks) begins traveling the black vaudeville circuit with William Benbow, whom she marries. Her half-sister Lizzie Miles, also a singer, soon joins them.

1912-1920's: Margaret Marshall Maurice Kimble is a well-known piano teacher.

1912-1916: Camille Nickerson goes to Oberlin, where she earns a degree in music.

1913-1938: Pianist Lovie Austin is house pianist, musical director, and pit orchestra

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

director for Monogram Theater in Chicago. Plays with many black New Orleans musicians.

1914-1918: Singer, Lizzie Miles, performs in minstrel shows in circuses.

1916-1926: Camille Nickerson teaches with her father, William J. Nickerson at the Nickerson School of Music, New Orleans.

1917: February: City ordinance attempts to racially segregate Storyville. Willie Piazza, who owns very successful quadroom brothel takes case to Louisiana State Supreme court and wins. Later the same year, federal ruling forbade prostitution within five miles of any navy base. Storyville closes.

1917: February: Camille Nickerson founds the B-Sharp Club to promote “Negro Music,” with an emphasis on spirituals, African American classical music, and Creole songs. Raises money to causes such as the scholarship fund of the National Association of Negro Musicians, the NAACP, and the Anti-Lynching Fund.

1917: Josephine Baker is stranded in New Orleans on a vaudeville tour with the Jones Family Band (that included trumpet playing mother and daughter Dyer and Dolly Jones). At one time, Baker had worked as a trombonist in their troupe.

1917: Dolly Douroux (later Adams) playing in Manuel Manetta’s band in the District.

1918: Lil Hardin moves to Chicago with her mother. Gets job as a music demonstrator, where she is influenced by Jelly Roll Morton. Also gets her first job with a band, which happens to be a New Orleans band: Eddie Garland (bass), Roy Palmer (trombone), Lawrence Duhe (clarinet), “Sugar Johnny” Smith (cornet), Tubby Hall (drums), Jimmy Palao (violin). Sidney Bechet joins for a time. Freddy Keppard

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

takes “Sugar Johnny Smith’s place. The band plays all around Chicago’s South Side, including the Deluxe Café. Winds up at the Dreamland. Band breaks up and Lil stays on as house pianist.

1918: Armistice. World War I ends. Jazz becomes more socially accepted in New Orleans among middle-class. More “society” bookings available, including debutante balls.

1919: Joe Oliver, who has moved to Chicago in the last year, leads the band at the Dreamland. Lil Hardin is the pianist.

1919: Dolly Douroux (later Adams) playing piano in Peter Bocage’s Creole Serenaders. Also starts leading her own group at the Othello Theater on South Rampart Street for vaudeville.

1919: Camilla Todd is pianist in John Robichaux’s Orchestra at the Lyric Theatre. When Robichaux becomes ill, several members form the Maple Leaf Orchestra. Later plays with Hyppolyte Charles’s Orchestra through 1925. Also plays with A.J. Piron and Kid Ory during this period.

1920: Lil Hardin becomes pianist in Joe “King” Oliver’s band.

1921: Six young women in clown suits (“yama-yama costumes”) disrupt the Carnival Queen and her elite court by dancing and doing acrobatics outside the Boston Club to a jazz orchestra.

1921: Lil Hardin decides to leave Joe Oliver’s west coast tour to return to New Orleans and play for band leader and violinist, Mae Brady, at the Dreamland in Chicago.

1921: New Orleans born Bertha Gonsoulin replaces Lil Hardin as pianist in Joseph

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

“King” Oliver’s Creole Jazz Band in San Francisco, then Chicago.

1922: Lizzie Miles makes her first record in New York City, “Muscle Shoals Blues”

(Okeh) Make dozens of recordings in NYC in the 1920s.

1923: Lil Hardin returns to King Oliver’s band after they return from Chicago. Bertha

Gonsoulin returns to west coast. Lil Hardin records with Oliver for Gennett.

Early 1920s, Emma Barrett is pianist in Oscar "Papa" Celestin's and “Bebe” Ridgeley’s

co–led Original Tuxedo Jazz Orchestra.

1920s: Goodson Sisters, Billie, Sadie, and Edna of Pensacola play piano for numerous

New Orleans bands traveling through Florida.

1920s: Boswell Sisters, a local vocal and instrumental trio, perform in New Orleans.

1920s: Mercedes Garman (Fields) is pianist with musicians, including Papa Celestin,

Louis Armstrong, and Alphonse Picou. She had also sometimes played on a

boat that sailed on Lake Ponchartrain. She is a music teacher from 1920s-

1950s.

1920s: Mother Leaf [Leafy] Anderson incorporates jazz musicians in her Spiritualist

Church.

1920: Seven-year old Louisa Dupont (later Blue Lu Barker) gains popularity as a child

star in Treme balls and clubs, singing and dancing.

1922-1930: Mother Catherine Seals, like her mentor Mother Anderson, incorporates

jazz musicians in her Spiritualist ministry. She herself plays trombone.

1922-mid-1920s: Neliska “Baby” Briscoe entertains as an acrobatic dancer at the Alley

Caberet, St. Bernard and Claiborne, in the Seventh Ward.

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

1923-26: Lovie Austin is the house pianist, arranger, musical director for jazz sessions at Paramount Records in Chicago. Records many black New Orleans musicians. Austin leads band, the Blues Serenaders, primarily made up of New Orleans musicians, including clarinetist Johnny Dodds, cornetist Tommy Ladnier, and trombonist Kid Ory.

1923-1925 or 1926: Margaret Maurice Kimble is pianist in John Robichaux's Lyric Theater Orchestra.

1924: Lil Hardin and Louis Armstrong are married. Louis goes to New York. Lil forms Lil's Hot Shots.

1924-1927: Lizzie Miles performs as a cabaret singer in Paris, known as the Creole Songbird.

1925: Louis Armstrong returns to Chicago and is featured in Lil Hardin Armstrong's band, Lil's Hot Shots. Band records and plays mostly in Chicago.

1925-1926: Louis Armstrong and Lil Armstrong record the Hot Fives and Hot Sevens records.

1925: Emma Barrett records with Oscar "Papa" Celestin's and "Bebe" Ridgeley's co-led Original Tuxedo Jazz Orchestra.

Mid through late 1920s: Wilhilmena Bart du Rouan plays with New Orleans bands. Plays in Storyville, among other places.

1925: Wilhelmina Bart is the pianist for the New Orleans Creole Jazz Band, organized by cornetist Amos White, a band that also included Barney Bigard and played at Old Spanish Fort, a popular resort since the 1800s, on Lake Pontchartrain.

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

1925 or 1926: Celestin and Ridgeley split. Emma Barrett stays with Ridgeley's Original Tuxedo Orchestra until 1936 (during same time period plays in bands led by Sidney Desvigne, John Robichaux, and A.J. Piron). Celestin hires a number of pianists (including Sadie Goodson) before Jeanette Salvant (Kimball) becomes his regular pianist.

1925 or 1926 through 1935: Jeanette Salvant (Kimball) is pianist for Oscar Celestin's Tuxedo Jazz Orchestra.

1926: Lil Hardin organizes the New Orleans Wanderers for Columbia Records.

1927 Wilhelmina Bart is the pianist in Willie Pajeaud's band at the Alamo Dance Hall, at Burgundy and Canal.

1927: Ann Cook, singer, becomes one of the few musicians to record in New Orleans in the 1920s, when she records "Mama Cookie's Blues" and "He's the Sweetest Black Man in Town" with Louis Dumaine's Jazzola Eight for a traveling crew from Victor Records.

1928: Mercedes Garman Fields is pianist in the NOLA dance orchestra led by trumpet player Peter Lacaze on Carondelet Street. Also in late twenties, plays with Bob Lyons's band and John Robichaux's orchestra.

1929: Dixie Fasnacht studies music and art and Nicholls School.

1930s: Mary and Billy Mack make Chicago their home base.

1930s-1940s: Mercedes Garman Fields is pianist with Oscar "Papa" Celestin's band.

Circa 1930-31: Baby Briscoe is a regular at the Astoria on South Rampart Street.

Early 1930s: Dixie Fasnacht goes on the road with all-girl band from Ohio, the Smart

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Set.

1931: Baby Briscoe moves to New York.

1933: All-girl band, the Smart Set, with New Orleans clarinetist/saxophonist Dixie Fasnacht break up on the road in Pensacola. Three members picked up by manager of the Bricktops and taken to New Orleans.

1933: Joe Robichaux's Rhythm Boys returns to the Rhythm Club after a trip to New York and becomes the regular band. The 15-piece band is fronted by two women in tuxedos, vocalist Joan Lunceford (Daisy Lowe), and dancer Baby Briscoe.

1933 or 1934: Maxine Phinney arrives in New Orleans with a home-made bass. Gets work in a quartet with Dixie Fasnacht, Judy Ertle, and Betty Giblins. They go on the road to Chicago and New York as the Southland Rhythm Girls, sometimes calling themselves the Sophisticates of Swing.

1935: Southland Rhythm Girls, with New Orleanean Dixie Fasnacht, make short film, "Speedy Justice."

1935. Harlem Playgirls, an African American all-woman band, is organized in Minneapolis, and soon plays annual Mardi Gras concerts in New Orleans.

1938: Blue Lu Barker launches a recording career that will include 24 sides on Decca.

1938, June, to July 1940, Baby Briscoe goes on the road as the leader of the Harlem Playgirls.

1939: Dixie and Irma Fasnacht open "Dixie's Bar of Music" across from the St. Charles Hotel. Judy Ertle returns to New Orleans to play trumpet in Dixie's bar, and Dixie

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

plays clarinet and saxophone.

1939: March 31 and September 14, Trumpet player Ann Cooper records 16 sides with the Harlem Hamfats in Chicago for Vocalion, replacing Herb Morand, New Orleans trumpeter and former leader of the band.

1939: Jelly Roll Morton records “Mamie’s Blues,” crediting Mamie Desdunes as the author.

1939: Dolly Douroux Adams returns to musical profession after 15 year hiatus to raise her family. Plays with her brothers Lawrence and Irving Douroux at West Bank clubs—the Varsity, Gay Paree, and Moonlight Inn.

Late 1930s: Jeanette Kimball becomes organist and choir director of Holy Ghost Catholic Church.

1940: Bertha Gonsoulin is well-respected piano teacher at the Booker T. Washington Community Service Center in San Francisco.

1941, Krewe of Venus (a middle-class white women’s organization) holds the first women’s Mardi Gras parade.

1940s through 1950s: Emma Barrett plays with small groups. Long job at Paddock Lounge where she acquires the name the “Bell Gal.”

1943: Bertha Gonsoulin accompanies Bunk Johnson in San Francisco concert, presented by New Orleans jazz enthusiasts. Records with Bunk Johnson.

1944: National Jazz Foundation: civic support of jazz in New Orleans; realization of potential for jazz tourism.

1944: In Los Angeles, Marili Morden, New Orleans jazz enthusiast and co-owner of

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Jazz Man Records, is asked by Orson Welles to procure a jazz band for his radio show. She brings Kid Ory to Welles' attention.

1947: Mercedes Garman Fields records on Deluxe with Papa Celestin.

1948: Olivia "Lady Charlot" Cook is the pianist in Herbert Leary's 15-piece society band.

1948: New Orleans Jazz Club founded by jazz enthusiasts, many in prominent social positions, dedicated to promoting jazz "purism," providing opportunities for traditional jazz musicians to work, and preservation of traditional jazz.

1949: July 21, former blues singer Ann Cook records a gospel song, "The Lord Will Make a Way" for William Russell's American Music label.

1949-1964: "Dixie's Bar of Music" moves to second location, at 701 Bourbon Street.

Dorothy Sloop comes from Ohio to play piano in the co-ed jazz band led by Dixie Fasnacht.

1951: Mercedes Garman Fields records three sides with Papa Celestin.

1953: Jeanette Kimball rejoins Papa Celestin. The band plays for President Eisenhower. Celestin dies in 1954, but band stays going, and Kimball continues playing with the band until 1977.

1954: Brown v. Board rules that, given the history of the U.S., separate does not automatically mean equal. Racial segregation ordered to end.

1955: Libraries in New Orleans desegregated.

1957: Dixie Fasnacht (clarinet) and Dorothy Sloop (piano) record l.p. *Sloopy Time* for Golden Crest. Maeceil Peterson Silliker is the drummer.

1958: Buses and streetcars in New Orleans desegregated.

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

1960-61: State and local resistance to desegregation threatens to close schools rather than integrate.

1961: Jazz Museum opens.

1961: Preservation Hall opens.

1961-66: Dolly Adams one of the regular pianists at Preservation Hall

1962: Dixie Fasnacht bails out of jail loyal patrons of Dixie's Bar of Music who are members of a gay carnival krewe. The Krewe of Yuga were victims of a police raid at a private party in Jefferson Parish. All members were arrested and names published in paper.

1961-67: Emma Barrett becomes one of the band leaders at Preservation Hall.

1961: Emma Barrett is recorded by a mobile unit from the Riverside label, for two-disk set, *New Orleans: The Living Legend* (Riverside 356/7; stereo 9356/7). These recordings play key role in stirring national and international interest in living New Orleans jazz artists who still played earlier styles.

1965: Olivia "Lady Charlot" Cook tires of playing society jobs like balls with Herbert Leary's band, and starts her own band, Olivia Charlotte Cook's Men of Rhythm.

1966: Blue Lu Barker, and her husband Danny Barker, move back to New Orleans after 38 years in New York and California. They form a band called the Jazz Hounds.

1968: Jazz Fest '68

1969: New Orleans Jazz and Food Festival

1970-present: New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival

1969-1971: Emma Barrett plays at Dixieland Hall

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

1971-1983: Emma Barrett plays at Preservation Hall.

1972: Charlotte McCullom Boutney becomes first black board member of the New Orleans Jazz Club.

1974-1989: Blue Lu Barker and Danny Barker are regulars at the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival.

1974: Miss Carrie's jazz funeral (former maid to Storyville madam Lulu White). Pianist Billie Pierce's jazz funeral.

1976: B-Sharp Club (founded by Camille Nickerson in 1917) includes jazz in its program.

1979: Jeanette Kimball becomes a member of the newly formed Original Camillia Band, led by English trumpeter Clive Wilson, and regular at Preservation Hall.

1980: Jeanette Kimball records album under her own name. *Sophisticated Lady: Trios and Quartets* (NOR 7208).

1986: Ellyna Tatum's jazz funeral. The first woman Grand Marshall. Wanda Rouzan is the Grand Marshall for Tatum's funeral.

1987: Blue Lu Barker is honored on WWOZ radio on her 74th birthday by an all-woman radio crew.

1989: Blue Lu Barker's last performance is recorded.

1992: Students at St. Mary's Academy form the Pinettes, an all-female New Orleans Brass Band

1994: The New Orleans City Council declares January 13, 1994 "Blue Lu and Danny Barker Day."

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

1998: Blue Lu Barker dies. Receives jazz funeral. Wanda Rouzan is Grand Marshal.

2002: Pinettes Brass Band records their CD, *“Who You Gonna Call? ... the Pinettes Brass Band!”* (AGB Records, 2002).

Historical Overview

As a cosmopolitan Caribbean hub, turn of the century New Orleans comprised many kinds of ethnic, racial, linguistic, religious, class, and national identifications—and with them, many kinds of music, and many definitions of proper roles for women and men. This historical overview organizes evidence of women’s participation in New Orleans jazz chronologically, in order to better understand the biographical entries that follow. The broad sweep of this overview also helps us to locate gender as one of many important elements in the rich history of cultural exchange that contributed to the development of jazz in New Orleans.

“Cultural exchange” has the ring of fairness about it, of give and take. It is important, however, to acknowledge that cultural exchange is rarely power-free, and that not all of the cultural exchange that provided the context for the emergence of jazz was elective or equal. Indeed, jazz emerged in New Orleans during a time of drastic legal and political shifts that would affect the ways that people thought about themselves, their neighbors, their allegiances, and would greatly affect their rights and life chances. Each set of new rules impacted people differently according to ethnicity, race, class, gender, and other factors. What did the emergence of jazz mean to people responding to such momentous changes as shifting colonial legacies, Americanization,

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

sea changes of immigration, multiple wars (including the Spanish American War, Civil War and World War I), and the rise of Jim Crow? And, specifically, what did it mean to *women*, whose relationships to the music are so often left out of the story?

According to Bruce Raeburn, among the important things one must consider in order to understand “the origins of jazz in New Orleans” are:

how concepts of ethnicity infused with racial valences (such as Creole of color, Sicilian, and Hispanic) were subjected to a process of radical transformation in the early twentieth century, how much cross-cultural exchange had already occurred before the rise of jazz, and the degree to which these terms were malleable, especially in the hands of young people seeking to construct American identities for themselves through jazz.¹

In a sense, this report seeks to focus these considerations on the women who crafted identities and livelihoods through jazz. It also seeks to gather clues into the roles that gender played in the ways that people of a wide variety of ethnic identities and racial classifications used jazz to construct themselves as American, as modern, and, in many cases, as *survivors* of Americanization and modernity. It seems fitting, then, to begin this historical survey of women and New Orleans jazz well before 1900.

Pre-Jazz New Orleans

We have already seen that women were among the drummers, vocalizers, chanters, and spectators at Congo Square, a site of cultural exchange among African and African-descended slaves and free people of color, as well as indigenous Americans and Europeans beginning in the late 1700s. Mary Gehman and Nancy Ries add that indigenous women “from the Choctaw, Houmas, Acolapissa, and other tribes

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

peddled baskets of fruits, herbs and pelts at the market.”² We have no way of knowing the extent to which this exchange included music, but certainly indigenous people engaged in cross-cultural listening at Congo Square. We also know that intermarriage took place, and that some tribes sheltered slaves. In fact, the black people who identify as Mardi Gras Indians, and who perform at the Jazz Fest and Mardi Gras every year, are paying tribute to the indigenous people who harbored slaves. Music may certainly have played a role in facilitating the formation of such alliances at Congo Square.

New Orleans was occupied by many colonial governments during the decades preceding the emergence of jazz, and the ongoing and cumulative effects of these shifts in rule had their effects on musical life, gender, and race. Certainly, the brass band music that accompanied changing national rule and heralded a succession of martial presences influenced jazz, and no doubt contributed to persistent associations of brass instruments with masculinity. Military band music exerted a highly public presence, replete with the repertoire and styles of various and competing nations. In short, New Orleans was under French colonial rule from 1731-1763; Spanish rule until 1802; followed by American territorial rule in 1803. Louisiana became a (slave) state in 1812, seceded from the Union in 1861, and was occupied by Union army from 1862 throughout the Civil War. The martial history of New Orleans in the 1800s includes the Battle of New Orleans (1814-1815), the Civil War, and its port location meant it immediately felt the military effects of the Spanish American war (1898). Throughout these massive military and governmental changes, battles over national and cultural allegiance took place at all levels, including musical ones. Monique Guillory writes of

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

the “friction at balls” in the 1800s when arguments over whether to dance French dances or the English quadrille would incite passionate style-wars that were very much about identity and power and not just about aesthetics. Changes in nations of rule meant changes in local rules affecting slaves and free people of color. Women were affected differently, depending upon their national, ethnic, and social status, but many of these effects were gender-specific. For instance, Gehman and Ries write that during the French period, free women (white and of color) had the right to “sell, lease or rent their own property and to contract large building projects in their own names. They were also more apt to divorce or separate from their husbands than women elsewhere in America, since they had financial security.”³ Enslaved women “had the possibility of buying their freedom or being freed upon their master’s death,” an option that contributed to the large numbers of free women of color that were not to be found in other cities of what would become the United States.⁴

Spanish rule brought with it somewhat more liberal laws regarding slaves and free people of color at first, though these tightened after 1785. When the Spanish rule began, slaves could petition for freedom under a variety of conditions, including those who had been living independently for ten years, who had married free people of color, and one law specifically granted freedom to female slaves whose masters had “hired them out as prostitutes.”⁵ This relative leniency of the Spanish laws turned around in 1785 with a new governor and with increased anxieties about slave rebellions. New restrictions included the passage of a series of laws designed to discourage romantic and sexual unions across race. In the 1780's, dancing and public meetings among non-

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

white people were restricted to Congo Square. Another law forbade enslaved and free women of color from wearing jewels or ornaments in their hair. Such rules were meant to lessen the attraction of French and Spanish men to non-white women, and the practice of formal concubinage known as *placage*. Through this arrangement, free women of color entered into long-term relationships with white French or Spanish men who supported them and their families, without the ties of marriage. In this way, many free women of color acquired property, raised families that carried their names, and enjoyed relative autonomy.⁶

This was also during this time period that free people of color built strong communities known as Creole of color. Shirley Thompson defines Creole as “a chameleon of a term, masking and exposing the anxieties over place, language and race.”⁷ The term has meant many things in New Orleans, including people of “Old World parentage, born in the New World,” and mixed Spanish, French, Italian, and African heritage. The emergence of the powerful group identity, Creole of color, also known as *les gens de couleur libre*, produced a francophone free black community that was separate from both white Creole and black. Creoles of color published their own newspapers, took interest in intellectual and political developments in France and the French West Indies (including the French Revolution, 1789-1795, and Haitian Revolution, 1791-1804, which had profound implications for conceptualizing freedom and citizenship). In the years prior to the Civil War, many Creoles of color faced increased restrictions as whites feared their potential alliances with black slaves, many shipping out to Mexico and Haiti. Mary Gehman writes that many returned after the

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Civil War, but another out-migration took place in the 1880s with the Rise of Jim Crow.⁸

Creoles of color tended to be well-educated, middle-class, and, according to Joseph Logsdon and Caryn Cosse Bell, assertive and self-confident.⁹ Education, skilled labor, class position, and property ownership, intertwined in the production of this powerful new ethnicity, and, not surprisingly, included powerful cultural dimensions as well.

Musical training for both girls and boys became an important and ongoing aspect of Creole of color identity-formation. Piano and voice training were considered especially important for girls, though musical accomplishments did extend to other instruments as well, especially in musical families.

Many of the women in this study were descended from Creole of color families. Olivia Manetta (born 1877; later Douroux, mother of **Dolly Adams**), was accomplished on the trumpet. She grew up in a famous Creole of color musical family that included her brother, Manuel Manetta, then married into another musical Creole of color family and often played her trumpet at private gatherings in duets with her husband Louis Douroux. The Nickerson Ladies Orchestra was an elite nine-piece ensemble founded by a Creole of color violinist and influential music teacher in New Orleans, William J. Nickerson. His students included Jelly Roll Morton, Manuel Manetta, and **Emma Barrett**. William J. Nickerson's daughter, **Camille Nickerson**, born in 1888, was already the pianist in the Nickerson Ladies Orchestra at the age of 9. She became an important music educator, and wrote one of the first histories of Creole of color music as her MA thesis at Oberlin in 1932.¹⁰ Entitled *Africo-Creole Music in Louisiana*, Camille Nickerson's thesis noted the importance of the French opera for Creoles of color of the

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

wealthiest classes, but focused on the distinctive and more class inclusive folk music that combined influences of African, Spanish, and French folk forms.¹¹ One characteristic of Creole of color folk music that she identified as distinctive from both French folk music and black American folk music was the frequent rhythmic use of triplets, which she believed to a Spanish influence. She also found the influence of Habanera rhythms in much of the Creole of color folk music that she studied; Habanera being a result of combined African and Spanish influences that emerged in several Spanish colonies with African slaves in the Americas.¹²

Nickerson's work did not address jazz, *per sé* (except to note that Creole of color bands comprised of wooden pipes, pebble-filled gourds, bones and drums played for Creole dances at Congo Square in the 1850s, and to offer the casual opinion that these bands seemed "a fore-runner of our modern jazz.")¹³ However, there are scholars who have studied Creole-specific contributions to jazz. Sybil Klein has identified musical effects of Creole linguistics. One characteristic, involves what she calls a "'snap' at the beginning of a song and the use of syncopated rhythm throughout."¹⁴ This particular approach to syncopating the melody, she argues, carried over to the tendency to come in on the second rather than on the first beat of the melody in early jazz. The singing of pianist **Emma Barrett** exemplifies this approach, according to Klein. Bruce Raeburn points out that Creole of color musicians developed a piano style of *habanera* rhythms fused with blues, of which pianist and singer, **Mamie Desdunes**, about whom we shall soon hear more, played an important role.¹⁵

Americanization in 1803 brought with it a whole new set of rules and attitudes

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

about race, gender, and sexuality. The new rulers of New Orleans had a much more rigid notion of separation of slaves and non-slaves, between people of African descent, and themselves, as a newly independent nation built on ideals of freedom and democracy—and on the economy of slavery. Yet, the New Orleans that the Americans acquired in 1803 was populated by a majority of people who were either slaves or free people of color, many of whom identified as Creole of color. A sizable percentage of city property was owned by free women of color. Such a concept was beyond the scope of property-owning American white men, for whom servility and African-ness had become ideologically linked, and for whom mastery over the women of their own race, as well as the slave race, was conceived as a prime component of justification of the right to rule. Soon after the Americans began their rule, the Haitian revolution became the first successful slave revolt to result in an independent black nation. This increased American anxieties about its own slave revolts—and they *did* occur—and also resulted in an influx of Haitians into New Orleans, doubling the overall population of New Orleans, and *quadrupling* the city's population of free people of color.¹⁶ When Louisiana entered the Union as a slave state (1812), more restrictions limiting the rights of African descended people, enslaved and free, were implemented. Restrictions would increase in the antebellum period (1830-1860) in response to acceleration of the abolitionist movement. Congo Square, for example, an important site of meeting, dancing and drumming since the late 1700s, would continue to serve as a weekly respite for enslaved people, a site for temporary freedom, socializing, and economic opportunities, until the 1830s, when it became highly policed.

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

English speaking black slaves and their descendants, referred to as “American Negroes,” by Creoles of color, brought with them a powerful religious vocal music, the spiritual, which is generally listed as a precursor to jazz, and a music that was sung by both women and men. After the Civil War, other African American musical forms contributed to the development of jazz include blues, ragtime, and gospel. While none of these forms originated in New Orleans, all of them traveled to New Orleans early on, via traveling musicians, tent shows, and minstrelsy; and via traveling New Orleans musicians who encountered these forms while on the road.¹⁷ As we shall see, women were key players in these forms as well, particularly blues and gospel.

Other cultural exchanges that preceded jazz include Latin American and Caribbean influences flowing into the Port of New Orleans from Cuba, Mexico, Haiti, and other locations. Jazz historians have begun to pay more attention to Latin American and U.S. cultural exchanges, and their effects on jazz. According to Raul Fernandez, the first meeting between music of the Caribbean and the U.S. was probably in nineteenth-century New Orleans, when musicians from Cuba and Mexico traveled and played together in port cities throughout the Caribbean. John Storm Roberts has identified the unique sound of New Orleans music over time to its historical give and take relationship with Caribbean cross-rhythms. A pan-Caribbean music called *danza* became the *habanera* and traveled with musicians and other travelers and migrants during the early 1800s. In the late 1800s, at the same time that ragtime was flourishing in New Orleans, another outgrowth of *danza* occurred in Cuba: the popular, slower, couples dance music form called the *danzon*. Cubans were playing jazz in the

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

early 1920s and New Orleanians were playing *danzones*. New Orleans and Havana were both busy port cities with strong European and African cultural influences, and powerful musical traditions that could blend in interesting ways.¹⁸ Don Rouse has pointed to this continuation of rhythmic and melodic ties between New Orleans Creole and Caribbean recorded music of the 1920s.¹⁹

Women participate in *danzon* and ragtime in both Cuba and New Orleans as dancers. Ragtime composers included women, and among them were New Orleanians: Viola Dominique (“Nervy George,” 1903), Leonie Ecuyer (“The Peter Pan Rag,” 1906), and Lillian M. Lawler (“The Classy Rag,” 1917).²⁰ And at least one woman instrumentalist would play a key role in the Caribbean/New Orleans musical exchange that contributed to the emergence of New Orleans jazz. **Mamie Desdunes** was the pianist and singer that Jelly Roll Morton often credited as influencing his approach to the blues in the early 1900s. This approach was distinguished by the aforementioned fusion of blues with *habanera* or *clave* rhythm favored by Creole of color musicians. We may never know exactly what Desdunes’s role was in this development, yet we do know that she had an influence on Morton who, in turn, popularized the style.²¹ Desdunes and Morton were both descendants from the influx of Haitian refugees that fled to Cuba after the revolution in the early 1800s, and then migrated to New Orleans in 1809.

The 1830s is historically remembered as a rich time in the musical life of New Orleans, for people of all classes and races. Indeed, the city had three opera companies, each offered seating for free people of color and for slaves. Public music abounded via street parades and festivals, notably Carnival. Brass bands, both black

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

and white, paraded through the streets. During the 1830s, the Negro Philharmonic Society was founded, attracting over one hundred members.²² Yet these antebellum years (1830s-1860) also saw the rise of legal restrictions for slaves and free people of color. These new laws made it expensive for slave owners to free a slave and required freed slaves to leave the state of Louisiana. Anxieties about racial mixing were expressed at all levels of the law, including a city ordinance that affected cultural and musical life. A city ordinance in 1837 levied fines on people who allowed black women and white women to attend the same balls during Carnival.²³ In the 1840s, police raids and arrests at Congo Square became commonplace. And, as Susan Cavin has brought to our attention, white women were arrested and fined for attending *vodun* ceremonies presided over by black women. When white women were policed, it was under the guise of protecting them—and their race—from “contamination,” and therefore upholding the ideology of white supremacy. Under the myths that passed as “racial science,” and that legally defined race in the United States at the time, only white women could produce “pure” white children and thus ensure the continuation of the “white race”—black women’s children were black, even if the father was white. The anxieties about *vodun* music entering white women’s bodies, and corrupting their purity, prefigures later moral outcries that would focus on protecting white women from the supposed ill effects of jazz. Such symbolic uses of white womanhood are recurrent in the history of public controversies about black music in the United States.

In 1861, Louisiana, a slave state, seceded from the Union. However, New Orleans was seized by Union troops in 1862, and occupied by the Union throughout the

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Civil War. When the war ended, slavery had been abolished, and there were increased rights (if not economic guarantees to exercise those rights) for people of African descent. Federal troops policed the south in 1867, resulting in actualization of promises, such as the right (of men) to vote. However, as in the rest of the south, the withdrawal of federal troops spelled the demise of Radical Reconstruction in 1877 and the rise of Jim Crow. Resistance would be waged by Creoles of color and African Americans in New Orleans throughout the 1870s. In 1876, the Committee of 500 Women, founded by a black woman named Mary Garrett, fought for equal rights and advocated migration north as the best hope for black New Orleanians.²⁴ An organization called the *Comite des Citoyens*, or Citizens Committee began bringing Civil Rights cases forward, focusing on inferior segregated transportation and other public accommodations as would the Civil Rights Movement eighty years later. (An interesting side-note is that one of the powerful leaders of the Citizens Committee was Rodolphe Desdunes, father of **Mamie Desdunes**.) One case in particular made its mark on U.S. race relations, though not in the way intended by its plaintiff and his supporters in the Citizens Committee. Homer Plessy, a Creole of color man from New Orleans, challenged the law that insisted he must be either black or white, and that he must sit on the appropriate side of that line while riding the train. Unfortunately, he lost his case; the court had confirmed that race in the U.S. a black or white matter, and the rules that applied to that black/white designation were legally relegated to the whims of the states, including states governed by former slave owners.

The context of cultural exchange, from which jazz would emerge, was full of

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

contradictions and battles over identity that were waged at all levels: political, legal, social, and cultural. Jazz was not only the product of cultural exchange, but a product of people's struggles for cultural survival. Jazz was not only a set of exciting new musical forms, but a new set of musical expressions and practices that people would use in various ways as they attempted to develop identities, livelihoods, and desirable relationships to modernity for themselves and their loved ones.

1890s: Emergence of Jazz

Several events in the 1890s affected New Orleanians' identities and the relationships of those identities to social standing and life chances. Especially pertinent to a discussion of women and jazz are 1) the rise of Jim Crow as a legal and mandatory system of unequal segregation (which resulted of massive in-migration of rural southern blacks escaping economic and racial violence, and the re-classification of Creoles of color as black); 2) resistance to economic and racial violence, with the rise of black institutions, such as the black press and black schools; 3) the devastating economic Depression of 1893 which exacerbated social tensions of all kinds; 4) social anxieties about women's increasing presence in public space; and 5) the redistricting of Storyville in 1897, an event that is often painted romantically, but that is actually very complex, and deeply interconnected with the other drastic changes just listed.

The rise of Jim Crow saw the rights of black people stripped away throughout the U.S., especially in the south. The same year that Plessy vs. Ferguson was passed, a controversial state election took place in Louisiana, in which a populist platform made

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

up of a cross-racial Republican coalition won the popular vote, but the election was “stolen by ultra-conservative Democrats.”²⁵ Soon, black people in Louisiana were systematically disenfranchised through grandfather clauses (which stated that one could vote only if one’s grandfather had voted), and poll taxes. Between 1896 and 1898, black voter registration in Louisiana dropped from 130,444 (44% of total) to 5,320 (4% of total). By 1922, the number would drop to 598.²⁶ Compared to rural Louisiana and Mississippi, New Orleans offered hopes for better economic circumstances and relative safety from racist terror, and so thousands of African Americans throughout the south migrated to the city. Vast numbers of black women left agricultural work for domestic work during this migration, which is highly pertinent to the participation of black women in entertainment, which offered a ticket of mobility for many working class black women. New Orleans was an attractive destination for black people from elsewhere in south, not because they could enjoy unlimited options, but because they could exercise more choice in low-paying jobs. However, black workers arriving in New Orleans during the rise of Jim Crow in the late 1890s did so during a lingering economic depression, which exacerbated hostilities of whites in New Orleans who blamed black workers on their own depression related-losses. The political climate gave license to retribution. In 1896, Louisiana set national record for lynchings; and in 1900, New Orleans exploded in the catastrophic Charles race riot.²⁷

The consolidation of Jim Crow radically changed racial classification under the law, if not in the ways that people saw themselves. Creoles of color, often French speaking, Catholic, and middle-class, were now categorized legally in the same group

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

as English-speaking American black former slaves and descendants of slaves. Not only did these groups not necessarily identify with one another, but for Creoles of color, this merging resulted in a drastic drop in social status. The sight of middle-class Creole of color women enraged white Americans indoctrinated in a rigid black/white split, and in definitions of race that depended on white womanhood as distinct from black womanhood, and that depended on that distinction to maintain concepts of white racial purity. As more and more white middle-class women entered the public workforce in New Orleans, anxieties and hostilities mounted, as demonstrated by this letter-to-the-editor of the *Daily Picayune*, June 2, 1900, signed, "a Woman Worker," in which a white woman wrote,

[w]hen one of these light colored mulatresses (sic) flounces in the car, dressed in all her finery, and almost sits on some white woman, it does indeed make one's blood boil."²⁸

At the same time, maintaining middle-class gender identity became an extremely important civil rights tactic for Creoles of color, as did the respectability politics employed by black women through the club movement. Musical training was an important indicator of such identities. In turn-of-the-century New Orleans, it was customary, and considered to be a sign of respectability, for middle-class white, black, and Creole families to have their daughters learn to play piano. According to Charles Chamberlain, the piano was seen as the "primary vehicle for genteel musical education" for girls.²⁹ This will become an important factor at the stage in early jazz history when the piano comes aboard, and bands need experience players with knowledge of correct chords from which improvisers could collectively take off.

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Some scholars have argued that Creole of color identity was displaced by Jim Crow, as a process of Americanization in which definitions of race as a black/white binary replaced the multiple categories that had existed in French (and Spanish) colonial New Orleans. Other scholars, including Shirley Thompson, see Creole of color as a continuing challenge to Jim Crow definitions of race. Thompson writes of the changing definitions of this group identity category as a history of how people negotiated the radical changes in racial classification in New Orleans over the past century and a half. Bruce Boyd Raeburn, Thompson, and a small but growing number of scholars are more likely to see Creolization as an ongoing process (as opposed to a coherent, stable identity) through which identities change through mixing. Raeburn has argued convincingly that hard and fast rules such as “Creoles = Francophone” or “Creoles of color are downtown black people,” or as Creoles of color were the “reading” musicians who brought European elements to jazz history, might serve as “guidelines for understanding jazz history,” but as “facts,” they are oversimplified.³⁰ In this study, for example, pianist and bassist **Dolly Adams**, was from a Creole of color family of Italian descent, with roots in the Algiers section of New Orleans, rather than downtown.

The first generation of Creole of color jazz musicians that appear in this study were born in the period in which these changes were taking place. Their parents may have been recognized as Creoles of color, but they would be legally identified under the category “colored,” regardless of how they or their families identified. Knowing the rules of what it meant to be considered black by the state was important to survival. Equally important, was the ability to maintain cultural identities that were meaningful, productive,

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

and dignified. Music and entertainment were powerful factors in both sides of what W.E.B. DuBois called “double consciousness.” Racist stereotypes circulated in entertainment and affected how people throughout the U.S. thought about non-white people. And performances that disrupted those stereotypes, such as black women’s ladies orchestras that played classical music, or the emergence of powerful new forms such as ragtime and jazz in a nation ruled by Euro-Americans who had not yet successfully figured out how to musically separate from Europe, were two of many ways that people defined as inferior by the rules of Jim Crow resisted and survived.

Jim Crow, incidentally, had taken its name from a character of black face minstrelsy, the popular form of entertainment that Frederick Douglas described as a theft “of complexion ... in which to make money.”³¹ Minstrelsy had been a dominant form of entertainment since well before the Civil War; it continued to thrive after the abolition of slavery, and retained its mainstream popularity much longer than most Americans care to remember; well into the twentieth century, when the Civil Rights Movement made it difficult to ignore the troubling implications of the form. In her oral history, Claire Perry Black, a white woman who grew up in the Irish Channel neighborhood, recalled that her uncle and aunt had performed in black face, as did she and her sister Lois, a jazz drummer, for church benefits in New Orleans as late as the 1950s.³²

The caricatures enacted in minstrelsy portrayed black men and black women as comical and sub-human; often constructing race stereotypes through grotesque depictions of gender and sexuality. Black men were often emasculated in these

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

performances; black women hyper-sexualized. Fantasies about black culture were played out through plantation songs that romanticized the Southern past. Fans and performers of minstrelsy often believed themselves to carry great affection for the black people. Ironically, it is through minstrel shows that mainstream U.S. popular culture first fell in love with what it interpreted as black culture.³³ Minstrelsy was initially enacted by white performers, but after the Civil War, when traveling in entertainment troops provided one of the scarce ways in which black people could earn a living, black performers also darkened their faces and traveled on “colored minstrel shows.”

White and black women participated in minstrelsy, though most of the literature on female performance in minstrelsy has focused on white men’s burlesques of black female characters.³⁴ Mabel Elaine was a white woman who performed in black face with New Orleans musicians. She seems to have been based in Chicago, functioning as a solo act that would pair up with a black New Orleans band and tour vaudeville. She appeared with King Oliver’s band at one time.³⁵ Eddie Garland recalled that the second New Orleans band to go to Chicago (after Freddie Keppard) was billed as “Mabel Elaine and her New Orleans Band.” According to Garland, Elaine was a white woman who appeared in blackface and danced in wooden shoes.³⁶ A photograph in Rose and Souchon’s *New Orleans Family Album* (page 262) shows her (listed as Mamie Lane), performing in blackface with New Orleans musicians Roy Palmer, Sugar Johnny Smith, Lawrence Duhé, Herb Lindsay, Louis Keppard, and Montundie Garland. The form of vaudeville blues known as “coon shouting,” derives from minstrelsy. **Edna Hicks** and **Lizzie Miles**, both of the generation that was born “Creole of color,” but

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

would be legally classified as black by the time they went on the road, both worked in black minstrelsy and were known as “coon shouters.” When trying to understand why women of color would perform in minstrel shows, it is important to remember that these entertainment circuits provided mobility and autonomy for women whose options otherwise were limited to domestic work, share cropping, or prostitution. Traveling in shows could, and for some women did, lead to stardom.

Though blues did not “originate” in New Orleans, local and traveling artists alike rendered the blues in the Crescent City. Blueswomen have finally received attention in jazz scholarship for their profound contributions to the music, for their musical collaborations with jazz instrumentalists; for influencing the sounds and phrasing of jazz instrumentalists, and for headlining on many of the earliest jazz recordings.³⁷ Classic blues singers more often emerged from rural south, but some blues singers did hail from New Orleans, including **Ann Cook**, **Mamie Desdunes**, Esther Bijou, Mary Mack, and **Lizzie Miles**. Many others traveled through town regularly on the TOBA (Theater Owners Booking Association) as the black vaudeville circuit was called. Acts that traveled through New Orleans on black vaudeville likely played at The Lyric Theater, where **Margaret Kimble** was the pianist in John Robichaux’s pit orchestra.³⁸

In the early teens, Gertrude “Ma” Rainey, known as the “Empress of the Blues,” often spent the winter in New Orleans, after the minstrel shows she toured with had finished with their Southern tours for the season.³⁹ According to trumpet player Punch Miller, many trumpet players “got the style” from accompanying singers, like Bessie Smith and Mamie Smith as they traveled through town.⁴⁰ Pensacola born pianist **Billie**

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Goodson Pierce counted among her earliest professional opportunities working in the chorus of Bessie Smith's show and playing with numerous New Orleans bands as they came through Florida. Venerated jazz and rock drummer Earl Palmer got his start in the music business dancing in an act with his mother and aunt, the Theophile Sisters, touring with the black vaudeville troupe headlined by blues singer Ida Cox in the 1930s.

Some scholars have looked to blues lyrics for clues as to black women's experiences of, and perspectives on hopes and disappointments of migration, and other social commentary.⁴¹ New Orleans women singers contributed to recorded blues that addressed the social concerns of the day. One of **Lizzie Miles**'s first recordings, "Cotton Belt Blues," told the story of a woman who had been "lured by a man," only to be abandoned in "that cold, cold minded North."⁴²

An excellent study would be a comparison of blues material favored by New Orleans blueswomen with material that has been documented about blues singers nationwide. While travel has been a widely discussed topic in blues scholarship, it seems to me that there may have been more references to the Caribbean in New Orleans blues repertoire. **Lizzie Miles** sang "Haitian Blues," which she co-wrote with Spencer Williams, also from New Orleans; Esther Bigeou sang "West Indies Blues" (not actually a blues in form, but still a fascinating inclusion in Bigeou's repertoire). The lyrics of "West Indies Blues" spoke of leaving "this worthless job" as an elevator operator to go home to Jamaica, but the speaker promised to return in a big way:

When I come back to this great land
You better watch me, Harvey,
'Cause I'm gonna be a great big man

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Like my friend Marcus Garvey!”⁴³

Garvey was, of course, the Jamaican-born founder of the Universal Negro Improvement Association, and proponent of the back-to-African movement in the 1920s. He was extremely influential for his international approach to black freedom struggles when Bigeou recorded “West Indies Blues” in 1923.

It is important to mention that not only the musicians on these circuits contributed to the development of early jazz, but so did other theatrical women: the dancers, the comedians, the actresses, the versatile performers of circuses, tent shows, variety, minstrelsy, and vaudeville. Such performers traveled through New Orleans from elsewhere, and women from New Orleans joined such groups and claimed musical careers and mobility (**Lizzie Miles, Edna Hicks, Olivia L’Ange Porter Shipp**). Social standing differentiated this experience for different women. When Olivia L’Ange joined a vaudeville show as a pianist in 1900, she changed her surname to Porter so as not to shame her Creole of color father by dragging his family name into show business. Theatrical women had long been associated with prostitution, and so the idea of women on the vaudeville stage represented a loss of respectability for communities unaccustomed to seeing the theater as a step up from drudgery.⁴⁴

Throughout jazz history, women musicians have often had to balance a sense of themselves as jazz musicians with the palpable awareness that audiences are likely to see them as sex objects and novelties. In response, they have developed performance strategies that mitigated between the two. A phenomenon with specific ramifications in

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

New Orleans is the historical obsession with Creole of color women as particular kinds of sex objects and fantasies about sex, gender, and race—a legacy that women musicians have negotiated in a number of ways. Many jazz scholars have noted the tendency of bands and musicians to emphasize “Creole” identity, and—when traveling out of New Orleans, to claim it whether they were Creole or not—in order to benefit from culture capital that did not accrue to “colored.” The most famous example is King Oliver’s Creole Jazz Band. Oliver was not Creole, but the name “Creole” was a selling point, especially outside New Orleans, where it took on an added appeal as “exotic” to its cache of class. As we have seen, generally, Creoles of color had a higher economic and social status than English-speaking or “American” black people. “Creole,” however, had different connotations nationwide for women than for men.

Jayna Brown’s excellent dissertation discusses how a literary obsession with mixed-race Creole women became a theatrical obsession in 1890. This was the year when Sam T. Jack’s black female revue, *The Creole Show*, toured the Eastern states. While the players and producers were not New Orleans-based, the popularity of this revue and its spin-offs featuring light-skinned black women performing as “Creoles” offers some insights into national and even international popularity of fantasies about New Orleans mixed-race women. Brown points out that spectacles such as the *Creole Show* offered some black women, Creole or not, alternatives to the narrow confines of minstrelsy.⁴⁵ The popularity of erotic fantasies about “quadroons” had been stimulated by New Orleans tourism since well before the Civil War.⁴⁶ Monique Guillory’s study of “Quadroon Balls” traces the history of these fantasies to the “fancy girl” trade at slave

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

auctions, for which New Orleans was famous; followed by the quadroon balls, where elite white propertied men with roots in the French colonial period secured quadroon mistresses. Literally, the term “quadroon” would mean someone who was one quarter black. However, Guillory points out that terms like “quadroon” and “octoroon” were not used for the sake of mathematical accuracy, but as erotic categories.⁴⁷ Just as the women in *The Creole Show* capitalized on performing the exotic “Creole Beauty,” some women musicians from New Orleans—some who actually did identify as Creoles of color, some who did not—were no doubt perceived through a lens of “the exotic” when they performed for tourists or when they worked for touring shows. Whether or not it was their intention, Creole of color women capitalized on this historical fascination when they traveled and recorded as “Creole Songbirds,” as did singers Esther Bigeou and **Lizzie Miles**. Miles’s performances of French-Creole songs contributed to her popularity in France and England, as well as in the U.S.⁴⁸ And some women’s performances clearly played off of the popularity of fantasies about black women in New Orleans as exotic and light-skinned—the obsession with “quadroons” coincided with the legacies of “colorism,” in which light-skinned women were perceived through the historical damage of anti-black racism as more beautiful than dark women.

Redistricting of Storyville

Another result of the economic Depression of 1890 and the rise of Jim Crow was the anxiety of how to maintain the separation of “respectable” women as signs of privileged class stability, as middle-class women increasingly entered public spaces,

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

and became less distinguishable from theatrical women. The association of women entertainers and prostitutes was an old one. The separation of “respectable” women from “fallen” women was a passionate project of white middle-class men who reserved the right to associate with “fallen” women without themselves falling in class position.

New Orleans had been legendary for prostitution long before the creation of Storyville. In 1895 alone, 20,000 guidebooks to New Orleans brothels were distributed to tourists.⁴⁹ Alecia P. Long’s brilliant dissertation (now a book, entitled *The Great Southern Babylon:: Sex, Race, and Respectability in New Orleans, 1865-1920*, Baton Rouge: Louisiana University Press, 2004), illuminates the relationship between the economic depression, the rise of Jim Crow, and the redistricting of Storyville in 1897, which effectively zoned women who worked in the red light district into one area of town. Interestingly, the area selected for the city’s prostitution center was a working-class African American neighborhood. The only school in the district set aside for Storyville was an African American school. A large black church lost its congregation as rents skyrocketed in the economic boom that was achieved in condensing the vice district.⁵⁰

Popular wisdom has it that jazz was born in Storyville, the famous red light district of New Orleans; delivered into a steamy ambiance of exotic Octoroon prostitutes by a handful of irrepressible and ingenious male musicians. *Piano men*, such as Jelly Roll Morton, are credited as the musical progenitors who created jazz as the bawdy background music for the city’s booming sex industry of the early 1900s. While this familiar origin story holds some truth, it also over-simplifies and distorts the entwined

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

histories of early jazz and Storyville on a number of levels. Obscured, for instance, are concurrent sites of musical alchemy (including churches, family bands, brass bands, etc.), that also led to the music that would become known as jazz. A focus on early jazz that cannot see its way out of Storyville brothels feeds a problematic tendency to always equate jazz with sex—an association with racist underpinnings that needs to be carefully examined, not uncritically reproduced.⁵¹ This “creativity-born-in-a-brothel” narrative obscures the complexity of the history of New Orleans sex industry as well. It is difficult to see power imbalances, economics, and politics when the commodified female bodies of Storyville are seen only as a sexy backdrop to sexy music.

With that caution, we can proceed to a consideration of Storyville as one of the places where women participated in the early years of jazz as fans, proprietors, and musicians. Most of the workers in the “District,” after all, were women, and given the multiple musical cultures that thrived in turn of the century New Orleans, it should not be surprising to know that some prostitutes and madams were also musicians, including **Antonia Gonzales**, who advertised herself as the “only cornet playing madam in Storyville,” pianist/vocalist **Mamie Desdunes** who influenced Jelly Roll Morton, and vocalists, including, notably, the barrel-house blues singer **Ann Cook**. Not all women who played music in Storyville brothels doubled as prostitutes. It was a selling point, in fact, to have musicians who simply entertained. Lulu White advertised that, in her brothel, there were “always ten entertainers who get paid to do nothing but sing and dance.”⁵² In 1917, thirteen year old **Dolly Adams** began playing piano in her uncle Manuel Manetta’s band.⁵³ Pianists **Camilla Todd** and **Edna Mitchell** played in

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Storyville as musician non-residents.⁵⁴ **Wilhelmina Bart de Rouen** appears on Rose's list of "jazz musicians who performed in the legally constituted tenderloin district known as Storyville between January 1, 1898 and November 17, 1917."⁵⁵ A fascinating record has been left by pianist, song writer, and vocalist **Rosalind Johnson**, a formally trained musician who preferred playing in Storyville brothels than in theaters.

Women also were powerful culture brokers in Storyville. Madams not only selected, hired, and advertised the prostitutes who worked for them; they also selected, hired, and advertised jazz musicians and other entertainers. Jelly Roll Morton proudly recalled having his piano playing talent requested by all the "highest class landladies," naming "Willie Piazza, Josie Arlington, Lulu White, Antonia Gonzales, Hilma Burt, and Gypsy Schaeffer."⁵⁶ **Antonia Gonzales**, the famous cornet-playing madam, hired Tony Jackson and played duets with him. Willie Piazza hired **Ann Cook**.

Gender and instruments

The long history of military bands in New Orleans contributed to the association of brass bands with masculinity and men; and perhaps even shored up the long history of the piano as a sign of middle-class feminine respectability for women and as a sign of "sissy" for men.⁵⁷ Yet, like so many other generalizations, these gender associations were far from static in turn-of-the-century New Orleans.

While it is true that women were less likely to play brass instruments in New Orleans marching bands than men—some did. A question deserving research would be one focused around the question: which women? New Orleans jazz historian Karl

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Koenig, who has made a concerted effort to include women in his studies, found that in Houma, Louisiana, a small town southwest of New Orleans, the town band included a number of women.⁵⁸ A local study of gender and music in Houma (in comparison with towns whose brass bands did not include women) would be one place to look for clues about one cultural trajectory of women's musical participation and status. While little is known about them, four women appear in a 1928 photo of the Tonic Triad Band, an African American New Orleans brass band.⁵⁹ Sylvester Francis reports that women did not appear in brass bands until after World War II, after which they did so infrequently.⁶⁰ The topic of women in New Orleans brass bands deserves further study. Oral history and photographic research may turn up more leads. Interestingly, women have appeared in traditional New Orleans brass bands in recent years. Diane Lyle-Smith, trumpet and flugelhorn, who taught at Xavier University from 1980-85, became the first woman to play in the Young Tuxedo Brass band.⁶¹ In 1992, students at St. Mary's Academy started an all-female traditional brass band. While still in high school, the Pinettes Brass Band played the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival, as well as weddings and funerals. Several years after graduating, they regrouped, recording their CD, *"Who You Gonna Call? ... the Pinettes Brass Band!"* (AGB Records, 2002), and appearing both locally and internationally.⁶²

I have mentioned that **Dolly Adams's** mother, Olivia Douroux, was a trumpet player. It seems significant that her brother, Manuel Manetta, played piano, but was only able to take lessons (from music teacher Laura Albert) when his sister lost interest.⁶³ She, in fact, played trumpet duets with her husband Louis Douroux, at

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

private parties. While it was acceptable for Louis to play his trumpet professionally, and not acceptable for Olivia, it is significant that it was acceptable for both to play trumpets at gatherings, and that their daughter (born 1904) would become a jazz pianist and band leader who doubled on bass and drums. The gender organization of instrument and genre seems more nuanced and dynamic in the Manetta and Douroux families than an analysis that said simply that it was not considered proper for women to play brass instruments or jazz in Creole-of-color communities. Olivet Depass (daughter of Lucille and Arnold DePass) played trumpet, but was discouraged from playing in public when her mother didn't like her to travel in the wee hours of the morning.⁶⁴ Antonia Gonzales played the trumpet in the brothel she operated. Mother Catherine Seals played trombone in the church services at which she officiated. Irma Young (born 1912), sister of tenor saxophonist Lester Young, also played the saxophone, and lived in New Orleans as a child. Though not primarily based in New Orleans, the Young Family Band, which included Lester and Irma's mother and aunt, did play there frequently.⁶⁵

Women and piano in early jazz bands

When Karl Koenig asked why there were so many women pianists in the early jazz bands, Sadie Goodson replied:

Well, I think it was because they needed pianists. At that time there weren't as many men playing piano; they wanted to play a trumpet or another wind instrument. It was considered more masculine to play a wind instrument. A lot of women, to be socially accepted, learned the piano as part of their upbringing. The men in the band liked the chords I played. Many of them depended on the chords to be able to play their part.⁶⁶

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

African American, European American, and Creole-of-color women were, without question, more likely to play piano and organ than brass instruments. Women who played piano in early jazz bands often came from church music backgrounds, and were more likely than men to have taken piano lessons, both of which made them more likely than men to read music. As pianists, and as reading musicians, women contributed important elements to jazz when the bands were no longer limited to mobile street units, and when band leaders desperately needed someone in the band with knowledge of chords, who was able to teach new charts to non-reading members. While Lil Hardin Armstrong is often acknowledged as an “exceptional woman” for performing this role in early Chicago-based New Orleans bands, but there was already a precedent for this practice in New Orleans before Joe “King” Oliver hired Hardin for his jazz band.⁶⁷

The timing of this convergence of pianos and women musicians in jazz bands is significant. Where we see women pianists entering jazz bands in large numbers coincides with a period in which jazz was enjoying a period of increased social acceptance among middle-classes in New Orleans, not as art, but as “all the rage” as a pleasurable dance music. This included the popularity of jazz bands at such spheres of social prestige as country clubs, hotels, and even debutante balls.⁶⁸

Louis Armstrong recalled playing in Anderson’s Restaurant on Rampart Street in 1918 with a band that included New Orleans pianist Edna Mitchell and her husband drummer Albert Francis.⁶⁹ Emma Barrett studied with Professor Nickerson, but was playing jazz professionally with Oscar “Papa” Celestin’s and “Bebe” Ridgeley’s co-led Original Tuxedo Jazz Orchestra in the early 1920s.”⁷⁰ Camilla Todd was the pianist in

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

John Robichaux's Orchestra at the Lyric Theatre, and later the Maple Leaf Orchestra, Hyppolyte Charles's Orchestra, A.J. Piron and Kid Ory. Mercedes Garman (Fields) played with Papa Celestin and Alphonse Picou.

When Lil Hardin left King Oliver's band during the west coast tour of 1921, Oliver replaced her with a woman piano player from New Orleans, living on the west coast: Bertha Gonsoulin. When Papa Celestin lost his pianist, Emma Barrett, to Bebe Ridgeley, he replaced her with a series of female pianists before hiring Jeanette Salvant (later Kimball). Not all of the women who played piano in early New Orleans jazz bands were from New Orleans. Several important players hailed from towns along the Gulf Coast, through which New Orleans bands regularly toured. Celestine found Jeanette Salvant in her home town of Pass Christian, Mississippi. Sadie, Billie, Edna, and Ida Goodson all worked with numerous New Orleans bands that passed through their hometown of Pensacola, Florida. Nellie Lutcher, born in Lake Charles Louisiana in 1915, became the organist for her church at the age of eight, and later left high school to play with her father, bassist Isaac Lutcher, in the Imperial Orchestra, Clarence Hart's band, touring Louisiana and Texas in the early 1930s. She stayed with Hart's band for six years, and then joined a band called the Southern Rhythm Boys, a band that included several members from New Orleans, including Paul Barnes.⁷¹

Olivia "Lady Charlot" Cook recalled being in demand as a reading pianist for men's bands, but also that male band leaders were ambivalent about her skills. "They liked that I could read it, but they hated that it was a woman."⁷² Was this "like/hate" relationship that male band leaders had with the skilled female pianists they hired

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

common? Was it something that affected the careers of women of all cultural groups in New Orleans? Did gender bias and the common inclusion of women musicians affect solo conventions that limited pianists more than reeds and horn players, as exemplified by Joe “King” Oliver’s denial of Lil Hardin’s “urge to run up and down the piano and make a few runs and things.”⁷³

Paradoxically, while gender typically defines power hierarchically within a culture, gender constructions are also common ways by which cultural groups define themselves as different from one another. In other words, the dominant groups’ ideological definitions of gender frequently function to define their culture as superior to all others. Leisurely women, non-working women, women with time to learn a lady-like “accomplishment,” were not only ways of being women, but they were class markers for the men in their families. Women outside dominant culture membership are affected both by the gender construction of their cultural group, and by the social “norms” defined by the dominant culture and from which she may be excluded. For instance, even as the dominant culture may have exerted a strong message that it wasn’t ladylike to work for wages, many women, of course, needed to work. It may not have been ideologically “ladylike” to play trombones or trumpets, or to enter the realms where jazz was played, but for some women, playing jazz was considered a viable way to earn a living. African American women who played classical music often found that careers in jazz were more open to them than careers in classical music, despite the fact that classical music may have been considered more “lady-like,” even in her own cultural group. Pianist and organist Olivia “Lady Charlot” Cook is just one African American jazz

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

musician whose dream was to have been a classical concert pianist.⁷⁴ Jazz, however, as masculinist as we may think of the music today, was available to her, while classical music as not, and she became (and still is) a celebrated New Orleans jazz musician.

Some of these pianists took improvised solos, but many did so only minimally, and some did not solo—however, it is also important to note that band leaders often did not *want* their pianists to take improvised solos. The role of the pianist in these 1920s bands was often seen as “laying down the right chords” for the other musicians.⁷⁵ As Bruce Raeburn explained, to film-maker Kay D. Ray, “[u]sually what you want the piano player to do in collective improvisation is comp and fill,” maintaining the chords so that the other instrumentalists could hear them and to improvise on them, and to “fill” the in between spaces in support of the improvising brass and reeds, who are collectively featured. For pianists working in this context of early collective improvisation, the opportunity to solo was limited.⁷⁶ Did gender have anything to do with this division of labor between soloists and supporting roles as keepers of the chords and rhythm? This theme will be further developed in the biographical chapters on specific pianists. Jeffrey Taylor suggests that while playing the piano in a jazz band was not considered more appropriate for one sex than the other, that “accompanying” was considered appropriate for female players in early jazz in a way that soloing was not. Soloing, on the other hand, had a different gender trajectory, as the domain of “piano men,” “professors,” and “ticklers,” such as Jelly Roll Morton, who were re-defining the piano from “sissy” instrument to ultimate symbol of heterosexual masculine fraternity in the jazz world.⁷⁷

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Women as jazz entrepreneurs

Lawn parties, like house parties and fish fries, were parties where whoever hosted the event would provide food, hire musicians, and charge admission to guests. According to band leader and multi-instrumentalist “Papa John” Joseph, a fish fry would be advertised by putting out a lantern. Anyone who saw the lantern could pay to get in. But a lawn party was by invitation.⁷⁸ Manuel Manetta recalled that lawn parties were open to the public, unless a club had booked the lawn party as a private affair.⁷⁹ Blues singer Lizzie Miles recalled lawn parties and fish fries as places where she began her performing career as a child.⁸⁰

While both women and men held lawn parties, it appears that women held significant roles in this enterprise. Lawn parties provided certain women who had access to large yards a way to add to their financial well-being without leaving home. The money to be made from lawn parties exceeded what one might make as a laundress or other in-home occupations open to women of color in early twentieth century New Orleans. The skills required to build a lawn party’s reputation included a reputation for hiring bands that would draw regular crowds and repeat customers. A lawn party entrepreneur, therefore, held considerable power in rewarding favorite bands with regular bookings and, therefore, played a significant role in the development of jazz audiences, in facilitating pairings of musicians and dancers who inspired one another; to the development of musical practices and therefore to musical sounds, and to the development and maintenance of the local jazz economy.⁸¹

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Betsy Cole was among the most famous and successful such entrepreneurs. The site of her lawn parties at Josephine and Willow is considered so important to the history of New Orleans jazz, that it appears in the *New Grove Dictionary of Jazz* under the listing: “Nightclubs: United States of America: New Orleans,” as a place where “jazz bands played ... regularly for dancing” in the 1910s and 1920s. Betsy Cole’s lawn also has its own entry in Rose and Souchon’s chapter, “Where’s Where in New Orleans.”⁸² Her parties took place in Central City, one of the oldest working class neighborhoods in New Orleans, where many jazz musicians lived, including Buddy Bolden, Kid Ory, and King Oliver. Oral histories of musicians who played in the teens and twenties often mention her parties, including the fact that there was no lawn, but a pavilion, lit by flambeaux, and that the ground had been danced upon so often that the earth “was packed into a nice surface.”⁸³ Ample space supported a host of activities. John Joseph remembered that along with music and dancing, there would also be baseball at Betsy Cole’s lawn parties.⁸⁴ It is hard to say when Betsy Cole’s lawn parties began, but certainly they were in full swing before 1916, when bassist McNeal Breaux was born next door. The family rented their quarters from the well known lawn party entrepreneur, known to Breaux as “Mrs. Hebert Cole.” His father, Theophile Breaux, sometimes served as the bartender.⁸⁵ Breaux recalled that his landlady was “very well noted in her days.”⁸⁶ Lillian DePass recalled that Betsy Cole did well financially from her parties, as well as from her other enterprise: taking out life insurance on people just before they died. As a party-giver, she certainly knew many people and their states of health, and as a spiritualist, she had an extra edge. According to DePass, Betsy Cole is

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

responsible for a law being passed preventing people from taking out life insurance on someone without their permission.⁸⁷

One of the claims to fame attributed to Betsy Cole is her regular booking of Kid Ory's band. According to bassist Ed Garland, Ory played at Betsy Cole's lawn parties "for years." Cole apparently liked the band so much that she wanted it to play at her funeral (indeed, Cole was perhaps the first one to receive a **jazz funeral**, or "funeral with music").⁸⁸ Clarinetist Albert Nicholas recalled that when he was 12 or 13 years old (circa 1912-1913) he would attend Miss Cole's lawn parties to hear his hero, Johnny Dodds, play clarinet with Kid Ory. He also recalled that on Sundays, "Miss Cole held penny parties," affordable versions of the adult lawn parties, for children.⁸⁹ No doubt, these youthful opportunities to hear Dodds helped to prepare him for the day he would replace Dodds in King Oliver's band in Chicago. Drummer Alfred Williams also had childhood memories of going to hear Kid Ory's band at Betsy Cole's place.⁹⁰

Betsy Cole was not without competition—in fact, many musicians noted that there were many places to hear music in the vicinity of Willow and Jackson. Notably, Napoleon "Toodlum" Johnson had a thriving lawn party on LaSalle (then Howard) and Gravier.⁹¹ Cornetist Hypolite Charles, who sometimes played at Betsy Cole's, found that lawn parties "didn't pay enough" compared with other venues available to him, such as the Francs Amis Hall, an elite Creole of color club on North Robertson.⁹² (Incidentally, dances were sometimes put on and bands hired at the Francs Amis Hall by another New Orleans jazzwoman, pianist **Wilhelmina Bart de Rouen**.)⁹³ On the other hand, Manuel Manetta stated that the two dollars and fifty cents that musicians

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

could make at a lawn party gig lasting from 8 pm until 4 am, was about the same as they could make playing for balls.⁹⁴ According to Lillian DePass, her husband Arnold DePass disliked playing for “uptown” lawn parties, and found the people who attended them “tacky.”⁹⁵ Her commentary points to differences and biases existing between “downtown” Creoles of color and “uptown” African Americans.

While Betsy Cole held “uptown” lawn parties in Central City, attended primarily by English speaking working class African Americans, Lillian DePass held parties and dances for downtown Creoles of color. The 1920 Census shows Lillian and Arnold DePass living at 1906 St. Philip Street, near Roman, in the Treme District. In her oral history, DePass recalled that her husband, drummer Arnold DePass, who led the Olympia Orchestra (1927-1932), played at the Fairgrounds, he would tell her to stay away, that the music and the crowds would be below her class status. She recalled that “young ladies” of her social group were not supposed to drink. She gave many dances and lawn parties, however, and made a good deal of money that way. She would either hire the Olympia Orchestra, or, if her husband’s band already had a gig, she would hire a different band. She recalled that she hired guitarist “Blind Charlie” Hays [Hayes] for her last lawn party.⁹⁶ Another place where women “called the tune,” so to speak, or at least hired the band, was in social clubs that gave dances. Lillian DePass recalled that her husband’s band was popular with several women’s social clubs. Musician and restaurateur Dooky Chase grew up in a household where his mother gave house parties and penny parties in Treme. Leah Chase described the difference between her husband Dooky’s childhood in the Treme, and her own just across Esplanade in the

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Seventh Ward. She recalled that the Treme area had “more music, more entertainment, people who lived a different life style, really a different kind of life style. They were more alive to me than they were in the Seventh Ward.”⁹⁷

Jazz funerals

Jazz funerals, or “funerals with music,” as they are often called in New Orleans, are an African American tradition that began around the turn of the century. They were extremely popular through the 1920s, enjoyed a renewed interest in the 1950s, and continue to this day. Many people believe that this practice comes out of West African funeral traditions; others cite French musical burials as antecedents. William Schafer notes that while jazz funerals were most common in black communities in the first forty years of the twentieth century, funerals with music also occurred in German, Italian, French and Irish communities in New Orleans.⁹⁸ According to Karl Koenig, jazz funerals were primarily associated with African American New Orleans culture, until the renewed popularity of jazz funerals in the 1950s rendered them widely symbolic of New Orleans jazz history.⁹⁹ To have a funeral with music is still considered an honor by many New Orleans musicians, despite the historical dissonance between mourners and tourists sampling the “local color” promised by guidebooks. Sylvester Francis, founder of the Backstreet Cultural Center in Treme, has done a great deal to educate the public, and respectfully document the cultural history of funerals with music.¹⁰⁰

Jazz funerals have historically been sponsored by social clubs and benevolent

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

societies to which the deceased belonged. According to Jacqui Malone, the earliest black benevolent societies appeared in New Orleans in the 1780s, but “by the 1860s, social and beneficial clubs were central to African American life.”¹⁰¹ Such clubs often had informal savings plans that formed as a kind of insurance for members. If a deceased member had requested a funeral with music, these clubs would sponsor it, unless the family refused, which might happen for reasons of decorum or economics. The role of the band or bands in a jazz funeral is to band play mournful music from the funeral home to the church; then to lead mourners from the church to the cemetery. A grand marshal leads the procession, followed by the band. The band does not play jazz during this part of the ritual, but rather—to quote Mahalia Jackson—plays music “as solemn as a choir or a big pipe organ.”¹⁰² At the cemetery, the band leads the hearse and mourners through. When the body is interred, or when the hearse reaches the cemetery, the grand marshal signals the band(s) to head back to the meeting hall(s) or other gathering place of the sponsoring club. As a respectful distance, the grand marshal signals the shift to upbeat music. The group of enthusiastic, high-stepping dancers known as the “second line” follows, celebrating the life, and the release from the troubles of life, of the deceased.¹⁰³

Historically, funerals with music have been more often given for men. Men have also been more visible in leadership roles and in the brass bands that march and play the solemn then happy music that facilitates the mourning and send-off. However, women have also been an active part of this tradition, as mourners, sponsoring club members (or auxiliary members), second-liners, and sometimes in prestigious roles as

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

grand marshals (after 1975), and even as the deceased who is honored with a jazz funeral. Many early benevolent societies that sponsored jazz funerals had women's auxiliaries, such as Young and True Friends, and some women's social aid and pleasure clubs had, and increasingly continue to have, a presence in second lines. Among the women honored with jazz funerals are Betsy Cole, "Mama" Johnson, **Blue Lu Barker**, **Billie Pierce**, Allison Minor, Ellyna Tatum, and Carrie White. Some women, including Ellyna Tatum, Wanda Rouzan, and Lois Andrews have served as grand marshals.¹⁰⁴ African American women have also been prominent in the mortuary business in New Orleans. Erma Henderson Gibbs and Julia Blandin became the first black female funeral home directors in 1931.¹⁰⁵ According to chef, author, and long-time Treme resident, Leah Chase, the burials for the "big jazz funerals" were performed by Gertrude Geddes on Jackson Avenue.¹⁰⁶ Geddes ran the Geddes Funeral Home for sixty-five years, first with her husband, then, when he died, she kept it going. In 1941, she founded the Gertrude Geddes-Willis Funeral Home and Insurance Company.¹⁰⁷ Geddes was active in the Ladies Auxillary Council of the Knights of Peter Claver.¹⁰⁸

Banjo player and historian Danny Barker, once noted that attitudes toward social class, and desire for class mobility, could explain why some black New Orleans residents rejected the "funeral with music" tradition and others carried it on. According to Barker, "Those who accept and ask for burial 'with music' are secure in their status ambitions and don't feel threatened by doing something labeled as too 'earthy' by some insecure persons in the middle and upper classes of the community."¹⁰⁹ "They never had a band behind a minister or an unimportant man," observed New Orleans born

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

gospel singer Mahalia Jackson, who explained that a “secret lodge man or a sportin’ man” who received a jazz funeral was obviously well-respected in his circle; however, not all well-liked men would be accorded the kind of “earthy” respect associated with the presence of a brass band at his funeral.¹¹⁰

Patriarchal definitions of “importance,” as well as middle-class concerns about the “earthiness” of jazz funerals could explain why so few women have received jazz funerals. While jazz funerals have been a sign of respect in some circles of New Orleans lodge members and musicians, a sign of devotion to New Orleans jazz for traditional revivalists, and a sign of “authenticity” for tourists to New Orleans, the jazz funeral has never been a sign of middle-class respectability. As we have seen across race and ethnic lines, women’s adherence to cultural ideas about female respectability has often been pivotal to middle-class affiliation. For many women identified with New Orleans jazz culture, however, to be honored with a jazz funeral is a sign of recognition, respect, and belonging.

Perhaps the first woman honored with a jazz funeral was **Betsy Cole**, well-known uptown giver of **lawn parties**. Cole’s lawn parties were famous for featuring jazz bands, such as Kid Ory’s with Johnny Dodds. Giving lawn parties involved hiring music, food, and ample space for dancing, and charging admission.

When “Miss Cole” was remembered in oral histories, it was either for her parties or for her funeral. Eddie Garland, who attended Miss Cole’s lawn parties, remembered that she liked Kid Ory’s band so much she wanted it to play at her funeral—an unusual wish, certainly, if not unprecedented.¹¹¹ Yet, Miss Cole did have her funeral with music.

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Lillian DePass remembered that Cole's funeral was large, with two bands.¹¹² Joe Rene, who played at Cole's funeral, believed that it was the only funeral with music that had been held for a woman.¹¹³ Apparently, there was also a funeral for a woman remembered as "Mama" Johnson, but it was later on.

Several large jazz funerals have been held since the 1970s for women, including the celebrated funeral of **Carrie White**. On July 18, 1974, the *States-Item* carried the headline: "A Dirge for Miss Carrie." "In her youth she worked as a maid for the famous Storyville madam, Lulu White on Basin Street, in her middle years she was a cook at the old Savoy Restaurant," wrote reporter Jim Amos, and in her last years she was "the sharp-tongued old lady in a chair" in front of her house at 924 Orleans Street. It seemed that Miss Carrie had "one great wish: a jazz funeral and a service in St. Louis Cathedral. To that end she saved \$3,000. Today her wish was fulfilled ... It was a people's funeral in the best sense. Miss Carrie had no known family, so the mourners were the people of the French Quarter."¹¹⁴ Miss Carrie had a spectacularly attended French Quarter funeral with two bands, Kid Sheik and the Olympia Brass Band.

Later that year, on October 3, 1974, **Billie Pierce**, one of the famous piano-playing Goodson Sisters, received an enormous jazz funeral, less than a year after her husband and musical partner, De De Pierce has his own four-band funeral.¹¹⁵ Another large jazz funeral was held in 1998 for singer, **Blue Lu Barker**.¹¹⁶

While jazz funerals are primarily held for New Orleans African American men, and some African American women, white people have also requested and received jazz funerals, including some white women. However, when New Orleans Jazz Club

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

president and founding member **Myra Menville** requested a jazz funeral, her prominent family would not allow it. Born Myra Eulalie Semmes Walmsley Loker, Menville's family tree, as described by Bruce Raeburn, "included a Confederate senator, a Rex, a president of the prestigious Boston Club, and a mayor of New Orleans."¹¹⁷ Instead, her devotion to New Orleans jazz was recognized by musician friends who honored her wishes by playing at the mausoleum the following day.¹¹⁸ **Allison Minor**, a New Orleans jazz devotee and arts administrator, who was actively involved with the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival, the Contemporary Arts Center, the Louisiana Jazz Federation; a president of the New Orleans music and Entertainment Association, and manager of Professor Longhair, Rebirth Brass Band, Kermit Ruffins, Eddie Bo, and the Wild Magnolias Mardi Gras Indians, received a jazz funeral in 1995.¹¹⁹

In 1985, a staff member from Preservation Hall, Dodie Simmons, toured Japan with a traditional band, and was struck by the level of respect accorded New Orleans jazz. Not only were people enthusiastic about the music, but they already knew and cared enough about New Orleans traditions to accord them a place in the curriculum.

"They teach traditional jazz and grand marshaling at the University of Waseda," she commented. "Most musicians in Japan learn the music in school. Girls are taught to be grand marshals, with umbrellas. It's incredible that we don't have anything like that here."¹²⁰ Two points seem to have struck Simmons as "incredible": that New Orleans jazz traditions were taught in school; and that girls were taught the prestigious role of grand marshal. Indeed, this role has most often been filled by men, though women have increasingly presided as grand marshals in recent decades.

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Gospel and jazz singer **Ellyna Tatum** was the first woman grand marshal for jazz funerals. Though she began as a singer, she, in fact, became famous for her second-lining with the Magnolia Jazz Band. According to her resume, on file at the Hogan Jazz Archive, the opportunity came in 1975, when she was hired to sing in a band led by Joe Gordon and Brian Finnigan that had gotten a “contract to play time-outs and half-times for the New Orleans Jazz Basketball team). So that I could remain with the band I became the Grand Marshall, a first as a lady, of the Magnolia Jazz Band....”¹²¹ Her second-line dancing and marching can be seen in the James Bond film, *Live and Let Die*. When she died of Lou Gehrig’s disease in 1986, she received a large jazz funeral of her own.¹²² Presiding as grand marshal for Tatum’s funeral was singer Wanda Rouzan, who continues to serve as a grand marshal for New Orleans jazz funerals.¹²³ Another contemporary woman grand marshal is Lois Andrews.

Lionel Batiste, Sr. listed Ellyna Tatum as one of his influences when he described the role of the Grand Marshal in a New Orleans funeral. “To lead a jazz funeral procession as a grand marshal takes a special demeanor, one of respect and dignity. With the sadness of the occasion filling the air and the music stirring the emotions, a grand marshal must stand apart from his or her personal feelings.”¹²⁴

As the person who signals the band, and therefore the mood, from dirge mode, to accelerated tempos and the sounds of celebration, the grand marshal has a tremendous responsibility to mourners and to ritual survival of the meaningfulness of jazz funerals.¹²⁵

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Religion, women, and jazz

Mahalia Jackson was a member of the Mount Moriah Baptist Church, but counted as an influence the Sanctified Church that she lived next door to as a child in New Orleans. “Those people had no choir and no organ. They used the drum, the cymbal, the tambourine, and the steel triangle. Everybody in there sang with their whole bodies. They had a beat, a powerful beat, a rhythm we held on to from slavery days, and their music was so strong and expressive it used to bring tears to my eyes.” Not only did Jackson consider the Sanctified Church to be a major influence on her own approach to sacred music, but she believed that “the blues and jazz and even the rock and roll stuff got their beat from the Sanctified Church.”¹²⁶

Religious diversity in New Orleans--and the close proximity of different sacred music practices--contributed to jazz history. We have already noted the presence of women at Congo Square. Zora Neale Hurston wrote that the dances on Congo Square, though Haitian, were not “hoodoo,” reporting that hoodoo dances were private, and that the dances on Congo Square were for pleasure.¹²⁷ We have also noted Susan Cavil’s suggestion that *vodun* ceremonies in less public settings may be another place where women contributed to a musical mix that paved the way for jazz.

The importance of the Catholic Church in New Orleans jazz includes the sponsorship of dances at venues such as St. Katherine’s Hall, and the sponsorship of brass bands. The rich musical life promoted by churches such as the Holy Ghost Catholic Church in New Orleans, turned out many jazz musicians. Jeanette Kimball is

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

just one of many New Orleans musicians who credited the Catholic church as an early musical influence.¹²⁸ Lizzie Miles began her professional singing career, interestingly, in her catechism classes, performing at first at lawn parties, fish fries, and later in halls, parks, and theaters.¹²⁹ Non-Catholic musicians benefited from the Catholic sponsorship of dances, since dancing was often prohibited by Protestant churches. Pianist Nellie Lutcher, who was Baptist, recalled that a lot of the work for the bands in her home town of Lake Charles, Louisiana, was sponsored by the Catholic Church, which allowed dancing and jazz, except for during Lent.¹³⁰

Scholars have noted the influence of Protestant repertoire for brass bands. “Perhaps the single largest source of music for the brass bands was the church. Hymnals of Baptists and Methodist churches and many fundamentalist sects provided an inexhaustible font of music familiar to the bandsmen and their audiences.”¹³¹ Often noted is the musical similarity between spirituals and gospel, from the black Protestant tradition, and blues and jazz. Women have been prominent in gospel and other sacred music traditions in church, and sometimes in public performance. *A cappella* jubilee quartets were organized at New Orleans University as early as 1914, but the tradition was “primarily male dominated,” writes Joyce Marie Jackson, until the 1930s and 1940s. One of the first, and most highly acclaimed female gospel quartets was organized in 1934 by Alberta French Johnson, whose brother was banjo player Albert “Papa” French, who played with Oscar “Papa” Celestin’s jazz band.¹³²

In the late 1910s and early 1920s, when many Christians considered jazz to be music of the devil, a religious movement flourished in New Orleans that sometimes

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

incorporated jazz in services. While the Black Spiritualist Church did not begin in New Orleans, the New Orleans version of this predominantly women-led religion combining trances and summoning of spirits of Afro-Caribbean voodoo, the saints of Catholicism, and the faith-healing and witnessing traditions of evangelical Protestantism found a special niche in New Orleans black neighborhoods, where it continues to thrive. Because of the prominence of women's leadership, and the women-led ministries that welcomed jazz, the Spiritual Churches can be seen as another place where we find a unique relationship between women and jazz in New Orleans.

While the Spiritualist Churches (shorted to Spiritual Churches by the 1940s), were often presented as quaint "local color" in both tourist literature, and in much historical writing (including the Federal Writers' Project reports, according to Claude Jacobs), there were nearly "100 of them among New Orleans' estimated 600 Black churches" in the 1930s, and did not see themselves as "exotic," but as a powerful voice in civic affairs. Not a passing fad, there continue to exist about 100 Spiritual churches in New Orleans today.¹³³ According to Yvonne Chireau, these ministries have been "paradigms of female religious empowerment," as well as civic empowerment. The churches expanded public roles for women, increased their economic status (by providing spiritual training and the right to charge fees for healing and other spiritual services), and provided leadership roles not available in the gender organization of most denominations or in other realms of civic life.¹³⁴

One of the earliest Spiritual churches was founded in Chicago in 1913 by an African American woman named Mother Leafy Anderson. After establishing her Eternal

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Life Spiritualist Church, Anderson traveled widely, founding missions from city to city. She eventually moved to New Orleans (possibly 1919), selecting the Crescent City as her home base. Mother Anderson incorporated jazz bands into her services at a time when jazz and blues were considered by major denominations as the devil's music.¹³⁵

One of the musicians who played for her services was cornetist Chris Kelly, who also played in parades, concerts, and dances, as a member of the Eclipse Brass Band.¹³⁶

One researcher for the WPA wrote that Mother Anderson “had a red hot six piece swing band that played the hymns in jazz time and style.” He continued, quoting another spiritualist leader, Mother Dora Tyson, whom he had interviewed, “Mother liked her music and swing it down when she preached.”¹³⁷

Mother Anderson’s services attracted converts who became religious leaders themselves. One of these was a poor Kentucky transplant named Catherine Seals (born Nanny Cowans). After starting, then outgrowing, her first ministry on Jackson Street, Mother Catherine founded her Temple of Innocent Blood (also called the Manger) in the Ninth Ward, where she focused her ministry on unwed mothers and their children. She continued Mother Anderson’s tradition of incorporating jazz to summon the spirits. Her ministry (1922-1930) appealed to poor people across race and ethnic lines, among them musicians. Bruce Raeburn points out that Ernie Cagnolatti, an Italian Creole of color who was raised Catholic, “became an initiate of Mother Catherine Seals ... and performed jazz at her services in the guise of the Archangel Gabriel.”¹³⁸ Harold “Duke” Dejan, leader of the Olympia Brass Band played at Mother Catherine’s services, as did another New Orleans musician, Frank Lastie, who served in her church

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

as a drum-playing deacon.¹³⁹ On her visits to the Manger in the 1920s, Zora Neale Hurston noted, “Unlike most religious dictators, Mother Catherine does not crush the individual. She encourages originality. There is an air of gaiety about the enclosure.” She also noted that Mother Catherine “encourages music.” This could be observed in her surroundings. “Mother Catherine holds court in a huge tent. On a raised platform is her bed, a piano, instruments for a ten-piece orchestra, a huge coffee urn, a wood stove, a heater, chairs and rockers and tables.”¹⁴⁰ Lyle Saxon reported the prominent place of music in Mother Catherine’s compound, writing, “The large blanket-covered objects are band instruments. On a table is an enormous brass trumpet; on the floor are the drums: a tom-tom, bass and kettle drums. An automatic piano stands in the center accompanied by a rack of rolls.”¹⁴¹ Mother Catherine Seals was known to play trombone in her church services. Jason Berry points out that many New Orleans jazz musicians had early musical experiences in Spiritual Churches, including saxophonist Donald Harrison, Jr., whose aunt is a minister in a Spiritual Church.¹⁴²

Great Migration

The common place of New Orleans in jazz history books is as the “birth place” or “cradle” of jazz (language deserving of gender analysis, indeed!) According to this popular version, when New Orleans’ famous red light district was shut down in 1917, jazz had nowhere to go but up--the Mississippi river, that is--to Chicago and Kansas City, before heading east to New York.

More recently, jazz historians have been chipping away at that simple genealogy,

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

pointing out that jazz flourished in New Orleans not merely because of its exotic reputation as locus of sex and sin, but precisely because it was a cosmopolitan cultural hub with people and influences traveling in and out. For that matter, jazz did not simply flow north on the inevitable logic of its own aesthetic journey.¹⁴³ Just as the influences of jazz traveled with people, the music that became known as jazz traveled with mobile populations, most notably with African Americans in the period known as the Great Migration, between the beginning of World War I and the end of World War II. In this respect, jazz musicians, like their audiences, were more likely to travel on railroads than on river boats, and did not only go to Chicago and Kansas City, but to scattered destinations in the north, east, west, and even in the urban centers in the south, where African Americans hoped to find improved working and living conditions.

Chicago is certainly an important destination, however, not only because New Orleans musicians migrated there, but because of the open connection between New Orleans and Chicago that played such a powerful role in the development of jazz.

Between 1910 and 1920, the African American population in Chicago increased from forty thousand to over a hundred thousand, with the largest numbers of black migrants traveling by rail from the Mississippi Delta.¹⁴⁴ With the migrants traveled tastes and markets for southern black culture, including *urban* and *modern* southern black culture that symbolized hopes for improved living and working conditions of black migrants in the inter-war years. As the primary representative of urban, modern, southern culture, New Orleans jazz expressed the hopes of many southern migrants as they sought increased opportunities in Chicago, while maintaining cultural and kinship

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

ties to the south.

In jazz history, geography and style often share the same name, rendering it easy to use these concepts interchangeably or without definition. Both Chicago and New Orleans are cities with long jazz histories, and both cities have styles named after them. “Chicago style” and “New Orleans style” are terms that hail bounded periods of time and particular sets of players and kinds of music that, of course, do not encompass all of the jazz played even in those cities. It is important to note that while a “Chicago style” developed in the 1920s, that this term has been primarily associated with the young, white musicians of the Austin High Gang, and is not used to describe the New Orleans style of music that was popular in Chicago in the late teens and early 1920s. New Orleans jazz in 1920s Chicago was often played by African American and Creole of color New Orleans migrants, or people influenced by them. The active travel route of musicians from New Orleans to Chicago also meant that these migrants appeared on many of the releases of the “race records” division of Chicago’s booming recording industry. New Orleans musicians who recorded in Chicago exerted a powerful influence on musicians and audiences for whom records were becoming a primary avenue of musical activity, experience, and knowledge.

Several women musicians were pivotal to the migration of New Orleans musicians to Chicago. Mary and Billy McBride brought many New Orleans jazz musicians to Chicago on the traveling show they will maintained for many decades, “Mack and Mack” (not to be confused with “Mack’s Merry Makers”). Their specialty was New Orleans music. Mary McBride (nee Thacker) was born in Algiers, Louisiana, and

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

sang the blues. Lovie Austin, based in Chicago, was responsible for the recording opportunities of many New Orleans musicians. Tennessee born Lil Hardin moved to Chicago in 1918, where she soon played her first job with a band, which turned out to be a New Orleans band, and spent much of her career playing and recording with New Orleans musicians in Chicago. As in New Orleans, Chicago's South Side of the 1920s was a place where it was not unusual to find women as well respected pianists in jazz bands. In fact, Austin, and Lil Hardin (later Armstrong) held, between them, many of the most prestigious jazz piano jobs in 1920s Chicago: Armstrong at the Dreamland Café and Royal Gardens and other locales, playing with popular New Orleans groups, including King Oliver's Creole Jazz Band. In addition to directing the music at the Monogram for twenty-five years, Austin was the house pianist, arranger, musical director for jazz sessions at Paramount Records (1923-1926), which was, at that time, a virtual clearing house for recordings of black New Orleans musicians.¹⁴⁵ Another woman who worked with many New Orleans musicians in Chicago was violinist Mae Brady, who led the band at the Dreamland in the early 1920s.¹⁴⁶

Even as many African Americans traveled out of the south in search of northern urban opportunities, still others moved to southern urban centers for the same reasons, migrating to cities such as Houston, Atlanta, Birmingham, and New Orleans. It is important to note that while Storyville closed in 1917, the black population of New Orleans more than doubled between 1910-1930, with greater acceleration *after* 1920.¹⁴⁷ True, jazz, with its musicians and audiences, was on the move in the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s, but it is also true that jazz never vacated New Orleans altogether, nor did it

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

freeze into the style named after that city. Due to the complex circuits of mobility during those years, including back-and-forth travel (another less discussed aspect of Great Migration history), black populations of many urban centers were connected through histories of chain migration, relocation, visiting, and culture. New Orleans and Chicago were so profoundly linked, that historians who study jazz history or black history in either city, one must look at the other. It isn't enough, in other words, to look at New Orleans as the "birth place" and Chicago (or Kansas City) as the "next stage," but to look at many sites and their intersections as integral parts of cultural exchanges facilitated by traveling musicians and audiences, new technologies such as records and radio, and interconnected black communities.

In these ways, current jazz scholarship is re-thinking the role of New Orleans in jazz history, not merely as a traditional "style" or "period" (Golden Age), but also as an urban center with a continuing jazz history, and its own historical relationship to industrialization, urbanization, migration, and new technologies.

Both jazz history and Great Migration history have paid more attention to men than to women, so there are great gaps in what we know about the movements of African American women jazz musicians—especially those who played instruments other than piano. Did women musicians travel to the same extent as men? Did women musicians migrate for the same reasons? Did their status as musicians vary from city to city? Did they mean the same things to audiences from place to place?

While much more historically grounded research of specific musicians, cities, and circuits needs to take place before these questions can be answered, the movements of

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

trumpet player **Ann Cooper** can, at the very least, offer evidence of one female instrumentalist's participation in the circuitous routes of mobile musicians whose careers touched New Orleans jazz. As elaborated in her biographical entry in this report, she migrated from Chicago to New Orleans in the mid 1930s. This decision seems to have been occasioned by an offer to play with Papa Celestin's orchestra, possibly instigated through her contacts with any number of New Orleans musicians currently playing in Chicago. When she arrived in New Orleans, however, she was hired instead by Joe Robichaux, for his Rhythm Boys orchestra.

Cabarets and theaters

Dance historian, Jacqui Malone has written,

The infancy of jazz coincided with extensive artistic and commercial efforts to get black musical theater established on Broadway. As a result, jazz musicians had a recognized connection with professional dance acts prior to the thirties. From the orchestra pit, musicians backed professional dancers and singers in theaters across the country. Throughout the twenties, jazz musicians, singers, and dancers worked together in night clubs and cabarets; and they performed jointly in revues that toured the United States and abroad."¹⁴⁸

Just as New York borrowed from New Orleans fantasies, New Orleans borrowed from theatrical conventions hailing from New York. Touring revues of light-skinned chorus lines such as the Brown Skinned Models and the Bronze Mannikins often came through New Orleans as part of their theater circuits. In 1939, the Bronze Mannikins performed the midnight show at the Palace Theatre with Alto Oates, "Harlem's Queen of Song." Three weeks later, the "Midnight Ramble" at the Palace was headlined by a local New Orleans entertainer known as Joan Lunceford (Daisy Lowe), a singer who

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

often performed with Joe Robichaux's Rhythm Boys, this time billed as "the country's new queen of swing," with a chorus line dubbed the "High Brown Creole Models."¹⁴⁹

Another dancer of the 1920s and 1930s that was an important member of Joe Robichaux's Rhythm Boys was **Baby Briscoe**, who, along with singer Joan Lunceford, and trumpet player Ann Cooper, played in that popular band at the New Orleans Rhythm Club in the mid-1930s. The female members of Robichaux's band were added as part of his switch to a fourteen-piece orchestra after returning from a Brunswick recording session in New York in 1933. In preparation for taking the Rhythm Club (Jackson and Derbigny, the Central City neighborhood) "by storm," Robichaux put together a big band fronted by Lunceford (nee Daisy Lowe) and Briscoe in tuxedos and batons. Both were popular female entertainers in New Orleans at the time. It is clear from the advertisements and reviews of the Rhythm Boys, that Baby Briscoe was one of the primary draws for this band, which performed with a floor show.

Briscoe and Lunceford wore tuxedos in the manner of other 1930s women entertainers such as Greta Garbo, Marlene Dietrich, and Jeni LeGon, who were not "male impersonators," but whose appeal was built on the novelty of women performing as women in men's dress. This is different from another cross-dressing tradition known as "drag," in which men impersonated women, and women impersonated men, though drag has also shared the stage with jazz. New Orleans born Stormé DeLarverie began her career as a band singer, began wearing men's dress to match her singing range, which was lower than most women's. She enjoyed the most fame as a male impersonator and singer with the Jewel Box Revue, in which she was the only male

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

impersonator in a traveling show of twenty-five female impersonators. She is the subject of one of the lesser known facts of gay and lesbian history, as the lesbian who through the first punch at the Stonewall Rebellion in 1969, the event that is credited with launching the Gay Liberation Movement.¹⁵⁰

All-Woman Bands

Most of the women who played instruments other than piano did so either as members of family bands or as all-woman bands. Maeceil Peterson, one of the excellent drummers from the musical family of Bernadette and George Peterson. George Peterson was a music teacher who taught at least three women drummers, all of whom became professionals: his daughters Bernadette Peterson Kerrigan and Maeceil Peterson Silliker, and his niece Lois Perry.¹⁵¹

Many New Orleans jazz women, including Baby Briscoe, Yvonne Busch, Lone Golden, Dixie Fasnacht, and Mickey Stevens, played went on the road with all-woman bands, and also the all-woman bands that traveled through New Orleans, including the International Sweethearts of Rhythm, Eddie Durham's "All-Star" Girls, Phil Spitalny's Hour of Charm (New Orleanean Maeceil Peterson went with them as a saxophonist), the Harlem Playgirls (New Orleanean Baby Briscoe became their leader), the Rays of Rhythm (Yvonne Busch played trumpet with them), Ada Leonard's All American Girls, and Ina Ray Hutton's Melodears.

Dixie Fasnacht studied clarinet and Eb alto saxophone at the Nicholls school in the late twenties and early thirties, where she knew Connie, Martha, and Vet Boswell.

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

All of these white women would become drawn to jazz. Fasnacht's opportunity came when a white "all-girl" band called the Smart Set got stranded in New Orleans. They stayed in a boarding house run by Dixie's sister. Getting stranded was easy to do on the road, and especially so during the Depression. Dixie Fasnacht, in fact, found herself stranded with the Smart Set in Pensacola. She returned New Orleans in 1933 with pianist Betty Giblin when they were offered an opportunity to appear with an "all-girl" band called the Bricktops. Later, she would go on the road again with women musicians she had met through these networks, this time called the Sophisticates of Swing. New Orleans based all-woman bands included the Harmony Maids in the 1930s and the Victoryettes in the 1940s. In the 1930s, when Lil Hardin Armstrong is to appear with an all-woman band at the Apollo Theater in New York, the organization founded by New Orleans-born bassist Olivia Sophie L'Ange Shipp, the Negro Women's Orchestral and Civic Association, supplied the musicians.¹⁵²

Sometimes the expectation of women to play in "all-girl" bands had its downside for professional women musicians. In a strange twist of gender bias, the recording company prevented the regular bass player, Johnny Senac, from appearing on the record. Apparently, there was no sense in recording women jazz musicians unless they fulfilled the "all-girl" band requirement. So instead of a bass, the band was recorded with drummer, Maeceil Peterson, an excellent drummer, but not a regular band member, so the band was unable to record in its usual configuration.

Women who owned night clubs where jazz was played include Dixie and Irma Fasnacht. In 1939, clarinetist and alto saxophonist New Orleans-born Dixie Fasnacht

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

came off the road from several years of playing in “all-girl” bands, to co-run a bar opened by her sister Irma. “Dixie’s Bar of Music,” as it was called, had a live jazz policy in both of its locations, with a co-ed band led by Miss Dixie. It would also become known as the first gay bar in New Orleans, though Miss Dixie and Miss Irma did not necessarily think of it as such. The first location was on 204 St. Charles, across the street from the St. Charles Hotel. While Miss Dixie kept charge of the entertainment, it was Miss Irma who managed the business end.¹⁵³ After World War II, the sisters moved Dixie’s Bar of Music to 701 Bourbon Street, where they operated the bar from 1949-1964. Bernadette Peterson Kerrigan opened a nightclub in Gentilly.¹⁵⁴

Educators

Throughout the history New Orleans, women have been some of the most important music teachers. Early influential educators include Margaret Kimble, Mercedes Garman Fields, and Camille Nickerson. Al Kennedy’s insightful study of the role of what he calls “jazz mentors” in the public schools includes trumpet player and public school teacher Yvonne Busch. The mentors in New Orleans that he writes about were often musicians with gigging experience, who taught in public schools, and developed mentoring relationships with students interested in jazz. This is a rich field for studying women’s participation in jazz. In Kennedy’s words, “Her legacy as a musical mentor in the public schools is an impressive roster of accomplished musicians. Some broke new ground as avant-garde jazz performers. Others formed the backbone of the New Orleans rhythm and blues explosion that caught the attention of the nation in

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

the 1950s. Still others are preserving the spirit of traditional New Orleans jazz.”¹⁵⁵

Yvonne Busch was born in 1929, and grew up in the Treme neighborhood, where brass bands were often heard in the street. As a little girl, Busch was afraid of the crowds brought by parades, but was influenced by them from the safety of her home. Though a nearby elementary school had a band with instruments, this was a white school which she walked past each day in order to get to her segregated black elementary school. She wanted to play an instrument, but family couldn't afford one and the school she attended didn't have any she could use.

Her cousin was James Clifton Polite, who was a student at Piney Woods Country Life School, in Mississippi. He played in the all-male band, and was an assistant teacher for the all-female band. In the summer of 1940, at the age of eleven, she went to Mississippi. She spent the first year learning to play alto horn and trumpet, earning a place in the Rays of Rhythm, and the second year being sent around the country to substitute for ill members of the International Sweethearts of Rhythm. After the Sweethearts broke from the school, the Swinging Rays of Rhythm were sent out as the front line band. In the spring of 1942, the Swinging Rays of Rhythm played the Gypsy Tea Room in New Orleans. She returned to New Orleans to live at the age of 13.

Busch completed eighth grade in New Orleans. One of her teachers formed a band, which she joined, gaining more valuable experience. She went to high school with trumpet player Dooky Chase, and joined his young band in the 1940s, which was able to secure considerable employment since slightly older bands had lost their members to the draft and enlistment of World War II. The Dooky Chase Orchestra

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

broke away from the older New Orleans styles to experiment with bebop. Along with Busch and Chase, the band included Calvin Labat (piano) and Benjamin “Benny” Powell (trombone). After high school, Busch majored in trombone at Southern University in Baton Rouge, where she was the only woman and the first trombonist in the university jazz band in 1947. Began teaching music at Grunewald’s School of Music during her first year of university, then got a job teaching band at Booker T. Washington Senior High. The school district forbade jazz and swing for public school bands, but she mentored students informally. She taught at Clark Senior High. and Carver Senior High, and retired in 1983 after 32 years of teaching in the New Orleans Public School District.¹⁵⁶ Bassist/vocalist Germaine Bazzle taught at Washington High School in Thibodaux in the 1960s, Xavier Preparatory High School in the 1970s.

New Orleans Revival

The first New Orleans jazz revival occurred directly following World War II, with another revival following in 1960s. Women were involved in both revivals, as revivalists, and as the aging early New Orleans musicians whom the revivalists wished to “revive.” The New Orleans Revival may be described as a cross-cultural, cross-generational, participatory preservationism, in which younger fans and musicians, usually white, immersed themselves in learning about, documenting, seeking out, playing, recording, and educating the public about music of an earlier generation of musicians, usually African American or Creole of color. The revivals took place in the context of the Civil Rights Movement. Traditional New Orleans jazz appealed to white liberals as a “folk”

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

music, and as a site of integration, but had less appeal for African Americans involved in the Civil Rights moment, particularly young people for whom the old music represented memories of an unjust past that needed to be replaced with new sounds and visions that included new black music such as rhythm and blues and soul..

In all of its social, political, economic, and cultural complexity, the New Orleans Revival cannot be underestimated for its influence in shaping the post-war future of New Orleans jazz. Nor should we underestimate the role of collectors, usually (but not exclusively) young white men, when considering the subsequent historical narratives, archival holdings, recordings (both reissued and new), and the continuing impact of such recordings and historical narratives on what we know about the music and musicians who created New Orleans Jazz. The Revival and revivalists affected New Orleans in numerous ongoing ways, including the culture and economy of jazz-tourism, the repertoire of street musicians, and of the eventual civic and commercial interest in promoting jazz as a product and symbol of New Orleans.¹⁵⁷ Indeed, most of the sources for this study are available due to the complex cross-cultural, cross-generational relationships of both men and women during the New Orleans Revival.

Bertha Gonsoulin was part of the first revival, when she appeared with Bunk Johnson in San Francisco in 1943. The daughter of a band leader and railroad worker, Gonsoulin was from New Orleans. She was living on the West Coast as early as 1921, when she filled in for Lil Hardin in King Oliver's band, and was a respected black music teacher in San Francisco Bay Area in 1940.¹⁵⁸ Another important contributor to the first revival who also resided in California was Marili Morden (Stuart Ertegun Levin).

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Morden, a white woman from Oregon, ran Jazz Man records, the center for New Orleans jazz devotees in Los Angeles in the late 1930s and 1940s. An active fan of jazz and blues, manager for blues guitarist T-Bone Walker, as well as an active integrationist, Morden negotiated bookings for Walker in highly segregated 1940s Hollywood, and demanded mixed-race audience policies for Walker's performances at Billy Berg's. According to Bruce Raeburn, Floyd Levin, and Morden's last husband, Art Levin, it was Marili Morden who brought trombonist Kid Ory out of retirement in the early 1940s. Ory had gotten out of the music business, and was working as a postal worker and chicken rancher in Los Angeles. Morden encouraged him to play the trombone after a nine year hiatus, and brought him to the attention of Orson Welles in 1944, when the film-maker enlisted Morden to find a traditional New Orleans band for his radio show.¹⁵⁹ Members of Kid Ory's band, including Ory himself, later appeared in the film project that had been started, and then abandoned, by Welles, *New Orleans* (1947), which also featured Louis Armstrong and Billie Holiday. The main character of *New Orleans*, however, is a white woman opera singer who appropriates the song she learns from her maid (played by Holiday in her only role in a feature film), and brings jazz to the concert hall with an all-white orchestra, jazz band (Woody Herman), and audience. The power imbalances depicted in this film are a striking illustration of what New Orleans jazz represented for dominant culture, and help to explain why many African American activists of the war-time and post-war Civil Rights Movement tended not to associate with traditional New Orleans jazz.¹⁶⁰ This was not true of all African American activists, however. As we shall soon see, Dodie Simmons, a black woman from New

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Orleans, combined her activism in CORE (Commission of Racial Equility) with her active participation at Preservation Hall during the New Orleans revival of the 1960s.¹⁶¹

Women whose careers received a boost due to the New Orleans Revival in the 1950s and 1960s include **Emma Barrett, Dolly Adams, Billie Pierce, and Olivia “Lady Charlot” Cook**. It is impossible to consider traditional New Orleans jazz from the 1940s on without understanding something about the revivalists, fans, collectors, and the serious devotees like William Russell, Richard Allen, and Larry Borenstein, and others, who recorded the musicians they loved, wrote about them, started the archival collecting that researchers still rely on today, and producing concerts. Among these devotees, were some women, notably Myra Menville and Helen Arlt, both active members and presidents of the New Orleans Jazz Club (founded 1948); and Menville was the founding editor of the club’s journal *Second Line*, and a major figure in the struggle to have a statue of Louis Armstrong erected in the city of his birth.¹⁶² The NOJC was a mostly white organization, reticent to rock the boat in segregated times, yet effective in bringing “respectability” to New Orleans jazz history that led to wider acceptance. The first African American board member of the NOJC was Charlotte McCullom Boutney who joined the board in 1972.¹⁶³

The Jazz Museum and Preservation Hall were both founded in 1961. Barbara Reid Edmiston and Sandra Jaffe both played key roles in founding and running Preservation Hall, as well as Mrs. Aline Willis (one of Larry Borenstein’s secretaries), Sylvia Shannon (another one of Borenstein’s secretaries), Resa Lambert (Sandra Jaffe’s sister, manager of road bands), and Dodie Smith Simmons.¹⁶⁴

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Sandra Jaffe was born in 1938. She was already an Armstrong fan when she married Allan Jaffe, a fan of New Orleans music. When Allan realized that the business career for which he had prepared was going to make him miserable, he and Sandra quit their jobs and took to the road. They arrived in New Orleans the spring of 1961, hoping to hear some of the artists they had been listening to on Folkways records. They arrived just in time for the founding of Preservation Hall, which was in the midst of a crisis over funds and politics. It was being run by Larry Borenstein, Ken Mills, and Barbara Reid. In September, 1961, Mills left, and the recent arrivals, Allan and Sandra Jaffe, assumed the responsibilities of running Preservation Hall.¹⁶⁵ The Jaffes, and other workers and volunteers at Preservation Hall, were committed to racial integration, during a particularly explosive time in New Orleans race politics. Sustained activism had achieved the integration of New Orleans libraries (1955) and buses and streetcars (1958), but state and local resistance to school desegregation threatened to shut down the schools rather than integrate in 1960 and 1961.¹⁶⁶ People who struggled for Civil Rights, or who even socialized across race during the post-*Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) years, did so at great personal risk. Preservation Hall is one of the integrated spaces at which people were arrested in New Orleans for congregating across race. Dodie Simmons became involved with Preservation Hall in the 1960s, at the same time that she was active in CORE. Civil Rights Activists and lawyers sometimes stayed at the hall in sleeping bags as a safe haven.¹⁶⁷ This period also saw the destruction of the thriving Claiborne Avenue black business area to make room for Interstate I-10.

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Conclusion

Jazz Fest '68 (1968), The New Orleans Jazz and Food Festival (1969), and the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival (1970-Present), are other sites where we find the participation of women, but are outside the scope of this study, except to note the appearances of the women whose biographies appear in the following pages. This report has focused primarily on the earlier jazzwomen, not because they are more important than those in more recent years, but because the more contemporary women's histories deserve in-depth research, and because the information is readily available for researchers in New Orleans. The conclusion of this "Historical Overview," therefore, is not meant as an ending, but as a prelude for additional scholarship on the contributions and historical and social contexts of such important New Orleans jazzwomen as bassist/vocalist Germaine Bazzle and clarinetist Doreen Ketchens.

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Notes

¹ Bruce Boyd Raeburn, "Submerging Ethnicity: Creole of Color Jazz Musicians of Italian Heritage," Conference Paper, Creole Studies Conference, Radisson Hotel, New Orleans, Louisiana, October 25, 2003, 1.

² Mary Gehman and Nancy Ries, *Women and New Orleans: A History* (New Orleans: Margaret Media, 2000 [1985]), 1.

³ Gehman and Ries, *Women and New Orleans: A History*, ii.

⁴ Gehman and Ries, *Women and New Orleans*. ii.

⁵ Mary Gehman, *The Free People of Color of New Orleans: An Introduction* (New Orleans: Margaret Media, 1994), 31.

⁶ Gehman, *Free People of Color*, 37-40.

⁷ Shirley Elizabeth Thompson, *The Passing of a People: Creoles of Color in Mid-Nineteenth Century New Orleans* (PhD. dissertation, Harvard, 2001), 4-5.

⁸ Mary Gehman, "A Scholar Researches Creole Émigrés who Fled Racial Prejudice," Louisiana Cultural Vistas, Winter 2001-2002. <http://www.margaretmedia.com/mexico-creole/connection.htm> (Accessed September 29, 2004).

⁹ Joseph Logsdon and Caryn Cosse Bell, "The Americanization of Black New Orleans," ed. Arnold R. Hirsch and Joseph Logsdon, *Creole New Orleans: Race and Americanization* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 1992), 204-5.

¹⁰ Camille Lucie Nickerson, *Africo-Creole Music in Louisiana: A thesis on the plantation songs created by the Creole Negroes of Louisiana* (Master of Music Thesis, Oberlin Conservatory of Music, May 23, 1932). Amistad Research Center, Louisiana Music Collection, #230, Box 2, Folder 20.

¹¹ Nickerson, *Africo-Creole Music*, 25.

¹² Nickerson, *Africo-Creole Music*, 41.

¹³ Nickerson, *Africo-Creole Music*, 68.

¹⁴ Sybil Kein, "Use of Louisiana Creole in Southern Literature," in Kein, ed., *Creole: The History and Legacy of Louisiana's Free People of Color* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Press, 2000), 124.

¹⁵ Raeburn, "Submerging Ethnicity," 9.

¹⁶ Thompson, *The Passing of a People*, 6-7; Logsdon and Bell, "The Americanization of New Orleans," 204-206.

¹⁷ Mark Tucker, "Jazz and the New Orleans background (1895-1916)," *Grove Music Online* ed. L. Macy (Accessed 2 May 2004) <<http://www.grovemusic.com>>

¹⁸ Raul Fernandez, *Latin Jazz: The Perfect Combination/La Combinacion Perfecta* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2002), 14-24.

¹⁹ Don Rouse, "New Orleans Jazz and Caribbean Music," *The Potomac River Jazz*

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Club, <http://www.pric.org/roots/nojazzandcarribe.html> (Accessed January 20, 2004).

²⁰ Nancy Bostick and Nora Hulse, "Ragtime's Women Composers: An Annotated Lexicon," *The Ragtime Ephemeralist* Vol. III, 2002.

²¹ Raeburn, "Submerging Ethnicity."

²² Eileen Southern, *The Music of Black Americans*, Second Edition (New York: Norton, 1983), 131-133.

²³ Karen Trahan Leathem, "A Carnival According to Their Own Desires": *Gender and Mardi Gras in New Orleans, 1870-1941* (PhD. Diss., University of North Carolina Chapel Hill, 1994), 40.

²⁴ Gehman, *Free People of Color*, 99.

²⁵ William Ivy Hair, *Carnival of Fury: Robert Charles and the New Orleans Race Riot of 1900* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1976), 104-5.

²⁶ Hair, *Carnival of Fury*, 107.

²⁷ Hair, *Carnival of Fury*, 73-4.

²⁸ Quoted in Hair, *Carnival of Fury*, 72.

²⁹ Charles Chamberlain, "The Goodson Sisters: Women Pianists and the Function of Gender in the Jazz Age," *The Jazz Archivist* vol. XV (2001), 3.

³⁰ Raeburn, "Submerging Ethnicity."

³¹ See quote in Eric Lott, *Love and Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class* (New York: Oxford University Press, Reprint Edition: 1995), 15.

³² Claire Black, oral history, March 19, 2001. Jack Stewart, interviewer; Tad Jones, assisting. Videotape. Hogan Jazz Archive, and New Orleans Jazz National Historical Park office.

³³ Thus, the title of Lott's *Love and Theft*.

³⁴ See Lott, *Love and Theft*; also Michael Rogin, *Blackface, White Noise: Jewish Immigrants in the Hollywood Melting Pot* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996); Annamarie Bean, James V. Hatch, and Brooks McNamara, ed, *Inside the Minstrel Mask: Readings in Nineteenth-Century Blackface* (Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press, 1996); William J. Mahar, *Behind the Burnt Cork Mask: Early Blackface Minstrelsy and Antebellum American Popular Culture* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999). For a gender analysis of blackface minstrelsy and women performers, see Pamela Brown Lavitt, "'First of the Red Hot Mamas': Coon Shouting" and the Jewish Ziegfeld Girl," *American Jewish History*, vol. 87, issue 4, 1999, 253-290.

³⁵ Gene Anderson, "The Genesis of King Oliver's Creole Jazz Band." *American Music* 12.3: 238 (21).

³⁶ Eddie Garland, Oral History, August 8, 1958, 4. Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University.

³⁷ See, for example, Angela Y. Davis, *Blues Legacies and Black Feminism: Gertrude "Ma" Rainey, Bessie Smith, and Billie Holiday* (New York: Random House, 1999), Sandra Lieb, Sandra. *Mother of the Blues: A Study of Ma Rainey*, (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1981); and Daphne Duval Harrison, *Black Pearls: Blues Queens of the 1920s* (New York: Rutgers, 1988).

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

³⁸ Lynn Abbott, "'For Ofays Only': An Annotated Calendar of Midnight Frolics at the Lyric Theater," *The Jazz Archivist*, vol. xvii (2003).

³⁹ Sandra R. Lieb, *Mother of the Blues: A Study of Ma Rainey* (University of Massachusetts Press, 1981), 5.

⁴⁰ Punch Miller, Oral History, April 4, 1960. Also present: Richard B. Allen, Paul R. Crawford, Lionel Robinson. Summary–retyped, Reel II, 9 and 10. Hogan Jazz Archive.

⁴¹ See Daphne Duval Harrison, *Black Pearls: Blues Queens of the 1920s* (Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1990), 13; 18-20; 63-64; 69.

⁴² Lyrics transcribed on *History Matters* website, <http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/5053> (accessed May 31, 2002).

⁴³ "West Indies Blues," Edgar Dowell, <http://www.heptune.com/lyrics/westindi.html> (Accessed May 27, 2004)

⁴⁴ Kathy Ogren, *The Jazz Revolution: Twenties America and the Meaning of Jazz* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 69.

⁴⁵ See Jayna Brown, "'Egyptian Beauties' and 'Creole Queens': The Performance of City and Empire on the Fin-de-siecle Black Burlesque Stage," *Babylon Girls: African American Women Performers and the Making of the Modern* (Ph.D. diss., Yale, 2001), 89-155.

⁴⁶ Alecia P. Long, *'The Great Southern Babylon': Sexuality, Race, and Reform in New Orleans, 1865-1920* (Ph.D. diss., University of Delaware, 2001), 1-3.

⁴⁷ Monique Guillory, *Some Enchanted Evening on the Auction Block: The Cultural Legacy of the New Orleans Quadroon Balls* (Ph.D. diss., NYU, 1999), 4-5; Alecia P. Long, *The Great Southern Babylon*, 1-3.

⁴⁸ Jayna Brown, "'Egyptian Beauties' and 'Creole Queens': The Performance of City and Empire on the Fin-de-siecle Black Burlesque Stage," from *Babylon Girls*; Alecia P. Long, *The Great Southern Babylon*.

⁴⁹ Hair, *Carnival of Fury*, 79.

⁵⁰ Alecia P. Long, "'Where the Least Harm Can Result': Sex, Race, and Respectability in a Single Neighborhood," *The Great Southern Babylon:: Sex, Race, and Respectability in New Orleans, 1865-1920* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2004), 102-147.

⁵¹ That Storyville so overshadows other sites of musical creativity (such as churches, family bands, brass bands, etc.) is problematic, but not surprising given the ongoing equation of jazz with things sexual.

⁵² Al Rose, *Storyville, New Orleans: Being an Authentic, Illustrated Account of the Notorious Red-Light District* (University of Alabama, 1974), 144.

⁵³ Adams, Dolly, Oral History Digest, April 18, 1962. Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University, New Orleans, Louisiana.

⁵⁴ Punch Miller interview, September 1, 1959, quoted in Charles Chamberlain, 4. Mary Gehman and Nancy Ries, *A History of Women and New Orleans* (New Orleans: Margaret Media, Inc., 1988), 76.

⁵⁵ Al Rose, *Storyville, New Orleans: Being an Authentic, Illustrated Account of the*

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Notorious Red-Light District (University of Alabama, 1974), 204.

⁵⁶ Rose, Storyville 115.

⁵⁷ Jelly Roll Morton is often quoted as saying that he feared being taken as a sissy for playing the piano, but Morton is by far not the only source for this gender association. Pianist Octave Crosby, for example, agreed that men in the early days were discouraged from playing piano because it was thought of as a "sissy" instrument. Octave Crosby, Oral History." I [of 2]—Summary--Retyped. Also present: William Russell, Ralph Collins. Tulane University, March 26. 1959. p. 1, Hogan Jazz Archives.

⁵⁸ Karl Koenig, *The Jazz Lectures* (Running Springs, Calif.: Basin Street Press, 1996), 18.

⁵⁹ D. Antoinette Handy, *Black Women in American Bands and Orchestras*, Second Edition, (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 1998), 164-165. The photograph appears in Al Rose and Edmond Souchon, *New Orleans Jazz: A Family Album* (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1984 [first published 1967]), 194.

⁶⁰ Sylvester Francis, conversation with Tami Albin, New Orleans, June 29, 2002.

⁶¹ Handy, *Black Women in American Bands and Orchestras*, 197-199.

⁶² <http://www.pinettesbrassband.com/index.htm> (Accessed May 20, 2004).

⁶³ Manuel Manetta, Oral History. Reel I (of 6)—Digest--Retyped. Present: William Russell, Robert Campbell, Nesuhi Ertegün, Richard B. Allen. Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University, March 21. 1957, 1.

⁶⁴ "Lillian DePass, Oral History, June 20, 1960, also present: Richard B. Allen, Arnold DePass, Jr., Lucianna DePass. Digest--Retyped, Reel II of 4, 10, Hogan Jazz Archive.

⁶⁵ Douglas Henry Daniels, *Lester Leaps In: The Life and Times of Lester "Pres" Young*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2002, 16-19.

⁶⁶ Koenig, Karl. *The Jazz Lectures* (Running Springs, California: Basin Street Press, 1996), 21-23.

⁶⁷ Charles Chamberlain, "The Goodson Sisters," 3.

⁶⁸ Bruce Raeburn, *New Orleans Style: The Awakening of American Jazz Scholarship and Its Cultural Implications* (PhD. diss., Tulane, 1991), 274-278.

⁶⁹ Albert Francis, Oral History, August 4, 1961, interviewed by William Russell, Digest--Retyped, Reel I (of 2), 1, Hogan Jazz Archive.

⁷⁰ Quoted in press release, vertical file, Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane.

⁷¹ Nellie Lutcher, Oral History, interviewed by Patricia Willard, January 10, 1979 and February 15, 1979, Smithsonian Jazz Oral History Project. Transcript, 21. Institute for Jazz Studies, Rutgers.

⁷² Olivia Charlot Cook, Oral History Interview, August 30, 1999, Video. New Orleans Jazz National Historical Park Office, New Orleans, Louisiana (also at Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University, New Orleans, Louisiana).

⁷³ Sally Placksin, *American Women in Jazz: 1900 to the Present, Their Words, Lives, and Music* (New York: Wideview Books, 1982), 60-61.

⁷⁴ Olivia Cook, Oral History Interview, August 30, 1999.

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

⁷⁵ Koenig, *Jazz Lectures*, 21.

⁷⁶ Bruce Raeburn, interviewed by film-maker Kay D. Ray for *Lady Be Good: Instrumental Women in Jazz*. Video # 311, in possession of Kay D. Ray.

⁷⁷ Jeffrey Taylor, "With Lovie and Lil."

⁷⁸ John Joseph, Oral History, November 26, 1958, interviewed by Richard Allen and Bill Russell, Reel IV--retyped, 94-95, Hogan Jazz Archive.

⁷⁹ Manuel Manetta, Oral History, March 21, 1957, also present: William Russell, Robert Campbell, Nesuhi Ertegun, Richard B. Allen. Reel III (of 6)—Digest--Retyped, 9, Hogan Jazz Archive.

⁸⁰ Lizzie Miles, Oral history, January 18, 1951. Also present: Richard B. Allen, Robert W. Greenwood. Summary--1 [of 2], 1. Hogan Jazz Archive.

⁸¹ Many thanks to Thomas Brothers for drawing my attention to the significance of lawn parties in women's contributions to New Orleans jazz.

⁸² Mike Hazeldine and Bill Russell, "Nightclubs: United States of America: New Orleans," *The New Grove Dictionary of Music Online*, ed. L. Macy (Accessed 26 June 2003), <<http://www.grovemusic.com>>; Rose and Souchon, *New Orleans: A Family Album*, 220.

⁸³ "Wooden Joe" Nicholas, Oral History, also present: William Russell, Charles DeVore, November 12, 1956. Reel II, Track 2—Digest--Retyped, 11. Hogan Jazz Archive.

⁸⁴ John Joseph, Oral History, November 26, 1958, interviewed by Richard Allen and Bill Russell, Reel IV--retyped, 94-95, Hogan Jazz Archive.

⁸⁵ While Betsy Cole does not show up in the U.S. Census, the 1920 U.S. Census shows Theophile and Alice Breaux as renters at 2821 Fourth Street, on the corner of Fourth and Willow, five blocks east of Jackson and Willow. The location of Betsy Cole's lawn parties varies in oral history accounts by a block or two: Willow between Josephine and Jackson (Alfred Williams, Manuel Manetta, John Joseph), and at Philip and Willow (Eddie Garland).

⁸⁶ McNeal Breaux, Oral History, November 24, 1958, also present: Richard Allen, William Russell, and Manuel Manetta, Reel I--retyped, 7-8. Hogan Jazz Archive.

⁸⁷ Lillian DePass, Oral History, June 20, 1960. Also present: Richard B. Allen, Arnold DePass, Jr., Lucianna DePass. Digest--Retyped, Reel III of 4, 15. Hogan Jazz Archive.

⁸⁸ Eddie Garland, Oral History, August 8, 1958, 4. Hogan Jazz Archive.

⁸⁹ Albert Nicholas, Oral History, June 26, 1972, also present: Hans Lychouc, Lars I. Edegran, and Richard B. Allen. Notes by Richard B. Allen, Digest by Elizabeth Wetzel. Reel I of IV, 1, Hogan Jazz Archive.

⁹⁰ Alfred Williams, Oral History, interviewed by Richard Allen, October 13, 1961, Reel III--Summary--Retyped, 17, Hogan Jazz Archive.

⁹¹ "Wooden Joe" Nicholas, Oral History, also present: William Russell, Charles DeVore, November 12, 1956. Reel II, Track 2--Digest--Retyped, 11. Hogan Jazz Archive; Manuel Manetta, Oral History, March 21, 1957. Also present: William Russell,

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Robert Campbell, Nesuhi Ertegun, Richard B. Allen. Reel III (of 6)--Digest--Retyped, 9. Hogan Jazz Archive.

⁹² Hypolite Charles, Oral History, April 13, 1963. Also present: Richard B. Allen, Gundrun Schreiner, Mildred and George Brown. Reel III [of 4] Digest--Retyped, 17. Hogan Jazz Archive.

⁹³ Danny Barker, *A Life in Jazz* (London: Oxford University Press, 1986), 41.

⁹⁴ Manuel Manetta, Oral History, March 21, 1957. Also present: William Russell, Robert Campbell, Nesuhi Ertegun, Richard B. Allen. Reel III (of 6)—Digest--Retyped, 9. Hogan Jazz Archive.

⁹⁵ Lillian DePass, Oral History, June 20, 1960. Also present: Richard B. Allen, Arnold DePass, Jr., Lucianna DePass. Digest--Retyped, Reel III of 4, 15. Hogan Jazz Archive.

⁹⁶ Lillian DePass, Oral History, June 20, 1960. Also present: Richard B. Allen, Arnold DePass, Jr., Lucianna DePass. Digest--Retyped, Reel III of 4, 12. Hogan Jazz Archive.

⁹⁷ Leah Chase, Oral History. Treme Oral History Collection. #494. Audiotape. Amistad Center.

⁹⁸ William Schafer, *Brass Bands and New Orleans Jazz* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1977), 67.

⁹⁹ Karl Koenig, Jazz Museum text, Old Mint.

¹⁰⁰ See, for instance, the web-site for the Backstreet Cultural Center, <http://backstreetculturalmuseum.com/reviews.htm> (Accessed September 28, 2004). The museum is located at 1116 St. Claude Street.

¹⁰¹ Jacqui Malone, *Steppin' on the Blues: The Visible Rhythms of African American Dance* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1996), 180.

¹⁰² Mahalia Jackson, with Evan McLeod Wylie, *Movin' On Up*, (New York: Hawthorn Books, Inc, 1966), 30.

¹⁰³ There are many descriptions of New Orleans jazz funerals, many of which are infused with guidebook style exoticism. I especially appreciate Jacqui Malone's excellent chapter on African American mutual aid societies in her *Steppin' on the Blues*, 167-186. Also helpful are Schafer, *Brass Bands and New Orleans Jazz* (66-86); and Jack V. Buerkle and Danny Barker, *Bourbon Street Black: The New Orleans Black Jazzman* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), 187-97.

¹⁰⁴ Jerry Brock, Board of Directors, Backstreet Cultural Center, email correspondence, January 1, 2004.

¹⁰⁵ Joanna Schindler, "Funeral Operator is Honored for Career," *Times-Picayune* (Gretna Section), August 31, 2003, 2; Dayna Harpster, "Undertaking Change," *Times-Picayune* February 22, 2000, D-1.

¹⁰⁶ Leah Chase, Oral History. Treme Oral History Collection. #494. Audiotape. Amistad Center, Tulane University, New Orleans.

¹⁰⁷ Mary Gehman and Nancy Ries, *Women and New Orleans: A History* (New Orleans: Margaret Media, 2000 [1985]), 60.

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

¹⁰⁸ “Gertrude Geddes Willis,” “Notable African Americans from Louisiana,” <http://nutrias.org/~nopl/info/aarcinfo/notabl2.htm> (accessed January 3, 2004).

¹⁰⁹ Jack V. Buerkle and Danny Barker. *Bourbon Street Black: The New Orleans Black Jazzman* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), 188-9.

¹¹⁰ Mahalia Jackson, with Evan McLeod Wylie, *Movin’ On Up*, (New York: Hawthorn Books, Inc, 1966), 30.

¹¹¹ Eddie Garland, Oral History, August 8. 1958, Retyped, 4. Hogan Jazz Archive.

¹¹² Lillian DePass, Oral History, June 20, 1960. Also present: Richard B. Allen, Arnold DePass, Jr., Lucianna DePass. Digest–Retyped, Reel III of 4, 14-15. Hogan Jazz Archive.

¹¹³ Joe Rene, Oral History, April 7, 1960. Also present: William Russell, Richard B. Allen, Marjorie T. Zander, Paul R. Crawford. Reel II [of 4]--Digest--Retyped, 16. Hogan Jazz Archive.

¹¹⁴ Jim Amoss, “A Dirge for Miss Carrie,” *The States-Item*, vol 98, no. 33, July 18, 1974, front page, continued on A-4., MSS 536, obit. f. 136, Williams Research Center.

¹¹⁵ “Jazz Funeral Scheduled for Bill Pierce,” *States-Item*, Tuesday, October 1, 1974, MSS 536, Pierce, Billie and De De f. 8, Williams Research Center.

¹¹⁶ Joel Simpson, “Blue Lu Barker” (obituary). *Down Beat* 65.10: 18 (1); Geraldine Wyckoff, “Louisa ‘Blue Lu’ Barker, 1913-98,” *Gambit Weekly*, May 19, 1998, vol. 19, #20, 34. Vertical file, “Blue Lu Barker,” Hogan Jazz Archive.

¹¹⁷ Bruce Boyd Raeburn, *New Orleans Style: The Awakening of American Jazz Scholarship and its Cultural Implications* (Ph.D. diss., Tulane, 1991), 297.

¹¹⁸ “Mrs. Myra Menville, N.O. jazz buff, dies,” *States-Item*, February 15, 1979, 14; “Mrs. Menville Rites Today,” *Times-Picayune* February 16, 1979, MSS 536, obits f. 95, The Williams Research Center.

¹¹⁹ Jerry Brock, Board of Directors, Backstreet Cultural Center, email correspondence, January 1, 2004; and Lynn Abbott, Hogan Jazz Archive, email correspondence, January 9, 2004.

¹²⁰ Dodie Simmons, quoted in William Carter, *Preservation Hall* (London and New York: Cassell, 1991), 277-278.

¹²¹ Many thanks to Lynn Abbott for finding this reference. Vertical file, Ellyna Tatum, Hogan Jazz Archive.

¹²² Mary Gehman and Nancy Ries, *Women and New Orleans: A History* (New Orleans: Margaret Media, 2000 [1985]), 77-8; Obituary, *Variety* October 1, 1986 v. 324, 126; conversation with Sylvester Francis, director of the Backstreet Cultural Center, and Tami Albin, research assistant on this report, June 29, 2002.

¹²³ Wanda Rouzan’s web-site: http://www.wandarouzan.com/html/jazz_funeral_grand_marshal.html (accessed January 3, 2004). There is a wonderful photograph on this website of Wanda Rouzan and vocalist Lady BJ at Ellyna Tatum’s jazz funeral.

¹²⁴ Geraldine Wyckoff, “Everybody’s Favorite Uncle: Lionel Batiste,” *Offbeat: New Orleans’ and Louisiana’s Music Magazine* (August 2002),(accessed 31 December

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

2003), <http://www.offbeat.com/obaugust2002/feature.html>.

¹²⁵ See Claude F. Jacobs, "Folk for Whom? Tourist Guidebooks, Local Color, and the Spiritual Churches of New Orleans," *Journal of American Folklore* - Volume 114, Number 453, Summer 2001, 309-330.

¹²⁶ Jackson, *Movin' on Up*, 32-33.

¹²⁷ Zora Neale Hurston, ed. Cheryl A. Wall, *Zora Neale Hurston: Folklore, Memoirs, and Other Writings* (New York: Library of America, 1995), 183, 222.

¹²⁸ Jeanette Salvant Kimball. Also present, Lars Edegran Barry Martyn, Richard B. Allen. Property of Barry Martyn. Oral History Digest. Reel I, June 16, 1969, Hogan Jazz Archive.

¹²⁹ Lizzie Miles, oral history, January 18, 1951. Also present: Richard B. Allen, Robert W. Greenwood. Summary--1 [of 2], 1, Hogan Jazz Archive.

¹³⁰ Nellie Lutcher, Oral History, Interviewed by Patricia Willard, January 10, 1979 and February 15, 1979, Smithsonian Jazz Oral History Project. Transcript, 29. Institute for Jazz Studies, Rutgers.

¹³¹ William Schafer, *Brass Bands and New Orleans Jazz*, 43-44.

¹³² Joyce Marie Jackson, "The Changing Nature of Gospel Music: A Southern Case Study," *African American Review*, Volume 29, Issue 2, Special Issues on the Music (Summer, 1995), 185-200, 194.

¹³³ Jason Berry, "Music: Jazz and the Spirit: The Legacy of Mother Catherine Seals," *New Orleans Magazine* March 2002, vol. 36, issue 3, 30.

¹³⁴ Yvonne Chireau, "Prophetess of the Spirits: Mother Leaf Anderson and the Spiritualist Churches of New Orleans," Beverly Mayne Kienzle and Pamela J. Walker, eds., *Women Preachers and Prophets Through Two Millennia of Christianity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998) 303-4.

¹³⁵ "Spiritualism," New Orleans Mystic, <http://www.neworleansmistic.com/services/spiritualist.htm> (Accessed January 3, 2004).

¹³⁶ Berry, "Music: Jazz and the Spirit."

¹³⁷ Jason Berry, *The Spirit of Black Hawk: A Mystery of Africans and Indians* (Jackson: University of Mississippi, 1995), 62-3.

¹³⁸ Raeburn, Bruce Boyd. "Submerging Ethnicity: Creole of Color Jazz Musicians of Italian Heritage," Conference Paper, Creole Studies Conference, Radisson Hotel, New Orleans, Louisiana, October 25, 2003, 12. For more information on Mother Catherine Seals, see Yvonne Chireau, "Prophetess of the Spirits: Mother Leaf Anderson and the Spiritualist Churches of New Orleans," Beverly Mayne Kienzle and Pamela J. Walker, eds., *Women Preachers and Prophets Through Two Millennia of Christianity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 303-317.

¹³⁹ Berry, "Music: Jazz and the Spirit," and *The Spirit of Black Hawk*.

¹⁴⁰ Zora Neale Hurston, "Mother Catherine," *The Sanctified Church* (Berkeley: Turtle Island Press, 198), 23-5.

¹⁴¹ Lyle Saxon, "The Temple of Innocent Blood," *Gumbo Ya-Ya*, 208-209.

¹⁴² Berry, "Music: Jazz and the Spirit," and *The Spirit of Black Hawk*.

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

¹⁴³ See Scott DeVeaux, "Constructing the Jazz Tradition: Jazz Historiography," *Black American Literature Forum* vol. 25, no. 3, Fall 1991, 525-560.

¹⁴⁴ Sandra Lieb, *Mother of the Blues: A Study of Ma Rainey*, (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1981), 22.

¹⁴⁵ Taylor, "With Lovie and Lil."

¹⁴⁶ Handy, *Black Women in American Bands and Orchestras*, 39.

¹⁴⁷ Joe Trotter, Jr., ed., *The Great Migration in Historical Perspective: New Dimensions of Race, Class, and Gender* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1991), 23, 128.

¹⁴⁸ Jacqui Malone, *Steppin' on the Blues: The Visible Rhythms of African American Dance* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1996), 91.

¹⁴⁹ Ads for the "Big Midnight Ramble" at the Palace Theatre, *Louisiana Weekly*, October 7, 1939, and November 11 1939: 4.

¹⁵⁰ See the documentary, *Stormé: The Lady of the Jewel Box* (dir. Michele Parkerson, 1987). For publicity materials on the Jewel Box Revue, see <http://www.queermusicheritage.com/fem-jewl.html>. For more on Stormé DeLarverie's role in the Stonewall Rebellion, see the website for the Stonewall Veterans Association, <http://stonewallvets.org/index.htm>.

¹⁵¹ Claire Perry Black, oral history, March 19, 2001. Interviewed by Jack Stewart, assisted by Tad Jones. Video. Hogan Jazz Archive and New Orleans Jazz National Historical Park.

¹⁵² Olivia Shipp Photograph Collection, Schomburg, New York Public Library.

¹⁵³ Pepe Citron, "Dixie and the Sheriff," *New Orleans States-Item*, August 4, 1973, 21.

¹⁵⁴ Gehman and Ries, *Women and New Orleans*, 76.

¹⁵⁵ Al Kennedy, *Chord Changes on the Chalkboard: How Public School Teachers Shaped Jazz and the Music of New Orleans* (Lanham, MD, and Oxford: Scarecrow Press, 2002), 49.

¹⁵⁶ All information on Yvonne Busch is taken from Al Kennedy's chapter on her in *Chord Changes on the Chalkboard*.

¹⁵⁷ Christopher Hillman, *Bunk Johnson: His Life & Times* (New York: Universe Books, 1988, 55-56; Raeburn, *New Orleans Style*.

¹⁵⁸ Floyd Levin, email to the author, August 19, 2004.

¹⁵⁹ See Raeburn, *New Orleans Style*, 161-164; Helen Oakley Dance, "Marili," *Stormy Monday: The T-Bone Walker Story* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1987), 49-54. Thanks to Art Levin, for his communicating with me about Marili Morden, to whom he was married. Art Levin, email correspondence, September 9, 2004.

¹⁶⁰ Sherrie Tucker, "When Good Girls Go Trad: Making a Lady Out of the Jazz Wars, The White Female Singer in *New Orleans* (1947), conference paper, Guelph Jazz Festival and Colloquium, Guelph, Ontario, Canada, September 8, 2004.

¹⁶¹ William Carter, *Preservation Hall* (London and New York: Cassell, 1991), 204-

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

207.

¹⁶² Floyd Levin, *Classic Jazz: A Personal View of the Music and the Musicians* (University of California Press, 2000), 303-312.

¹⁶³ Charles Suhor, *Jazz in New Orleans: The Post-War Years Through 1970* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2001), 30-31.

¹⁶⁴ Carter, *Preservation Hall*, 204-207

¹⁶⁵ Carter, *Preservation Hall*, 146-160.

¹⁶⁶ Kim Lacy Rogers, *Righteous Lives: Narratives of the New Orleans Civil Rights Movement* (New York: New York University Press, 1993).

¹⁶⁷ Carter, *Preservation Hall*, 204-207.

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Bibliography

Primary Sources

- Black, Claire Perry, Oral History, March 19, 2001. Interviewed by Jack Stewart, assisted by Tad Jones. Video. Hogan Jazz Archive and New Orleans Jazz National Historical Park.
- Breaux, McNeal, Oral History, November 24, 1958, also present: Richard Allen, William Russell, and Manuel Manetta, Reel I--retyped, 7-8. Hogan Jazz Archive.
- Charles, Hypolite, Oral History, April 13, 1963. Also present: Richard B. Allen, Gundrun Schreiner, Mildred and George Brown. Reel III [of 4] Digest--Retyped, 17. Hogan Jazz Archive.
- Chase, Leah, Oral History. Treme Oral History Collection. #494. Audiotape. Amistad Center.
- Cook, Olivia Charlot, Oral History Interview, August 30, 1999, Video. New Orleans Jazz National Historical Park Office, New Orleans, Louisiana (also at Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University, New Orleans, Louisiana).
- Crosby, Octave, Oral History." I [of 2]--Summary--Retyped. Also present: William Russell, Ralph Collins. Tulane University, March 26. 1959. Hogan Jazz Archive.
- DePass, Lillian, Oral History, June 20, 1960, also present: Richard B. Allen, Arnold DePass, Jr., Lucianna DePass. Digest--Retyped, Reel II of 4, 10, Hogan Jazz Archive.
- Francis, Albert, Oral History, August 4, 1961, Interviewed by William Russell, Digest--Retyped, Reel I (of 2), 1, Hogan Jazz Archive.
- Garland, Eddie, Oral History, August 8, 1958, 4. Hogan Jazz Archive.
- Joseph, John, Oral History, November 26, 1958, interviewed by Richard Allen and Bill Russell, Reel IV--retyped, 94-95, Hogan Jazz Archive.
- Kimball, Jeanette Salvant Kimball. Also present, Lars Edegran Barry Martyn, Richard B. Allen. Property of Barry Martyn. Oral History Digest. Reel I, June 16. 1969, Hogan Jazz Archive.
- Lutcher, Nellie, Oral History, Interviewed by Patricia Willard, January 10, 1979 and February 15, 1979, Smithsonian Jazz Oral History Project. Transcript, 29. Institute for Jazz Studies, Rutgers.
- Manetta, Manuel, Oral History. Reel I (of 6)--Digest--Retyped. Present: William Russell, Robert Campbell, Nesuhi Ertegun, Richard B. Allen. March 21, 1957. Hogan Jazz Archive.
- Miles, Lizzie, Oral History, January 18, 1951. Also present: Richard B. Allen, Robert W. Greenwood. Summary--1 [of 2], 1. Hogan Jazz Archive.
- Miller, Punch, Oral History, April 4, 1960. Also present: Richard B. Allen, Paul

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

- R. Crawford, Lionel Robinson. Summary–retyped, Reel II, 9 and 10. Hogan Jazz Archive.
- Nicholas, Albert, Oral History, June 26, 1972, also present: Hans Lychouc, Lars I. Edegran, and Richard B. Allen. Notes by Richard B. Allen, Digest by Elizabeth Wetzel. Reel I of IV, 1, Hogan Jazz Archive.
- Nicholas, "Wooden Joe," Oral History, also present: William Russell, Charles DeVore, November 12, 1956. Reel II, Track 2—Digest--Retyped, 11. Hogan Jazz Archive.
- Raeburn, Bruce Boyd, interviewed by film-maker Kay D. Ray for *Lady Be Good: Instrumental Women in Jazz*. Video # 311, in possession of Kay D. Ray.
- Rene, Joe, Oral History, April 7, 1960. Also present: William Russell, Richard B. Allen, Marjorie T. Zander, Paul R. Crawford. Reel II [of 4]--Digest--Retyped, 16. Hogan Jazz Archive.
- Williams, Alfred, Oral History, interviewed by Richard Allen, October 13, 1961, Reel III—Summary—Retyped, 17, Hogan Jazz Archive

Secondary Sources

- Abbott, Lynn. "'For Ofays Only': An Annotated Calendar of Midnight Frolics at the Lyric Theater," *The Jazz Archivist*, vol. xvii (2003).
- _____. and Doug Seroff, *Out of Sight : The Rise of African American Popular Music, 1889-1895* (Jackson : University Press of Mississippi, 2002).
- Amoss, Jim. "A Dirge for Miss Carrie," *The States-Item*, vol 98, no. 33, July 18, 1974, front page, continued on A-4., MSS 536, obit. f. 136. Williams Research Center.
- Anderson, Gene. "The Genesis of King Oliver's Creole Jazz Band." *American Music* 12.3: 238 (21).
- Barker, Danny. *A Life in Jazz* (London: Oxford University Press, 1986).
- Berry, Jason. *The Spirit of Black Hawk: A Mystery of Africans and Indians* (Jackson: University of Mississippi, 1995).
- _____. "Music: Jazz and the Spirit: The Legacy of Mother Catherine Seals," *New Orleans Magazine* March 2002, vol. 36, issue 3, 30.
- Bostick, Nancy, and Nora Hulse. "Ragtime's Women Composers: An Annotated Lexicon," *The Ragtime Ephemeralist* Vol. III, 2002
- Brown, Jayna, *Babylon Girls: African American Women Performers and the Making of the Modern* (Ph.D. diss., Yale, 2001).
- Buerkle, Jack V., and Danny Barker. *Bourbon Street Black: The New Orleans Black Jazzman* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973).
- Carter, William. *Preservation Hall* (London and New York: Cassell, 1991).
- Cavin, Susan. "Missing Women: On the Voodoo Trail to Jazz" (*Journal of Jazz Studies* Vol. 3, no. 1, Fall 1975, 4-27)
- Chamberlain, Charles. "The Goodson Sisters: Women Pianists and the Function of Gender in the Jazz Age," *The Jazz Archivist* vol. XV (2001).
- Charters, Samuel Barclay, IV. *Jazz: New Orleans, 1885-1957* (Belleville, N.J.:

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

- Walter C. Allen, 1958),
- Chireau, Yvonne. "Prophetess of the Spirits: Mother Leaf Anderson and the Spiritualist Churches of New Orleans," Beverly Mayne Kienzle and Pamela J. Walker, eds., *Women Preachers and Prophets Through Two Millennia of Christianity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).
- Dahl, Linda. *Stormy Weather: The Music and Lives of a Century of Jazzwomen* (New York: Limelight Editions, 1989).
- Dance, Helen Oakley. "Marili," *Stormy Monday: The T-Bone Walker Story* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1987), 49-54.
- Daniels, Douglas Henry. *Lester Leaps In: The Life and Times of Lester "Pres" Young*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2002.
- Davis, Angela Y. *Blues Legacies and Black Feminism: Gertrude "Ma" Rainey, Bessie Smith, and Billie Holiday* (New York: Random House, 1999).
- DeVeaux, Scott. "Constructing the Jazz Tradition: Jazz Historiography," *Black American Literature Forum* vol. 25, no. 3, Fall 1991, 525-560.
- Fernandez, Raul. *Latin Jazz: The Perfect Combination/La Combinacion Perfecta* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2002).
- Gehman, Mary. "A Scholar Researches Creole Émigrés who Fled Racial Prejudice," Louisiana Cultural Vistas, Winter 2001-2002.
<http://www.margaretmedia.com/mexico-creole/connection.htm> (Accessed September 29, 2004).
- _____. *The Free People of Color of New Orleans: An Introduction* (New Orleans: Margaret Media, 1994).
- _____ and Nancy Ries. *Women and New Orleans: A History* (New Orleans: Margaret Media, 2000 [1985]).
- Guillory, Monique. *Some Enchanted Evening on the Auction Block: The Cultural Legacy of the New Orleans Quadroon Balls* (Ph.D. diss., NYU, 1999).
- Hair, William Ivy. *Carnival of Fury: Robert Charles and the New Orleans Race Riot of 1900* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1976).
- Handy, D. Antoinette. *Black Women in American Bands and Orchestras*, Second Edition, (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 1998).
- Harris, Sheldon. *Blues Who's Who: A Biographical Dictionary of Blues Singers* (New Rochelle, NY: Arlington House Publishers, 1979).
- Harrison, Daphne Duval, *Black Pearls: Blues Queens of the 1920s* (Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1990).
- Hillman, Christopher. *Bunk Johnson: His Life & Times* (New York: Universe Books, 1988).
- Hirsch, Arnold R. Hirsch and Joseph Logsdon. *Creole New Orleans: Race and Americanization* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 1992).
- Hurston, Zora Neale. "Mother Catherine," *The Sanctified Church* (Berkeley: Turtle Island Press, 1983).
- Jackson, Joyce Marie. "The Changing Nature of Gospel Music: A Southern Case Study," *African American Review*, Volume 29, Issue 2, Special Issues on the Music (Summer, 1995), 185-200.
- Jackson, Mahalia, with Evan McLeod Wylie, *Movin' On Up*, (New York: Hawthorn

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

- Books, Inc, 1966).
- Jacobs, Claude F. "[Folk for Whom? Tourist Guidebooks, Local Color, and the Spiritual Churches of New Orleans](#)," *Journal of American Folklore* - Volume 114, Number 453, Summer 2001, 309-330.
- "Jazz Funeral Scheduled for Bill Pierce," *States-Item*, Tuesday, October 1, 1974, MSS 536, Pierce, Billie and De De f. 8, Williams Research Center.
- Kein, Sybil. "Use of Louisiana Creole in Southern Literature," in Kein, ed., *Creole: The History and Legacy of Louisiana's Free People of Color* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Press, 2000).
- Kennedy, Al. *Chord Changes on the Chalkboard: How Public School Teachers Shaped Jazz and the Music of New Orleans* (Lanham, MD, and Oxford: Scarecrow Press, 2002).
- Koenig, Karl. *The Jazz Lectures* (Running Springs, Calif.: Basin Street Press, 1996).
- Lavitt, Pamela Brown. "'First of the Red Hot Mamas:' Coon Shouting" and the Jewish Ziegfeld Girl," *American Jewish History*, vol. 87, issue 4, 1999, 253-290.
- Leathem, Karen Trahan. *"A Carnival According to Their Own Desires": Gender and Mardi Gras in New Orleans, 1870-1941* (PhD. diss., University of North Carolina Chapel Hill, 1994).
- Levin, Floyd. *Classic Jazz: A Personal View of the Music and the Musicians* (University of California Press, 2000).
- Lieb, Sandra. *Mother of the Blues: A Study of Ma Rainey*, (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1981).
- Logsdon, Joseph, and Caryn Cosse Bell. "The Americanization of Black New Orleans," ed. Arnold R. Hirsch and Joseph Logsdon, *Creole New Orleans: Race and Americanization* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 1992).
- Long, Alecia P. *'The Great Southern Babylon': Sexuality, Race, and Reform in New Orleans, 1865-1920* (PhD. diss., University of Delaware, 2001).
- _____. *The Great Southern Babylon:: Sex, Race, and Respectability in New Orleans, 1865-1920*, Baton Rouge: Louisiana University Press, 2004),
- Lott, Eric. *Love and Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class* (New York: Oxford University Press, Reprint Edition: 1995).
- Malone, Jacqui. *Steppin' on the Blues: The Visible Rhythms of African American Dance* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1996).
- Nickerson, Camille Lucie Nickerson. *Africo-Creole Music in Louisiana: A thesis on the plantation songs created by the Creole Negroes of Louisiana* (Master of Music Thesis, Oberlin Conservatory of Music, May 23, 1932). Amistad Research Center, Louisiana Music Collection, #230, Box 2, Folder 20.
- Ogren, Kathy. *The Jazz Revolution: Twenties America and the Meaning of Jazz* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989).
- Placksin, Sally. *American Women in Jazz: 1900 to the Present, Their Words, Lives, and Music*. New York: Wideview Books, 1982

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

- Raeburn, Bruce Boyd. "Submerging Ethnicity: Creole of Color Jazz Musicians of Italian Heritage," Conference Paper, Creole Studies Conference, Radisson Hotel, New Orleans, Louisiana, October 25, 2003.
- _____. *New Orleans Style: The Awakening of American Jazz Scholarship and Its Cultural Implications* (PhD. diss., Tulane, 1991).
- Rogers, Kim Lacy. *Righteous Lives: Narratives of the New Orleans Civil Rights Movement* (New York: New York University Press, 1993).
- Rose, Al, Rose, Al. *Storyville, New Orleans: Being an Authentic, Illustrated Account of the Notorious Red-Light District* (University of Alabama, 1974).
- _____. and Edmond Souchon. *New Orleans Jazz: A Family Album* (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1984 [first published 1967]).
- Schafer, William. *Brass Bands and New Orleans Jazz* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1977).
- Southern, Eileen. *The Music of Black Americans*, Second Edition (New York: Norton, 1983).
- Suhor, Charles. *Jazz in New Orleans: The Post-War Years Through 1970* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2001).
- Taylor, Jeffrey. "With Lovie and Lil: Rediscovering Two Chicago Pianists of the 1920s" (conference paper), Society for Music Theory, Annual Meeting, Columbus, OH, Nov. 1, 2002.
- Thompson, Shirley Elizabeth. *The Passing of a People: Creoles of Color in Mid-Nineteenth Century New Orleans* (PhD. diss., Harvard, 2001).
- Trotter, Jr., Joe, ed. *The Great Migration in Historical Perspective: New Dimensions of Race, Class, and Gender* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1991).
- Tucker, Mark. "Jazz and the New Orleans background (1895-1916)," *Grove Music Online* ed. L. Macy (Accessed 2 May 2004) <http://www.grovemusic.com>
- Tucker, Sherrie. ; and "Big Ears: Listening for Gender in Jazz Studies," *Current Musicology* no. 71-73, Spring 2001-Spring 2002, 375-408
- _____. "Women," *New Grove Dictionary of Jazz*, ed. Barry Kernfeld, MacMillan, 2001, 978-984
- Wilson, Oly. "The Heterogeneous Sound Ideal in African-American Music," *Signifyin(g), Sanctifyin', and Slam Dunking: A Reader in African American Expressive Culture*, ed. Gena Dagel Caponi (University of Massachusetts Press, 1999)

PART TWO: SELECTED BIOGRAPHICAL ENTRIES

This selection of biographical entries is far from comprehensive. There are many more women whose lives can enhance our knowledge about New Orleans jazz history. In hopes that this Research Study may serve as a launch pad for future research, I have added a suggested list (also not comprehensive) of women about whom biographical entries should be written and included.

The biographical entries that are included represent a cross-section of women involved in jazz history in different ways. There is a preponderance of pianists and vocalists, which reflects the gender division of labor in New Orleans jazz history (and elsewhere, and the present, for that matter), but there are also women who played instruments other than piano, entrepreneurs, dancers, band leaders, and educators.

Each entry includes a bibliography, and, whenever possible, a discography, a videography or filmography, and a list of available illustrations.

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazzwomen:
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Dolly Marie Douroux Adams (pianist, band leader, doubled on bass and drums)

b. January 11, 1904 (New Orleans) / d. November 6, 1979 (New Orleans)

Dolly Marie Douroux (later Adams) was born in New Orleans, January 11, 1904, into the third generation of a well-known Creole of color family that was commended in the 1984 edition of *New Orleans Jazz: A Family Album* for “supplying jazz, dance, and concert music in the New Orleans area for a century.”¹ In addition to carrying on this tradition through her own fifty-year career as a pianist and band leader, Adams raised and trained her own musical family, who continue the family legacy.

Adams’s parents, Olivia Douroux (born Manetta) and Louis Douroux, were both musicians, popular for dual trumpet playing that showed off their precision triple tonguing technique. They performed their trumpet duets at private parties, not in public. While Louis played his trumpet professionally, Olivia did not, in all likelihood because brass instruments were not considered appropriate for girls. According to Karl Koenig, while boys—Creole, black, and white—might grow up in late nineteenth century New Orleans hoping to play in a brass band, girls were not encouraged to play brass instruments in public, or to march in bands. The only acceptable instruments for girls to play in public were piano and violin. Yet, as the piano became important to early

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazzwomen:
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

twentieth century jazz bands, women with piano training--especially those who had acquired the knowledge of chords that was invaluable to these early collectively improvising ensembles--began to be hired as regular members of otherwise all-male professional bands.² Olivia's daughter Dolly would be a key participant in this historical shift.

Olivia was an excellent musician, proficient on piano and violin, in addition to cornet and trumpet. Had she been a boy, she may have gone down in New Orleans history with the accolades accorded her brother, band leader, multi-instrumentalist, music "Professor," Manuel Manetta. While "Creole" is usually assumed to denote French heritage, Olivia and Manuel Manetta, like many Creole of color musicians, came from a family with Sicilian roots.³ Manetta, the first band leader to hire Adams, played and taught all of the instruments for more than fifty years, and was known for being able to play trumpet and trombone at the same time in harmony.⁴ Louis Douroux, Adams's father, was a butcher by trade--not a bad day job for a musician, since he was off at noon. He played cornet and trumpet with many of the brass bands in the Algiers vicinity, including the acclaimed Eureka and Excelsior Brass Bands.

Growing up in family with such a strong musical history, it is no surprise that Adams grew up playing a variety of musical instruments. In her oral history interview on April 18, 1962, she told William Russell that she had yearned to play the piano even before her family acquired one. When the piano entered her household, seven-year-old Dolly began her life-long relationship with the instrument, gaining some instruction from

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazzwomen:
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

her parents, as well as from her uncle Manuel Manetta. She continued her studies at St. Mary's Academy, but was adamant that she picked up how to *play* the piano on her own, and required lessons only in reading and scales. By the time she was nine, she was playing with her brother, a violinist, at private parties. At the age of thirteen, she began going to work with her Uncle Manetta, helping him carry his instruments. He soon became the first band leader to hire her to play piano. Manetta's band, with its impressive, though rapidly changing personnel, afforded her the opportunity to work with many of the finest musicians of pre-1920s jazz, including Louis Armstrong, Kid Ory, Joe "King" Oliver, Kid Howard, and Alec Bigard.

When asked how it was possible for her to obtain these opportunities in times when it was unusual for young women to go out to play, or even to hear, music, she explained how family connections mitigated social norms. "I was always well chaperoned with Manetta, by my brothers and later, my sons."⁵ Although Manetta was already the pianist for his own band, Adams explained that her uncle began playing clarinet in the band so that she would have a chance to play.⁶ Her son, Placide Adams, Jr., had a somewhat different theory, telling film maker Kay D. Ray that he believed Manetta hired his mother in part as self-protection. Manetta often worked in rough areas, such as brothels, including the famous house of Lulu White. Placide Adams Jr. believed that his mother was hired, in part, because Manetta thought that no one would attack a pre-adolescent girl carrying money and instruments.⁷ At age 15, she joined Peter Bocage's Creole Serenaders. She also played with Luis "Papa" Tio, Lorenzo Tio,

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazzwomen:
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Jr., and Alphonse Picou, and started her career as a leader around the same time, with a group that played at the Othello Theatre on South Rampart Street, playing for vaudeville acts. She played piano for the silent films at the theater as well. Her band included Dominique Remy, trumpet; Joe Welch, violin; and Eddie Woods, drums.

Around 1922, she married a contractor by the name of Placide Adams, and took a 15 years sabbatical from the professional music world while she raised her own musical family. Throughout her career, Dolly Adams was usually hired to play the piano only, but, like her mother, she was a capable multi-instrumentalist. Pianist Jeanette Kimball told film-maker Kay D. Ray that, "Dolly played the bass. She was good."⁸ Additionally, she could play drums, guitar, and trumpet, and was able to teach her seven children to play a variety of instruments. Three of her sons would become prominent New Orleans musicians, Gerald (bass and piano), Justin (guitar), and Placide Jr. (bass and drums). Her other three sons and one daughter (Odollie) played musical instruments, but not professionally: Carl (trombone), Odollie (piano), Robert (piano) and Calvin (bass). Placide Adams Sr. played the piano for his own enjoyment, but was not a professional musician. Placide Adams Jr. recalled his father playing one blues number over and over "when he thought no one was around."⁹

In 1937, Dolly Adams returned to an active professional playing schedule again, this time in a band with her brothers, Lawrence Douroux (trumpet) and Irving Douroux (trombone). Placide Jr. told film maker Kay D. Ray that his father didn't like the idea of his wife going out to play in a band, but because the family needed the money, he

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazzwomen:
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

tolerated her activities. After Irving's death, Adams continued playing with Lawrence. Although she usually played only piano in public, Charles Love recalled that in addition to playing "swell piano.... [w]hen Lawrence played the piano, she played bass."¹⁰ Eventually, she formed a new family band with her sons, Justin, Gerald, and enlarged it to a quartet when her son Placide Jr. came home from army. Placide Jr. recalled that the band played mostly at West Bank clubs—the Varsity, Gay Paree, and Moonlight Inn, and that their "main competition was Kid Thomas and his band, who played at the Moulin Rouge."¹¹

In 1961, Dolly Adams primarily played at Preservation and Dixieland Halls as leader of her own group, a band that included her sons. While playing at Preservation Hall in 1965, bass player, Papa John Joseph collapsed after his bass solo and died, falling on Adams's foot. Traumatized by this event, she slowed down her playing schedule. In 1966, she suffered a stroke that put a permanent end to her regular playing career, though she did occasionally appear at the piano in public. A note in the vertical files at the Hogan Jazz Archive at Tulane indicates that she had telephoned the Archive on June 21, 1967, to announce that she had recovered sufficiently from her stroke to play again, and expressing interest in locating a gentleman who had wanted to interview her when she was sick. Also in the files is a review, by Clive Wilson, of Dolly's playing in a band that included Manuel Manetta and her sons Justin and Gerald, for the Creole Spring Fiesta Association Ball, at Corpus Christi School on May 5, 1968.

Wrote Wilson, "Dolly Adams played the first few numbers on piano while Manetta

***A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazzwomen:*
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas**

sat out. I was impressed with her drive and accurate chording, although she said she has not recovered entirely from her stroke which affected her hands.”¹²

When Adams died on November 6, 1979 at the age of 75, New Orleans jazz magazine, *Second Line*, honored her with a cover feature, and the New Orleans Jazz Club presented her family with a certificate commemorating “the role she played in the history of Jazz in New Orleans.”¹³

Notes

¹ Rose, Al, and Edmond Souchon. *New Orleans Jazz: A Family Album*, third edition, revised and enlarged (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1984), 38.

² Karl Koenig, *The Jazz Lectures* (Running Springs, California: Basin Street Press, 1996), 17-19.

³ Raeburn, Bruce Boyd. “Submerging Ethnicity: Creole of Color Jazz Musicians of Italian Heritage,” Conference Paper, Creole Studies Conference, Radisson Hotel, New Orleans, Louisiana, October 25, 2003, 8.

⁴ Rose and Souchon, *New Orleans Jazz*, 81.

⁵ Dolly Adams quoted in Koenig, *The Jazz Lectures*, 26.

⁶ Adams, Dolly, Oral History Digest, April 18, 1962. Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University, New Orleans, Louisiana.

⁷ Placide Adams, Jr.. Interviewed by film-maker Kay D. Ray for *Lady Be Good: Instrumental Women in Jazz*. Video # 316, in possession of Kay D. Ray.

⁸ Jeanette Salvant Kimball, interviewed by film-maker Kay D. Ray for *Lady Be Good: Instrumental Women in Jazz*. Video # 301, in possession of Kay D. Ray.

⁹ “Dolly Douroux Adams,” *Second Line* XXXII, Winter, 1980, 17.

¹⁰ Love, Charles, Oral History Summary, May 10, 1960, Reel III, 24, Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University, New Orleans, Louisiana.

¹¹ “Dolly Douroux Adams,” *Second Line* XXXII, Winter, 1980, 18.

¹² Wilson, Clive, “Creole Spring Fiesta Association Ball, May 5, 1968,” May 8, 1968, vertical file, “Dolly Adams,” Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University, New Orleans.

¹³ “New Orleans Jazz Club Resolution.” Vertical file, “Dolly Adams,” The Old Mint, Louisiana State Museum, New Orleans (no date).

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazzwomen:
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Bibliography

Primary Sources

- Adams, Dolly. Oral History Digest, April 18, 1962. Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University, New Orleans, Louisiana.
- Adams, Placide Jr.. Interviewed by film-maker Kay D. Ray for *Lady Be Good: Instrumental Women in Jazz*. Video in possession of Kay D. Ray.
- Allen, Richard B. "Adams, Dolly, June 21, 1967," note, vertical file, "Dolly Adams," Hogan Jazz Archives, Tulane.
- Crawford, Paul. "Dolly Adams's Band, May 1, 1966," May 2, 1966," note, vertical file, "Dolly Adams," Hogan Jazz Archives, Tulane University, New Orleans, Louisiana.
- Kimball, Jeanette Salvant, interviewed by film-maker Kay D. Ray for *Lady Be Good: Instrumental Women in Jazz*. Video # 301, in possession of Kay D. Ray.
- Love, Charles. Oral History Summary, May 10, 1960, Reel III, Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University, New Orleans, Louisiana.
- Wilson, Clive, "Creole Spring Fiesta Association Ball, May 5, 1968," May 8, 1968, vertical file, "Dolly Adams," Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane.

Secondary Sources

- Borenstein, Larry, and Bill Russell. *Preservation Hall Portraits: Paintings by Noel Rockmore*. Baton Rouge, Louisiana: State University Press, 1968.
- Carter, William. *Preservation Hall*. London and New York: Cassell, 1991.
- "Dolly Douroux Adams." *The Second Line* XXXII (Winter 1980): 17-19.
- Handy, D. Antoinette. *Black Women in American Bands and Orchestras, Second Edition*. Lanham, Mass. and Kent: Scarecrow Press, 1998, 234-235.
- Jerde, Curtis Dale. *A Biographical Listing of Selected Major Jazz/Blues Artists in New Orleans, Past and Present* (New Orleans: Jean Lafitte National Historical Park and Preserve, 1990).
- Koenig, Karl. *The Jazz Lectures* (Running Springs, Calif.: Basin Street Press, 1996).
- Obituary, "Adams," *Times Picayune*, November 7, 1979, (no page number), vertical file, "Dolly Adams," The Old Mint, Louisiana State Museum, New Orleans, Louisiana.
- "Mrs. Adams Rites Today," *Times-Picayune* November 8 1979 (no page number), vertical file, "Dolly Adams," The Old Mint, New Orleans.
- Rose, Al, and Edmond Souchon. *New Orleans Jazz: A Family Album*, third edition, revised and enlarged (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1984).

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazzwomen:
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Discography

No recordings found.

Illustrations



Joe Watson, George Lewis,
and Dolly Adams.
Accession number: 122.1818
Hogan Jazz Archive.

There are also some excellent photographs of Dolly Adams at Preservation Hall.

Contact Benjamin Jaffe

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Lil[lia]n Hardin Armstrong (pianist, composer, leader, vocalist)

b. Feb 3, 1898 [or 1902, or 1900] (Memphis, Tennessee)¹ / d. August 27, 1971
(Chicago, Illinois)

Lil Hardin was not born in New Orleans, neither did she live there. Nonetheless, the Memphis-born, Chicago-based pianist, composer, and band leader made an undeniable mark on New Orleans jazz. She was influenced by New Orleans musicians, worked with New Orleans musicians, hired New Orleans musicians as a leader, and influenced New Orleans jazz as a member of some of the most important bands in the New Orleans-Chicago connection that was vital to the growth of jazz through the mass culture boom in the 1920s. She appears on some of the most important recordings of New Orleans musicians, including Louis Armstrong's Hot Five and Hot Seven Sessions, and the 1926 New Orleans Wanderers sessions (which she organized). As a composer, she wrote many pieces that became standard fare for New Orleans bands to this day, notably "Struttin' With Some Barbeque."

Lillian Hardin was born in Memphis to Dempsey and William Hardin. Her birth year is sometimes published as 1898 and sometimes as 1902, and, indeed, even the public records contradict each other. The Social Security Death Index gives her birth year as 1902. But because the 1900 Census lists her as a two-year old, it is unlikely that she could have been born two years later. And to make matters more complicated, Lillian herself, like her famous one-time husband, Louis, gave interviewers a different birth year altogether. Lil Hardin claimed 1900 as her birth year.

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

According to Hardin, her father died when she was two years old. She and her mother moved into a boarding house down the street, but apparently there was a pump organ, as she recalled playing the keys as soon as she could reach them. A cousin helped out by crawling on the floor and pushing the pedals.

In grade school when she began piano lessons. She first studied with a teacher named Miss Violet White, then attended Miss Hook's School of Music. In these lessons, she learned classical music, marches and hymns. She became known as a child prodigy; and while this is no doubt so, it is also important to note that because she was small, and looked younger than her age, her reputation as a child prodigy outlasted her childhood. As with many women who became jazz musicians, Lil's first exposure to jazz was through a male relative, a cousin, who played on his guitar a kind of music that her grandmother found "vulgar." In her oral history with William Russell, she said that cousin's sang and played "Buddy Bolden's Blues."²

She studied at Fisk University in Nashville for 2 ½ years on a special music program. Then, in 1918, like so many African Americans in the south, she and her mother moved to Chicago, as part of the Great Migration. There, she obtained a job as a music demonstrator in a sheet music store on State Street, working for a Mrs. Jones, who also booked bands. It was there that her oft-cited meeting with Jelly Roll Morton took place. After hearing Morton, the story goes, she decided to play "heavy" and "strong," a factor that endeared her to New Orleans musicians, whom she said liked playing with her because she played "loud" and supported them.³

After a short time, Mrs. Jones dispatched her to an audition with a New Orleans

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

band. Lil got job, in a band that she remembered as including Eddie Garland (bass), Roy Palmer (trombone), Lawrence Duhe (clarinet), “Sugar Johnny” Smith (cornet), Tubby Hall (drums), Jimmy Palao (violin).⁴ According to Garland, personnel at the time Lil joined included Joe Oliver (trumpet), Roy Palmer (trombone, later replaced by Honore Dutrey), Johnny Dodds (clarinet), Minor Hall (drums), himself (bass), and Lil.⁵ Though she had only played notated music up to this time, she found herself comfortable with the band that did not use sheet music.

The legend goes that Lil had to sneak to her job because she was too young, but if she was born in 1898, she would have been about 20. In any case, playing in jazz bands at venues such as the Deluxe Café in the South Side of Chicago, was an un-lady-like activity that she knew would give her mother “a fit,” and so she told her she was playing at a dance studio. As she told one reporter, “The way she looked at it, you either were or weren’t, and playing in filthy cabarets or saloons, well, you weren’t a lady.”⁶ When her stepfather discovered her playing in the band, Lil’s mother checked it out and selected Tubby Hall as her daughter’s protector/chaperon.

At one point, Sidney Bechet came through Chicago with Mack’s Merrymakers and joined the Deluxe band for a time. Eventually, the band moved across the street to the Dreamland, where Freddy Keppard replaced “Sugar Johnny.” When the band broke up, Lil stayed on as the house pianist for the Dreamland.

When Joe “King” Oliver brought his band to the Dreamland in 1920, he was met by a New Orleans style pianist who had never set foot in New Orleans. While she admired Oliver, she also recalled resenting that he didn’t allow her to solo. She often

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

told how he would tell her, “We already have a clarinet in the band,” when she would make too many runs. Even though piano “professors” or “ticklers” like Jelly Roll Morton were known for their solo pianistics, the piano players in New Orleans-style bands were expected to play the correct chords loudly enough for improvisers to hear them and take off on their own collectively improvised flights. Jeffrey Taylor has made an excellent case for developing appropriate aesthetic standards for evaluating this sort of piano style, since it tends to be ignored, or even denigrated in jazz criticism, yet was precisely what New Orleans jazz band leaders sought when hiring a pianist.⁷

When King Oliver went to the west coast on his ill-fated 1921 tour, he took Lil as his pianist. After six months, she became discouraged by the lack of work, and jumped at an offer to return to Dreamland to play with violinist Mae Brady, another Chicago-based band-leader who worked with New Orleans musicians. **Bertha Gonsoulin** replaced Lil on Oliver’s West Coast tour. When Oliver returned to Chicago in 1923, he opened at the Royal Garden with Gonsoulin on piano. Soon after Louis Armstrong came up from New Orleans to play second cornet, Lil rejoined the band and Gonsoulin went home. In one of his many memoirs, Louis described Lil’s playing in Oliver’s band,

I particularly enjoyed Lil that night, with that four (4) beats to the bar—for a woman, I thought she was really wonderful. She got her training from Joe Oliver, Freddie Keppard, Sugar Johnny ... in fact all of the pioneers from New Orleans.⁸

Elsewhere, he wrote,

She was the best. She would give out with that good ‘ol’ New Orleans 4 beats which a lot of the Northern piano players couldn’t do to save their lives.⁹

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

In April 1923, Lil recorded with King Oliver on Gennett. In 1924, Lil and Louis married. Her role in advising Louis to leave Oliver for Fletcher Henderson's band is another jazz legend, with Lil often represented as "domineering," as have so many strong women in jazz history and elsewhere. On numerous occasions, Louis spoke and wrote of his gratitude for Lil's advice, while chastising the critics who would make him appear "hen-pecked."

I listened very carefully when Lil told me to always play the lead. "Play second trumpet to no one. They don't come great enough." And she proved it. Yes, sir, she proved that she was right, didn't she? You're damn right she did. The guys who called me hen-pecked—all the time they did. I know. They were broke all the time and I always had a pocket full of money. When Lil spoke, that was it. And I don't regret it today. That was all the indication that the woman was in my corner at all times.¹⁰

While Louis was with Henderson in New York, Lil formed her own band, called Lil's Hot Shots. Louis returned to Chicago, and joined Lil's Hot Shots in 1925. The band recorded and played mostly in Chicago.

You can imagine how glad that I was to join my wife Lil and her fine band. She had a damn good band. To me, it was better than Fletcher's. That's right.¹¹

Lil's Hot Shots is the band that made the legendary recordings as Louis Armstrong's Hot Fives and Hot Sevens in 1925 through 1927. She sang and played on many of the cuts, and wrote much of the repertoire for these historic sessions.

In 1926, a Columbia Records executive asked Lil to put together a band and record with them. He asked her to write three numbers and for Louis to write three numbers. Lil wrote all six arrangements, but for the agreement with Columbia, put Louis's name on three of them. She formed the New Orleans Wanderers band to

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

record the six tunes. The personnel consisted of George Mitchell (cornet), Kid Ory (trombone), Johnny Dodds (clarinet), Johnny St. Cyr (banjo). When the sides were released, the composition credits in Louis's name were enlarged to make it as though Louis Armstrong was playing on them. Louis was furious.

Lil and Louis separated in 1931, and eventually divorced, though they continued to be close friends until Louis's death in 1971.

Lil continued to study music throughout her early career. She earned a teaching degree from the Chicago Musical College in 1928, and studied at the New York College of Music. Lil had several bands in New York, including an all-woman band in 1932 that performed at the Apollo. **Olivia Shipp**, a bass player from New Orleans, and founder of the Negro Women's Orchestral and Civic Association in New York, supplied many of the excellent jazz musicians for this group, including Alma Long Scott (saxophone), Leora Meoux Henderson and Dolly Jones Hutchinson (trumpets)¹² In the late 1930s she led an otherwise all-male band that recorded with Decca. Sadly, no recordings exist of her all-woman group.

In the 1940s, she returned to Chicago, where she continued to play the piano, but also became a fashion designer. In 1961 she appeared on a TV-show, entitled, *Chicago and All That Jazz* (which is available on video and also includes a performance of the aforementioned Mae Brady).

In August, 1971, she died of a heart attack while playing "St. Louis Blues" at a memorial for Louis Armstrong, who had died seven weeks previously.

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Notes

¹ The 1900 Census lists her as two-years old, while the Social Security death index lists her birth year as 1902; I'm inclined to believe the former.

² Lillian Hardin Armstrong, Oral History, July 1, 1959. Also present: William Russell. Reel I (of 1)–Digest, Retyped, 1. Hogan Jazz Archive.

³ Lillian Hardin Armstrong, Oral history, 1.

⁴ Lillian Hardin Armstrong, Oral history, 1.

⁵ Eddie Garland, Oral History, August 8, 1958, 5-6. Hogan Jazz Archive.

⁶ Louise Hutchinson, "Lil Armstrong Recalls Chicago's 'Swing Time' of the 1920s," Chicago Tribute, March 28, 1965, 1A-9.

⁷ Jeffrey Taylor, "With Lovie and Lil: Rediscovering Two Chicago Pianists of the 1920s" (conference paper), Society for Music Theory, Annual Meeting, Columbus, OH, Nov. 1, 2002.

⁸ Louis Armstrong, ed. Thomas Brothers. *Louis Armstrong in his own Words: Selected Writings* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 50.

⁹ Louis Armstrong, manuscript, "The Armstrong Story," 1953. MSS MANU 1, No. 1, 122. Louis Armstrong Archive, Queens College.

¹⁰ Louis Armstrong, reading from a letter he wrote to critic Max Jones, dated August 15, 1970. Louis Armstrong tapes, Reel 4, Cassette 3, Louis Armstrong Archive, Queen's College.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² Scope notes, Olivia Shipp Photograph Collection, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Ad for Lil Armstrong: "Queen of the Piano" Singing, Playing and Winning your heart.

Former wife of Louis Armstrong." MSS 536, Armstrong, f 72. Williams Research Center.

Lil Armstrong, Lillian Hardin, Oral History, July 1, 1959. Also present: William Russell. Reel I [of 1]–Digest–Retyped. Hogan Jazz Archive.

Funeral program, Institute for Jazz Studies, Rutgers.

Garland, Eddie. Oral History, August 8, 1958, 5-6 Hogan Jazz Archive.

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Secondary Sources

- Albertson, Chris. "Lil Hardin Armstrong--A Fond Remembrance," September 25 1971: 66 (2). vertical files, Old Mint
- Anderson, Gene. "The Genesis of King Oliver's Creole Jazz Band." *American Music* 12.3: 238 (21).
- Armstrong, Louis, ed. Thomas Brothers. *Louis Armstrong in his own Words: Selected Writings* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).
- Bruyninckx, Walter. *60 Years of Recorded Jazz 1917-1977* (Belgium), A232.
- Choice, Harriet. "Lil's Last Stand," ?, October 28 1971.
- Dickerson, James L. *Just for a Thrill: Lil Hardin Armstrong, First Lady of Jazz* (NY: Cooper Square Press, 2002). (Use with care. I have been warned that there are errors in this book).
- "Final Bar," *Down Beat*; October 28 1971: 9 (1). October 28 1971: 9 (1). Vertical files, Institute for Jazz Studies, John Cotton Dana Library, State University of New Jersey, Rutgers.
- Jones, Max, and John Chilton. *Louis: The Louis Armstrong Story, 1900-1971*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company.
- Handy, D. Antoinette. *Black Women in American Bands and Orchestras, Second Edition*. Lanham, Mass. and Kent: Scarecrow Press, 1998, 231.
- Hazeldine, Mike, and Barry Kernfeld. "Armstrong [Nee Hardin], Lil(Lian)." *New Grove Dictionary of Jazz*. Ed. Barry Kernfeld. MacMillian, 2001, 66-67.
- Koenig, Karl. *The Jazz Lectures*. Running Springs, California: Basin Street Press, 1996, 17-19.
- Kogan, Herman. "The Blues Moan Low, But Lil Armstrong Sings 'Em with a Grin," (no date). Vertical files, Institute for Jazz Studies, John Cotton Dana Library, State University of New Jersey, Rutgers.
- "Lil Hardin Dies During A Tribute to Armstrong, Her Ex-Husband." *New York Times*, August 28, 1971. Vertical files, Institute for Jazz Studies, John Cotton Dana Library, State University of New Jersey, Rutgers.
- "Lil Armstrong Services Set Tuesday Night." *Chicago Tribune*, August 29, 1971.
- "Lil Armstrong (1902 - 1971)," *Second Line*, Fall 1971. Vertical files, Old Mint.
- "Lil Armstrong, Ex-Wife of Trumpeter, Dies," *Arkansas Gazette* August 28 1971. Vertical files, Old Mint and Hogan Jazz Archive.
- "Louis Armstrong's 2nd Wife, Lil Hardin, Dies at a Tribute." United Press International (August 28, 1971), vertical files, Institute for Jazz Studies, Rutgers.
- McNamara, Helen. "Men Don't Have Monopoly on Jazz." (1960). Vertical files, Institute for Jazz Studies, John Cotton Dana Library, State University of New Jersey, Rutgers.
- Placksin, Sally. *American Women in Jazz: 1900 to the Present, Their Words, Lives, and Music*. New York: Wideview Books, 1982.
- Raeburn, Bruce Boyd. *New Orleans Style: The Awakening of American Jazz*

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

- Scholarship and Its Cultural Implications*. Ph.D. Diss. New Orleans, Louisiana: Tulane, 1991. 71-72.
- Roy, Rob. "Meet Another Arm(Strong) of Music." *Chicago Defender* June 5 1954: 29.
- Rust, Brian. "Mrs. Louis" *Jazz Tempo* (no date); vertical files, Institute for Jazz Studies, John Cotton Dana Library, State University of New Jersey, Rutgers..
- Scott, Patrick. "The Hot Miss Lil." *Globe Magazine*, ?, no date available. Vertical files, Institute for Jazz Studies, John Cotton Dana Library, State University of New Jersey, Rutgers.
- _____. "Lil on the Levee: Still Picking," (no date) vertical files, Institute for Jazz Studies, John Cotton Dana Library, State University of New Jersey, Rutgers.
- Taylor, Jeffrey, "With Lovie and Lil: Rediscovering Two Chicago Pianists of the 1920s" (conference paper), Society for Music Theory, Annual Meeting, Columbus, OH, Nov. 1, 2002.
- Unterbrink, Mary. *Jazz Women at the Keyboard* (Jefferson, N.C., and London: McFarland, 1983), 22-30.
- Wilson, John S. "Miss Lil Armstrong Reminisces," *New York Times*, December 10, 1968. Vertical files, Institute for Jazz Studies, John Cotton Dana Library, State University of New Jersey, Rutgers.

Discography

Because Lil Hardin Armstrong's recordings are so numerous, this is an incomplete list with an emphasis on sessions at which she appears as the leader. See Bruyninckx for more complete list.

Lillian Armstrong's Serenaders

"Probably" the following personnel, according to Bruyninckx: Louis Armstrong (cornet), Kid Ory (trombone), Johnny Dodds (clarinet), Lil Armstrong (piano), Johnny St. Cyr (banjo).

Chicago, April 20, 1926

C-168/9, E-2871/2 "After I Say I'm Sorry (unissued) Vocalion

C-170/1, E-2873/4 "George Bo Bo"

Lil's Hot Shots

Louis Armstrong (cornet), Kid Ory (trombone), Johnny Dodds (clarinet), Lil Armstrong (piano), Johnny St. Cyr (banjo).

Chicago, May 28, 1926

C-340, E-3156 Georgia Bo Bo Vocalion 1037

C-341, E-3157 "Drop that Sack" Vocalion 1037

C-342, E-3158 "Drop that Sack" Vocalion 1037

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Lillian Armstrong (vocal), accompanied by Clarence Williams (piano)
New York, September 23, 1932
152308-1,2 Rhapsody in Love (unissued)
152309 "Virginia" Col 14678-D

Lil Armstrong and her Swing Band

Joe Thomas (trumpet), Buster Bailey (clarinet), Chu Berry (tenor saxophone), Teddy Cole (piano), Huey Long (guitar), John Frazier (bass), Lil Armstrong (vocal).

New York, October 27, 1936

90967-B "Love me Or Leave Me Alone" De 1092, AoH Ah161
90968-A "My Hi-De-Ho Man" De 1059
90969-A "Brown Gal" De 1092
90970-A "Doin' the Suzie-Q" De 1059, Swingfan 1014
90971-A "Just For A Thrill" De 1182
90972-A "It's Murder" AoH AH161

Joe Thomas (trumpet), Buster Bailey (clarinet), Robert Carroll (tenor sax), James Sherman (piano), Arnold Adams (guitar), Wellman Braud (bass), George Foster (drums), Lil Armstrong (vocal)

April 15, 1937

61945-A "Born to Swing" De 1299
61946-A "I'm on a Sit-Down Strike for Rhythm" 1272
61947-A "Bluer than Blue" De 1299, MCA2-4064
61948-A "I'm Knockin' at the Cabin Door" 1272

Shirley Clay (trumpet), Buster Bailey (clarinet), Prince Robinson (tenor sax), James Sherman (piano), Arnold Adams (guitar), Wellman Braud (bass), Manzie Johnson (drums), Lil Armstrong (vocal)

New York, July 23, 1937

62442-A "Lindy Hop" De 1388, Swingfan 1014
62443-A "When I Went Back Home"
62444-A "Let's Call It Love" 1502
62445-A "You Mean Son Much to Me"

Ralph Muzillo, Johnny McGee (trumpet), Al Philburn (trombone), Tony Zimmers (clarinet), Frank Froeba (piano), Dave Barbour (guitar), Haig Stephens (bass), Sam Weiss (drums), Lil Armstrong (vocal).

New York, February 2, 1938

63236-A "Let's Get Happy Together" De 1904, Swingfan 1014
63237-A "Happy Today, Sad Tomorrow"
63238-A "You Shall Reap What You Saw"
63239-B "Oriental Swing" 1904

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Reunald Jones (trumpet), J.C. Higginbotham (trombone), Buster Bailey (clarinet), Lil Armstrong (piano, vocal), Wellman Braud (bass), O'Neil Spencer (drums)
New York, September 9, 1938

64604-A "Safely Locked Up in my Heard" De 2234, Swingfan 1014
64605-A "Everything's Wrong, Ain't Nothing Right" De 2542, AoH Ah161
64606-A "Harlem on Saturday Night" De 2234, Swingfan 1014
64607 Knock-kneed Sal 2542

Jonah Jones (trumpet), Don Stovall (alto sax), Russell Johns (tenor sax), Lil Armstrong (piano, vocal), Wellman Braud (bass), Manzie Johnson (drums), Midge Williams, Hilda vocal)

New York, March 18, 1940

67331-A "Sixth Street," De 7739, Swingfan 1014
67332 "Riffin' the Blues" De 7803
67333-A "Why is a Good Man So Hard to find"
67334-A "My Secret Flame," De 7739, Swingfan 1014

Jonah Jones (trumpet), J.C. Higginbotham (trombone), Al Gibson (clarinet, baritone sax), Lil Armstrong (piano, vocal), Sylvester Hickman (bass), Baby Dodds (drums)
Chicago, January 9, 1945

BW81 "East Town Boogie" Black & White 1210
BW82 "Little Daddy Blues" Black & White 1211
BW83 "Lady Be Good"
BW84 "Confessin'" Black & White 1210

Lil Armstrong (piano, vocal)

Chicago, 1947

101 "East Town Boogie" Eastwood 1181
102 "Walkin' on Air" Eastwood 1180
103 "Little Daddy Blues" Eastwood 1182
104 "Rock It" Eastwood 1183

Lil Armstrong (piano, vocal)

Chicago

LA-1 "Boogie Boogie" Gotham 241
LA-2 "Baby Daddy"
"Rock It" Gotham 256
"Brown Gal"

Lil Armstrong (piano, vocal), Marcel Blanche (drums)
Paris, May 20, 1953

53V4556 "Maple Leaf Rag" Vogue 5169
53V4557 "The Pearls" 5157

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

53V4558 "Lil's Boogie"
53V4559 "Joogie Boogie" 5169

Lil Armstrong (piano, vocal), Guy Pedersen (bass), Kansas Fields (drums)
Paris, November 2, 1954
RJS101 "Padam, Padam," Echophone (F) RJS101
RJS102 "Baby Daddy"

Lil Armstrong (piano solo)
Paris, 1953-54 or 1961. Bruyninckx thinks the former.
"Lil's Boogie" Swing M33307

Lil Armstrong (piano), accompanied by the Hardinaires (vocal)
Chicago 1959
"A Memphis Man" Ebony 1015
K3608 "Let's Have a Ball" Trend 30-017

Eddie Smith, Bill Martin, Leroy Nabors (trumpet), Preston Jackson, Al Wynn (trombone),
Darnell Howard, Franz Jackson (clarinet), Lil Armstrong (piano, vocal), Pops Foster
(bass), Booker Washington (drums)
Chicago, September 7, 1961
365 "Red Arrow Blues" Riv RLP12401
366 "Bugle Blues"
367 "Basin Street Blues"
368 "Muskrat Ramble"
369 "Royal Garden Blues"
370 East Town Boogie"
371 Clip Joint"
372 Padam, Padam (unissued)
373 "Lullaby of Birdland (unissued)
374 "Boogie Me" (Armstrong, Foster, and Washington only)
375 Scotch Plaid (piano solo) (unissued)

Lil Armstrong (piano solos)
New York October 31, 1961
"Original Boogie" ("The Pearls") Verve MGV8441
"Original Rag

Lil Armstrong (piano solos)
New York, November 5, 1961
CP100 "It's murder"
CP101 "Yas yas yas"
CP102 "Padam, Padam

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

CP103 “Clip Joint”
CP104 “Rock It”
CP105 “Virgin Sundown”

According to Bruyninckx, this last group of solo recordings was not issued.

See Bruyninckx for additional recordings under other leaders—notably, Louis Armstrong.

Videography

America’s Music: Chicago and All That Jazz (1961), distributed on VHS by Landmark Distributors (1991). This has some wonderful footage of Lil Hardin Armstrong and other New Orleans style musicians who played in Chicago, including violinist/band leader Mae Barnes.

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Illustrations

Photographs available by permission from Hogan Jazz Archive:

Lil Hardin with Freddie Keppard
Accession number: 152.75941
Hogan Jazz Archive



Louis Armstrong's Hot Five
Not numbered
Hogan Jazz Archive



Louis Armstrong's Hot Five
circa 1926, Chicago
St. Cyr Collection
Hogan Jazz Archive



Mrs. Jones, Peter Davis, Louis
Armstrong, Capt. Jones, Lil Hardin,
?, 1936.
Accession number: 152.7596
Hogan Jazz Archive



A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Photos available by permission at Louis Armstrong House and Archives, Queens College, CUNY. Contact Michael Cogswell,

Photo of Louis Armstrong and Lil Hardin
by Kelly Photo, NO, LA
Louis Armstrong Archive
Series Photo-10
Accession number: 36/2



Lil Hardin
Louis Armstrong Archive
Series Photo-10
Accession number: 36/6



Lil Hardin
Louis Armstrong Archive
Series Photo10
Accession number: 36/5



A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Lovie Austin [Cora Calhoun] (pianist, band leader, arranger, composer)

b. September 19, 1887 (Chattanooga, TN) / d. July 10, 1972 (Chicago, IL)

Though Lovie Austin never lived in New Orleans, and in fact, spent most of her life in Chicago, she is an important figure in New Orleans jazz history. She is central to the history of *recorded* New Orleans jazz, as well as that of the broader music industry that arose in the dynamic movements of musicians and audiences between New Orleans and Chicago in the 1920s.

Between 1910 and 1920, the African American population in Chicago increased from forty thousand to over a hundred thousand, with the largest numbers of black migrants traveling by rail from the Mississippi Delta.¹ With them traveled tastes and markets for southern black culture, including *urban* and *modern* southern black culture that symbolized hopes for improved living and working conditions of black migrants in the inter-war years. As a primary representative of urban, modern, southern culture, New Orleans jazz expressed the hopes of many southern migrants who sought opportunities in Chicago, while maintaining cultural and kinship ties to the south.

Like New Orleans, Chicago is a city with a long jazz history, yet which is associated with a particular style and period. “Chicago” and “New Orleans,” as jazz styles, hail bounded periods of time, particular sets of players, and kinds of music, that are, of course, not the only music played even in those cities during those periods. It is

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

important to note that while a “Chicago style” developed in the 1920s, that this term has been primarily associated with the young, white musicians of Chicago’s Austin High Gang, and is not used to describe the New Orleans style of music that was popular in Chicago in the late teens and early 1920s. New Orleans jazz in 1920s Chicago was often played by African American and Creole of color New Orleans migrants, or people influenced by them. The active travel route of musicians from New Orleans to Chicago also meant that these migrants appeared on many of the releases of the “race records” division of Chicago’s booming recording industry. New Orleans musicians who recorded in Chicago exerted a powerful influence on musicians and audiences for whom records were becoming a primary avenue of musical experience.²

Tennessee-born Lovie Austin was a pivotal figure at this rich juncture of jazz, migration, and new technology that links Chicago and New Orleans. Born Cora Calhoun in 1887³, she received the nickname, “Lovie,” from her grandmother. Her father, Professor Calhoun, was “a great musician, and a teacher in New York,” she told William Russell, but she grew up in Chattanooga.⁴ According to some sources, Bessie Smith, the future “Empress of the Blues,” who was several years younger than Austin, spent part of her childhood growing up in the same household, or at least in nearby households.⁵ In an interview with William Russell, Austin said, “Bessie Smith lived right next door to me. She was raised in my mother’s house. We were raised together.”⁶ In any case, they were close by enough as girls, that they would sneak through an alley and listen to Gertrude “Ma” Rainey sing in a theater, Austin told Chris Albertson.⁷ In her interview with Russell, she recalled sitting with Bessie Smith outside a carnival where

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Ma and Pa Rainey were performing, since the girls did not have the money to go in.⁸

Both would grow up to have musical careers that touched that of their idol—Smith singing in traveling shows with Rainey—and Austin as the band leader and pianist on Rainey’s first eight recordings. The first of these was written by Austin, as well, entitled “Bad Luck Blues.”⁹ Many of the songs Austin wrote and recorded on Paramount in the 1920s, Bessie Smith would later record on Columbia.

Cora “Lovie” Calhoun graduated from high school in Chattanooga, then went to Roger Williams College in Nashville. When the school burned down, she continued her studies at Knoxville College. Fisk University may seem a more obvious choice for an African American college woman wishing to study music, but, as Austin told William Russell, the reason she didn’t go to Fisk, was because Fisk was affiliated with the Congregational Church, and her family was Baptist. She married a trombonist/cornet player by the name of Dudley¹⁰, and, together, they bought and ran a vaudeville theater. This marriage ended in divorce, after which she married a vaudeville entertainer by the surname of Austin. Joining her new husband on the road as the piano accompanist of his team act “Austin and Delaney,” Lovie Austin traveled the black vaudeville circuit known as TOBA (Theater Owners Booking Association) that was so grueling it was also known as “Tough on Black Actors.”¹¹ Even after she had based herself in Chicago, Austin would sometimes take off on traveling shows, with acts such as the Sunflower Girls and her own band, the Blues Serenaders.

The mobility of TOBA work put black performers in contact with one another, and with black audiences all over the country, and it is likely that Austin met and heard New

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Orleans musicians on these circuits. When she settled in Chicago, her close association with traveling musicians continued as part of her long-term position as house pianist, musical director, and leader of the pit orchestra of the Monogram Theater, a major vaudeville theater.

Austin told William Russell that she began her twenty-five years at the Monogram Theater in 1913. When she started at the Monogram it was located at 31st Street, then she moved with the theater to its new location at 35th. It was while working at the Monogram that she befriended New Orleans “piano professor” Jelly Roll Morton.

“When Jelly first came there,” she told Russell, “he was with a little show—Billy Mack and Mary Mack, from New Orleans. Mary Mack always carried a little four-piece band with her show, and Jelly played in this band.”¹² Billy and Mary Mack (shortened from McBride) had a traveling show from 1908-1959 which they called “Mack and Mack,” not to be confused with “Mack’s Merry Makers” (which was led by Thomas Mack, a trumpet player from New Orleans). Their specialty was New Orleans music. Mary McBride (nee Thacker) was born in Algiers, Louisiana, and sang the blues. “Mack and Mack” were popular at the Monogram, and would settle in Chicago in the 1930s, as did many other New Orleans musicians that Austin, herself a southern migrant to Chicago, met and worked with on TOBA or while playing for acts at the Monogram and other theaters.¹³

According to Austin, her friendship and collegiality with Morton included helping him to transcribe the music he had composed in his head and at the piano, but hadn’t been able to write down to his satisfaction.

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

[H]e'd come over to my house at 3316 Calumet and stay two or three hours, and I would take his music down on paper. That way he got copies he could have published. He wouldn't trust anybody but me ... He thought I was the finest musician in the world and the best friend he had, and I felt that same way about him."¹⁴

As in New Orleans, Chicago's South Side of the 1920s was a place where it was not unusual to find women as well respected pianists in jazz bands. In fact, Austin, and Lil Hardin (later Armstrong) held, between them, many of the most prestigious jazz piano jobs in 1920s Chicago: Armstrong at the Dreamland Café and Royal Gardens and other locales, playing with popular New Orleans groups, including King Oliver's Creole Jazz Band. In addition to directing the music at the Monogram for twenty-five years, Austin was the house pianist, arranger, musical director for jazz sessions at Paramount Records (1923-1926), which was, at that time, a virtual clearing house for recordings of black New Orleans musicians.¹⁵

Founded in 1917, Chicago's Paramount Records launched its "race records" division in 1922, enlisting the services of a black talent scout named Mayo Williams to hire and record black musicians. It was Williams who hired Lovie Austin as a music director, house pianist, and arranger, a move that helped to build Paramount's success as one of the top three "race records" companies of the 1920s (along with Okeh and Columbia).¹⁶ Before long, Paramount absorbed Black Swan records, the company that had once belonged to W.C Handy, further strengthening its position in the "race" market.¹⁷ During these years of high demand for Paramount to dominate production of New Orleans style jazz and "classic blues" vocals, Lovie Austin's wrote music for, played on, and directed massive numbers of recordings that would later be considered

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

among the most historically significant recordings of 1920s jazz and blues.

For New Orleans jazz musicians living in Chicago, Austin's presence at Paramount was significant, in that she hired many of them for these influential trio and quartet sessions. Her band, the Blues Serenaders, included, at various times, clarinetist Johnny Dodds, cornetist Tommy Ladnier, and trombonist Kid Ory.¹⁸ Ladnier, one of the mainstays of the Serenaders, had studied with Bunk Johnson, and later played with King Oliver. A contemporary of Louis Armstrong, he used a mute and was known as the "Talking Cornetist."¹⁹ These small groups were led by Austin, and often played her compositions and orchestrations. They also appeared on many early recordings of what is now known as the "classic blues," in which jazz instrumentalists accompanied blues singers, usually women. The Blues Serenaders were very active in shaping this genre, recording with such singers as Ida Cox, Alberta Hunter, Ma Rainey, and New Orleans vocalist **Edna Hicks**. Austin composed and co-composed much of the repertoire of the "classic blues," including "Downhearted Blues" which she wrote and recorded with Alberta Hunter, and which was later a hit for Bessie Smith.

In his insightful paper, entitled, "With Lovie and Lil: Rediscovering Two Chicago Pianists of the 1920s," Jeffrey Taylor has suggested that accompaniment has been less valued by jazz historians as a desirable skill than it was by jazz musicians during the 1920s, and that different standards need to be adopted in order to appreciate the skills of pianists who were primarily expected to "comp" and "fill" with the "correct chords." Taylor suggests that while playing the piano in a jazz band was not considered more appropriate for one sex than the other, that "accompanying" was considered

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

appropriate for female players in early jazz in a way that soloing was not. Soloing, on the other hand, had a different gender trajectory, as the domain of “piano men,” “professors,” and “ticklers,” such as Jelly Roll Morton, who were re-defining the piano from “sissy” instrument to ultimate symbol of heteromasculine fraternity in the jazz world. Working toward developing listening practices that can actually hear and appreciate the aesthetics of “accompanying,” Taylor described a recording on which Lovie Austin accompanied Butterbeans and Susie., with whom she had also worked at the Monogram Theater. “What is immediately apparent is the sheer density of Austin’s style; she is an entire band unto herself. Yet, she never obliterates the featured soloists with technical artifice, as did many other pianists of the time.”²⁰

After the Paramount job, she continued working as the theater pianist, band leader, and music director for the Monogram Theater, playing for black vaudeville acts, many of whom were the same performers with whom she had recorded. She also managed and played with traveling shows, such as Irving Miller’s Brown Babies, and the Club Alabam show that traveled from New York in the mid-1920s. After the Monogram, she continued to work as a theater pianist in the Gem and Joyland Theaters. Her output during her years at the Monogram and Paramount was remarkable—she not only played constantly, but she wrote the music, and directed the bands. The great pianist and composer/arranger Mary Lou Williams remembered being inspired by Lovie Austin when she saw her as a young girl, drawing inspiration from the veteran pianist, composer/arranger, band leader.

You can imagine my surprise and thrill to see a woman sitting in the pit with four

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

or five other male musicians, with her legs crossed, cigarette in her mouth, playing the show with her left hand and writing music with her right had for the next act to come on the stage. And was she a master of conducting the music.²¹

Austin worked as an inspector in a navy plant during World War II, but was back working as pianist for the Penthouse studios, home of Jimmy Payne's dancing school in Chicago, in the late 1940s.

Austin's correspondence with George Hoefer in the 1950s tells the sad and sadly common story of not being paid royalties due her for her Paramount recordings.

Turning to Hoefer, who had written a feature about her in *Down Beat* (June 16, 1950, p. 11), Austin explained that she had received royalties of 25% regularly until the death of the owner of Paramount records, at which time, the reissues continued, but payments ceased, and the new owner even passed along the rights to other record companies.²²

In 1961, she came out of retirement to be recorded with her old friend Alberta Hunter, by Chris Albertson for Riverside Records for the "Chicago—The Living Legends" series. She died at the age of 84 in 1972.

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Notes

¹ Sandra Lieb, *Mother of the Blues: A Study of Ma Rainey*, (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1981), 22.

² Burton W. Perretti, *The Creation of Jazz: Music, Race, and Culture in Urban America*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1992. 152-53.

³ Most sources say 1887, though D. Antoinette Handy lists 1897. 1887 is most certainly the more plausible of the two, since Austin had already finished college and traveled on TOBA before settling in Chicago in 1913.

⁴ Lovie Austin, Oral History, April 25, 1969, Reel I, Summary. Interviewed by William Russell, Hogan Jazz Archive, 2.

⁵ George Hoefler, "Lovie Austin Still Active as a Pianist in Chicago," *Down Beat* xvii/12 (1950), 11. I have been trying to pin-point the period in which Lovie Austin and Bessie Smith could have lived in the same household. The 1900 US Census for Tennessee, shows Bessie Smith, reported as age 7, living with her own mother and seven siblings in Chattanooga. In 1910, she appears at age 16, living in a household on State Street in Chattanooga with her sister Viola Smith, and Viola's daughter, Laura. She most certainly could have lived with Lovie Austin and her grandmother at some point between Census years, but I have been unable to verify this.

⁶ Lovie Austin, Oral History, April 25, 1969, Reel I, Summary, 14, Hogan Jazz Archive.

⁷ Chris Albertson, liner notes, "Alberta Hunter With Lovie Austin and Her Blues Serenaders," *Chicago: The Living Legends* (Riverside RLP 418), 1961.

⁸ Lovie Austin, Oral History, April 25, 1969, Reel I, Summary, 14, Hogan.

⁹ Lieb, *Mother of the Blues*, 193.

¹⁰ I have not determined whether this is his first or last name.

¹¹ According to an unidentified note in the vertical files at the Institute for Jazz Studies, "one of her first professional jobs was with the Dudley Serenaders in Norfolk, Virginia."

¹² William Russell, "Oh, Mister Jelly" *A Jelly Roll Morton Scrapbook* (Denmark: JazzMedia Aps, 1999), 351.

¹³ Russell, "Oh, Mister Jelly," 342-344.

¹⁴ Russell, "Oh, Mister Jelly," 352. See also William Russell, "Lovie Austin." Research notes, MSS 519, F.3, F. 5, Williams Research Center. Austin's friendship with Morton is also discussed in Jeffrey Taylor, "With Lovie and Lil: Rediscovering Two Chicago Pianists of the 1920s" (conference paper), Society for Music Theory, Annual Meeting, Columbus, OH, Nov. 1, 2002.

¹⁵ Taylor, "With Lovie and Lil."

¹⁶ Lieb, *Mother of the Blues*, 21-22.

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

¹⁷ According to Sandra Lieb, the merger took place in 1923, though Burton Peretti places this in 1922. Lieb, 47; Peretti, 153.

¹⁸ William Russell, unpublished notes. MSS 519, "Austin, Lovie," f. 3, Williams Research Center.

¹⁹ Liner notes, *Lovie Austin and Her Blues Serenaders*. IJS, Rutgers.

²⁰ Taylor, "With Lovie and Lil," 10.

²¹ Linda Dahl, *Morning Glory: A Biography of Mary Lou Williams* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 29. Dahl suggests that this scene may not have been in Pittsburg in 1920, but later when Williams was traveling with bands in Chicago. It certainly *could* have been in Pittsburg, however, in the late teens or early twenties. Austin did take off on travels even when based in Chicago.

²² Letter from Lovie Austin to George Hoefer, October 12, 1956. Vertical files, Institute for Jazz Studies, Rutgers.

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Bibliography

Primary Sources

- Austin, Lovie, correspondence with George Hoeffer, Vertical files, Institute for Jazz Studies, Rutgers.
- Austin, Lovie. Oral History, April 25, 1969, Reel I, Summary. Interviewed by William Russell. Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University.
- Johnson, Rosalind, interview. Handwritten notes by William Russell, February 23, 1970. MSS 519 F1 (rough version) and F2 (edited version). Williams Research Center.
- Russell, William. "Lovie Austin." Research notes, MSS 519, F.3, F. 5, Williams Research Center.

Secondary Sources

- Albertson, Chris, liner notes, "Alberta Hunter with Lovie Austin and her Blues Serenaders," *Chicago: The Living Legends* (Riverside, RLP 389/390; stereo RLP 9389/9390), September 1, 1961.
- Andrews, Adrienne, "Lovie Austin," ed. Dorothy Salem, *African American Women: A Biographical Dictionary* (Garland, 1993), 17.
- Dahl, Linda. *Stormy Weather: The Music and Lives of a Century of Jazzwomen* (New York: Limelight Editions, 1989), 25-28.
- Downbeat* October 12, 1972.
- Handy, D. Antoinette. *Black Women in American Bands and Orchestras, Second Edition*. Lanham, Mass. and Kent: Scarecrow Press, 1998, 228-9.
- Harrison, Daphne Duval, *Black Pearls: Blues Queens of the 1920s* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1988).
- Hillman, Christopher, "Cora Calhoun—Miss Austin to You," *Jazz Journal*, January 1973, 19
- Hoefer, George, "Lovie Austin Still Active as a Pianist in Chicago," *Down Beat* June 16, 1950, 11.
- Lieb, Sandra. *Mother of the Blues: A Study of Ma Rainey* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1981).
- Russell, William. "Oh, Mister Jelly" *A Jelly Roll Morton Scrapbook* (Denmark: JazzMedia Aps, 1999), 351-2.
- Southern, Eileen. "Austin, Lovie," *Biographical Dictionary of Afro-American and African Musicians* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1982).
- Taylor, Jeffrey, "With Lovie and Lil: Rediscovering Two Chicago Pianists of the 1920s" (conference paper), Society for Music Theory, Annual Meeting, Columbus, OH, Nov. 1, 2002.

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Zieff, Bob. "Austin, Lovie [Nee Calhoun, Cora]." *New Grove Dictionary of Jazz*. Ed. Barry Kernfeld. MacMillian, 2001, 93.

Discography

Available:

Classics CD, *Lovie Austin, 1924-1926*

From Bruyninckx (A392, A393, B182, B183, B1060, C331, C653-656, D109, F190, H487, H509, H828, H830, M37, M158, R22, S757, W155).

I am including a lengthy discography, since Austin's influence through recordings is so significant. The following comes directly from Bruyninckx, though I have only noted the Paramount releases, many of which were also re-issued on other labels. I have also listed only an incomplete list of her recordings with Alberta Hunter, in the interest of space. See Bruyninckx for information on re-issues, and for a full listing of the recordings with Hunter.

As leader:

Chicago, November 1924, with Tommy Ladnier (cornet), Jimmy O'Bryant (clarinet)
10004-2 "Steppin' on the Blues" Paramount 1255, Fountain FJ105
10005-2 "Traveling Blues" "" ""

Chicago April 1925, same group only with W.E. Burton (drums) and Priscilla Stewart (vocalist)

2094-1	"Charleston Mad"	Paramount 2278, Fountain FJ105
2094-2	"Charleston Mad"	Fountain FJ105
2095-2	"Charleston, South Carolina"	Paramount 12278, Fountain FJ 105
2096-1	"Heebie Jeebies"	Paramount 12283, "
2097-2	"Peepin' Blues"	Paramount 12277, "
2098-2	"Mojo Blues"	Paramount 12283

Chicago, August 1925, same group as above, except Bob Schoffner, replaces Ladnier on cornet

2219-1	"Don't Shake it no More"	Paramount 12300, Fountain FJ105
2220-1	"Rampart Street Blues"	Paramount 12300, Fountain FJ105
2221	unissued unknown title	
2222-2	"Too Sweet for Words"	Paramount 12313, Fountain FJ 105

Chicago, August, 1926. Shirley Clay (cornet) (NOTE: Although "Shirley" later became

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

a name used for women, it used to be not uncommon for men to be named "Shirley." Shirley Clay was a man), Albert Wynn (trombone), Johnny Dodds (clarinet), Lovie Austin (piano), Houston Woodfork (banjo), and Henry Williams (vocal)

2621-1	"Chicago Mess Around"	Paramount 12380, Riverside 12-104
2622-1	"Galion Stomp"	Paramount 12380, Riverside 12-104
2623-2	"In the Alley Blues"	Paramount 12391, Riverside 12-104
2624-2	"Merry Maker's Twine"	

(These were also reissued on Riverside RM8808, Milestone 2011, and Fountain FJ105)

Chicago, September 1, 1961. Jimmy Archey (trombone), Darnell Howard (clarinet), Lovie Austin (piano), Pops Foster (bass), Jasper Taylor (drums)

320	"Gallion Blues"	Riverside RLP418
321	"C Jam Blues"	"
322	"Sweet Georgia Brown"	"

As leader of Lovie Austin's Serenaders, accompanying Viola Bartlette, vocalist

Chicago, September 1925. Bob Shoffner (trumpet), Lovie Austin (piano), Jimmy O'Bryant (clarinet), W.E. Burton (drums, percussion)

2300-2	"Go Back Where you Stayed Last Night"	Paramount 12322
2301-1,2	"Tennessee Blues"	Paramount 12322

Chicago, January 1926. Bob Shoffner or Punch Miller (cornet), Junie Cobb or Jimmy O'Bryant (clarinet), probably Kid Ory or unknown (trombone), Lovie Austin (piano), W.E. Burton or unknown (drums).

2426-1	"You Never Can Tell What Your Perfectly Good Man Will Do."	Paramount 12351
--------	--	-----------------

Chicago, May 1926. Unknown (cornet), Albert Wynn (trombone), Johnny Dodds (clarinet), Junie Cobb (tenor sax), Lovie Austin (piano).

2545-2	"Sunday Morning Blues"	Paramount 12369
2546-1,2	"You don't Mean Me No Good"	Paramount 12363
2548	"Walk Easy 'Cause My Papa's Here"	(unissued)
2552-1,2	"Out Bound Train Blues"	Paramount 12363
2554-2	"Walk Easy 'Cause My papa's Here"	Paramount 12369

Lovie Austin, piano, accompanying Butterbeans and Susie, vocalists

Chicago, June 18, 1926		
9749-A	"I Can't Do That"	Okeh 8355

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Lovie Austin, piano, accompanying J. (John) Churchill, vocalist.

Chicago, December 1923

1588-1,2	“Sleep Baby Sleep”	Paramount 12091
1589-1	“Mad Man Blues”	Paramount 12091

Lovie Austin, piano, accompanying Ida Cox, vocalist.

Chicago, June 1923.

1437-2,4	“Any Woman Blues”	Paramount 12053
1438-1,2	“Bama Bound Blues”	Paramount 12045
1439-1,2	“Lovin’ is the Thing I’m Wild About”	Paramount 12045

Ida Cox accompanied by Lovie Austin and her Blues Serenaders

Chicago, June 1923. Ida Cox (vocal), Tommy Ladnier (cornet), Jimmy O’Bryant (clarinet), Lovie Austin (piano), Arville Harris (alto sax).

1442-1,2	“Graveyard Dream Blues”	Paramount 12044
1443-1,2	“Weary Way Blues”	Paramount 12044

Ida Cox (vocal), accompanied by Lovie Austin, piano.

Chicago, July 1923

1486-2	“Blue Monday Blues”	Paramount 12053
1487-2,4	“I Love My Man Better Than I Love Myself”	Paramount 12056

Ida Cox (vocal), accompanied by Lovie Austin and her Blues Serenaders

Chicago, July 1923. Tommy Ladnier (cornet), Jimmy O’Bryant (clarinet), Lovie Austin (piano)

1488-3,4	“Ida Cox’s Lawdy, Lawdy Blues”	Paramount 12064
1488-4	“Lawdy, Lawdy Blues”	Harmograph 883
1493-3,4	“Moanin’ Groanin’ Blues”	Paramount 12064

Ida Cox, vocal, accompanied by Lovie Austin, piano.

Chicago, July-August 1923

1496-1,3,4	“Chattanooga Blues”	Paramount 12063
1503-3,4,5,6	“Chicago Bound Blues”	Paramount 12056
1503-?	“Chicago Bound Blues”	Gennett GEN5371
1504-1,2	“Come Right In”	Paramount 12022

Ida Cox, vocal, accompanied by Lovie Austin and her Blues Serenaders

Chicago, September 1923. Tommy Ladnier (cornet), Jimmy O’Bryant, (clarinet), Lovie Austin (piano)

1509-3,4	“I’ve Got the Blues for Rampart Street”	Paramount 12063
----------	---	-----------------

Ida Cox, vocal, accompanied by Lovie Austin, piano

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Chicago, October 1923

1545-1,2 "Graveyard Dream Blues" Paramount 12022

Ida Cox, vocal, accompanied by Lovie Austin and her Blues Serenaders

Chicago, November 1923. Tommy Ladnier, Jimmy O'Bryant, Lovie Austin.

1594-1,2 "Mama Doo Shee Blues" Paramount 12085

1595-1,2 "Worried Mama Blues" Paramount 12085

1604-1,2,3 "So Soon This Morning Blues" Paramount 12086

1605-1 "Mail Man Blues" Paramount 12087

1607-1,2 "Confidential Blues" Paramount 12086

Chicago, March 1924. Ida Cox, accompanied by Tommy Ladnier (cornet), possibly Charles Harris (alto sax), Lovie Austin (piano).

1705-1,2 "Last Time Blues" Paramount 12212

1706-2 "Worried Any How Blues" Paramount 12202

1607-1 "Chicago Monkey Man Blues" Paramount 12202

1607-2 "Chicago Monkey Man Blues" Paramount 12202

1608-2 "Mean Papa Turn Your Key" Paramount 12097

Ida Cox, accompanied by Lovie Austin and her Blues Serenaders.

New York or Chicago, April 1924. (According to Bruznincyk, the following musicians may be present on this recording: Bubber Miley, Bob Fuller, Ernest Elliott, Louis Hooper, Cliff Jackson, Elmer Snowden).

1714-1,2 "Blues Ain't Nothin' Else But !" Paramount 12212

Ida Cox, accompanied by Lovie Austin and her Blues Serenaders

Probably July 1924. Tommy Ladnier (cornet), Jimmy O'Bryant or Stumps Evans (clarinet), possibly Charlie Harris (alto sax), Lovie Austin (piano)

1841-1, "Cherry Picking Blues" unissued

1842-1,2 "Wild Women Don't Have the Blues" unissued

1843-1 "Worried in Mind Blues" Paramount 12237

Ida Cox, accompanied by Lovie Austin and her Blues Serenaders

Chicago, August 1924. Tommy Ladnier (cornet), Johnny Dodds (clarinet), Lovie Austin (piano)

1840-3 "Kentucky Man Blues" Paramount 12220

1841-3 "Cherry Picking Blues" Paramount 12228

1841-4 "Cherry Picking Blues" Paramount 12228

1842-4 "Wild Women Don't Have the Blues" Paramount 12228

1843-3 "Worried in Mind Blues" Paramount 12237

1854-3 "Death Letter Blues" Paramount 12220

1855-4 "My Mean Man Blues" Paramount 12237

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Ida Cox accompanied by Lovie Austin and Serenaders.

Chicago, April 1925. Tommy Ladnier (cornet), Jimmy O'Bryant (clarinet), Lovie Austin (piano).

2103-2	"Black Creep Blues"	Paramount 12291
2104-2	"Fare Thee Well Poor Gal"	Paramount 12291
2105-2	"Cold Black Ground Blues"	Paramount 12282
2106-2	"Someday Blues"	Paramount 12282

Ida Cox, accompanied by Lovie Austin and her Serenaders.

Chicago, August 1925. Bob Shoffner (cornet), Jimmy O'Bryant (clarinet), Lovie Austin (piano)

2242-1,2	"Mistreatin' Daddy Blues"	Paramount 12298
2243-1,2	"Long Distance Blues"	Paramount 12307
2244-2,4	"Southern Woman's Blues"	Paramount 12298
2246-1	"Lonesome Blues"	Paramount 12307

Ida Cox, accompanied by Lovie Austin's Serenaders, same as above, only with unknown drummer added.

Chicago, September 1925

2291-1,2	"How Can I Miss You When I've Got Dead Aim?"	Paramount 12334
2292-1,2	"I Ain't Got Nobody"	Paramount 12334

Ida Cox, accompanied by Lovie Austin's Serenaders.

Chicago, September 1925

Bob Shoffner (cornet), Jimmy O'Bryant (clarinet), Lovie Austin (piano), probably W.E. Burton (drums).

2299-1	"One Time Woman Blues"	Paramount 12325
--------	------------------------	-----------------

Ida Cox, accompanied by Lovie Austin's Serenaders

Chicago, February 1926. Possibly Bernie Young (cornet), unknown (trombone), Jimmy O'Bryant (clarinet), Lovie Austin (piano), unknown (drums)

2441-2	"Trouble Trouble Blues"	Paramount 12344
2443-1,2	"Do Lawd Do"	Paramount 12353
2444-1,2	"I'm Leaving Here Blues"	Paramount 12344
2445-1,2	"Night and Day Blues"	Paramount 12353

Ida Cox accompanied by Lovie Austin and band.

Chicago, September 1926. Lovie Austin (piano), with possibly Shirley Clay (cornet), possibly Albert Wynn (trombone), possibly Johnny Dodds (clarinet), and possibly Houston Woodfork (banjo).

2633-2	"Don't Blame Me"	Paramount 12381
2634-2	"Scottle De Doo"	Paramount 12381

Accompanying vocalists: Ford and Ford

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Chicago, October 1924. Tommy Ladnier (cornet), Johnny Dodds (clarinet), Lovie Austin (piano)

1914-1 "I'm Three Times Seven" Paramount 12244

Edna Hicks, vocalist, accompanied by Lovie Austin and her Blues Serenaders.

Chicago, March 1924. Tommy Ladnier (cornet), Jimmy O'Bryant (clarinet), Lovie Austin (piano).

1710-2 "Down on the Levee Blues" Paramount 12204

1711-2 "Lonesome Woman Blues" Paramount 12204

Bertha "Chippie" Hill, accompanied by Lovie Austin's Blues Serenaders

Chicago, February 5, 1946. Lee Collins (trumpet), Lovie Austin (piano), John Lindsay (bass), Baby Dodds (drums).

C1 "Trouble in Mind" Circle J1003

C2 "Careless Love" Circle J1004

C7 "Around the Clock Blues" Circle J1013

C8 "Nobody Knows you When You're Down and Out" Collectors Ed. 1001

Alberta Hunter, accompanied by "her Paramount Boys" (but same as Lovie Austin's Serenaders).

Chicago, October 1923. Tommy Ladnier (cornet), Jimmy O'Bryant (clarinet), Lovie Austin or J. Glover Compton (piano)

1528-1 "Experience Blues" Paramount 12065

1529-1,2 "Sad 'n' Lonely Blues" Paramount 12065

Alberta Hunter, accompanied by Lovie Austin's Blues Serenaders.

Chicago, September 1, 1961. Jimmy Archey (trombone), Darnell Howard (clarinet), Lovie Austin (piano), George "Pops" Foster (bass), Jasper Taylor (drums)

312 "Downhearted Blues" Riverside RLP(S9)389, (S9)418

313 "Moanin' Low" "" ""

314 "You Better Change" "" ""

315 "Now I'm Satisfied" "" ""

316 "I Will Always Be in Love With You" "" ""

317 "Streets Paved with Gold" "" ""

318 "St. Louis Blues" "" ""

Lovie Austin plays on more recordings that are listed under Alberta Hunter's name, too numerous to list. See Bruyninckx for full listing.

Hattie McDaniel, accompanied by Lovie Austin.

Chicago, November 17, 1926. Unknown (cornet), Preston Jackson (trombone), Darnell Howard (alto sax), Lovie Austin (piano), Johnny St. Cyr (banjo).

9899-A "I Wish I Had Somebody" Okeh 8434

9900-A "Boo Hoo Blues" Okeh 8434

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Hattie McDaniel vocal duet with “Dentist” Jackson (possibly Charlie Jackson)
 Chicago, March 1929. Lovie Austin (piano), probably Charlie Jackson (guitar)
 21203-2 “Dentist Chair Blues Pt. 1” Paramount 12751
 12104-2 Dentist Chair Blues Pt. 2” Paramount 12751

Ozie McPherson, vocal, accompanied by Lovie Austin’s Serenaders.
 Chicago, November, 1925. Bob Shoffner (cornet), Jimmy O’Bryant (clarinet), Lovie
 Austin (piano), W.E. Burton (drums)

11005-2 “You Gotta Know How” Paramount 12327
 11006-2 “Outside of that he’s Allright With me” “”

Shoffner is replaced by an unknown cornetist for next date, but otherwise the same
 Chicago, January 1926

2422 “Down to the Bottom Where I stay” (unissued)
 2423-1 “Standing on the Corner Blues” Paramount 12350
 2425-2 “He’s My Man” “”

Gertrude “Ma” Rainey, vocals, accompanied by Lovie Austin and her Blues Serenaders
 Chicago, November 1923. Tommy Ladnier (cornet), Jimmy O’Bryant (clarinet), Lovie
 Austin (piano), unknown (violin)

1596-2 “Bad Luck Blues” Paramount 12081
 1597-1 “Bo-weavil Blues”
 1597-2 “Bo-Weavil Blues” Paramount 12080
 1598-2 “Barrel House Blues” Paramount 12082
 1599-1 “Those All Night Long Blues” Paramount 12081
 1599-2 “Those All Night Long Blues” “ ”

Chicago, December 1923

1608-1 “Moonshine Blues” Paramount 12083
 1608-2 “Moonshine Blues” Paramount 12083
 1609-2 “Last Minute Blues” (1,2) Paramount 12080
 1612-2 “Southern Blues” Paramount 12083
 1613-2 “Walking Blues” Paramount 12082

Chicago, March 1924. Tommy Ladnier (cornet), Jimmy O’Bryant (clarinet), probably
 Arville Harris (soprano, alto, tenor sax), Lovie Austin (piano).

1701-2 “Honey Where You Been So Long?” Paramount 12200
 1702-2 “Ya-do-do” Paramount 12257
 1702-3 “Ya-do-do” (1) Paramount 12257
 1703-1 “Those Dogs of Mine (Famous Cornfield Blues)” Paramount 12215
 1704-2 “Lucky Rock Blues” Paramount 12215
 1741-1 “South Bound Blues” Paramount 12227

(next ones without Harris)

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

1758-1	“Lawd Send Me A Man Blues”	Paramount 12227
1758-2	“Lawd Send Me A Man Blues”	Paramount 12227

Ma Rainey vocal, accompanied by “her Georgia Jazz Band” but it is the Blues Serenaders in this case.

Chicago, early 1925. Tommy Ladnier (cornet), Jimmy O’Bryant (clarinet), Lovie Austin (piano)

10001-2	“Cell Bound Blues”	Paramount 12257
---------	--------------------	-----------------

Priscilla Stewart, vocal, accompanied by Lovie Austin’s Blues Serenaders

Chicago, April 1925. Tommy Ladnier (cornet), Jimmy O’Bryant (clarinet), Lovie Austin (piano), W.E. Burton (drums)

2094-1,2	“Charleston Mad”	Paramount 12278
2095-2	“Charleston South Carolina”	“”

Ethel Waters, vocals, accompanied by Lovie Austin’s Blues Serenaders

Chicago, April 1924. Probably Tommy Ladnier (cornet), possibly Jimmy O’Bryant (clarinet), unknown (soprano sax), Lovie Austin, piano.

1742-1,2	“Craving Blues	Paramount 12313
1747-2	“Black Spatch blues”	Paramount 12230
1749-2	“I Want Somebody All My Own”	Paramount 12230

Filmography

She appears in a film, entitled *The Great Blues Singers* (1961).

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Louisa “Blue Lu” Barker (nee Louisa Josephine Dupont [Louise] [Lu Blue]) (blues singer, song writer)

b. November 13, 1913 (New Orleans, Louisiana) / d. May 7, 1998 (New Orleans, Louisiana)

Louisa Dupont, better known in her later years as Blue Lu Barker, was born in New Orleans on November 13, 1913, to August Dupont and Louisa Hurley Dupont, both of whom were also born in New Orleans. In her oral history, she told bassist Milt Hinton, “My mother is half-Irish and my father is half-French. He’s Negro and French, and my mother is Negro and Irish.”¹

During Dupont’s childhood in the neighborhoods of Treme and Gentilly, her father sold bootleg whiskey from the small businesses he ran, which included, at various times, a grocery store, a pool hall, and a candy store. Her mother worked for the post office as a custodian. “My cousin Clarice was working for some people, and they gave her a piano,” she explained when asked how so many poor black people were able to obtain pianos in those days.² Clarice’s place turned out to be too small to house the piano, so, by default, it wound up belonging to the Duponts. The family enjoyed music and had a number of amateur and professional musician relatives, friends, and neighbors who regularly came to the Dupont household to play music. Musician-relatives included Lu’s cousins, clarinetist Joseph Thomas, and drummer,

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Erthy Lazard.³

In a 1991 interview, Barker credited her mother with starting her along on her performance career. “My mother had all these blues records, and we had this big armoire with mirrors on each side, and she’d get on one side and I’d get on the other and she’d show me what to do.”⁴

These blues practice sessions with her mother launched Louisa to local fame, when, at the age of seven, she became popular for singing bawdy lyrics that she didn’t actually understand at neighborhood events, amateur contests, and parties. As she approached puberty, her mother had second thoughts about her pre-adolescent daughter being known for such repertoire as “I’ve Got Everything that a Woman Needs to Make a Good Man Fall.” She instructed her daughter to sing off key at rehearsals in order to emphasize her dancing abilities.⁵ This she did, and as a dancer, she worked with a semi-professional troupe called the Merrymakers, with whom she performed at balls at the San Jacinto Club, the Lyons Club, and the Pelican Club.

Her singing, however, is what remained in people’s minds. That very combination for which she was popular as a child—the sexual double-entendre lyrics, and an ironic and humorous delivery that inspired listeners to speculate as to whether or not she was aware of their double-meanings--became her trademark throughout her sixty year career. As columnist Lolis Eric Elie put it, “Even though she sang those bawdy songs, she never gave the impression that she was the type of woman to hang out in places where they played songs like that.”⁶ Banjo player Danny Barker, her future husband, found such evaluations insufficient, and instead, later described her as

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

a “sweet, subtle blues singer,” comparable to Maxine Sullivan.⁷

Louisa Dupont met Danny Barker just weeks after she turned 13, and married him on January 8, 1930, at the age of sixteen. Her new husband was a banjo player and guitarist whose career was taking off—and taking him away from New Orleans as well. Like Louisa, Danny also came from a musical family, including his grandfather, alto horn player Isidore John Barbarin, his grandfather’s cousin, blues singer Esther Bijou, and his uncle (Isidore’s son), drummer Paul Barbarin. When Paul Barbarin, offered Danny a job in his band in New York, Louisa followed a month later, clutching her childhood doll, wrapped in newspaper, on her lap. As she told Elizabeth Mullner, the doll literally spoke to her own homesickness. “When you turned it over, it said mama.”⁸ She never stopped thinking of New Orleans as her home, and the feeling was mutual. Even though she left Louisiana at the age of 16 and lived in New York and California throughout most of her recording career, “Blue Lu” Barker never ceased to be considered a New Orleans singer. When her mother became ill in 1966, she and Danny would return to live in New Orleans.

In New York, it took awhile for Louisa’s career to launch. While Danny Barker played guitar for major bands led by Lucky Millinder, Benny Carter, and Cab Calloway, Louisa Barker stayed home and cooked New Orleans style meals for displaced New Orleans musicians in the Harlem apartment they shared with Henry “Red” Allen and Paul Barbarin and their wives. At one point they lived with blues singer Lizzie Miles. She cooked up the tastes of home for countless New York-based New Orleanians, with the agreement that the people she fed would do their own dishes.

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

In 1935, Louisa and Danny Barker had their first and only child, Sylvia. And in 1938, Louisa's professional singing career began in earnest. That year, she recorded "A Tisket, A Tasket" with Hammond organ on Vocalion. This led to a series of 24-sides on a Decca contract, including her hit, "Don't You Feel My Leg," a title that was deemed too risqué and changed to "Don't You Make Me High." Even so, the song proved too shocking for the times. Yet, despite being literally pulled off the presses, it became her best known recording. It was at Decca when she began working under the name of Blue Lu Barker. She appeared at Kelly's Stable on 52nd Street that year, and entered an active recording schedule that would lead to a total of 24 sides on Decca, followed by sessions on Apollo Records, followed by a contract with Capitol in the 1940s.

After 36 years away from New Orleans, the couple moved back in 1966 when Sylvia was an adult and Blue Lu's mother was ill. They formed a band, known as the Jazz Hounds, and worked locally, including regular appearances at the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival from 1974 through 1989, when health conditions forced her to retire. Blue Lu's last performance was, in fact, the New Orleans Jazz Festival performance in 1989, which was recorded.

The Barkers' last years were full of honors. Blue Lu's 74th birthday was celebrated with an hour-long special on her life and career on WWOZ-Radio, produced by an all-woman radio crew.⁹ Other honors include the Walk of Fame in front of Tippetina's Music Hall, the Henrietta DeLille Award, the Loyola University President's Medal, an award from the Treme Cultural Enrichment Program, three Lifetime Music Achievement Awards, awards from Offbeat Magazine, the Big Easy, and the Amistad

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Research Center, *New Orleans Magazine's* Jazz All-Star Award, African American Cultural Arts Awards, Gyarre School for Jazz Awareness, and a State of Louisiana award for outstanding contributions to Louisiana music. In 1991, she was honored for her contribution to jazz by St. Mary's Academy, in 1991 with a performance featuring many New Orleans women musicians, including Germaine Bazzle, Marva Wright, and Charmaine Neville.¹⁰

Blue Lu and Danny Barker were married for 64 years. The New Orleans City Council honored them by declaring January 13, 1994 "Blue Lu and Danny Barker Day." Danny Barker died in March 1994. Blue Lu Barker died of cancer four years later at the age of 84. She had a jazz funeral, with Wanda Rouzan presiding as Grand Marshal.

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Notes

¹ Danny Barker and Lu Barker, oral history, interviewed by Milt Hinton, April 30, 1980. Transcript, Institute for Jazz Studies, Rutgers, Newark.

² Danny Barker and Lu Barker, oral history, April 1980, transcript, 23.

³ Jason Berry, Jonathan Foose, and Tad Jones, *Up From the Cradle of Jazz: New Orleans Music Since World War II* (Athens and London: University of Georgia Press, 1986), 14.

⁴ Elizabeth Mullener, "This Lady Still Sings the Blues." *Times-Picayune*, March 3 1991: B-3.

⁵ Barker told this story many times. See Elizabeth Mullener, "This Lady Still Sings the Blues." *Times-Picayune*, March 3 1991: B-3.

⁶ Lolis Eric Elie, "Encounter with a Legend," *Times -Picayune*, May 15, 1998.

⁷ Danny Barker, ed. Alyn Shipton, *A Life in Jazz* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 178.

⁸ Mullner, B-3.

⁹ "Is She Blue? Radio Program Honors New Orleans Vocalist Blue Lu Barker." *Wavelength*, November 1987: 6. Williams Research Center, MSS 536 F1 (B Miscel).

¹⁰ See Mullener, B-1 and 3.

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Danny Barker and Lu Barker, oral history, interviewed by Milt Hinton, April 30, 1980.
Transcript, Institute for Jazz Studies, Rutgers, Newark.
Funeral program, St. Raymond Catholic Church, May 13, 1998, Old Mint.
State of Louisiana death certificate, copy at Old Mint.

Secondary Sources

Barker, Danny, ed. by Alyn Shipton, *A Life in Jazz* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986).

Jason Berry, Jonathan Foose, and Tad Jones. *Up From the Cradle of Jazz: New Orleans Music Since World War II*. Athens and London: University of Georgia Press, 1986.

Elie, Lolis Eric. "Encounter with a Legend," *Times-Picayune* May 15, 1998, vertical files, "Blue Barker," Hogan Jazz Archive and Old Mint.

Elie, Lolis Eric. "Funerals Not for Tourists." *Times-Picayune* May 5, 1998, vertical files, "Blue Lu Barker," Hogan Jazz Archive and Old Mint.

Harris, Sheldon. *Blues Who's Who: A Biographical Dictionary of Blues Singers* (New Rochelle, NY: Arlington House Publishers, 1979), 39-40.

Hart, Richard S. "Danny and Blue Lu in Many Ways Indistinguishable from City, Music," *Times-Picayune*, April 20, 1975. Vertical files, Old Mint and Hogan Jazz Archive.

"Is She Blue? Radio Program Honors New Orleans Vocalist Blue Lu Barker," *Wavelength*, November 1987: 6. Williams Research Center, MSS 536 F1 (B Miscel).

Mullener, Elizabeth. "Blue Lu Barker, 84, Sweet, Sassy Jazz Singer," (obituary), *Times-Picayune*, Friday May 8, 1998, 3. Vertical files, Old Mint.

Mullener, Elizabeth. "This Lady Still Sings the Blues." *Times-Picayune*, March 3, 1991: B1(3) Vertical files, Old Mint and Hogan Jazz Archive.

Shipton, Alyn, "Blue Lu Barker," Kernfeld, Barry. Ed. *New Grove Dictionary of Jazz*. (MacMillian, 2001), 138-39.

Simpson, Joel. "Blue Lu Barker" (obituary). *Down Beat* 65.10: 18 (1).

Wyckoff, Geraldine. "Louisa 'Blue Lu' Barker, 1913-98," *Gambit Weekly*, May 19, 1998, vol. 19, #20, 34. Vertical file, "Blue Lu Barker," Hogan Jazz Archive.

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Discography

Blue Lu Barker cut over fifty sides in the 1930s and 1940s. Some of her classics are:

- “He caught the B and O”/“Don't you make me high” (Decca 7506)
- “That made me mad” (Decca 7538)
- “A little bird told me” (Capitol 15308)
- “Here's a little girl” (Capitol 15347)

Many of these are currently available on CD, including:

- Classics 704, “Blue Lu Barker, 1938-1939”
- Classics 1130, “Blue Lu Barker, 1946-1949”

Her last concert at the 1989 New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival was recorded, and is available on CD:

- Orleans OR2111 *Blue Lu Barker Live at the Jazz Festival* (1989)

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Illustrations

The Hogan Jazz Archive has several excellent photographs of Blue Lu Barker.

Capitol Publicity shot, Blue Lu Barker
Accession number 152.4599
HJA P000076.02
Hogan Jazz Archive



Blue Lu Barker
Accession number 152.7598
HJA P000076.01
Hogan Jazz Archive



A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Blue Lu Barker - standing
Jeanette Kimball - seated
Accession number: 152.7600
P000076.03
Hogan Jazz Archive



Jeanette Kimball (piano) and Blue Lu Barker
Accession number: 52.7484
Hogan Jazz Archive



A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Emma “Sweet Emma” Barrett (piano, vocal, leader)

b. March 25, 1898 [March 25, 1897, April 1, 1897, April 25, 1897]¹ (New Orleans, Louisiana) / d. January 28, 1983 (Metairie, Louisiana)

SWEET EMMA
Former Pianist of
the Old Original Tuxedo Band
RINGING HER BELLS
And Spanking the Ivories with
Dixieland Jazz, at its best.
Phone HU. 8-1636, New Orleans, La.²

Business card, “Sweet Emma” Barrett

One of the best known and most recognizable New Orleans musicians, with her ubiquitous red beanie and the signature bells that jingled from her garters as she stomped and played the piano, was “Sweet Emma” Barrett, whose sixty-year career began with Oscar “Papa” Celestin in the 1920s, and ended with a three-nights-a-week gig at Preservation Hall that lasted a quarter of a century. “Sweet Emma,” also known as the “Bell Gal,” became almost synonymous with the crowded French Quarter room dedicated to the preservation of traditional jazz as a living art. She granted one interview in 1968, from which much of this report is drawn.³

Most accounts agree that Emma Barrett was born in the Spring, though it is less clear if the month was March or April, or if the year was 1897 or 1898. Varying dates

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

appear, not only in secondary sources, but in public records. She was named for her mother, Emma (nee Kennedy) Barrett. Her father, Captain William B. Barrett, was said to have fought for the North in the Civil War, and was a politician, and a Louisiana State senator. When Barrett was growing up, her father worked at the Custom House. She lived with her parents, seven brothers, and two sisters at 516 South Dorgenois Street, in the Tulane/Gravier neighborhood of the Mid-City District, just south of Treme. She recalled a band led by a musician named Ulysses that rehearsed in her neighborhood as one of her first musical influences.

We have seen that in turn-of-the-century New Orleans, piano-playing daughters were considered signs of respectability and upward mobility for middle-class white, black, and Creole families.⁴ In that tradition, Captain Barrett bought a piano for Emma's older sister, but it was Emma who was drawn to the instrument. At age seven, she began teaching herself; or, as she put it, "I just started playing."⁵ She began taking music lessons from the well-known music teacher, Professor Nickerson, father of Camille Nickerson, at his home on Galva Street.⁶ Even with this formal training behind her, during her career Barrett was never known as a "reading" musician, but rather one with a keen ear, a comprehensive knowledge of chords, excellent transposing skills (necessary for encountering pianos that were frequently out-of-tune), strong hands, and an infallible sense of time—not bad for a pianist who claimed not to practice. As she told Allen Jaffe, "People never could understand how I learned to play so good because I never did practice or like to play in my house. But I always liked to go out to other places and play." In the same interview, she said that she started playing in bands at

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

the age of twelve.⁷

By most accounts, her first professional job was with Oscar "Papa" Celestin's and "Bebe" Ridgely's co-led Original Tuxedo Jazz Orchestra in the early 1920s, though there must have been many earlier jobs in the decade between when she said she started playing in bands and when she joined Celestin and Ridgely. Percy Humphrey recalled that before she joined the Original Tuxedo Jazz Band, she played with a band at the Peking Temple Roof Garden.⁸ In any case, she was playing early enough for William Russell to claim that she was "one of the first known jazz pianists from New Orleans."⁹ Barrett, who would have been in her early twenties when she began playing with the Original Tuxedo Jazz Band, recalled that Celestin promised her mother he would make sure she "got home alright," and that he would pick her up and bring her back.¹⁰ This is the same arrangement Celestin would later make with Jeanette Salvant [Kimball]'s mother, after Celestin and Ridgely parted ways.

The history of the Original Tuxedo Orchestra is important for following the Barrett's career in the 1920s. Trumpet player/cornetist Oscar "Papa" Celestin led a group at the short-lived Tuxedo Dance Hall in Storyville in 1910, but this was not the same as the Original Tuxedo Orchestra, which was co-founded in 1917 by Celestin and trombonist William "Bebe" Ridgely. By the 1920s, the co-led Original Tuxedo Orchestra was pursuing what were called "society" engagements, such as debutante balls. It is during this period that Barrett auditioned for the band and was hired, perhaps also marking a shift in the band's bookings in environments that increased the social acceptability of a female piano player. She recorded with this band in 1925.¹¹

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Dissension within the group resulted in a split in the band in the mid-1920s. Many of the musicians, including Barrett, followed William "Bebe" Ridgely, who kept the name, Original Tuxedo Orchestra. Celestin formed a new band called the Tuxedo Jazz Orchestra, hiring Jeanette Salvant (later Kimball) as his pianist. Barrett stayed with Ridgely's Original Tuxedo Orchestra until 1936. During these years, Barrett also played with numerous other bands including those led by Sidney Desvigne, John Robichaux, and A.J. Piron. She also played on the steam ships or "steamers" that traveled the river, including the S.S. *Sidney* and the S.S. *Capitol*. On one of these excursions, she is said to have played with Louis Armstrong.¹² Though this fact could not be confirmed, it is highly plausible, since she and Armstrong would have been in town at the same time, and traveled in overlapping circles.¹³ She played in small groups throughout the 1940s. In the 1950s, she became "the Bell Gal" when the owner of the Paddock Lounge on Bourbon Street suggested that she accentuate the rhythm she kept with her feet by wearing garters around her legs with bells attached. It was also around this time that she acquired the name "Sweet Emma." Some accounts have her receiving this name because of her sweet disposition; others attribute it to irony—she was famous for being cantankerous, for charging for autographs, throwing water at people who tried to take her picture. As Barrett herself told one reporter who tried to learn her full name, "Sweet Emma, the Bell Girl, is what everybody calls me ... and that's the way I like it."¹⁴

Throughout the 1950s she continued playing with small groups, making several records. She joined the band of trumpet player Percy Humphrey; then he joined hers, when in 1961, she became a band leader at Preservation Hall. Preservation Hall was,

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

and still is, the labor of love of devoted jazz fans. It was established quite literally in order to “preserve” early jazz, and to provide a place for older jazz musicians to work. The history of Preservation Hall cannot be separated from the roots and folk music revival of the 1960s, nor can it be separated from Emma Barrett, who became a kind of mascot for the hall, as well as one of its most popular drawing cards. Barrett’s knowledge of traditional music, as well as her famous eccentricities (she distrusted airplanes, banks, and doctors), found an affectionate home among the revivalists, who sought meaning in cultural expressions of earlier times, and who were equally ambivalent about modern technology and institutions.¹⁵

1961 was a momentous year for Barrett. Not only did she begin her important relationship with Preservation Hall as a band leader and one of its most popular artists, but she was recorded by a mobile unit from the Riverside label, which featured her on a two-disk set, *New Orleans: The Living Legend* (Riverside 356/7; stereo 9356/7). These recordings powerfully helped to stir national and international interest in living New Orleans jazz artists who still played earlier styles. As John S. Wilson pointed out, by concentrating on artists in New York and Chicago, the recording industry had perpetuated the misconception that jazz completely evacuated New Orleans in 1917.¹⁶ The Riverside disks did not portray jazz in New Orleans as “cutting edge,” or as modern, but rather as a living link with a colorful and timeless past. Again, Barrett’s eccentricities, as well as her strong playing, occupied the attention of critics. Ralph Gleason noted that during the recording session, Barrett couldn’t feel inspired until she went home and came back wearing her red beanie, garters, and bells.¹⁷

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Critics could not help but write about Barrett's oddity, and the stories about her make it easy to see why. It is unfortunate however, that we know so much more about her as a "character," than as a musician. We know that she kept her life savings in a bag, rather than a bank. Just before Christmas, 1961, this bag—and its contents of \$2,500—were stolen by a man who offered to help her to cross the street. She told the police she was carrying her life savings with her because she didn't trust banks.¹⁸ The jazz community held a benefit concert for her at the Royal Orleans Hotel, charging only "a donation to Sweet Emma," and raising \$1,000.¹⁹ Unfortunately, most of that money was stolen from her two months later.²⁰ She still trusted her bag more than a bank.

Drummer Bob French was sometimes sent by his father Albert "Papa" French to pick up Emma and her wheel chair and bring her to Preservation Hall. He remembered that she would carry a sandwich with her, and would eat it on her break. The break, of course, was also when fans that had come from all over the world to hear her play, would approach her for her autograph. She would demand five dollars.²¹

Her fear of flying made travel difficult, but the popularity of the Preservation Hall band brought opportunities such as a 1964 booking at Disneyland.²² Allen and Sandra Jaffe, proprietors of Preservation Hall, arranged for her to take the train. Fear of flying may have complicated bookings, but it endeared her to many fans of traditional jazz. She became a favorite of the New Orleans Jazz Club who had her play for their "Jazz on Sunday Afternoon" concert series at the Royal Orleans Hotel.²³ When she backed out of a concert scheduled at a "Preservation Hall" in Memphis, fans forgave her because she had a funeral to play that day, "and "a funeral is just something she can't

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

miss."²⁴ She played all sorts of bookings throughout the 1960s. In April 1965, her band played for the maiden voyage of an oil tanker.²⁵ She played many benefits, for instance, a concert for Charity Hospital in April, 1965.²⁶

She was plagued by health problems in the later 1960s. On February 16, 1966, the *New Orleans Times-Picayune* reported that Barrett had "dropped a sizeable cake of ice on her foot."²⁷ The next month, at a New Orleans Jazz Club meeting, Richard Allen noticed that her badly swollen legs were wrapped in bandages.²⁸ She refused to go to a doctor. In January of 1967, her son, Ricard Alexis, (whose father was the trumpet player and bass player Ricard Alexis, but who Barrett had raised alone) tricked her into going to the doctor for her leg by telling her that if she didn't, he would have her committed. She complied and indeed, the doctor found that her leg was abscessed. Two days later, she suffered a stroke that left her paralyzed on her left side.²⁹ Barrett had helped to organize an annual "Jazz Jamboree" benefit for the Heart Fund, and had, in fact, played at all four of the annual programs. So, in light of her stroke, the fifth "Jazz Jamboree" was dedicated to her.³⁰

She was never able to regain the use of her right hand, but even this blow did not keep her from the piano. That winter, her return to the piano was described by jazz fan Helen Arlt, a president of the New Orleans Jazz Club, and printed in Thomas Griffin's "Lagniappe" column in the *States-Item*. It seems that while a Baptist church choir was singing at a Christmas party at the hospital, Emma had been persuaded to play a "one-handed piano selection. The accompanist for the choral group played the bass and Sweet Emma played the treble." Together, they performed a repertoire of traditional

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

material, such as “The Saints,” and “Didn’t He Ramble.” According to Arlt, “Emma said that she surprised herself with what she was able to do.”³¹

On March 4, 1968, the *Time’s Picayune* announced that Sweet Emma was planning her return to public performance. She would play for the Heart Fund Jazz Jamboree, the first time she has played publicly since her “lengthy career was curtailed by a stroke two years ago.”³² After she played the benefit, she returned to Preservation Hall, and continued to play very strong one-handed piano from her wheelchair, three nights a week for the next 15 years. This includes, actually, a two year period when she took her services to another club run by revivalists, Dixieland hall.

Barrett, angered by Allen Jaffe’s opinion that due to her fragile health, she should play two nights a week instead of three, played at Dixieland Hall from 1969 to 1971. When that club went under, Barrett played a closing-night “When the Saints Go Marching In,” then returned, once again, to Preservation Hall, where she played three nights a week as much as she could until her death.³³

At the Hogan Jazz Archive is a long list of song titles covering two sides of a sheet of paper. Under the heading, “Songs that are the Big Hits,” Sweet Emma listed shortened titles of her most requested numbers: “Bill Bailey,” “Basin Street,” “St. Louis Blues,” “Bourbon Street,” “None of My Jelly Roll,” “Good man’s Hard to Find,” “Sister Kate,” “Closer Walk,” and dozens more.³⁴

Her style has been described as strong, rhythmic, and as delivering the powerful and accurate foundation of chords, even when transposing to keep in tune with tonically-wandering bands—important skills in early New Orleans band styles that

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

featured collective improvisation. Said William Russell, "For such a small lady, she had tremendous power. She sat on a low stool and in her later years, a wheelchair with her hands no higher than her arms, yet she got all that power in there."³⁵

On January 18, 1983, Barrett played her last engagement at Preservation Hall. She died ten days later at the age of 85.

"At her request, there will be no jazz funeral, said her son, Ricard Alexis."³⁶

Twenty years after her death, she is still one of the most popular musicians at Preservation Hall, recalled in photographs, recordings, and stories. In August, 2001, she was commemorated in an art exhibit at the New Orleans African American Museum of Art. Said curator Lolet Boutte, "We are always recognizing these male trumpet players ... but little attention has been given to some of the females."³⁷

Notes

¹ Most sources have March 25, 1898, as her birth date, but the 1900 and 1910 US Census reports list the April 1, 1897 date. To complicate matters, the Social Security Death Index states her birth date as April 25, 1897.

² Emma Barrett's business cards, MSS 536, cards, f. 140. Williams Research Center.

³ The notes from this interview, by Chris Botsford and William Russell, are housed in the Williams Research Center, and were reprinted as "The Sweet Emma Interview," in *New Orleans Music* vol. 2, no. 3, February 1991, 6-12.

⁴ Charles Chamberlain, "The Goodson Sisters: Women Pianists and the Function of Gender in the Jazz Age," *The Jazz Archivist* vol. XV (2001), 3.

⁵ William Russell. "Notes for Emma Smoky Mary Album," MSS 519, f.12, Williams Research Center, 1.

⁶ Richard Allen, "'Sweet Emma' Rings Bell at the Royal Orleans," August 28, 1967, typed draft. Vertical files, Hogan Jazz Archive.

⁷ Chris Botsford and William Russell, "The Sweet Emma Interview," *New Orleans*

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Music (incorporating *Footnote*) vol. 2, no. 3, February 1991, 7.

⁸ John Pope, "'Sweet Emma' Barrett, Jazz Musician, is Dead," *The Times-Picayune States-Item*, January 29, 1983, 4.

⁹ Quoted in press release, vertical file, Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane.

¹⁰ Botsford, 7.

¹¹ Samuel B. Charters, *Jazz: New Orleans: 1885-1963*, (New York: Oak Publications, Revised Edition, 1963), 69, 137.

¹² 'Sweet Emma' Will Entertain," *New Orleans States-Item*, July 17, 1965. Vertical file, Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University.

¹³ Bruce Raeburn, email correspondence, September 2, 2004.

¹⁴ Thomas Griffin, "Lagniappe," *States-Item*, July 13, 1960, Hogan Jazz Archive.

¹⁵ Sally Placksin, *Jazzwomen: 1900 to the Present, Their Words, Lives and Music* (London and Sydney: Pluto Press, 1985), 250. See also Carter, William, "Tales of Emma," *Preservation Hall: Music from the Heart* (London and New York: Cassell, 1991), 256-261.

¹⁶ Wilson, John S. "Neglected Region," *New York Times*, May 28 1961, 16X. Vertical files, Hogan Jazz Archives; also MSS 519, f. 14, Williams Research Center.

¹⁷ Gleason, Ralph J. "A Stirring LP Expedition Into Jazz of New Orleans." *Des Moines Register* November 1961. Vertical files, Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University.

¹⁸ "Woman Robbed of 2500 Here," paper?, "about Xmans, '61," MSS 519 F14. Williams Research Center.

¹⁹ "The Music is Sweet and Hot Coming Back," *New Orleans Times-Picayune*, February 8, 1962. Vertical files, Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University. "Show Biz," *New Orleans States-Item*, January 30, 1962, Vertical files, Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University. "'Sweet Emma' Rings Bell at the Royal Orleans," *New Orleans States-Item*, January 20, 1962. Vertical files, Hogan Jazz Archives, Tulane University. "Robbed of her Lifetime Savings ...," *New Orleans States-Item*, January 30, 1962. Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University.

²⁰ "Jazz Pianist Hit, Robbed of \$1225," *New Orleans States-Item*, March 1962, Vertical file, persons, Emma Barrett, Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University; also, "What The Ding Dong?" *The Second Line* XIII.3/4: 14. Marr Sound Archive, University of Missouri, Kansas City.

²¹ Bill Grady, "Drummer Shucks the Jive from Dixie," *Times-Picayune*, September 17 2000, B-1, 2. Vertical files, Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University.

²² Bacin, Bill. "Skyful of Jazz." *The Second Line* XV.11-16;42: 11-12, Marr Sound Archive, University of Missouri, Kansas City. "Sweet Emma's in a quandary....," *New Orleans States-Item*, September 1964, Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University.

²³ "Jazz Club to Feature 'Bell Gal' Emma," *New Orleans Times-Picayune*, April 12 1964. Vertical files, Hogan Jazz Archives, Tulane University. "Sweet Emma' Will Entertain," *New Orleans States-Item*, July 17, 1965. Vertical file, Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University.

²⁴ "Why Sweet Emma Can't Come Up to Memphis." *Press-Scimitar* May 1965.

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Vertical files, Hogan Jazz Archives, Tulane University.

²⁵ "Supertanker New Orleans Arrives Here," *New Orleans States-Item*, Wednesday, April 14 1965. Vertical files, Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University.

²⁶ Goreau, Lorraine, "C'est La Vie," April 13 1965. Vertical files, Hogan Jazz Archives, Tulane University.

²⁷ "One of Carnival's..." *New Orleans Times-Picayune*, February 16 1966.

²⁸ Allen, Richard, "New Orleans Jazz Club Meeting," March 21, 1966, typed notes. Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University

²⁹ EDE (find out who this is), typed note regarding Emma Barrett's health, January 20 1967. Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University.

³⁰ "Heart Fund Jazz Benefit in Honor of 'Sweet Emma,'" *Times-Picayune*, March 8 1967, 1. Hogan Jazz Archives, Tulane University; also MSS 519, f. 14, Williams Research Center.

³¹ Thomas Griffin, "Lagniappe," *New Orleans States-Item*, December 29, 1967. Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University.

³² "Sweet Emma' Plans Return," *Times-Picayune*, March 4, 1968. MSS 519 F14. Williams Research Center.

³³ "Dixieland Hall Closes Its Doors," *New Orleans Times-Picayune*, April 13 1971, Vertical files, Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University; Tom Gage, "Lean Times, Rising Union Pay Closes Dixieland Hall," *Times-Picayune*, April 13, 1971, 2. Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University;

³⁴ Barrett, Emma. "Songs that are the Big Hits." List of Sweet Emma Barrett's repertoire in her handwriting. Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University.

³⁵ "Emma Barrett is Dead at 85; Preservation Hall Piano Star," *New York Times*, January 30, 1983.

³⁶ Pope, John, "'Sweet Emma' Barrett, Jazz Musician, is Dead," *The Times-Picayune States-Item*, January 29, 1983, 1.

³⁷ Doug MacCash, "Show Stars Jazz Movers and Shakers," *Times-Picayune*, August 3, 2001 Vertical files, Hogan Jazz Archives, Tulane University.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Allen, Richard, "New Orleans Jazz Club Meeting," March 21, 1966, typed notes. Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University.

____ "Sweet Emma' Rings Bell at the Royal Orleans," August 28, 1967, typed draft. Vertical files, Hogan Jazz Archive.

Barrett, Emma. "Songs that are the Big Hits." List of Sweet Emma Barrett's repertoire in her handwriting. Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University.

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

EDE, typed note regarding Emma Barrett's health, January 20 1967. Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University.

Russell, William. "Notes for Emma Smoky Mary Album," MSS 519, f.12, Williams Research Center

Russell, William, handwritten notes. MSS 519 F15, Williams Research Center.

Wilson, John R. Correspondence with Emma Barrett, July 28, 1965. Vertical file, Institute for Jazz Studies, John Cotton Dana Library, Rutgers.

Secondary Sources

Arnold, G.E. "Goodbye to 'Sweet Emma'." *Times-Picayune & States-Item*, February 1983: section 1, page 18. MSS 519, f.15. Williams Research Center.

Ashforth, Alden, "Barrett, Sweet Emma," *New Grove Dictionary of Jazz* (Oxford University Press 2003) grovemusic.com (accessed June 26, 2003).

Bacin, Bill. "Skyful of Jazz." *The Second Line* XV.11-16;42: 11-12, Marr Sound Archive, University of Missouri, Kansas City.

"'Bell Gal' to Play on Jazz Series," *Times-Picayune*, August 21 1966. Vertical files, Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University.

Borenstein, Larry, and Bill Russell. *Preservation Hall Portraits*. Baton Rouge, Louisiana: State University Press, 1968.

Botsford, Chris, and William Russell, "The Sweet Emma Interview," in *New Orleans Music* (incorporating *Footnote*) vol. 2, no. 3, February 1991, 6-12.

"Bourbon Street Parade," *Vieux Carre Courier*, February 16, 1968. Vertical files, Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University.

Carter, William, "Tales of Emma," *Preservation Hall: Music from the Heart* (London and New York: Cassell, 1991), 256-261.

Chamber of Commerce Bulletin, March 27 1964. Vertical files, Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University.

Chamberlain, Charles, "The Goodson Sisters: Women Pianists and the Function of Gender in the Jazz Age," *The Jazz Archivist* vol. XV (2001), 3.

"Dixieland Hall Closes Its Doors," *New Orleans Times-Picayune*, April 13 1971. Vertical files, Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University.

"Dixieland Pianist 'Sweet Emma' Barrett, 85," *Chicago Tribune* (find the date).

"Emma Barrett, 85, Jazz Pianist, Dies," *New York Times*, January 30, 1983, 18.

"Emma Barrett is Dead at 85; Preservation Hall Piano Star," *New York Times*, January 30, 1983.

Gage, Tom. "Lean Times, Rising Union Pay Closes Dixieland Hall," *Times-Picayune*, April 13, 1971, 2. Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University.

Gleason, Ralph J. "A Stirring LP Expedition Into Jazz of New Orleans." *Des Moines Register* November 1961. Vertical files, Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University.

Goreau, Lauraine, "C'est La Vie," April 13 1965. Vertical files, Hogan Jazz Archives, Tulane University.

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

- Grady, Bill. "Drummer Shucks the Jive from Dixie," *Times-Picayune*, September 17 2000, B-1, 2. Vertical files, Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University.
- ____ "Jazz Hall's Ghosts Pluck at Manager's Heartstrings," *Times-Picayune* June 2, 2002, B-1, 3. Vertical files, Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University.
- Griffin, Thomas (Tommy), column, "Lagniappe," *New Orleans States-Item*, July 13, 1960, June 5 1961, April 15, 1966, December 29, 1967, March 6, 1968, Vertical files, Hogan Jazz Archives; Tulane University.
- "Group Swing Popular Jazz," *Times-Picayune*, January 30 1962. Vertical files, Hogan Jazz Archives, Tulane University.
- Handy, D. Antoinette. *Black Women in American Bands and Orchestras*. 2nd Edition. Lanham, MD and Kent, England: Scarecrow Press, 1998, 229.
- "Heart Fund Jazz Fete March 19," *New Orleans States-Item*, March 8, 1967. Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University.
- "Heart Fund Jazz Benefit in Honor of 'Sweet Emma,'" *Times-Picayune*, March 8 1967, 1. Hogan Jazz Archives, Tulane University; also MSS 519, f. 14, Williams Research Center.
- "Jazz Club to Feature 'Bell Gal' Emma," *New Orleans Times-Picayune*, April 12 1964. Vertical files, Hogan Jazz Archives, Tulane University; and MSS 536, f. 35, Williams Research Center.
- "Jazz Pianist Hit, Robbed of \$1225," *New Orleans States-Item*, March 1962. Vertical file, Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University.
- Lerman, Leo. "The Local Legend: Sweet Emma the Bell Gal on Her Front Porch in Her New Orleans," unknown publication, 150-151. Vertical files, Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University.
- "Local and Jackson Groups Bounce Together," *UCC*, January 23 - 29 1962. Vertical files, Hogan Jazz Archives, Tulane University.
- MacCash, Doug. "Show Stars Jazz Movers and Shakers," *Times-Picayune*, August 3, 2001 Vertical files, Hogan Jazz Archives, Tulane University.
- Manley, Brent. "Jazzfest Show is Stolen By Sweet Emma Barrett," *Times-Picayune* April 24 1970. Vertical files, Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University.
- McCauley, Patrick. "Sweet Emma." *The Second Line* XIII.3/4: 13-14. Marr Sound Archive, University of Missouri, Kansas City.
- Morrison, Benjamin. "Vintage Jazz, N'Awlins Style." *Times-Picayune* June 21 - 27 1987. Vertical files, Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University.
- "The Music is Sweet and Hot Coming Back," *New Orleans Times-Picayune*, February 8, 1962. Vertical files, Hogan Jazz Archives, Tulane University.
- "N.O. Jazz Pianist Emma Barrett Dies," *Times-Picayune/States-Item Metro*, January 28, 1983, section 1, page 13. .
- Obituary, *The Times-Picayune*, January 30, 1983, 3.
- "'Oh Didn't They Ramble' ...," *New Orleans States-Item*, October 21 1964. Vertical files, Hogan Jazz Archives, Tulane University.
- "One of Carnival's..." *New Orleans Times-Picayune*, February 16 1966.
- Placksin, Sally. *Jazzwomen: 1900 to the Present, Their Words, Lives and Music*.

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

- London and Sydney: Pluto Press, 1985), 250.
- John Pope, "Sweet Emma' Barrett, jazz musician, is dead," *The Times-Picayune States-Item*, January 29, 1983, 1, 4. MSS 519, Williams Research Center; and Hogan Jazz Archive Tulane University.
- Record Player, The. "Sweet Emma's Just Fine on Wax," *New Orleans States-Item*, August 7, 1965. Vertical files, Hogan Jazz Archives, Tulane University.
- "Robbed of her Lifetime Savings ...," *New Orleans States-Item*, January 30, 1962. Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University.
- Rose, Al, and Edmond Souchon. *New Orleans Jazz: A Family Album*, third edition, revised and enlarged (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1984), 11.
- Schafer, William, "Original Tuxedo Orchestra," *The New Grove Dictionary of Music Online* ed. L. Macy (Accessed June 26, 2003), <<http://www.grovemusic.com>>
- "Show Biz," *New Orleans States-Item*, January 30, 1962, Vertical files, Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University.
- "Supertanker New Orleans Arrives Here," *New Orleans States-Item*, Wednesday, April 14 1965. Vertical files, Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University.
- "Sweet Emma' Due in Jazz Concert," *New Orleans Times-Picayune*, July 18 1965. Vertical files, Hogan Jazz Archives, Tulane University.
- "Sweet Emma intends to come back..." *New Orleans States-Item*, September 8, 1967. Vertical files, Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University.
- 'Sweet Emma' Plans Return," *Times-Picayune*, March 4, 1968. MSS 519 F14. Williams Research Center
- "Sweet Emma' Rings Bell at the Royal Orleans," *New Orleans States-Item*, January 20, 1962. Vertical files, Hogan Jazz Archives, Tulane University.
- "Sweet Emma' To Appear in Benefit Show," *New Orleans States-Item*, March 4, 1968. Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University.
- "Sweet Emma' Will Entertain," *New Orleans States-Item*, July 17, 1965. Vertical file, Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University.
- "Sweet Emma's in a quandary..." *New Orleans States-Item*, September 1964, Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University
- Watson, Clay. "Museum News." *The Second Line* XV.3/4: 19; 21.
- "What The Ding Dong?" *The Second Line* XIII.3/4: 14. Marr Sound Archive, University of Missouri, Kansas City.
- "Why Sweet Emma Can't Come Up to Memphis." *Press-Scimitar* May 1965. Vertical files, Hogan Jazz Archives, Tulane University.
- Wilson, John S. "Neglected Region," *New York Times*, May 28 1961, 16X. Vertical files, Hogan Jazz Archives; also MSS 519, f. 14, Williams Research Center.
- "Woman Robbed of 2500 Here," paper?, "about Xmans, '61," MSS 519 F14. Williams Research Center.

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Discography

As a leader:

New Orleans' Sweet Emma and Her Preservation Hall Jazz Band Preservation Hall, VSP 12, with Sweet Emma Barrett, Leader, Piano; Percy Humphrey, Master of Ceremonies, Trumpet, Josiah "Cie" Frasier, drums, Emanuel Sayles, Banjo, Willie Humphrey, Clarinet; Jim "Big Jim" Robinson, Trombone, Alcide "Slow Drag" Pavageau, bass. Recorded in 1964, Guthrie Theater, Minneapolis.

Sweet Emma: The Bell Gal (Riverside, 1961).

Two-disk set, *New Orleans: The Living Legend* (Riverside 356/7; stereo 9356/7) recorded on Riverside mobile unit, Jan. 61

(From Bruzincyk B172-3)

New Orleans, January 25, 1961. Percy Humphrey (trumpet), Jim Robinson (trombone), Willie Humphrey (clarinet), Sweet Emma Barrett (piano, vocal), Emanuel Sayles (banjo, guitar), McNeal Breaux (bass), Josiah Frazier (drums).

180	"Just a Little While (test)	Riverside
180-1	"Just a Little While	Riverside RLP364
181	St. Louis Blues	" RLP356
182	"Bill Bailey"	" RLP364
183	"Down in Honky Tonk Town"	—
184	"The Bell Gal's Careless Blues"	—
185	"Tisomingo Blues"	—
186	"High Society"	RLP357
187	"The Saints"	RLP364
188	"Sweet Emma's Blues"	RLP357
189	"I Ain't Gonna Give None of My Jelly Roll"	RLP 364
190	"Chinatown My Chinatown"	RLP 364

New Orleans, 1963. Alvin Alcorn (trumpet), Jim Robinson (trombone), Louis Cottrell (clarinet), Sweet Emma Barrett (piano, vocal), Emanuel Sayles (banjo), Placide Adams (bass), Paul Barbarin (drums)

"Jelly Roll Blues"	Southland SLP241
"A Good Man is Hard to Find"	"
"Big Butter and Egg Man"	"
"That's a Plenty"	"

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

New Orleans, 1963. Same group as above, except Raymond Burke (clarinet), Don Albert (trumpet), and Waldren Joseph (trombone) replace Cottrell, Alcorn and Robinson.

With Alvin Alcorn (Bruyninckx A70)

New Orleans Rarities 2: "Oh, Didn't He Ramble," "Pallet on the Floor," "In the Shade of the Old Apple Tree," "Big Lunch Blues," "Just a Closer Walk With Thee," "Bill Bailey."
New Orleans, 1964. Alvin Alcorn (trumpet), Andrew Morgan (clarinet), Capt. John Handy (alto saxophone), "Sweet" Emma Barrett (piano, vocal), "Creole George Guesnon (banjo), Joseph Butler (bass), Josiah "Cie" Frazier. (Bruyninckx, A70.)

With Original Tuxedo Jazz Orchestra (playing at Spanish Fort)
Oscar Celestin, Shots Madison (cornets), Bill Ridgely (trombone), Willard Thoumy (clarinet), Paul Barnes (alto sax), Emma Barrett (piano), John Marrero (banjo) Simon Marrero (bass), Abbie Foster (drums).

OK 8215, 8906-A "Original Tuxedo Rag"

OK 8198, 8907-A "Careless Love"

OK 8198, 8908-A "Black Rag"

Recorded New Orleans, January 1925. (Samuel B. Charters notes that there is some confusion as to the personnel on the recordings of the Original Tuxedo Jazz Orchestra. Charters, *Jazz: New Orleans: 1885-1963*, 137.)

With James "Kid" Clayton (Bruyninckx C371)

Folkways FA2463 and FA 2465, with Jimmy Clayton (trumpet and vocal), Joe Avery (trombone), Albert Burbank (clarinet), Sweet Emma Barrett (piano), George Guesnon (banjo, vocal), Sylvester Handy (bass), Alec Bigard (drums). New Orleans, August 20, 1952.

With Israel Gorman (Bruyninckx, G413)

Center CLP12, with Charlie Love (trumpet), Joe "Kid" Avery (trombone), Israel Gorman (clarinet), Sweet Emma Barrett (piano), Albert Jiles (drums). Recorded at the "Happy Landing," New Orleans, July 31 and August 7, 1954.

With Percy Humphrey (Bruyninckx H821)

Sweet Emma: Living in New Orleans 1974! (Smoky Mary SM1974P) with Percy Humphrey (trumpet), Jim Robinson (trombone), Willie Humphrey (clarinet), Sweet Emma Barrett (piano, vocal), Frank Demond (banjo), Chester Zardis (bass), Josiah "Cie" Frazier (drums), Annie Pavageau, Alma Anderson (vocal). Recorded in New Orleans, May 27, 1974.

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Films and Videos

On the Road Again (Various Artists, produced by Sherwin Dunner and Richard Nevins),
Yazoo 520. Includes footage of Emma Barrett performing "I Ain't Gonna Give
Nobody None Of My Jelly Roll

The Cincinnati Kid (1965)

TV special: *Steppin' Out Special Edition: A Jazz Archive* (WLAE, 1987).

Also appeared on Ed Sullivan Show.

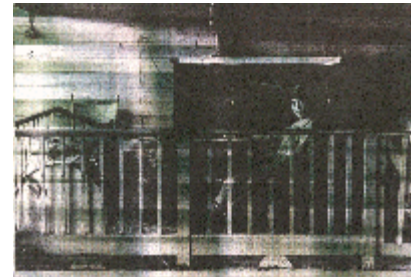
A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Illustrations

Ephemera, business cards, tickets, flyers, etc. MSS 536 cards f. 22, f. 83, and f. 140, are available at the Williams Research Center.

The Hogan Jazz Archive has a number of photographs of Emma Barrett.

Emma Barrett on the porch of Luthjen's Bar
in the late 1950s, 2533 Marais Street
(photo by Lee Friedlander)
Hogan Jazz Archive



Emma Barrett (piano) with Brady Smith (drums)
New Orleans Jazz Club Party, Mardi Gras Day, 1959
(photographer William Russell)
Hogan Jazz Archive.



A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Emma Barrett at the New Orleans Jazz Club Party, Mardi Gras Day, 1959 (photographer William Russell).
Hogan Jazz Archive.



Emma Barrett playing the piano at the Lauralee Guest House, St. Charles Ave. for the Krewe of Wrecks Mardi Gras Party, March 1, 1960 (photographer Florence Mars).
Hogan Jazz Archive.



A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Wilhelmina Bart de Rouen (pianist)

b. circa 1900 (New Orleans, Louisiana) / d. October 21, 1969 (New Orleans, Louisiana)

Little information has been published on Wilhelmina Bart de Rouen, though books and oral histories about New Orleans jazz musicians often contain fleeting mentions of her as a pianist who worked in New Orleans bands from the mid-late 1920s. Al Rose and Edmond Souchon estimated her birth year to be around 1900, and claimed that early in her career she worked with clarinetist Jimmy Noone.¹ She also appears on Rose's list of "jazz musicians who performed in the legally constituted tenderloin district known as Storyville between January 1, 1898 and November 17, 1917."²

Biographical data is scarce. Her parents were Madeline D'Hemecourt and William A. Bart.³ Emanuel Sayles remembered that she lived on Annette Street, near Claiborne, in the Seventh Ward, in the 1920s.⁴

Guitarist and banjo player Danny Barker recalled that he was a child when he first encountered Bart in the early 1920s, and that she was "a prominent jazz pianist, a lady much respected in the downtown Creole French (colored) section of New Orleans." She, in fact, hired Barker's childhood band, the Boozan Kings, to play a concert at the elite Creole of color meeting place, the Francs Amis Hall, in the Seventh Ward. "Playing

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

for Mrs. Bart and at the exclusive Francs Amis was quite an achievement for the novelty band.”⁵ “Much respected,” as Bart may have been, Barker’s own opinions about her seem to have been mixed. In his oral with Milt Hinton, he said that Bart grossly underpaid the Bouzan Kings; after charging 25 or 35 cents admission, she paid the boys a dollar fifty each when it was over, making a large profit since “[i]t was a great big hall.”⁶ Barker cited this disappointment as the impetus for leaving his boyhood band for more professional jobs—yet, Bart was the pianist at Barker’s first professional job in Willie Pajeaud’s band at the Alamo Dance Hall. Samuel Charters quotes Barker as saying that Bart tended to nod off, eat lunch, and read the paper on the band stand, and sometimes didn’t know what tune was being played.⁷ Barker also told of Bart’s habit of “promptly falling asleep at eleven p.m., and, at times snoring louder than the band.”⁸

In 1925, Bart was the pianist for the New Orleans Creole Jazz Band, organized by cornetist Amos White, a band that also included Barney Bigard and played at Old Spanish Fort, a popular resort since the 1800s, on Lake Pontchartrain. Charters includes this cryptic mention: “There was union trouble and somebody threw a stink bomb at Willa, but the orchestra played through the summer.”⁹ In 1927, she was at the Alamo Dance Hall on Burgundy and Canal, as the pianist in Willie Pajeaud’s band. When Danny Barker left this band, George Guesnon took his place. He remembered that the job was “tough.” The proprietor would say, “Don’t let me hear the echo of the last piece die out before you pick up another one.” He also remembered that the job lasted from nine until three. Guesnon recalled Bart as a “good, strong piano player”¹⁰ Alex Bigard recalled playing with her in Willie Pajaud’s band at the Alamo.¹¹ Lester

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Santiago also remembered Bart from the Alamo.¹² She was never recorded.

A hand-written note in the vertical files at the Hogan Jazz Archive indicates that around 1960, she was living in Lacombe, Louisiana.¹³ She died in 1969.

Notes

¹ Al Rose and Edmond Souchon, *New Orleans Jazz: A Family Album*, third edition, revised and enlarged (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1984), 11.

² Al Rose, *Storyville, New Orleans: Being an Authentic, Illustrated Account of the Notorious Red-Light District* (University of Alabama, 1974), 204.

³ Samuel B. Charters, *Jazz New Orleans 1885-1963* (New York: Oak Publications, 1963 edition), 103.

⁴ Emanuel Sayles, Oral History Digest, January 17, 1959, Reel IV, 33. Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane.

⁵ Danny Barker, *A Life in Jazz* (London: Oxford University Press, 1986), 41.

⁶ Oral History, Danny Barker, interviewed by Milt Hinton, New Orleans, April, 1980. Transcript, Institute for Jazz Studies, Rutgers.

⁷ Samuel B. Charters, *Jazz New Orleans 1885-1963*, 64.

⁸ Danny Barker, ed. Alyn Shipton, *Buddy Bolden and the Last Days of Storyville* (London and New York: Cassell, 1998), 135.

⁹ Charters, 103.

¹⁰ George Guesnon, Oral History, June 10, 1960, Digest–Retyped, 6. Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane.

¹¹ Alex Bigard, Oral History, February 7, 1961, Digest–Retyped, 12. Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane.

¹² Lester Santiago, Oral History, January 9, 1959, Reel I–Summary–Retyped, 7. Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane.

¹³ Handwritten note, vertical file, persons, Wilhelmina Bart DeRouen. Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane.

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Bibliography

Primary Sources

- Alex Bigard, Oral History, February 7, 1961, Digest–Retyped, 12. Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane
- George Guesnon, Oral History, June 10, 1960, Digest–Retyped, 6. Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane.
- Lester Santiago, Oral History, January 9, 1959, Reel I–Summary–Retyped, 7. Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane.
- Emanuel Sayles, Oral History Digest, January 17, 1959, Reel IV, 33. Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane.

Secondary Sources

- Charters, Samuel Barclay, IV. *Jazz: New Orleans 1885 - 1957*. Belleville, N.J.: Walter C. Allen, 1958, 64.
- Handy, D. Antoinette. *Black Women in American Bands and Orchestras, Second Edition*. Lanham, Mass. and Kent: Scarecrow Press, 1998.
- Rose, Al. *Storyville, New Orleans: Being an Authentic, Illustrated Account of the Notorious Red-Light District* (University of Alabama, 1974).
- Rose, Al, and Edmond Souchon. *New Orleans Jazz: A Family Album*, third edition, revised and enlarged (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1984).
- Obituary, *New Orleans States-Item*, October 23, 1969; *Times-Picayune*, October 24, 1969, the Williams Research Center, MSS 536, Obits f. 38.

Discography/Illustrations

No recordings or illustrations found.

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Connie [Connee] Boswell [Constance Fooré] (singer, arranger, multi-instrumentalist)

b. December 3, 1907 (Kansas City, MO) / d. October 11, 1976 (New York, NY)

Connie Boswell was the lead voice in the famous Boswell Sisters, a white singing trio whose spectacular success in radio and the recording industry lasted from 1931-1936. When her sisters, Martha and Helvetia married and retired from their singing careers, Connie continued on with her own successful solo career, changing the spelling of her name to Connee in 1941.¹ Less known, but of great interest to this study, is the local fame and musical contributions of Connie Boswell and her sisters earlier on, as a singing and instrumental trio in New Orleans in the 1920s.

While not born in New Orleans, Connie and her sisters grew up there. The influence of the city's music as can be heard in the unique approach to vocal harmony for which they would become known. Jane Hassinger has written, "With their inspired phrasing, advanced harmonies, blues intonations, melodic and rhythmic invention, and steadfast refusal to perform a tune just the way it was written, they helped bring Afro-American jazz elements in the mainstream of popular music in the 1930s."² Inspired by instrumental jazz improvisation, which they heard and played in their youth, and black vocal styles in blues and gospel, which they heard on record, from street musicians at the French Market, and from the servants in the family home, the Boswell Sisters fused an improvisatory approach to vocal harmony that delighted the jazz musicians with

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

whom they played, and inspired singers including the Andrews Sisters (who even copied their Southern accents), Ella Fitzgerald, and Bing Crosby.

Before moving to New Orleans, the Boswells lived in Kansas City, Missouri, and briefly in Birmingham, Alabama. Martha and Connie were born in Kansas City, in 1905 and 1907, respectively, and the youngest sister, Helvetia, known as “Vet,” was born in Birmingham in 1911. When the family moved to New Orleans in 1914, Vet was 3, Connie was 7, and Martha was 9. The 1920 Census finds the Boswell family living at 3937 Camp Street, in what is known as the Touro Neighborhood, between Uptown and the Garden District.³ The family was comfortably middle-class, with a managerial income, and employed several African American servants, whose singing the sisters would later recall in interviews when asked about their influences.⁴

Before arriving in New Orleans in 1914, both Connie and Vet had already begun their training in classical music, expected of young white women of their class and times, and Martha was soon to begin piano lessons. Vet studied violin. Connie, who had contracted polio at the age of three, was given the cello, an instrument she could play from a seated position.⁵ At an early age (probably 7, though most accounts say 4), she studied with renowned cellist, Otto Finck.⁶ Connie also studied piano and painting, but never took singing lessons.⁷ The sisters’ training in “high-brow” music continued, all excelled, and all three would play in the New Orleans Philharmonic. However, growing up in New Orleans in the teens and 1920s, they were especially drawn to jazz.

We are accustomed to seeing historical accounts of young white men in the 1920s being “bitten by the jazz bug,” but the Boswell sisters give us access to a history

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

of young, white women, who found themselves energized and inspired by the new music. Vet picked up the banjo, violin, and guitar; Connie the alto saxophone and trombone; and Martha “jazzed up” her piano style.

In interviews, the Boswells often reminisced about jazz musicians jamming in the family home. They enjoyed musical associations with many New Orleans jazz musicians, including cornetist, Emmett Hardy; drummer, Arthur “Monk” Hazel; trombonist, Santo Pecora, trumpet players, Leon and Louis Prima; and most especially with pianist, bassist and orchestra leader Norman Brownlee.⁸ In an interview with Jan Shapiro, Vet recalled that she and her sisters “actually just grew up with music. Well, mostly my mother was great on the piano and so was papa. But then, they had guitars and banjos. They had musical instruments around all the time.”⁹ Their parents and aunt and uncle sang in a barbershop quartet, providing the sisters with intimate exposure to close harmonies.

While both Boswell parents enjoyed music and encouraged their daughters’ talents, it was their mother who supported their desire to perform jazz in public. Connie recalled that it was her mother who took her to hear Mamie Smith, and other blues singers, in a black theater that held shows for white audiences on Friday nights.¹⁰ Connie’s singing inspirations also included Enrico Caruso. “I used to sit and listen and be amazed by his breathing. Then I’d try and do what he was doing. I’d take a long breath and hit a lot of notes.”¹¹

With the encouragement of their mother (and in spite of the discouragement from their father), the Boswell Sisters formed a vocal and instrumental trio and performed

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

locally. In 1925, they were recorded by a mobile unit from Victor. “Nights When I’m Lonely” and “I’m Gonna Cry (Crying Blues),” written by Martha, remain classics, and an example of what the Boswell’s sounded like before traveling on vaudeville. Once they took to the road in 1928, traveling to Chicago and California, they focused primarily on their singing.

While performing on a radio station in 1929, they were heard by an artists’ manager named Harry Leedy, who signed them on. Their recording career would coincide with their becoming almost exclusively a vocal trio, with the exception of Martha’s piano.

They landed a contract with Okeh in October 1929. They signed by Brunswick in 1931, after performing at the Paramount Theater, New York, and were national and international stars for the rest of the trio’s time together. Once they began performing and recording with big bands, they were no longer accompanied by Martha alone, but by bands and jazz musicians. Their first recording on Brunswick was with the Dorsey Brothers Orchestra.

Even as mainstream recording stars, the Boswells were praised by improvisers for their ability to improvise and to foster a creative musical environment of interaction among singers and instrumentalists. John Lucas defended and praised the Boswells in a series of articles he wrote for *Downbeat* in 1944. He related that the sisters were “taunted” for their unconventional harmonies, but that they were supported by many musicians, including Tommy Dorsey. Their approach to harmony taken from jazz improvisation, they didn’t write their parts down, but worked them out as head

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

arrangements, creating parts so appealing to jazz musicians that instrumentalists sometimes played the Boswell's parts.¹² Their approach to lyrics incorporated elements of behind-the-beat jazz phrasing and blue notes. On many of their recordings, they "emulated the sound of trumpets, trombones, and banjos," wrote Jan Shapiro, who observed that the Boswell's style was heard as "black," by audiences, and challenged notions of white womanhood in ways that were both disturbing and titillating to white audiences.¹³

After five years of spectacular success as radio and recording stars, Vet and Martha both left their careers to get married. Connee married, also, to her manager—a marriage that would last nearly forty years—but she did not leave her career. During Connie's solo career, she changed the spelling of her name to "Connee," after receiving a fan letter addressed to that spelling in 1941, while appearing on the Kraft Music Hall with Bing Crosby.¹⁴

In Connee's later career, she worked steadily as a recording and radio star, and supper club entertainer. Her last performance was at Carnegie Hall with Benny Goodman in October 1975. She died of stomach cancer in 1976.

In the late 1990s, the Boswell Museum was founded in East Springfield, New York.

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Notes

¹ John Lucas, "Another Boswell Chronicle," *Jazz Journal* January 1974. Vertical files, Institute for Jazz Studies, Rutgers.

² Jane Hassinger, "Close Harmony: Early Styles in the Music of the New Orleans Boswell Sisters," 195.

³ 1920 Census; Greater New Orleans Community Data Center
<http://www.gnocdc.org/orleans/2/67/index.html> (accessed May 26, 2004).

⁴ Jan Shapiro, *Filling in the Gaps in the History of Vocal Jazz: Connee Boswell and the Boswell Sisters*, National Endowment for the Arts Study (1989-90). Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane, 107.

⁵ Rob Bamberger, 1992, liner notes *The Boswell Sisters: Syncopating Harmonists from New Orleans* Take Two Records, TT406 CD.

⁶ Otto Finck was based in New Orleans, so it is likely that while Connie studied cello in Kansas City at the age of 4, that her studies with Professor Finck did not begin until she was the ripe old age of 7.

⁷ "Boswell Would Refuse Cure for Paralyzed Legs to Help Economic Cripples!" *Downbeat* August 1938, 8.

⁸ See Jan Shapiro, *Filling in the Gaps*, 106; Curtis Dale Jerde, *A Biographical Listing of Selected Major Jazz/Blues Artists in New Orleans* (Jean Lafitte National Historical Park and Preserve, April 16, 1990), 18, 20, 40, 41.

⁹ Shapiro, *Filling in the Gaps*, 106.

¹⁰ Shapiro, *Filling in the Gaps*, 107.

¹¹ Chris Ellis, "Connee Boswell," *Storyville* 71, June-July 1977, 166.

¹² John Lucas, "Visionary Scoring Puts Boswells Over," *Down Beat*, Nov. 1, 1944.

¹³ Shapiro, *The Inventive Vocal Style of Connee Boswell and the Boswell Sisters: Is There More Than What Has Been Released on Record?*, National Endowment for the Arts Study (1989-90). 225.

¹⁴ John Lucas, *Jazz Journal*, Jan 1974.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Allen, Richard B. Correspondence; October 4 1976. Vertical files, Hogan Jazz Archives.

Birth Record, Martha Boswell. Issued by Kansas City, Missouri Dept. of Health. Vertical files, Hogan Jazz.

Certificate of Death, Connee Boswell. Vertical files, Hogan Jazz Archives.

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Certificate of Death, Martha Boswell, 1988. Vertical files, Hogan Jazz Archives.

Secondary Sources

- "66 On Airliner Jarred." Unknown publication, March 21 1955. Vertical files, Institute for Jazz Studies, Rutgers.
- Bamberger, Rob. "The Boswell Sisters: Syncopating Harmonists from New Orleans (Liner Notes)." (Take Two Records, 1992).
- Bamberger, Werner. "Connee Boswell Is Dead at 68; Long a Popular Singer and Actress." *New York Times* Tuesday, October 12 1976.
- "Boswell Museum of Music." Pamphlet. Vertical files, Institute for Jazz Studies, Rutgers.
- "The Boswell Sisters. *Nostalgia Art News*, August 2000. Vertical files, Institute for Jazz Studies, Rutgers.
- "Boswell Sisters." *Radio Personalities* (1935): 160 (2). Vertical files, Hogan Jazz Archives
- "Boswell Sisters." Album insert (Brunswick Collectors' Series, Album No. B-1003, 1943). Vertical files, Hogan Jazz Archives.
- "Boswell Sisters Rarities on New CD from Take Two." *Past Times: The Nostalgia Entertainment Newsletter* 10. Vertical files, Hogan Jazz Archives.
- "Boswell Sisters Sing from Studios of WHAT." *The Courier-Journal*, Louisville, March 11 1933. Vertical files, Hogan Jazz Archives.
- "Boswell Would Refuse Cure for Paralyzed Legs to Help Economic Cripples!" *Down Beat* August 1938: 8, 29. Vertical files, Hogan Jazz Archive; also Institute for Jazz Studies, Rutgers.
- Boyd, Richard. "Ella." *The States-Item*, February 2 1980. Vertical files, Hogan Jazz Archives.
- Chilton, John. "Boswell, Connee [Connie; Fooré, Constance]." *The New Grove Dictionary of Music Online* ed. L. Macy (accessed May 26, 2004).
- "Connee Tells How Song Eased Ordeal." Unknown publication, March 21, 1955. Vertical files, Institute for Jazz Studies, Rutgers.
- "Connee Boswell." *Look* February 2 1958. Vertical files, Hogan Jazz Archives.
- "Connie Boswell." Unknown publication, April 1 1939. Vertical files, Institute for Jazz Studies, Rutgers.
- "Connie's Pins Better; She Walks Again." *Downbeat* December 1939. Vertical files, Hogan Jazz Archives.
- Dumont, Lou. "The Boswell Sisters." *Hobbies--The Magazine for Collectors* October 1978: 122 - 123 (2). Vertical files, Hogan Jazz Archives.
- Dumont, Lou. "The Boswell Sisters." *vertical files, Hogan Jazz Archives; Nostalgia Radio News* January 1978: p. 4 of 5.
- Ellis, Chris. "Connee Boswell 3 Dec. 1907 - 11 Oct. 1976." *Storyville* 71 June/July 1977: 166-169.

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

- "The Family Business." Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities. Summer 1999
Vertical files, Hogan Jazz Archives
- Freeman, Wanda. "Those Perfect Boswells." *The Times-Picayune* Sunday, May 28 1978: 26 (1). Vertical files, Hogan Jazz Archives.
- Gagnard, Frank. "The Last Boswell Calls on Her Hometown." *New Orleans Times-Picayune* April 26 1987. Vertical files, Hogan Jazz Archives.
- Giddins, Gary. "It Sisters." *Village Voice* March 17, 1999.
- Griffin, Thomas. "Orleans' Boswell Influenced Ella." *The States-Item*, Tuesday, December 28 1971: 19 (1). Vertical files, Hogan Jazz Archives;
- Gurman, Joseph, and Myron Slager. "The Boswell Sisters.;" *Nostalgia Radio News* January 1979: 3. Vertical files, Hogan Jazz Archives.
- "Helvetia 'Vet' Boswell Jones Dies; Last Member of Boswell Sisters Trio." *Gannett Westchester Newspapers* Monday, November 14 1988. Vertical files, Hogan Jazz Archives.
- Jerde, Curtis Dale. *A Biographical Listing of Selected Major Jazz/Blues Artists in New Orleans*, Jean Lafitte National Historical Park and Preserve, April 16, 1990.
- Lamparski, Richard. "The Boswell Sisters." *Whatever Became Of..?* 1 (1967): 186 (2). Vertical files, Hogan Jazz Archives.
- Lucas, John. "Another Boswell Chronicle." *Jazz Journal* January 1974. Vertical files, Institute for Jazz Studies, Rutgers.
- _____. "Cats Hepped by Connee's Chirping." *Down Beat* October 15, 1944: 3-4. Vertical files, Institute for Jazz Studies, Rutgers.
- _____. "Visionary Scoring Puts Boswells Over." *Down Beat* November 1 1944: 3. Vertical files, Institute for Jazz Studies, Rutgers.
- "Mama Said." (Obit. Vet) *The Times-Picayune*. Vertical files, Hogan Jazz Archives
- "Martha Boswell of Singing Trio Dead; Won Fame With Sisters Connee and Vet." *New York Times* July 1958. Vertical files, Institute for Jazz Studies, Rutgers.
- David McCain, *The Boswell Sisters and Connee Boswell Discography* (1989). Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane.
- McCain, David. "The Boswells." *Nostalgia Radio News* January 1979: 4. Vertical files, Hogan Jazz Archives.
- "N.O.-Born Singer Boswell Dead at 68." *New Orleans Times-Picayune* October 12 1976. Vertical files, Hogan Jazz Archives.
- Obituary, Vet Boswell. *New York Times* November 15 1988.
- Shewey, Don. "Sibling Harmony." *The Soho News* June 17 1981. Vertical files, Hogan Jazz Archives.
- Shapiro, Jan. *Filling in the Gaps in the History of Vocal Jazz: Connee Boswell and the Boswell Sisters*, National Endowment for the Arts Study (1989-90). Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane.
- _____. *The Inventive Vocal Style of Connee Boswell and the Boswell Sisters: Is There More Than What Has Been Released on Record?*, National Endowment for the Arts Study (1989-90). Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane.
- Silvert, Conrad. "A Veteran Superstar with Moxie, Class." *San Francisco Chronicle*

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Thursday, September 13, 1979. Vertical files, Hogan Jazz Archives.
"Vet Boswell, Last of Trio of Popular Singing Sisters." *New York Newsday* November 14 1988. Vertical files, Hogan Jazz Archives.
"Vet Boswell." *New York Daily News*, November 14 1988. Vertical files, Hogan Jazz Archives
"Vet Boswell, 77, Dead; Member of Singing Trio." Unknown publication. Vertical files, Hogan Jazz Archives
Washburn, Mel. "The Spotlight." Saturday, August 9 (?) 1938 (?). Vertical files, Hogan Jazz Archives.
Watson, Clay. "Museum News." *The Second Line* XIII.9/10: 11-13.
Wilson, John S. "Stage: 'Heebie Jeebies,' a Boswells Life.;" *The New York Times* June 1981. Vertical files, Hogan Jazz Archives.
Woods, Keith. "'Vet' Boswell Dead at 76." *The Times-Picayune* Sunday, November 13 1988. Vertical files, Hogan Jazz Archives.

Discography

According to Gary Giddins, the Boswell Sisters made "about 80 records, a quarter of them major hits," and most still available on CD. (Giddins, "It Sisters," *Village Voice* March 17, 1999.)

For detailed discographical information, see:

David McCain, *The Boswell Sisters and Connee Boswell Discography* (1989). Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane.

Recommended for the New Orleans Jazz National Historical Park:

CD, *The Boswell Sisters Collection* Vol. 2, 1925-32, NOCD 3008.

Includes examples of early Boswell Sisters, including the song written by Vet, and recorded in New Orleans:

Victor 19639/matrix # PBVE-32124-4 "Nights When I'm Lonely," recorded in New Orleans, March 25, 1925.

Same CD has excellent examples of their Los Angeles output that demonstrates their continued interest in jazz and blues including "Heebie Jeebies" and "Gee, But I'd Like to Make you Happy."

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Filmography

Close Farm-ony (musical short, 1932)
Rambling 'Round Radio Row (Vitaphone, 1932)
When it's Sleepy Time Down South (Fleischer Studios animated short, 1932)
The Big Broadcast (Paramount, 1932)
Boswell Sisters (Universal musical short, 1933)
Transatlantic Merry-Go-Round (Reliance, 1934)
Moulon Rouge (20th Century Pictures, 1934)
It's All Yours (Columbia, 1937)
Artists and Models (Paramount, 1937)
Sunday Night at the Trocadero (MGM musical short, 1937)
Kiss the Boys Goodbye (Paramount musical, 1941)
Syncopation (RKO musical, 1942)
Swing Parade of 1946 (Monogram musical, 1946)
Connee Boswell and Ada Leonard (Universal musical short, 1952)
Senior Prom (Columbia musical, 1958)
Pete Kelly's Blues [TV series] (1959)

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Illustrations

Some very interesting photographs are in the Hogan Jazz Archives, including a wonderful shot of the Boswell Sisters when they were still an instrumental and vocal trio in New Orleans.

Boswell Sisters: Connie (cello), Martha (piano),
Vet (violin)
David McCain Scrapbook
Hogan Jazz Archive



Boswell Sisters: Vet (banjo), Martha, Connie (saxophone)
Scrapbook
Hogan Jazz Archive



The Boswell Sisters: Vet (top),
Connie (left) & Martha
Hogan Jazz Archive



The Boswell Sisters: left to right:
Vet, Martha, Connie—1931
Hogan Jazz Archive



A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Neliska “Baby” Briscoe (Mouton, Casimire [Brisco]) (dancer, entertainer, band leader)

b. April 7, 1914 (New Orleans) / d. August 25, 1994 (Cleveland, Ohio)¹

Neliska Briscoe, better known as “Baby” Briscoe, was born on April 7, 1914. Her mother was Neliska Thomas, a laundress, whose father was born in Mexico, and mother was born in Louisiana. Thomas was the elder Neliska’s maiden name; she had been married to a Joseph Mitchell in 1902. The younger Neliska’s siblings, Hardy and Joseph, are listed as Mitchell in the 1930 Census, while their sister is listed with the surname Briscoe. On Neliska Briscoe’s birth certificate, her father, Eddie Briscoe (sometimes spelled Brisco), was listed as a “packer.” He is listed as a laborer in a fruit orchard on the 1920 Census. This birth certificate also indicates that Eddie Briscoe and Neliska Thomas were not married, though in the 1920 Census, they are listed as married, and living on 1905 St. Philip Street. In 1920, the household consisted of Eddie Briscoe (head of household), Neliska Briscoe (wife), Hardy Briscoe (son, age 10), and Neliska Briscoe (daughter, age 5).² Joseph Mitchell Jr. would have been 12 in 1920, but is not listed as living with in this household at this time.

The US Census of 1930 indicates that by 1930, Eddie Briscoe was not living with the family, and that the elder Neliska was going by Neliska Mitchell, and listed as the head of household at 1721 Saint Ann, in the Treme neighborhood, with her two sons, Joseph Mitchell (age 21) and Hardy Mitchell (age 19), her daughter Neliska Briscoe

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

(age 16), and a roomer named John Edgarson. According to the 1930 Census, the younger Neliska had been married for one year (to an unknown party). According to Neliska Briscoe's daughters, there had also been a sister, Lillian Rand Mitchell, who had died young. At the age of 16, the younger Neliska Briscoe was listed as an "entertainer," a claim that is well supported by newspapers of the day.³

According to Briscoe's daughters, Avon Howse and Debra Mouton, their mother began her career at the age of 8 or 9, when her mother, the elder Neliska, took her talented daughter to the Alley Cabaret (Claiborne and St. Bernard) in the Seventh Ward, where another relative was employed, about ten blocks away from their St. Ann Street address. By day, Neliska Thomas Mitchell was employed by St. Ann's Church, where she cared for the convent and cooked for the priests and nuns. But after work she would take her daughter to the Alley Cabaret. As the only child entertainer in the floor show, the younger Neliska acquired the stage name, "Baby" Briscoe.⁴ According to banjo player Danny Barker, the Alley was "a very popular gambling house and cabaret," where "the doors never closed, day or night, while the gambling tables were always occupied by the most renowned hustlers and gamblers in the city. In the rear of the Alley was the cabaret, which stayed open all night, and the band would play as long as there were customers to listen." Barker recalled that the jazz band that played the Alley in the summer of 1925 was a "very good jazz band," with Maurice Dumond on cornet, 'Big Eye' Louis Nelson, clarinet, George Henderson, drums, Odette Davis, piano, Wellington Dowdon, banjo, and Neliska (sic) Briscoe sang and entertained."⁵ Briscoe was eleven.

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

De De Pierce told Bill Russell that his cousin “Malisca” [Neliska?] gave him his first trumpet when he was 17 and that she played in an all-girl band. If Neliska Briscoe gave De De Pierce a trumpet when he was 17, she would have been seven, but then again, she did begin her career as a child. It also possible that his memory was off by a couple years, or that Neliska had acquired a trumpet and had given it to him before her work with all-woman bands began.⁶ Later on in her career, Briscoe would appear with a trumpet in hand, though I have not been able to confirm whether she played the instrument.

By the time she was a teenager, “Baby” Briscoe was well-known in New Orleans cabarets as an acrobatic dancer with a dynamic stage presence. A write-up on February 7, 1931 lists “Baby” Briscoe as one of the Astoria Cabaret’s “regular entertainers,” along with Myrtle Edwards and “Green and Daniels.”⁷ In May, another article stated that “Neliska “Baby” Briscoe and Hattie Watts are back at the Astoria these days, along with Myrtle Edwards, while Rena and His Hot Eight serenade at each dance.”⁸ By December of the same year, the *Louisiana Weekly* indicated that the artist, “formerly of the Astoria [South Rampart Street], Entertainers [Franklin near Customhouse/Iberville], Owl, and St. Bernard Alley cabarets of this city,” was now working in New York. The headlines of this item announced the shocking news: “Baby Brisco Hurt When Gangsters Shoot Up Cabaret,”

When gangsters staged their little war Miss Briscoe, in attempting to escape, was hurled by them against a piano and as a result, has been confined to bed for two weeks. A friend entertainer, [sic] says Neliska was shot in the arm. She did not state, however, where the shooting scene occurred in Small’s Paradise or the other club in which she is employed⁹

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

There is a gap at the moment in the chronology of her career between her injury in New York, December, 1931, and her appearance in the ranks of Joe Robichaux's Rhythm Boys, the large band that Robichaux brought to the Rhythm club in 1933. I do not yet know when she returned to New Orleans. It is possible that she connected (or reconnected) with Robichaux in New York, where he was recording his small group on Vocalion. When he returned to New Orleans he brought a larger band to the Rhythm Club. This incarnation of Joe Robichaux's Rhythm Boys included three women: Baby Briscoe, vocalist Joan Lunceford (Daisy Lowe), and trumpet player Ann Cooper.

Her dance career began to merge into a band directing career when Joe Robichaux returned from a recording session in New York to enlarge and remake his band for a stint at the New Orleans Rhythm Club. Robichaux, the nephew of the famous band leader, John Robichaux, was a pianist and band leader in his own right. From 1931-1933, Joe Robichaux led a six-piece band that, according to Rudolph J. Hopf, typified "the New Orleans sound of the Swing Era—a sound rarely captured on record."¹⁰ The band recorded five dates on Brunswick (issued on Vocalion) in New York in 1933. Brunswick wanted to hire them as a staff band, but the fact that they were an - out-of-town band created a union complication that could not be overcome.¹¹

When Robichaux reappeared in New Orleans, it was with an expanded 10-piece band, which was soon enlarged to 15-pieces, and the "Rhythm Boys" were no longer an all-male unit. Bassist and tuba player McNeal Breaux recalled, "When he got back to the Rhythm Club he had the big band: he had Baby Briscoe ... Baby Briscoe—and

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

what's this other gal was entertaining with him? He had two girls entertaining, Baby Briscoe and Joan Lunceford."¹²

From photographs and oral histories, it appears that "Baby" Briscoe and vocalist Joan Lunceford (whose name Robichaux had changed from Daisy Lowe), and perhaps a third woman, wore tuxedos and "fronted" Robichaux's New Orleans Rhythm Boys at the Rhythm Club on Jackson and Derbigny Streets in the mid-1930s. To "front" a band is to appear with the band as its director in shows, and to literally entertain in front of it, but without actually rehearsing the band and leading it as would a band director. This was the same band that included female trumpet player Ann Cooper. In his oral history, Robichaux described Briscoe as a "fine female tap dancer."¹³

In the meantime, in 1935, a drummer by the name of Sylvester Rice was instructed by his father, band leader Eli Rice, to organize an all-woman band (called "all-girl" in those days) for his Minneapolis-based talent agency. The band was to be called the Harlem Play Girls and its front was to be Edie Crump. Rice hired the talent and worked with the band for a year. The original personnel included Ernestine "Tiny" Davis, Mary Shannon, and Jean Lee (trumpets), Leila Julius (violin at first, then guitar, then trombone), Elizabeth King, Marge Backstop, and Lula Edge, reeds; Pam Moore, violin; Orvella Moore (from Eli's band), piano; Marie Backstrom (bass), Sylvester Rice (drums, director), Jean Taylor (front).¹⁴ Edie Crump did become the band's director at some point, though Baby Briscoe would eventually be the band's leader. On March 5, 1938, when the band played New Orleans at Mardi Gras for the Exclusive Bunch Club, there was no mention of Baby Briscoe.¹⁵ A *Pittsburgh Courier* story indicates that Edie

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Crump was still fronting (or leading) the band in May 1938.¹⁶ Howard Rye's meticulous research of traveling reports filed at the American Federation of Musicians finds that by June 1938, Crump was out, and Baby Briscoe had become their director. According to Rye, Briscoe's tenure with the Harlem Playgirls lasted until July 1940.¹⁷

A November 1938 story in the *Pittsburgh Courier* stated that the Harlem

Play Girls were appearing in Cleveland and "are now doing great work under the direction of 'Baby' Briscoe, versatile and flashy New Orleans band leader." The story continued,

Formerly appearing with Joe Robichaux, Lil Armstrong, the Five Joy Clouds, the Four Coeds, and Troy Brown, Miss Briscoe has a great wealth of experience on the road.

Miss Briscoe is rounding out her first year with the all-girls' band and has enjoyed tremendous successes as the band's leader. Her ability to keep the girls 'in the groove' while swinging out with their hot numbers, has won her a good reputation as a band leader.

In addition to directing, "Baby" Briscoe will soon play trumpet. For sometime now she has been studying the trumpet and will soon be heard blowing that instrument."¹⁸

Whether Briscoe actually played trumpet in performance is not yet known, though she did use it as a prop, according to her daughters. In later years, she would learn to play the alto saxophone. The Harlem Play Girls were in New York in time to play the 1938 Thanksgiving show at the Apollo Theatre in Harlem.¹⁹

The Harlem Playgirls was a touring band, but with Briscoe at the helm, the band's New Orleans appearances became major events. The *Louisiana Weekly*, in January 1939, announced the band's forthcoming visit.

Composed of 11 artists, and led by Babe Briscoe, New Orleans' dancing star, the famous aggregation always scores a hit here with Crescent City dance lovers, and the appearances at the San Jacinto Auditorium and the Tick Tock Tavern, Saturday and Sunday nights, respectively, are expected to pack 'em in, coming as an opening attraction of a gay Carnival season.²⁰

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

The San Jacinto appearance was for a dance, sponsored by the Unique Club.²¹

Then they were back on the road, but back at the Tick Tock in April 1939.

The holiday spirit will prevail again at the Tick Tock Tavern Easter Sunday and Monday when stellar dance entertainment is offered. On Sunday, during the day, there will be the usual matinee with plenty good music from 4:00 p.m. until 9:00 p.m. Easter Sunday night the Harlem Play Girls, who are extremely popular here, will be featured with New Orleans' own Sweetheart, Babe Briscoe, directing 11 artists of swing.²²

According to a subsequent article, the Harlem Play Girls ("the swingiest aggregation of girls in the country) broke the box office record for their Easter Sunday appearance at the Tick Tock.²³ (Their personnel list at this time includes a trumpet player, Bessie Comeaux, who may have been from New Orleans.)

And several months later, the *Louisiana Weekly* again heralded that,

The famous Harlem Play Girls, internationally-known band, which is led by New Orleans' own Babe Briscoe, invade the Tick Tock on Thursday night, November 30, to play the latest in swing arrangements. Composed of 11 real artists, the famous aggregation is well-liked by Orleanians and always packs 'em in. Admission to this gala dance is only 40 cents. There will also be a day dance."²⁴

The band returned to the Tick Tock on Easter Sunday and Monday of 1940, this time sponsored by the Autocrat Club.²⁵ A *Louisiana Weekly* columnist on March 23, 1940, listed an impressive list of New Orleans visitors, including:

...Marian Anderson, the Southernaires, Tiny Bradshaw, the Four Ink Spots, and the Harlem Playgirls, and that's really dishing it up on a silver platter ...Nite Clubbing: The Jitter-bunnies will be jumping Easter Sunday night at the Tick Tock (Monday also) to the music of those famous Harlem Play Girls with Baby Briscoe, Crescent City Queen, directing.²⁶

According to her daughters, Briscoe then worked with the International

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Sweethearts of Rhythm, though this has not been confirmed.

By the early 1940s, “Baby” Briscoe had settled again in New Orleans, and married David “Val” Mouton. Their daughter Avon was born on August 1, 1943. In 1946, a gas explosion at the St. Bernard Projects forced Briscoe to leap from the second story to the ground, pregnant with her second daughter, Debra. They all survived. Briscoe gave up her performing career to raise her daughters. They lived with her mother Neliska Mitchell on North Conti Street. Briscoe (now Neliska Mouton) studied cosmetology, and opened a series of businesses, including a boutique on Galva Street called Avon and Debra’s Gift Shop, and a small restaurant called the Chicken Shack. She was an accomplished seamstress, as well, and sewed ball gowns for Mardi Gras. With the left-over fabric, she made silk dresses for her daughters. She also exchanged her sewing skills for dance lessons for her daughters, a luxury she herself didn’t have when growing up.

In 1957, Baby Briscoe married Clarence Casimire, whom she had known since third grade. Casimire was an employee of the Oakwood Country Club in Cleveland, Ohio. The couple was married by Baby Briscoe’s brother, Joseph Mitchell, co-founder of the Christian Mission Baptist Church in New Orleans. The Casimires left for Ohio the following day.

Neliska Casimire took up the alto saxophone in the 1970s when she was in her sixties. Though she wasn’t on the stage, she continued to entertain family and friends. On her seventy-fifth birthday, she did the splits to prove she still could. She danced on her 80th birthday. The day after, however, she began to complain about pain, which

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

turned out to be bone cancer. She spent the next four months in the hospital, and finally, in a hospice.

One day, her daughter Avon went to check on her in the hospital. The nurse told her that her mother had been pretty good that day. She helped fold some clothes. She sat up. But, added the nurse, she had also seemed a little confused, probably from the morphine.

“Why do you say she was confused?” asked Avon.

The nurse told her that her mother had started talking about how she wore a tuxedo and led an orchestra.

“That isn’t confused,” said Avon. “She really did that!”²⁷

Neliska “Baby” Briscoe Mouton Casimire died four months after her 80th birthday, on August 25, 1994. To commemorate the tenth anniversary of her death, her daughters set up the Baby Briscoe Scholarship Fund at Tulane University.

Notes

¹ Ancestry.com lists her birthdate as April 7, 1914 in the Ohio Deaths records; Ancestry Plus, however, lists her birthdate as April 14, 1914. Her daughters, Avon Howse and Debra Mouton, confirm the April 7, 1914 date.

² Fourteenth Census of the United States: 1920, 5th Precinct, New Orleans, City, 6th Ward.

³ Fifteenth Census of the United States: 1930, 6th Precinct, New Orleans, 5th Ward, block 183.

⁴ Telephone interview with Avon Howse and Debra Mouton, July 7, 2003.

⁵ Danny Barker, ed. by Alyn Shipton, *A Life in Jazz* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 66.

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

⁶ Billie and De De Pierce, oral history, interviewed by William Russell and Ralph Collins, April 2, 1959, Reel I (of 2), 1. Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane.

⁷ "Astoria Management Gives Invitation Dance," *Louisiana Weekly* February 7, 1931.

⁸ The Owl, "At Moon Time," *Louisiana Weekly* May 30, 1931, 5.

⁹ "Baby Brisco Hurt When Gangsters Shoot Up Cabaret," *Louisiana Weekly*, December 14, 1931, 3.

¹⁰ Rudolph J. Hopf., "Joseph Robichaux and his New Orleans Rhythm Boys," *Footnote* vol. 3, no. 2, Nov-Dec 1971, 4.

¹¹ Joe Robichaux, Oral History Digest, IV [of 4] March 19, 1959, p. 16, Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University, New Orleans.

¹² McNeal Breaux Oral History Transcript, Hogan, Nov. 24, 1958, Reel I, 12, Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University, New Orleans, Louisiana.

¹³ Joe Robichaux, Oral History Digest, March 19, 1959, Reel I, 4, Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University, New Orleans, Louisiana.

¹⁴ John Miner, "Eli Rice: The Professor from Oshkosh," *International Association of Jazz Record Collectors Journal* vol. 28, no. 3 (Summer 1995), 55-8.

¹⁵ "Great Bands at Mardi Gras." *Pittsburgh Courier* March 5 1938: 20.

¹⁶ "New All-Girls' Band." *Pittsburgh Courier* May 21 1938: 20.

¹⁷ Howard Rye, "What The Papers Said: The Harlem Play-Girls and Dixie Rhythm Girls (and Dixie Sweethearts)," *Storyville* (Chigwell, Essex, England: 1996-7), 173-187.

¹⁸ "All Girl Band," *Pittsburg Courier* November 5, 1938, 24.

¹⁹ Thanksgiving Week Attraction at the Apollo." *Pittsburgh Courier* November 19 1938: 21.

²⁰ "Harlem Play Girls Here Sat. and Sun." *Louisiana Weekly* January 14 1939: 4.

²¹ "America's Finest Girl Band to Play at San Jacinto Club and Tick Tock Tavern." *Louisiana Weekly* January 7 1939: 4.

²² "Harlem Play Girls on Tick Tock Easter." *Louisiana Weekly* April 8 1939: 4.

²³ "They Broke Record in New Orleans." *Pittsburgh Courier* April 29 1939: 20.

²⁴ "Harlem Play Girls at Tick Tock Nov. 30." *Louisiana Weekly* November 25 1939: 4.

²⁵ "Disguise Ball at Tick Tock on St. Joseph." *Louisiana Weekly* March 16 1940: 4; Harlem Play Girls at Tick Tock Easter." *Louisiana Weekly* March 23 1940: 4. .

²⁶ Cojobo, "Out on a Limb," *Louisiana Weekly* March 23 1940: 4.

²⁷ Telephone interview with Avon Howse and Debra Mouton, July 7, 2003.

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Bibliography

Primary Sources

- Breaux, McNeal. Oral History Transcript, Nov. 24, 1958, Reel I, Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University, New Orleans, Louisiana.
- Howse, Avon, and Debra Mouton. Telephone interview with Sherrie Tucker, July 7, 2003.
- Robichaux, Joe. Oral History Digest, Reel I, March 19, 1959, Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University, New Orleans, Louisiana.

Secondary Sources

- "All Girl Band," *Pittsburg Courier* November 5, 1938, 24.
- "Astoria Management Gives Invitation Dance," *Louisiana Weekly*, February 7, 1931.
- "Baby' Briscoe Hurt When Gangsters Shoot Up Cabaret," *Louisiana Weekly*, Dec. 14, 1931, 3.
- "Carnival Night on Tuesdays at Owl," *Louisiana Weekly*, date? 1931?
- Hop, Rudolph J., "Joseph Robichaux and his New Orleans Rhythm Boys," *Footnote* vol. 3, no. 2, Nov-Dec 1971, 2-6
- Obituary, Neliska Casimire, *Plains Dealer* (Cleveland, Ohio), August 26, 1994.
- Obituary, David Val Mouton, *Times-Picayune*, May 9, 2003, B-5.
- Owl, "At Moon Time" (column), *Louisiana Weekly*, May 30, 1931, 5.
- Handy, D. Antoinette. *Black Women in American Bands and Orchestras, Second Edition*. Lanham, Mass. and Kent: Scarecrow Press, 1998, 234-235.
- Rose, Al, and Edmond Souchon. *New Orleans Jazz: A Family Album*, third edition, revised and enlarged (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1984).
- Rye, Howard. "What The Papers Said: The Harlem Play-Girls and Dixie Rhythm Girls (and Dixie Sweethearts)," *Storyville* (Chigwell, Essex, England: 1996-7), 173-187.

Discography

No recordings available.

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Illustrations

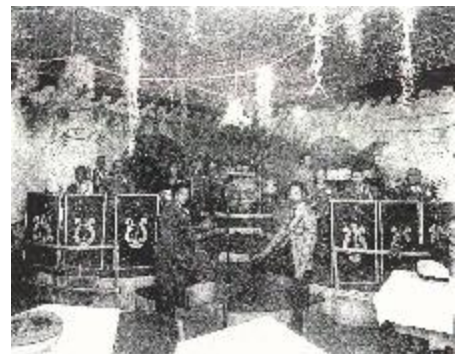
There is an excellent photograph of Baby Briscoe in the Al Rose Collection at the Hogan Jazz Archive.

“Baby Briscoe with Baton”
Al Rose Collection
Accession number: HJA P000085* 152.7611
Hogan Jazz Archive



Other photographs at the Hogan document Joe Robichaux’s Rhythm Boys, some featuring other women fronting the band.

Joan Lunceford (l) and another woman (r), fronting Joe Robichaux’s Rhythm Boys.
Hogan Jazz Archive.

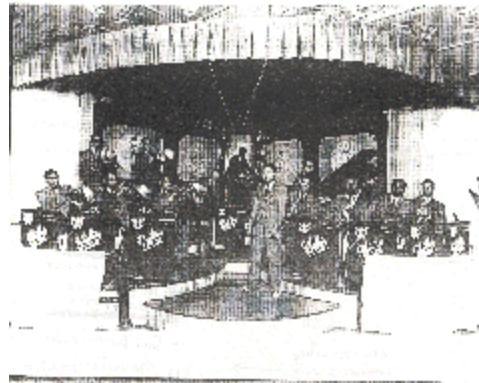


A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Joe Robichaux at the Rhythm Club
 Accession number: 152.7692
 Hogan Jazz Archive



1939, Rhythm Club, New Orleans
 Joan Lunceford with baton
 Al Rose Collection
 Accession number: 152.7571



There are many excellent newspaper ads, such as those below, in the black press. Xeroxes of these are included in the files that accompany this Research Study.



A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Ann Cook (Johnson) (blues singer)

b. April 1886 [May 10, 1903] (Fazenville Road [Franzenville, Fazendeville, Fazenvuille] St. Bernard Parish, Louisiana) / d. September 29, 1962 (New Orleans, Louisiana)¹

Born in 1886 [or circa 1888 or 1903], to Carl Cook, a laborer, and Rose Henderson, a housekeeper, Ann Cook spent her early childhood on Fazenville Road in St. Bernard Parish, which was then a rural area, and is now the site of Jean Lafitte National Historical Park. One of at least eleven children, she appears to have begun working in Storyville her late teens or early twenties. She was an extremely popular blues singer in the New Orleans, and spent the rest of her life in the city.

Manuel Manetta recalled that Cook lived in the neighborhood known as “The Battlefield,” where “women and men were tough,” and that she sang the blues during the same years that the legendary Buddy Bolden played his cornet.² The “Battlefield,” also called “Back o’ Town,” was the neighborhood where Louis Armstrong grew up. It included the area known as “Black Storyville.” Willie Parker noted that in addition to singing, Cook worked as a “hustler in the District.”³

As a singer, Cook worked on the other side of Canal Street in the more famous red light district of “Storyville,” singing for white customers and racially mixed and light-skinned sex workers in the house of one of the era’s most successful madams, Countess Willie Piazza. According to Alecia P. Long, Piazza was one of several light-

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

skinned and mixed-race women entrepreneurs who was able to build her fortune on white men's fantasies about "Octoroons" (literal meaning: one eighth black; the practical meaning: mobilization of myths about race and sex) as cultured and erotic women.⁴ To build on this atmosphere of cultivation and sexuality, Piazza's roster of entertainment had to span the gamut of white men's racial stereotypes about refined and educated white womanhood and passionate and sexual black women. The stereotypes of sexual licentiousness that were associated with dark skinned women, and the cultural associations with barrelhouse blues singing as low class and bawdy, lead one to speculate that Piazza's hiring of Ann Cook may have served to fulfill the more explicitly sexual end of the range of white men's fantasies.

In the 1920s, Cook sang in numerous cafes and bars in New Orleans, including the Red Onion Café on South Rampart and Julia, and the Calliope Street Café. "She would sing according to the temperament and moods of the customers and could sing endless verses to one song," remembered Clarence Williams.⁵

Very few black bands in New Orleans were able to record in the 1920s, but in 1927, Cook recorded two sides with trumpet player Louis Dumaine's orchestra, the Jazzola Eight. At the time, Cook was one of the most popular vocalists in New Orleans; so popular, in fact, that when she didn't show up for the session, clarinetist Willie Joseph had to go looking for her, and found her in a bar on Calliope Street where she had been singing the night before.⁶ That session was recorded in New Orleans, not by a local label, but by Victor, which periodically traveled through New Orleans to record musicians. Cook recorded her "Mama Cookie's Blues" and "He's the Sweetest Black

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Man in Town” with the Jazzola Eight. Storyville pianist Rosalind Johnson remembered Ann Cook as a “great entertainer,” and noted that her Victor recordings “stopped the traffic on Rampart Street.”⁷ Years later, when William Russell offered her \$10 to record a couple of songs, she told him that she had been paid \$100 for the 1927 sides, an amount George Lewis found plausible, since “Dumaine’s orch. was paid \$285 for their date.”⁸ She did eventually record for Russell in 1949, though the song was not a blues, but a gospel number, “The Lord Will Make a Way,” with a sextet led by trumpeter Wooden Joe Nicholas that included guitarist Johnny St. Cyr. A thank you letter from Cook to Russell indicates that she planned to record for him again, though an additional recording date doesn’t appear to have happened.⁹

From the 1940s on, she sang in the church choir of Greater St. Matthew #2 Church in New Orleans. According to Al Rose, “Most of her later life was devoted to church work and she refused to speak of her early years.”¹⁰

She died in New Orleans of a heart attack on September 29, 1962. Her obituary gives little information on her life, but does mention that she was married to Willie Johnson; and was daughter of Carl Cook and Rose Henderson, and sister of Mr. Henderson Cook, Joseph Cook, and James Cook, Mrs. Millie Morris, and Miss Mary Cook.

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Notes

¹ Sheldon Harris, in his entry on Ann Cook in *The Blues Who's Who*, gives the May 10, 1903 birth date; Al Rose and Edmond Souchon in *New Orleans Jazz: A Family Album* has Cook born circa 1888 in Franzenville, Louisiana. I am more inclined to go with the 1900 Census, which states her birth date as April, 1886, and her address as Fazenville Road in St. Bernard Parish. Harris suggests that St. Francisville in West Feliciana Parish is the most likely birthplace for Cook, since neither "Franzenville" nor "Fazeneville" were cities in Louisiana at that time. However, Roy Tucker points out that Fazenville Road (sometimes Fazenvuille or Fazendeville), however, does appear on maps of the period in St. Bernard Parish, in what was then a rural area, and what is now the site of Jean Lafitte National Historical Park. If the family lived on Fazenville Road at that time, it is likely that the census recorders would list "Fazenville" since the area was some distance from town or other roads. The family is listed at the same address in the 1880, 1900, and 1910 Census, though Ann Cook only appears in 1900.

² Manuel Manetta, Oral History Digest, March 28, 1957, Reel III of IV, 11. Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University.

³ Parker, Willie. Oral History transcript, November 7, 1958, 34, Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University.

⁴ Alecia P. Long, "Chapter 3, 'As Rare as White Blackbirds': The Case of the Countess Willie Piazza and the Disappearance of the Octoroons," *The Great Southern Babylon: Sexuality, Race, and Reform in New Orleans, 1865-1920* (Ph.D. dissertation, year?), 178-233.

⁵ Clarence Williams, from the *Boogie Woogie Blues Folio*, Clarence Williams Publishing Company, 1940, quoted in Harris, *Blues Whos Who*, 128.

⁶ Charters, Samuel Barclay, IV. *Jazz: New Orleans, 1885-1957* (Belleville, N.J.: Walter C. Allen, 1958), 74.

⁷ Rosalind Johnson, Oral History, February 23, 1970, hand-written notes by William Russell, p. 15. Williams Research Center.

⁸ Tom Bethell, *George Lewis: A Jazzman from New Orleans* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), 148.

⁹ Ann Cook, letter to William Russell, October 10, 1949. MSS 518, f. 47. Williams Research Center.

¹⁰ Al Rose, *Storyville, New Orleans: Being an Authentic, Illustrated Account of the Notorious Red-Light District* (University of Alabama, 1974), 105.

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Bibliography

Primary Sources

- Rosalind Johnson, Oral History, February 23, 1970, hand-written notes by William Russell, p. 15. Williams Research Center
- "Letter to William Russell from Ann Cook." MSS 518. F. 47. The Williams Research Center, October 10. 1949.
- Manetta, Manuel. Oral History digest, March 28, 1957, Reel III of IV, Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University, New Orleans, Louisiana.
- Parker, Willie. Oral History transcript, November 7, 1958, 34, Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University, New Orleans, Louisiana.

Secondary Sources

- Bruyninckx, Walter. *60 Years of Recorded Jazz: 1917-1977*, C575, W624
- Charters, Samuel Barclay, IV. *Jazz: New Orleans, 1885-1957* (Belleville, N.J.: Walter C. Allen, 1958), 74, 135, 138.
- Harris, Sheldon. *Blues Who's Who: A Biographical Dictionary of Blues Singers* (New Rochelle, NY: Arlington House Publishers, 1979), 128.
- Obituary, *New Orleans States-Item*, October 2, 1962. Vertical file, "Ann Cook," Hogan Jazz Archives, Tulane University, New Orleans, Louisiana.
- Rose, Al. *Storyville, New Orleans: Being an Authentic, Illustrated Account of the Notorious Red-Light District* (University of Alabama, 1974).
- Rose, Al, and Edmond Souchon. *New Orleans Jazz: A Family Album*, third edition, revised and enlarged (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1984), 29.

Discography

(Bruyninckx and Charters give different personnel information for the 1927 sides so I include both. Three of the 1927 sides are currently available on CD on FROG DGF5, *Sizzling the Blues*.)

According to Bruyninckx:

March 7, 1927, New Orleans

37981-1 "Mama Cookie," RCA (F) FPM1-7003

37981-3, "Mama Cookie," Vic 20579, Hist HLP27, NOR TT1291, RCA (F) FPM1-7003

37982-1 "He's the Sweetest Black Man in Town," Vic 20579, NOR TT1291, RCA (F) FPM1-7003

37982-2 "He's the Sweetest Black Man in Town" (unissued)

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Ann Cook (vocal), Louis Dumain (cornet), Willie Joseph (clarinet), Maurice Rouse (piano), Leonard Mitchell (banjo).

According to Charters:

BVE-37981 "Mamma Cookie's Blues" Victor 20579

BVE-37982 "He's the Sweetest Black Man in Town," Victor 20579.

Ann Cook, vocalist, accompanied by Dumaine's Jazzola Eight (Louis Dumaine, trumpet; Early Humphrey, trombone; Willie Joseph, clarinet; Lewis James, tenor sax; Morris Rouse, piano and vocal; Leonard Mitchell, banjo; Joe Howard, tuba; James Willigan, drums), New Orleans; March 5, 1927. (Source: Charters, 135-138).

New Orleans, July 21, 1949

978 "The Lord Will Make a Way" American Music 536 (also on Storyville 204 and Dan [Japan] 7014)

Wooden Joe Nicholas (trumpet, vocal); Louis Nelson (trombone), Albert Burbank (clarinet), Johnny St. Cyr (guitar), Austin Young (bass), Albert Giles (drums), Ann Cook (vocal).

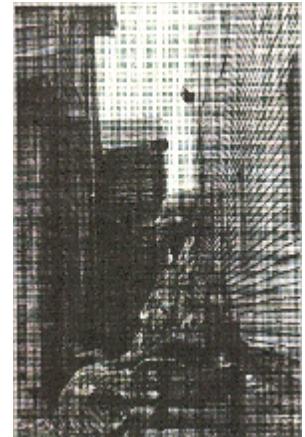
Currently available on CD: Document Records, DOCD-5666, *Jazzin the Blues*.

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Illustrations

Below are photos available at the Hogan Jazz Archive.

Ann Cook, Late 1950s
2227 Thalia (her home)
Photographer: Lee Friedlander
Hogan Jazz Archive



Ann Cook, July 1949
At her home on Thalia Street.
Photographer: William Russell
Hogan Jazz Archive



There is also an amazing photograph of her by Lee Friedlander in *The Jazz People of New Orleans* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1992), photograph #22.

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Olivia “Lady Charlotte” Cook (Olivia Charlot, Olivia Charlotte, Lady Charlotte, Olivia Cook) (pianist, organist, leader, educator)

b. May 11, 1913 (New Orleans)

Pianist, organist, band leader Olivia “Lady Charlotte” Cook is a well-known figure to New Orleanians and aficionados of New Orleans jazz. For visitors to the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival, she is an institution, a Jazz Fest fixture and living symbol of the history of New Orleans Jazz. A 2002 concert guide prepared festival-goers for her set, by stating:

Eighty-eight-year-old pianist Olivia Cook has played with a who's-who of the New Orleans music scene throughout her career, including the late legend Danny Barker and trad jazz brothers Bob and George French. Her Jazz Fest sets -- accompanied by a full band -- are a loving tour of traditional 20th century New Orleans music.¹

Yet, as Cook has told interviewers throughout her career, her dream was to have been a concert pianist, a goal that was out of the realm of possibility for African Americans during her youth and throughout the prime of her career.

Cook was born in New Orleans on May 11, 1913 to Roland and Rose Williams, though her father “didn’t stay with us very long,” as she told interviewer Jack Stewart.² She and her mother lived with her mother’s parents, William James Mayo, a church musician and Pullman porter, and Olivia Clayborn Mayo, a graduate nurse and registered midwife. Her mother was a maid on the railroad and worked for the telephone company. Cook’s grandparents owned both a piano and a pump organ, and

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

on them her grandfather taught her music fundamentals: scales and triads. She began playing publicly at the age of six, primarily in church.

Cook also studied with a private teacher, a Juilliard-trained musician by the name of Beatrice Stewart Davis. Every Saturday, she traveled to the home Mrs. Davis, where she studied classical music, perfecting her favorite etudes and playing duets with her teacher. There was no doubt in her mind that she would someday earn her living as a musician. The only other career she considered was nursing, but witnessing first-hand some of the less savory demands of her grandmother's profession, she resolutely settled on music. Her mother and both of her grandparents were supportive in general, but the blessings of her mother and grandmother proved more limiting than those of her grandfather. When the opportunity arose for Cook to pursue her studies at Juilliard School of Music on scholarship—an arrangement that had been made possible through her piano teacher—Cook's mother could not bear to part with her talented daughter. Her grandmother supported her desire to play, so long as the repertoire was either church music or the classics—but was strongly opposed to jazz. Cook—whose grandparents belonged to Mount Moriah and Plymouth Rock Baptist Church on Adams Street—played church music her entire life, but if she was to work professionally in New Orleans, she knew she would need to learn other forms of music as well. Eventually, she would seize other local opportunities, and become sought after by leaders of jazz bands.

By the age of 15, Cook was studying music at New Orleans University. This was followed by studies at Straights College, where she earned a B.S. in Music, and Xavier University. She began teaching music, and married a Mr. Charlot when she was in her

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

early twenties. At some point, she began receiving calls to play in Dixieland bands.

“The first time I went out to play with a jazz band,” Cook told interviewers, “my grandmother put up big fuss. She said, ‘I think it’s terrible. Those men are gonna disrespect you.’” Yet, when her grandfather heard about it, she recalled, “He loved it! I guess it was partly because he had gone to New York and seen a young woman leading an orchestra there.”³ Her grandfather’s job required him to travel a great deal, which seems to have been an important factor in securing his support for Cook’s musical career. In another interview, she commented, “If my grandfather hadn’t been a Pullman porter, I never would’ve played jazz.”⁴

She worked for a time with Dixieland combos, then, at age 35, received her first jazz call from Herbert Leary, who had heard that she could play well and was skilled at reading music. Leary was the pianist in his own fifteen-piece society swing band, and sought a replacement with strong reading skills; someone who could keep on top of his charts while he led the band.

“I could read anybody’s manuscript,” Cook explained. “And that’s the thing that they liked and they hated. They liked that I could read it, but they hated that it was a woman.”⁵ Karl Koenig writes that New Orleans jazz included a long tradition of women pianists being hired by male band leaders, a practice that he attributes in part to the belief that women were better able to play “correct chords” than men. Whether this assumption was based on gender stereotypes, or on social gender organization of activities such as formal piano lessons, and church music that required reading, many women, including Cook, were hired precisely for their ability to read. A reading pianist

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

was an important asset in collective improvisation among non-reading musicians. In addition, women were thought to be more reliable and less prone to drink.⁶

Cook's account of playing as the only woman in a men's band offers an interesting perspective on why some women musicians may have been less prone to drink than others. "When I used to go out with Leary's band, I'd be the only woman. So, you know I had to take care of myself. You're walking down Bourbon Street—all I'd hear is 'Hello, Miss Charlot.' Everybody had respect for me. I played music. I got through. I came home." Drinking on the job had different ramifications for women than it did for men. It affected a woman's reputation differently, and held different implications for her safety. "I never ran the streets. I knew I was a woman. I knew the dos and don'ts and I took care of myself."⁷

Her marriage to Charlot, a gambler, did not last, and Cook remarried, this time to Albert Cook, an army veteran, and employee of Adler's jewelry store. She continued to play for Leary for many years, but left because she wanted to be more involved in the jazz scene on Bourbon Street, rather than the society engagements, such as balls, that were Leary's specialty. In 1965, she started her own band, Olivia Charlotte Cook's Men of Rhythm. Even as she played on the Bourbon Street scene, sometimes in tourist spots such as the Famous Door, sometimes in strip clubs, often attending jam sessions after her own gigs, she retained her work ethic of respectability and sobriety and passed these along to her musicians. In 1977, she told D. Antoinette Handy, "I've been leading my own combo for the last twelve years. When I say leading, I mean just that—no smoking and drinking on the band stand"⁸ Throughout her Bourbon Street jazz career,

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

she also maintained her careers as music educator and church musician, as a *Times-Picayune* advertisement from 1969 attests: “Olivia Charlot, professional musician of piano and organ ... tutors gospel music privately or in classes.”⁹

Cook’s career has taken her on international tours, playing with bands in Germany, France, Spain, Holland, Norway, Finland, and Switzerland. As a music educator, she has taught piano, organ, trumpet, and clarinet, and was the music supervisor in the Jefferson Parish Public Schools for seven years. She served many years as the secretary for Local 496 of the American Federation of Musician (musicians’ union), and was cited twice by the mayor of New Orleans for her accomplishments.

Notes

- ¹ “Lady Charlotte’s Jazz Band,” April 23, 2002, BestofNewOrleans.com.
- ² Cook, Olivia Charlot. Oral History Interview, August 30, 1999. Video. New Orleans Jazz National Historical Park Office, New Orleans, Louisiana. Also available at Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University, New Orleans, Louisiana.
- ³ Buerkle, Jack V. and Danny Barker. *Bourbon Street Black: The New Orleans Black Jazzman* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), 68-69.
- ⁴ Grady, Bill. “Lady Charlotte,” *The Times-Picayune* April 27, 2001, front page.
- ⁵ Cook, Oral History.
- ⁶ Koenig, Karl. *The Jazz Lectures*. Running Springs, California: Basin Street Press, 1996, 19.
- ⁷ Cook, Oral History.
- ⁸ D. Antoinette Handy, *Black Women in American Bands and Orchestras, Second Edition*. Lanham, Mass. and Kent: Scarecrow Press, 1998, 56.
- ⁹ “Gospel Music Taught,” *New Orleans Times-Picayune* December 14, 1969, (page unknown), vertical file, “Olivia Charlot,” Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University.

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Cook, Olivia Charlot. Oral History Interview, August 30, 1999, Video. New Orleans Jazz National Historical Park Office, New Orleans, Louisiana (also at Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University, New Orleans, Louisiana).

Secondary Sources

Borenstein, Larry, and Bill Russell. *Preservation Hall Portraits: Paintings by Noel Rockmore*. Baton Rouge, Louisiana: State University Press, 1968.

Buerkle, Jack V. and Danny Barker. *Bourbon Street Black: The New Orleans Black Jazzman* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), 68-69.

Grady, Bill. "Lady Charlotte," *The Times-Picayune* April 27, 2001, front page.

Handy, D. Antoinette. *Black Women in American Bands and Orchestras, Second Edition*. Lanham, Mass. and Kent: Scarecrow Press, 1998, 56, 245.

Jerde, Curtis Dale. *A Biographical Listing of Selected Major Jazz/Blues Artists in New Orleans, Past and Present* (New Orleans: Jean Lafitte National Historical Park and Preserve, 1990).

Koenig, Karl. *The Jazz Lectures*. Running Springs, California: Basin Street Press, 1996 (19).

"Lady Charlotte's Jazz Band," April 23, 2002, BestofNewOrleans.com

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Ann Cooper (Annarette), (trumpet player, arranger)

b. ? (Indianapolis) / d. ?

Though little is known about trumpet player Ann Cooper, what we can know about her life sheds light on two lesser known aspects of New Orleans jazz history: 1) the existence of women brass players, and 2) the history of New Orleans as a vibrant jazz center and destination of musicians well into and beyond the 1920s. Cooper was a well-regarded trumpet player who left Chicago for New Orleans in the mid 1930s. Her career, in many ways, challenges received wisdom on jazz history.

While the most common role of women jazz musicians has been as vocalists and pianists, there were enough women jazz trumpet players in the thirties for the *New York Amsterdam News* to run a feature on them in January, 1938. According to this item, Cooper hailed from Indianapolis, where she grew up playing both piano and trumpet. While piano was (and continues to be) the instrument more socially acceptable for women to play—and certainly a sensible choice for black women who sought jazz careers in the 1930s—it was the trumpet that career landed Cooper prestigious jobs and favorable press notices in 1930s Chicago.¹

Then, counter to most narratives of jazz history, in the midst of her Chicago success in the 1930s, Cooper *left* Chicago to pursue jazz trumpet opportunities in New Orleans. This decision seems to have been occasioned by an offer to play with Papa

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Celestin's orchestra, possibly instigated through her contacts with any number of New Orleans musicians currently playing in Chicago. When she arrived in New Orleans, however, she was hired instead by Joe Robichaux to join his Rhythm Boys. Despite the name of this popular New Orleans band, it employed, at various times, at least three women, including vocalist Joan Lunceford and dancer **Neliska "Baby" Briscoe**.

Robichaux's band, up to that time, was comprised of all men, and a smaller group, six to seven pieces. The female members of Robichaux's band were added as part of his switch to a fourteen-piece orchestra after returning from a Brunswick recording session in New York in 1933.² In preparation for taking the Rhythm Club (Jackson and Derbigny, the Central City neighborhood) "by storm," Robichaux put together a big band fronted by Lunceford (nee Daisy Lowe) and Briscoe in tuxedos and batons. Both were popular female entertainers in New Orleans at the time. Robichaux remembered Ann Cooper as a "dependable high-note trumpeter" with a "style like that of Louis Armstrong." He added that she could she could "hold her own in jam sessions."³

Cooper's stay in New Orleans was brief. Robichaux recalled that the trumpet player left his band after a year when he tried to move her out of the regular section and into a feature spot in the show. While Robichaux saw the move as a "promotion," Cooper believed that she was being "cut out of the band" and quit. If Cooper envisioned the "feature spot" as a demotion, she would find good company in this history of female jazz musicians. Just as it was less disruptive to social norms for African American pianist Teddy Wilson to be booked as a "special feature" in Benny Goodman's Orchestra before black musicians were integrated into that previously all-white band, it

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

has also been more considered more socially acceptable for female brass players to appear as “special features” of male orchestras, rather than as members of the regular section. Billie Rogers, white female trumpet player from Woody Herman’s Orchestra in the 1940s, recalled that the male musicians were not threatened by her presence so long as she (along with the vocalist) sat in chairs separated from the band and only chimed in for “special features.” When Herman moved her into the regular section, Rogers was elated, as it meant contributing to the sound of the band as a “musician” rather than as a “woman musician,” a shift that also resulted in new hostility from her section mates.”⁴ Like Rogers, Cooper sought work and recognition as a trumpet player, not as a novelty or decoration.

Rather than evacuate the trumpet section for the “special attraction” slot, Cooper left New Orleans for Detroit, before moving back to Chicago, and later, to New York. Her travels are absent from jazz history books and Great Migration narratives, but they can be traced in the black press, in union records, and also in oral histories of male New Orleans jazz musicians who later recalled to interviewers the various cities where they ran into her on the road. Robichaux recalled that a pianist named “Bubba,” heard Cooper playing in the area of Chicago known as the “loop.”

It was during this period that the remarkable article on women trumpet players appeared in the *New York Amsterdam News*. The African American paper acknowledged Cooper’s achievements, while noting her instrument choice as unusual.

Cornet playing isn’t quite the fad with womenfolk, but Annarett Cooper, who says she was weaned on a horn, stands out as one example of a woman who has gone places with that instrument.⁵

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

The article mentioned her stint with Robichaux, as well as other associations with Lil Hardin Armstrong, Mae Brady, Gertrude Long, a “sensational tour” with Major Bowes, an appearance at the Roseland Ballroom with Claude Hopkins, and noted that she was currently living in Harlem where she was “debating offers to come to the coast or to return to the stage.” and “devising new arrangements and writing new tunes.” “She hits the C above high C,” praised the article, which then went on to describe the talents of trumpet playing mother and daughter Dyer and Dolly Jones.

Back in Chicago in 1939, Cooper made the only known recordings of her career on two dates with the Chicago jazz-blues band, the Harlem Hamfats for the Vocalion label. The leader, Herb Morand, a New Orleans trumpeter and vocalist, had left the group at the brink of success. Rather than give up their hard-won opportunities, the remaining members hired Ann Cooper to replace Morand as trumpet player and Joe McCoy and Alberta Smith to take over the vocals. On two separate occasions in the spring and summer of 1939, the group entered the studio and successfully recreated the distinctive Harlem Hamfats sound, complete with its small but “well balanced horn sound” produced from Cooper’s trumpet plus Odell Rand’s clarinet, and sometimes the saxophone of Chris Reggell.⁶

By 1940, Cooper landed a job that the *Chicago Defender* described as “a unique honor,” as the only woman in Sir Oliver Bibb’s Swing Orchestra. The *Defender* went on to praise her for being “the only girl musician in the game today who actually holds down a chair in a man’s suit. For, not only does Ann do specialty trumpeting and

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

singing, but she has her rightful place in the band and plays all the music along with the other swingsters.”⁷ Two months later, *Downbeat* reported that she had garnered so much attention that she had left Bibbs to start a band of her own, taking with her all but two of Bibb’s musicians. Her band enjoyed bookings in Chicago for a time.⁸ By 1942, she shows up in the black press and in traveling musicians reports with the all-female band, the International Sweethearts of Rhythm. She seems to have stayed only a short time, perhaps returning to Chicago when she was replaced by trumpeter Jean Starr. By the summer of 1944, the black press reported that Cooper was the “new star” of another all-female band, the Darlings of Rhythm:

Joining the band coming direct from Windy City triumphs, Ann Cooper, outstanding trumpeter, will be featured as soloist throughout their tour which will include Delaware (sic), Virginia, New Jersey, Maryland, Pennsylvania, New York, Connecticut, Massachusetts and other key cities co-starring with Joan Lunceford, Helen Taborn and others. Clarence Love is concert master.”⁹¹⁰

As both the International Sweethearts of Rhythm and the Darlings of Rhythm routinely included New Orleans engagements on their road tours, and both Lunceford and Briscoe also traveled with these groups from time to time in their careers, it is likely that Cooper’s New Orleans connections were maintained throughout this period.

Notes

- ¹ “They Blew Horns.” *New York Amsterdam News* January 29, 1938, 19.
- ² These sessions were issued on Vocalion. *The Jazz Discography*, R485.
- ³ Joe Robichaux, Oral History Digest, March 19, 1959, Reel 1, page 4, Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University, New Orleans.
- ⁴ Billie Rogers (Archer), email to author, 2002. For Rogers, who had been playing trumpet in bands since 1934, it was the opportunity she had been dreaming of, as would any aspiring swing trumpeter of her generation. However, when Herman brought her

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

into the regular section, her fellow musicians were as hostile as it meant that Herman considered her equal to the other musicians—an acknowledgment that was difficult for many of the men in the orchestra, and certainly more challenging to social norms. But that is what many women instrumentalists have wanted throughout the history of jazz—to be treated like musicians, rather than like “women musicians.”

⁵ “They Blew Horns.”

⁶ David Evans, liner notes, Document Records, DOCD-5274, *Harlem Hamfats Complete Recorded Works in Chronological Order* Volume 4.

⁷ “Ann Cooper Plays With Bibb’s Band,” *Chicago Defender*, February 17, 1940, 10.

⁸ “Girl Trumpeter Steals Sir Oliver's 'Stuff'.” *Down Beat* April 1 1940: 5.

⁹ Ann Cooper to 'Darlings of Rhythm' Band." *Chicago Defender* August 19 1944:

6. See also, "The Darlings Get Hot Trumpeter." *Chicago Defender* August 26 1944: 6.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Robichaux, Joe. Oral History Digest, March 19, 1959, Reel 1, page 4, Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University, New Orleans.

Secondary Sources

"Ann Cooper to 'Darlings of Rhythm' Band." *Chicago Defender* August 19 1944: 6.

“Ann Cooper Plays With Bibb’s Band,” *Chicago Defender*, February 17, 1940, 10.

"The Darlings Get An Ella; She's Good, Pal." *Chicago Defender* August 26 1944: 6. "

"The Darlings Get Hot Trumpeter." *Chicago Defender* August 26 1944: 6. "

“They Blew Horns.” *New York Amsterdam News* January 29, 1938, 19.

"Girl Trumpeter Steals Sir Oliver's 'Stuff'." *Down Beat* April 1 1940, 5.

“Jean Starr Joins Sweethearts.” *New York Age* February 28 1942, 10.

"Sweethearts to 'Battle' Smack Henderson Soon." *Down Beat* April 1 1942, 5.

Trotter, Jr., Joe, ed., *The Great Migration in Historical Perspective: New Dimensions of Race, Class, and Gender* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1991).

"Local Reports." *International Musician* December 1942: 20. Local No. 257, Nashville, Tenn. Under traveling members: Ray Lee Jones, Johnnie M. Rice, Grace Bayron, Anna Belle Byrd, Helen Saine, Helen Jones, Ann Garrison, Willie M. Lee, Bernice Rothchild, Ann Cooper, Johnnie Mae Stansbury, Marjorie Pettiford, Ethlyn Williams, Roxana Lucas.

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Discography

Available on CD: Document Records, DOCD-5274, *Harlem Hamfats Complete Recorded Works in Chronological Order* Volume 4, 22 April 1938 to 14 September 1938, cuts 8-23

“You’ve Had Your Last Good Time With Me,” “What Was You Doing”,
“Something Wrong With My Mind” “Way Down That Lonely Road,” “When the
Sun Goes Down in Harlem,” “That’s going to Ruin Your Beauty Spot,”
“Bartender’s Blues,” “Ready For the River,” (Recorded in Chicago, March 31,
1939); “Rockin’ Myself to Sleep,” Business Is Gone Away,” “You Done Turned
Salty on Me,” “You Brought Me Everything But Love,” “Oh Babe, Has You Money
Come?,” “Take Me In Your Alley,” “You Can’t Win in Here,” and “When My Love
Has Come Down.” (Recorded in Chicago, September 14, 1939)

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Illustrations

The Hogan photographs of Joe Robichaux's Rhythm Boys do not include Ann Cooper.

There is a good photo of her in the newspaper story: "They Blew Horns." *New York Amsterdam News* January 29, 1938, 19. Xerox is included in accompanying file.

Frank Driggs also has a grainy copy of a photograph of Cooper with drummer, Tubby Hall, in Chicago in the 1930s. For a copy and for permission to use it, one would need to contact Frank Driggs, 1235 E. 40th Street, Brooklyn, NY 11210



A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Mamie Desdunes [Mary Celina Degay or Dugay Desdunes, Desdune, Desdume]
(pianist, vocalist, song writer)¹

b. March 25, 1879 (if she is Mary Celina Desdunes, Orleans Birth Records), 1880 (Mary Degay is listed in the 1900 census as being born in 1880), or 1881 (the only time Mamie appears as “Mamie” in the census is in 1910, in which her name is spelled Mamie Desdume and her birthdate is listed as 1881)² / d. unknown

When Jelly Roll Morton (Ferdinand Joseph Lamothe) was asked to recount his influences, he often listed the name of an eight-fingered piano player and singer, Mamie Desdunes, who lived near his godmother, Eulalie Hecaud (sometimes spelled “Echo,” later known as Laura Hunter), in the Garden District. In some interviews, Morton credited Desdunes with introducing him to the blues, and in others, he speculated that he must have heard the blues before, but that she was the first person “who really sold me on the blues.”³ In either case, he claimed to have been significantly influenced by the way that she played the blues.

Two middle fingers of her right hand had been cut off, so she played the blues with only three fingers on her right hand. She only knew this one tune and she played it all day long after she would first get up in the morning....‘I stood on the corner, my feet was dripping wet, I asked every man I met... Can’t give me a dollar, give me a lousy dime, Just to feed that hungry man of mine.’⁴

Morton would later record “Mamie’s Blues,” and publish the sheet music, but not without crediting Mamie Desdunes for authorship. After recording the song for General Records in 1939, Morton wrote to Roy Carew, “Mamie Desdume wrote ‘Mamie’s Blues’ in the late 90’s. I don’t like to take credit for something that don’t belong to me, I guess

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

she's dead by now & there would probably be no royalty to pay, but she did write it."⁵

That the man known by many as a *braggadocio* (who, in fact, claimed to have “invented jazz,” much to the fury of many of his contemporaries), frequently acknowledged Desdunes’s musical influence, even in high profile interviews in *Time* and *Downbeat*, is significant. Pinning down what that significance may have been is another matter.

One clue as to the impact that this piano-playing neighbor had on Morton’s career can be found in Morton’s Library of Congress interviews with Alan Lomax. In Morton’s presentation of “Mamie’s Blues” (collected on CD on Rounder Records, *Winin’ Boy Blues: The Library of Congress Recordings*, V. 4, ROUN1094), he begins by telling the story of how Mamie Desdunes played the blues “like this all day long, when she would first get up in the morning,” then illustrates her style at the piano. What is striking about this recording--in addition to Morton’s lyrical approach to the melody of “Mamie’s Blues”—is the *habanera* rhythm he gives this rendition, leading some scholars to speculate that Desdunes not only sparked Morton’s interest in the blues, but in the Latin rhythms that he referred to as the “Spanish tinge.”⁶

It may not be possible to know for sure if Morton’s enthusiasm for Mamie Desdunes’s playing amounts to his first exposure to fusing blues with Latin rhythms, or whether Morton was responding to something more personal or unique about her style within a broader context of musical change in which both blues and Latin rhythms were prominent. It is not surprising that Morton and Desdunes would find themselves playing blues and Latin rhythms, as both forms were plentiful in New Orleans, in the late nineteenth, early twentieth century. In fact, according to Bruce Boyd Raeburn, many

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Creole of color pianists played blues with *habanera* rhythm during those years.⁷ Morton was a major popularizer of this approach, however, so his consistent citing of Desdunes as an influence could signal that she was an innovator in this style. While we may not know exactly what Desdunes's role was in jazz history, we may speculate that she is one of the musicians involved in fusing blues and Latin rhythms in a distinct Creole of color approach to piano jazz. More definitely, we may piece together the cultural context of the musical connection between Desdunes, Morton, and other musicians who knew and heard them both in turn of the century New Orleans.

As discussed earlier in this report, nineteenth-century New Orleans was one of several busy port cities with strong African, Latin-American, and European cultural traditions that found interesting musical fusions.⁸ Musicians traveled from port to port—Mexico, Cuba, Louisiana, and other locations—which meant that pan-Caribbean forms could develop, and that New Orleans musicians both contributed to and benefited from these traveling influences. In this rich musical network, distinct forms could become popular in locations other than their point of origin, and diverse forms could influence one another to create new forms.

One of the circuits by which Cuban music traveled to New Orleans was via Haitian refugees in the early 1800s. 30,000 people migrated from Haiti to Cuba as a result of the Haitian revolution, including white French colonial subjects, free people of color, and slaves. In 1809, when Cuba deported many of its Francophone refugees, 10,000 Haitian refugees in Cuba moved to New Orleans, doubling the city's total population and quadrupling the number of free people of color.⁹ While the facts are

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

blurry regarding the relationship between this history and those of Morton and Desdunes (Morton's because of self-perpetuated conflicting versions of his life story, and Desdunes, because of lack of documentation), both appear to have had roots in that mass migration and the history of cultural contact among Caribbean ports.

According to Raul Fernandez, Morton "traced his ancestry to Haiti through both parents, was raised by godparents of Cuban ancestry, and learned to play *habaneras* from his Mexican guitar teacher."¹⁰ According to Peter Hanley, Mamie Desdunes's mother was a black English-speaking woman named Clementine Walker and her father was one of the most well-known figures of Creole of color history, Rodolphe L. Desdunes. Desdunes, who had his own wife and children across town, was later the author of *Nos Hommes et Notre Histoire* (1921), and a major player in the Supreme Court civil rights case, Plessy vs. Fergusson. Though the Plessy appeal was unsuccessful and brought about the disastrous ruling that ushered in Jim Crow laws, the intent of Desdunes and his fellow civil rights workers, was to expose the catastrophic folly of the black/white binary to account for everyone, and thus to invalidate racial segregation.

How often, or if ever, Mamie Desdunes saw her father we don't know. Clementine Walker is not mentioned in the biographical data on Rodolphe Desdunes, though their names are linked in the birth records of Mary Celina Desdunes (Hanley's best guess at Mamie's identity) and John Alexander Desdunes (probably Mamie's brother). Creoles of color of Desdunes's social standing typically considered themselves superior to poor English speaking black people such as Clementine Walker.

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

The institution of *placage*, or formal arrangement of mistress-keeping, although usually referring to white Creole men with Creole of color mistresses, might also provide a context for this union across social groups in which the children receive the father's name.¹¹ Though not of the same elite background as Rodolphe Desdunes, Morton was also a Creole of color, and adamantly so—he often made the point that he was not a “Negro.” While Mamie Desdunes was raised in a black English speaking household, she did live in the same neighborhood as Morton, and it is like that the two crossed paths professionally as well, since they both played Storyville brothels.

To a *Time Magazine* reporter, Morton recalled Mamie Desdunes as “good-natured, a fine dresser, and extremely popular with the sporting crowd.”¹² In a 1949 interview with Alan Lomax, Bunk Johnson, recalled, “I knew Mamie Desdoumes real well. Played many a concert with her singing those same blues. She was pretty good looking, quite fair and with a nice head of hair. She was a hustlin' woman. A blues-singing poor gal. Used to play pretty passable piano around them dance halls on Perdido Street.” Added Johnson, “When Hattie Rogers or Lulu White would put it out that Mamie was going to be singing at their place, the white men would turn out in bunches and them whores would clean up.”¹³ Manuel Manetta recalled, “Mamie Desdume was a madam who had a house of Villere Street; she played the piano.”¹⁴

Mamie Desdunes apparently lived at 2328 Toledano Street with family members in 1900, about eight blocks from Morton's godmother, who was by then known as Laura Hunter (formerly Eulalie Hecaud) at 2706 S. Robertson. Between 1901 and 1905, Jelly Roll Morton lived with his godmother, and this is likely the time when he listened to

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Desdunes playing “Mamie’s Blues.” Morton’s controversial claim to have “invented jazz” in 1902, while discredited by many scholars, may also indicate that this time period was a turning point for Morton in the way he was conceptualizing and playing the difference between ragtime and jazz.¹⁵

If Mamie Desdunes and Mary Celina Degay [Dugay] are the same person, she married George Degay [Dugay] in 1898. I have not been able to locate her house on Villere, nor have I been able to find her death date.

Notes

¹ In his transcription of Jelly Roll Morton’s interviews, Alan Lomax spelled her name “Desdoumes,” but Lomax’s spelling is not one of the most reliable features of his valuable documentation of jazz history.

² Thanks to Roy Tucker for genealogical research, and to Peter Hanley for his excellent essay “Mamie Desdunes, *Portraits from Jelly Roll’s New Orleans* <<<http://www.doctorjazz.freeseve.co.uk/portnewor.html>>> Both Tucker and Hanley believe that Mamie Desdunes is likely the same person as Mary Celina Desdunes.

³ Alan Lomax, *Mister Jelly Roll*. New York: Grove Press, 1950, 17-18. For notes on the spelling of Jelly Roll Morton’s name as Ferdinand Joseph Lamothe, and history of Eulalie Echo/Laura Hunter’s name, see Phil Pastras, *Dead Man Blues: Jelly Roll Morton Way Out West* Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001, 13. Some spelling errors stem from the transcription of taped interviews conducted by Alan Lomax. Mamie Desdunes’s name is spelled a number of different ways in the documentation, but Peter Hanley’s best guess is that her name was spelled Desdunes, since it appears that her father was Rodolphe L. Desdunes. Roy Tucker’s census research confirms this theory. See Peter Hanley, “Mamie Desdunes, *Portraits from Jelly Roll’s New Orleans* <<<http://www.doctorjazz.freeseve.co.uk/portnewor.html>>>

⁴ Alan Lomax, *Mister Jelly Roll*. New York: Grove Press, 1950, 17-18.

⁵ Jelly Roll Morton, correspondence to Roy Carew, December 23, 1939. Jelly Roll Morton Correspondence,” William Russell Collection, Williams Research Center. This correspondence is also published in William Russell, “*Oh, Mister Jelly*” *A Jelly Roll Morton Scrapbook* (Denmark: JazzMedia Aps, 1999), 223-4.

⁶ Conversation with Bruce Boyd Raeburn, Hogan Jazz Archive, January 10, 2002.

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Bruce Boyd Raeburn, "Submerging Ethnicity: Creole of Color Jazz Musicians of Italian Heritage," Conference Paper, Creole Studies Conference, Radisson Hotel, New Orleans, Louisiana, October 25, 2003.

⁷ Raeburn, "Submerging Ethnicity."

⁸ Raul Fernandez, *Latin Jazz: The Perfect Combination/La Combinacion Perfecta* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2002), 14-24.

⁹ Paul F. LaChance, "The Foreign French," in Arnold R. Hirsch and Joseph Logsdon, *Creole New Orleans: Race and Americanization* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1992), 103-7; Shirley Elizabeth Thompson, *The Passing of a People: Creoles of Color in Mid-Nineteenth Century New Orleans* (Ph.D. dissertation, 2001), 6-7.

¹⁰ Fernandez, *Latin Jazz*, 20.

¹¹ For a useful historical analysis of placage, see Monique Guillory, "Placage: The Twilight of Freedom," *Some Enchanted Evening on the Auction Block: The Cultural Legacy of the New Orleans Quadroon Balls* (Ph.D. diss., New York University, 1999), 62-100.

¹² "Jelly." *Time* March 11 1940: 65-66. "

¹³ Quoted numerous places, included Shapiro, Nat, and Nat Hentoff. *Hear Me Talkin' To Ya: The Story of Jazz by the Men Who Made It*. New York and Toronto: Rinehart & Company, Inc., 1955. 7-8. According to William Russell's notes, Alan Lomax recorded this interview with Bunk Johnson in 1949. William Russell, notes, May 31, 1988. MSS 519, Johnson, Bunk, f. 1. William Russell Collection, Williams Research Center.

¹⁴ Manuel Manetta, interview with William Russell, March 28, 1957, reel IV (of 4): p. 12,

¹⁵ See Pastras's approach to the "creator of jazz claim" in *Dead Man Blues*, 2-3.

For more on how scholars have attempted to unravel Morton's contradictory claims and Lomax's misspellings, see the invaluable joint-authored website

<<<http://www.doctorjazz.freeseve.co.uk/page10.html#prol>>>

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Morton, Jelly Roll, correspondence to Roy Carew, December 23, 1939. Jelly Roll Morton Correspondence, William Russell Collection, Williams Research Center, Historic New Orleans Collection.

Manuel Manetta, interview with William Russell, March 28, 1957, reel IV (of 4): p. 12
Russell, William, notes, May 31, 1988. MSS 519, f. 1, Johnson, Bunk, page 6. William Russell Collection, The Williams Research Center.

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Secondary Sources

- Guillory, Monique, *Some Enchanted Evening on the Auction Block: The Cultural Legacy of the New Orleans Quadroon Balls* (Ph.D. diss., New York University, 1999).
- Hanley, Peter, "Mamie Desdunes," *Portraits from Jelly Roll's New Orleans*, Doctor Jazz website, <http://www.doctorjazz.freereserve.co.uk/portnewor.html>
- "Jelly." *Time* March 11 1940: 65-66.
- "Immortals of Jazz." *Down Beat* April 15 1940: 10.
- Lomax, Alan. *Mister Jelly Roll*. New York: Grove Press, 1950. 17-18.
- Raeburn, Bruce Boyd, "Submerging Ethnicity: Creole of Color Jazz Musicians of Italian Heritage," Conference Paper, Creole Studies Conference, Radisson Hotel, New Orleans, Louisiana, October 25, 2003.
- Russell, William. "Oh, Mister Jelly" *A Jelly Roll Morton Scrapbook* (Denmark: JazzMedia Aps, 1999), 223-4, 341, 479-480, 489.
- Shapiro, Nat, and Nat Hentoff. *Hear Me Talkin' To Ya: The Story of Jazz by the Men Who Made It*. New York and Toronto: Rinehart & Company, Inc., 1955. 7-8
- Smith, Charles Edward. "'Oh, Mr. Jelly!'" *The Jazz Record* no. 17: 8-10. "

Discography

No recordings of Mamie Desdunes are available, however, the Library of Congress recordings of Jelly Roll Morton playing "Mamie's Blues" and talking about Mamie Desdunes is available on CD on Rounder Records: Jelly Roll Morton, "Mamie's Blues," *Winin' Boy Blues: The Library of Congress Recordings, V. 4* (ROUN1094)

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Illustrations

I could not locate a photograph of Mamie Desdunes, but there are two good photographs of her house at 2328 Toledano Street, in the *New Orleans Historic Collection*. Contact the Williams Research Center for reproduction and permission

Mamie Desdunes' house
2328 Toledano Street
Photo from Richard W. Tolbert
Jelly Book File
New Orleans Collection
Williams Research Center



Mamie Desdunes' House
2328 Toledano
July 1968
Williams Research Center
MSS 508 f. 237

MSS 508 f. 237



Mamie Desdunes' House
2328 Toledano
July '68

THE WILLIAMS RESEARCH CENTER
418 CHARLES STREET
NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA 70119

THE WILLIAMS RESEARCH CENTER
418 CHARLES STREET
NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA 70119

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Yvonne (Miss Dixie) Marther Fasnacht (clarinet, alto saxophone, vocalist, club owner)

b. July 7, 1910 (New Orleans)

Yvonne Fasnacht was born on Laharpe Street, a “downtown girl,” of Swiss, German, and French lineage, in 1910 to a Catholic mother, Julia Almont, and a Lutheran father, Carroll P. Fasnacht. Ironically, she wouldn’t be known as “Miss Dixie” until the 1930s, when she went on an Eastern tour with an “all-girl” band from Ohio. Intrigued by her accent, the members of the Smart Set re-named her “Dixie,” a name that would stick even after she returned to New Orleans for good.

Her father played the drums, though his occupation ranged from bartender, to salesman, to hotel night manager. Her mother’s health wasn’t good, and times were difficult. When Fasnacht was nine years old, her mother died of brain cancer, and her sister, Irma Fasnacht, became the head of household at age 18. To support her younger sister and their brother Lionel, “Miss Irma” took in lodgers, in particular, single women who had come to the city to work as secretaries.

In school, Yvonne Fasnacht was only interested in drawing and music. She was fortunate to be able to attend the Francis C. Nicholls School, where these were two of the areas of focus. The other option, sewing, did not interest her in the least. Among her classmates were the talented **Boswell Sisters**, Connie (later Connee), Martha, and Vet, who played instruments and sang during the early years of their career in New

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Orleans, and would soon go on to national acclaim as a singing trio. At the Nicholls School, “all of the girls were uptown girls,” said Fasnacht in her oral history. “Because of the Depression, many of the women had been at Newcomb but had to go to trade school.”¹ The stock market crash, in other words, resulted in a scenario in which formerly affluent white college women sought money-making skills alongside young working class white women such as Fasnacht.

Fasnacht had only a sixth grade education, but excelled in her studies in drawing and music at the Nicholls School, and soon found employment in both fields. In terms of her music studies, she began with the clarinet, and then switched to the E-flat alto sax. She improvised and played by ear. After the Nicholls School, she worked as a card illustrator for a company called the Idea Shop. She also “found a little girl band and we played different places. We were the Harmony Maids.”² The Harmony Maids were managed by a man named Al Durring or Durning.³

She still did not know whether she wanted to be an artist or a musician, but one event in particular helped to make up her mind.

“There was a girl band called the Smart Set that came from Ohio,” she told an interviewer. “They were farm girls. And they came down and they played the Orpheum. “The six-piece band was stranded in New Orleans with no bookings beyond their Orpheum engagement, and so Fasnacht’s sister, “Miss Irma,” took them in. When the band took off on the road once again, they brought along Yvonne Fasnacht as their newest member. She was soon told, “You don’t look like an Yvonne. We’re going to call you Dixie because you’re from the South.”⁴

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

The band broke up on the road, in Florida, as Fasnacht recalled, “right after repeal,” when the Prohibition against alcohol sales was revoked in 1933. At that time, Gene Austin, the manager of a highly successful “all-girl” band called the Bricktops, ran across the musicians on a trip through Pensacola. He took Fasnacht, trumpet player Judy Ertle, and pianist Betty Giblin back to New Orleans where the Bricktops had an engagement at either the Suburban Gardens or South Port. The Bricktops, a big band, played the main part of the club, and the trio played the smaller room. The trio then played at the Little Ritz, a cocktail lounge near the St. Charles Hotel.⁵

Another musician arrived in New Orleans from Akron, Ohio, toting a home-made bass fiddle. With the addition of bassist Maxine Phinney, the trio hit the road as a quartet. Sometimes called the Sophisticates of Swing and sometimes called the Southland Rhythm Girls, they played the College Inn in Chicago. In New York, they played the Astor Hotel and Leon and Eddies on 52nd Street. Fasnacht recalled that their engagements at Leon and Eddies ran six months at a time.⁶ At Leon and Eddies, their act was caught by a movie scout who offered them the opportunity to do movie shorts.⁷ In 1935, they appeared in the short film, “Speedy Justice” (Universal Pictures).

A 1938 write-up in *Down Beat* praised the skills and predicted success for “Betty Giblin at the ivories, Judy Ertle blowing a hot trumpet, Maxine Phinney slapping the bass and Dixie Fasnacht hitting ‘em high on the clarinet and supplying the vocal swing.”⁸ At some point, pianist Dorothy Sloop from Steubenville, Ohio, took Betty Giblin’s place in the band in New York.⁹

While Miss Dixie was on the road with the band, her sister, Miss Irma, opened a

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

bar and made a successful business. Miss Dixie came off the road to co-run the bar in 1939. This bar would become a well-known spot for hearing Dixieland jazz, and would, for many of its clientele, eventually become known as the first gay bar in New Orleans. In both its first and second locations, the bar would also become famous for its 35-foot mural by Xavier Gonzales, depicting sixty-six musicians and entertainers of the period. After the closing of the second location in 1964, the mural was moved to the Old Mint.

The first location of Dixie's Bar of Music was on 204 St. Charles, across the street from the St. Charles Hotel. The sisters ran the bar throughout World War II, becoming so popular with servicemen that they were told that some U.S. military personnel had opened a Dixie's Bar of Music overseas. The division of labor was strict and established early. Miss Irma was the business woman, and also "the Sheriff," because "it was she who, in addition to minding the books and the cash register at Dixie's Bar of Music, also 'kept the kids in line'."¹⁰ Miss Dixie was in charge of the entertainment, which included providing and playing in the band, which was made up of both women and men. The first band included Judy Ertle (trumpet), Armand Hug (piano), Bonnie Bell, Johnny Senac (bass), Bob Doyle (Armand Hug's brother-in-law), and Fasnacht on clarinet. Of her own playing, Miss Dixie has said, "I'm not a good musician, but I get a good tone."¹¹ Joe Loyacano also recalled working in the St. Charles Avenue location of Dixie's Bar of Music in a three-piece group that included Fasnacht on clarinet, "a girl piano player," and himself on trombone.¹² The New Orleans writer Lyle Saxon, who resided in the St. Charles Hotel, recalled a band comprised of both constants and variables: "usually a pretty girl" at the piano, a

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

guitarist, a bassist, and “sometimes there is a trumpeter, sometimes not.” Miss Dixie, he recalled, was one of the constants.

And there is always Dixie and her clarinet. From her point of vantage on the platform, she is able to look over the heads of those at the bar and see the guests seated at the small tables beyond. She has that gift so necessary in conducting a club in that she can do three things at once; she sings, she plays with apparently carefree abandon, and she exchanges jokes with the guests. This is interspersed with sudden shouts: ‘Vincent, catch Table 17,’ or ‘Joe a guest is at the door,’ or ‘Look who’s here.’ Nothing escapes her notice.¹³

After the war, the landlords no longer wanted a bar on their property, so the sisters moved Dixie’s Bar of Music to 701 Bourbon Street (current location of a bar called the Cat’s Meow). The sisters lived upstairs. The second Dixie’s Bar of Music opened around 1949. At this point, pianist Dorothy Sloop (1913-1998) joined the band. She and Fasnacht would later record an album together *circa* 1957, entitled, *Dixie and Sloopy: Sloopy Time* (Golden Crest 3066), now a collectors item. In a strange twist of gender bias, the recording company prevented the regular bass player, Johnny Senac, from appearing on the record. Apparently, there was no sense in recording women jazz musicians unless they fulfilled the “all-girl” band requirement. So instead of a bass, the band was recorded with drummer, Maeceil Peterson, one of the excellent drummers from the musical family of Bernadette and George Peterson. George Peterson was a music teacher who taught at least three women drummers, all of whom became professionals: his daughters Bernadette Peterson Kerrigan and Maeceil Peterson Silliker, and his niece Lois Perry.¹⁴ Though Maeceil Peterson was a fine drummer, Fasnacht regretted that the band, which ordinarily had a bass and no drums, did not sound like itself on its record.¹⁵

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

The bar had already begun to attract a small gay clientele at its first location, some of whom would follow Dixie's Bar of Music to its new location. On Bourbon Street the club acquired a large and very loyal customer base, both gay and straight, who became closely attached to the unique community of artists and eccentrics it harbored and encouraged. It was here where the reputation of Dixie's Bar of Music as a gay bar was consolidated, whether or not Miss Dixie and Miss Irma saw it as such. These were dangerous times for gay people and gay bars, but the sisters were proud of their ability to maintain a well-run business, and they went to great lengths to protect their customers. Recalled one regular, "When they started to raid the bars, if Miss Dixie heard about it, she wouldn't close up. She'd just tell us to go home. All the vice squad found when they got there was Dixie and the bartender."¹⁶ The most famous incident occurred in 1962, when the Krewe of Yuga, a gay Carnival krewe, was raided at a private party in Jefferson Parish. As was typical with police raids of gatherings of gay people, arrests were made and the names published in the newspaper. The raid had not happened on the bar's premises, but Miss Dixie still bailed the entire krewe out of jail. She later would insist that it was not a big deal and that too much had been made of the incident, but the gay and lesbian community in New Orleans hail it as one of the important markers of local struggles in the larger Gay Liberation Movement. For Fasnacht, the story is more one of mutual loyalty between proprietors and customers.¹⁷ She has been dismissive of the topic of sexual identity with interviewers, except to make the point that in her generation this was not something people discussed. To the inevitable questions about marriage that single women tend to field throughout their

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

lives, she has replied that she and Miss Irma had suitors “coming and going,” and “friends—all kinds of friends,” and that they simply didn’t have time for marriage.¹⁸

In 1964, Miss Dixie and Miss Irma bought a cottage on Bourbon Street, sold Dixie’s Bar of Music and retired.

Miss Irma died on May 14, 1993 at the age of 91.

In 1997, Miss Dixie was presented a Lifetime Achievement Award at the 11th Annual Gay Appreciation Awards (GAA) Gala, for being "a living testament to the history of gay New Orleans."¹⁹ As of this writing, she still lives on Bourbon Street.

Notes

¹ Oral History, Yvonne Dixie Fasnacht, interviewed October 14, 1999, Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University, New Orleans, Louisiana.

² David Cuthbert, "Dixie Land," *Times-Picayune*, May 18 1996: E-3.

³ Oral History, Yvonne Dixie Fasnacht, interviewed October 14, 1999, Hogan.

⁴ Oral history, Yvonne Dixie Fasnacht, October 14, 1999, Hogan.

⁵ Oral History, Yvonne Dixie Fasnacht, October 14, 1999, Hogan.

⁶ Interview, Dixie Fasnacht, with Sherrie Tucker, June 29, 2002, New Orleans.

⁷ "They Open at New York's Astor." *Down Beat*, November 1938.

⁸ "They Open at New York's Astor," *Down Beat*, November 1939.

⁹ Eric Lyttle, "The Real Story of 'Hang on Sloopy,'" *Columbus Monthly* (September 2003), 42.

¹⁰ Pepe Citron, "Dixie and the Sheriff," *New Orleans States-Item*, August 4, 1973,

21.

¹¹ Oral History, Yvonne Dixie Fasnacht, October 14, 1999, Hogan.

¹² Oral History, Joe Loyacano, Oral History, August 20, 1959, Reel I—Summary, 8. Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane.

¹³ Lyle Saxon, *The Friends of Joe Gilmore* (New York: Hastings House, 1948), 68.

¹⁴ Claire Perry Black, oral history, March 19, 2001. Interviewed by Jack Stewart, assisted by Tad Jones. Video. Hogan Jazz Archive and New Orleans Jazz National Historical Park.

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

- 15 Oral History, Yvonne Dixie Fasnacht, October 14, 1999, Hogan.
16 Quoted in Cuthbert, E-3.
17 Interview, Dixie Fasnacht, with Sherrie Tucker, June 29, 2002, New Orleans.
18 Oral History, Yvonne Dixie Fasnacht, October 14, 1999, Hogan.
19 Rip and Marsha Naquin-Delain, "GAA Gala Raises \$2,809 for Belle Reve & Belle Esprit," *Ambush Magazine* vol. 15/issue 24 (1997), *Ambush Mag*; <http://www.ambushmag.com/is2497/hot.htm> 15.24 (2000).

Bibliography

Primary Sources

- Yvonne Dixie Fasnacht, interview with Sherrie Tucker, June 29, 2002, New Orleans.
Yvonne Dixie Fasnacht, Oral History, interviewed October 14, 1999, Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University, New Orleans, Louisiana.
Joe Loyacano, Oral History, August 20, 1959, Reel I–Summary, 8. Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane.

Secondary Sources

- Citron, Pete. "Still With It: Dixie and the Sheriff," *States-Item (New Orleans)*, August 4 1973: 21 (2). Vertical files, Old Mint, New Orleans
Cuthbert, David. "Dixie Land," *Times-Picayune*, May 18 1996: E-1 (2). Vertical files, Old Mint, New Orleans.
"French Quarter Flashbacks," *Times-Picayune*, November 7 - 13 1999 (cover story of "TV Focus" section). Hogan Jazz Archives, Tulane University, New Orleans.
Hardy, Jeannette. "Come on Inside." *Times-Picayune*, September 19 (when printed?) 2000. Vertical files; Hogan Jazz Archives, Tulane University, New Orleans.
Lyttle, Eric. "The Real Story of 'Hang on Sloopy,'" *Columbus Monthly* (September 2003), 42.
Naquin-Delain, Rip and Marsha, "GAA Gala Raises \$2,809 for Belle Reve & Belle Esprit," *Ambush Magazine* vol. 15/issue 24 (1997), *Ambush Mag*; <http://www.ambushmag.com/is2497/hot.htm> 15.24 (2000).
Obituary, Irma Fasnacht. Sunday, May 16 1993. Unknown newspaper. Vertical files, Old Mint, New Orleans.
Obituary, Irma Fasnacht. 1993. Unknown newspaper. Vertical files, Old Mint, New Orleans (1993)
Obituary, Ruth Fasnacht (sister-in-law of Dixie), *Times-Picayune*, April 3 2002. Vertical files, Hogan Jazz Archives, Tulane University, New Orleans.

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Saxon, Lyle. *The Friends of Joe Gilmore* (New York: Hastings House, 1948).
Teague, Matthew. "Sunset Boulevard," *Times-Picayune*, October 2 2000. Vertical files, Hogan Jazz Archives, Tulane University, New Orleans.
"They Open at New York's Astor," *Down Beat*, November 1938. Vertical files, Old Mint, New Orleans.

Discography

Dixie and Sloopy, "Sloopy Time," Yvonne Fasnacht, clarinet; Dorothy Sloop, piano; Maeceil Silliker, drums. (Golden Crest 3066, circa 1957). This is an out-of-print collectors item. Tom Stagg at the Louisiana Music Factory owns a copy. He has burned a copy for the New Orleans Jazz National Historical Park, which is included in the accompanying file.

Filmography

Universal Pictures, *Speedy Justice* (18 minute film short, September 1935, with Southland Rhythm Girls).

I have tried to locate a copy of this film through Library of Congress, and also through jazz film historian, Mark Cantor. According to Cantor, it is extremely rare. I quote from Cantor's email to me, January 18, 2003: "Universal Pictures often turned to independent producers to put together short subject presentations. One was Mentone Productions, heading by Milton Svharzwald, who also produced musical shorts for RKO Radio Pictures. Between 1933 and 1939 Universal released at least 77 shorts, one of which was 'Speedy Justice.' The Mentone shorts are extremely hard to come by these days, although they show up every once and a while. 'Speedy Justice,' however, has proved to be most elusive."

Illustrations

Dixie Fasnacht has some fabulous photographs, but when I was at her house, she was unable to find them. Included in the accompanying file are newspaper articles featuring photographs of the bands in which she played.

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Mercedes Garman Fields [sometimes Gorman] (pianist, vocalist)

b. March 1899 (New Orleans) / d. November 14, 1967 (New Orleans, Louisiana)

When William Russell received the news that pianist Mercedes Garman Fields had died, he happened to have on his lap a copy of Al Rose's and Edmond Souchon's *New Orleans Jazz: A Family Album*. Flipping to her biography, he saw that there was one line only, indicating that she had been with Papa Celestin's band in the 1930s and 1940s, but with no details included.

Saddened that so little had been documented, and that no oral history had been conducted with this well-respected pianist, Russell went to the wake to see if he could find out more about her. There he found a step-niece who told him that Mercedes Garman was a New Orleans native, born on Jackson Avenue probably in 1898 (but maybe 1897 or 1899),¹ that she had worked with many renowned jazz musicians of the 1920s, including Celestin, Louis Armstrong, and Alphonse Picou. She had also sometimes played on a boat on Lake Ponchartrain. Besides New Orleans, she had worked on the Gulf Coast at Biloxi, Gulfport, and other locations. She was a graduate of Xavier, a member of the Holy Ghost Catholic Church, and a well-regarded piano teacher, as well as a working pianist.²

From Russell's notes, along with the information that was documented in her obituaries, we can piece together an outline of an entire life spent in New Orleans. The

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

U.S. Federal Census also helps to pin down some details.

According to the 1900 and 1910 Census reports, Mercedes Garman was born in March, 1899, the youngest of ten living children (three others died before 1900). Her parents were Adolph Garman, a laborer, whose father was born in England and mother was born in Louisiana, and Alice Luciana Garman, a house keeper, whose father was born in Italy and mother was born in Louisiana. The 1890 and 1910 Census reports listed the entire Garman family as “mulatto,” a vague term that was used to classify children of mixed parentage (specifically black and white), all people with known mixed ancestry (again, specifically black and white), and Creoles- of-color who would not have identified as either black or white. Since there was no racial category for people who were mixed in Jim Crow logic, all of these groups were lumped into the “Colored” side of the legal and mandatory black/white color line. Reflecting these contradictions, the 1900 Census lists the whole family as “black.” The Census also shows that the family was English-speaking, though it does not record if other languages were spoken as well.³ The 1880 Census shows the family to be living at 328 Jackson Avenue, and the 1900 Census indicates that they had moved to 2039 Jackson Avenue. By 1910, Mercedes Garman’s mother was listed as widowed. The wage earners in the household are recorded as Mercedes’s siblings, brothers: Ethan, a driver; Maltry, a laborer who did odd jobs; Ferdinand, a porter in a club, and her sister Orelia (or Aurellia), a seamstress.

Mercedes Garman married Herbert B. Fields at some point before 1923, and lived at 2325 Josephine.⁴ While most references to her professional career refer to her

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

as “Mercedes Fields,” drummer Alex Bigard remembered playing in a band with “Mercedes Garman,” which suggests that her career began before she married. As Mercedes Fields, she was an active jazz band pianist and piano teacher from the 1920s through the 1950s. She taught private lessons, and also taught piano for about three years at the Beth Israel Cultural Nursery School on Terpsicore.⁵

Mercedes Garman Fields played piano for jazz bands at a time and place when it was not unusual for an otherwise all-male band to have a woman at the piano. As is evident throughout this report, many women pianists worked, and were respected as competent musicians, in the most popular jazz bands of New Orleans in the 1920s. A photograph at the Hogan Jazz Archive shows Mercedes Garman Fields at the piano in the band led by cornetist Manuel Perez at the opening of the Pythian Temple Roof Garden in the summer of 1923.⁶ Pianist Jeanette Salvant Kimball recalled that three years later, on September 19, 1926, when Kimball played her first job with Oscar “Papa” Celestin at the Pythian Temple Roof Garden, Perez’s band was also playing, and Fields was still the pianist.⁷ In 1928, Fields was playing in the NOLA dance orchestra led by trumpet player Peter Lacaze on Carondelet Street.⁸ According to Karl Koenig, she played with John Robichaux’s band in the late 1920s, along with Willie Pajaud, Harrison Barnes, Sam Dutrey Sr. and Charles McCurdy. He also mentions that she was in bassist Bob Lyon’s band with Ricard Alexis, Frankie Dusen, Sidney Vigne and Tom Benton.”⁹ Drummer, Alex Bigard, recalled that when he played with Bob Lyon’s band, a pianist wasn’t always used, but when there was a pianist it was often “Mercedes Gorman.”¹⁰ Koenig also quotes Ernie Cognolotti, who remembered playing with her in

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Bill Matthew's band. "She was a good pianist and had a very good reputation and following in New Orleans. But she was not a traditional jazz pianist."¹¹

What Cognolotti meant by that statement is probably what clarinetist Willie Humphrey meant when he described the playing of a long list of women pianists who played with early jazz bands, including Fields, as "good piano players" who "made the correct chord changes. They could read and had good left hands."¹² Some of these pianists took improvised solos, but many did so only minimally, and some did not solo—however, it is also important to note that band leaders often did not *want* their pianists to take improvised solos. The role of the pianist in these 1920s bands was often seen as "laying down the right chords" for the other musicians.¹³ As Bruce Raeburn explained to film-maker Kay D. Ray, "[u]sually what you want the piano player to do in collective improvisation is comp and fill," maintaining the chords so that the other instrumentalists could hear them and to improvise on them, and to "fill" the in between spaces in support of the improvising brass and reeds, who are collectively featured. For pianists working in this context of early collective improvisation, the opportunity to solo was limited.¹⁴

Fields' most noted period of playing is during the 1930s and 1940s, when she played with Oscar "Papa" Celestin.¹⁵ Jeanette Kimball recalled that when she took some time off from Celestin's band (between 1935 and 1953), to raise her children, Celestin maintained two groups; a traveling band and a band at the Paddock Lounge. According to Kimball, Mercedes Fields was the pianist for the traveling band.¹⁶ It was also Fields who appeared on Deluxe recordings that were made in 1947, the first records Celestin had made since 1928. She appeared on three more recordings with

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Celestin in 1951. None of these recordings are available as of this writing. According to Bruce Raeburn, she also played with Herbert Leary and with Ricardo Lexus.¹⁷

She was active as a professional musician through the 1950s, and then continued to work primarily as a piano teacher. In the mid-1960s, she broke her pelvis bone, an injury that forced her to retire. She spent the last couple of years of her life at the Lodwick-Manor Nursing Home, 5407 Dauphine. However, as Bill Russell was told at her wake, "even here she entertained the other patients with her music."¹⁸

Notes

¹ The 1900 and 1910 U.S. Census for Louisiana list her birth date as March, 1899.

² William Russell, unpublished notes, "Field, Mercedes G." November 16 1967. Williams Research Center, MSS 536, obits f. 44. Also in vertical files, Mercedes Garman Fields, Hogan Jazz Archives.

³ U.S. Federal Census, 1900.

⁴ Deaths," *Times-Picayune*, November 16, 1967, 2. Vertical files, Hogan Jazz Archives; also MSS 536 obits f. 44, Williams Research Center.

⁵ Russell, unpublished notes, 4.

⁶ Bruce Raeburn, interviewed by film-maker Kay D. Ray for *Lady Be Good: Instrumental Women in Jazz*. Video # 311, in possession of Kay D. Ray.

⁷ Jeanette Kimball, Oral History, February 10, 1962, interviewer William Russell. Oral History Digest--Retyped. 1 [of 2], Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University, New Orleans.

⁸ Samuel Barclay Carters IV, *Jazz: New Orleans: 1885-1963: An Index to the Negro Musicians of New Orleans* (New York: Oak Publications, revised edition, 1963), 83. Carters spells it "Locage," but elsewhere it is spelled Lacaze.

⁹ Karl Koenig, *The Jazz Lectures*, (Running Springs, California: Basin Street Press, 1996), 25.

¹⁰ Alex Bigard, Oral History, February 7, 1961, interviewers William Russell, Ralph Collins, Richard B. Allen. Digest--Retyped., III [of 3], 12.

¹¹ Koenig, *The Jazz Lectures*, 25.

¹² Koenig, *The Jazz Lectures*, 20.

¹³ Koenig, *The Jazz Lectures*, 21.

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

¹⁴ Bruce Raeburn, interviewed by film-maker Kay D. Ray for *Lady Be Good: Instrumental Women in Jazz*. Video # 311, in possession of Kay D. Ray.

¹⁵ Al Rose and Edmond Souchon, *New Orleans Jazz: A Family Album*, third edition, revised and enlarged (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1984), 43; and D. Antoinette Handy, *Black Women in American Bands and Orchestras*, Second Edition. (Lantham, Mass. and Kent: Scarecrow Press, 1998), 222.

¹⁶ Jeanette Kimball, Oral History, February 10, 1962, interviewer William Russell. Oral History Digest--Retyped. 2 [of 2]. Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University, New Orleans.

¹⁷ Bruce Raeburn, interviewed by film-maker Kay D. Ray for *Lady Be Good: Instrumental Women in Jazz*. Video # 311, in possession of Kay D. Ray.

¹⁸ Russell, William, unpublished notes, 4.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Kimball, Jeanette, Oral History, February 10, 1962, interviewer William Russell. Oral History Digest--Retyped. 1 [of 2] and 2 [of 2]. Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University, New Orleans.

Raeburn, Bruce, interviewed by film-maker Kay D. Ray for *Lady Be Good: Instrumental Women in Jazz*. Video # 311, in possession of Kay D. Ray.

Russell, William, unpublished notes, "Field, Mercedes G." November 16 1967.

Williams Research Center, MSS 536, obits f. 44. Also in vertical files, Mercedes Garman Fields, Hogan Jazz Archives.

U.S. Census for Louisiana, 1890, 1900, and 1910.

Secondary Sources

Bruyninckx, Walter. *60 Years of Recorded Jazz: 1917-1977* (Belgium, Deaths," *New Orleans States-Item*, November 16 1967. Vertical files, Hogan Jazz Archives.

Deaths," *Times-Picayune*, November 16, 1967, 2. Vertical files, Hogan Jazz Archives; also MSS 536 obits f. 44, Williams Research Center.

Handy, D. Antoinette. *Black Women in American Bands and Orchestras, Second Edition*. Lantham, Mass. and Kent: Scarecrow Press, 1998. According to Handy, Fields "often played with Oscar 'Papa' Celestin's Orchestra during the 1930s and 1940s (222).

Koenig, Karl. *The Jazz Lectures*. Running Springs, California: Basin Street Press,

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

1996, 25.

"Rites Conducted for Mrs. Fields," *New Orleans States-Item*, November 17 1967.

Vertical Files, Hogan Jazz Archives; also Old Mint

Rose, Al, and Edmond Souchon. *New Orleans Jazz: A Family Album*, third edition, revised and enlarged (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1984), 43, 151, 153, 161.

"Services Today for Mrs. Fields," *The Times-Picayune* November 17, 1967, vertical files, Hogan Jazz Archives; also MSS 536 Obits f. 44, The Williams Research Center; also vertical files, Old Mint.

Discography

(from Bruyninckx, C212 & C213)

Celestin's Original Tuxedo Orchestra. Oscar "Papa" Celestin (trumpet), Bill Matthews (trombone), Alphonse Picou (clarinet), Paul Barnes (alto sax), Sam Lee (tenor sax), Mercedes Fields (piano), Harrison Verret (guitar), Richard Alexis (bass), Christopher "Black Happy" Goldston (drums). New Orleans, October 26, 1947

500-1	"Hey la bas" [sic]	DeLuxe 1123, Mono MNEP2
501-1A	"Marie Laveau"	DeLuxe 1125, Mono MNEP2
502-4	"My Josephine"	DeLuxe 1123, Mono MNEP2
503-2	"Maryland, My Maryland"	Deluxe 1125, Mono MNEP2

Oscar "Papa" Celestin and his Tuxedo Jazz Band. Celestin (trumpet), Eddie Pierson (trombone), Paul "Polo" Barnes (clarinet), Mercedes Fields (piano), Harrison Verret (banjo), John Porter (bass), Louis Barbarin (drums). New Orleans, probably Autumn 1951.

"Darktown Strutters Ball"	N.O.R. 4
"When the Saints Go Marching In"	New Orleans, 1951
"Tiger Rag"	Racoon HGS18-500

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Illustrations

There is at least one photograph at the Hogan Jazz Archive.

Mercedes Fields in Oscar Celestin's band at the Paddock Lounge on June 20, 1951.
Photographer, Joe Mares.
Hogan Jazz Archive.



Bruce Raeburn has also mentioned a great photograph of her with Manuel Perez's band at the Pythian Temple Roof Garden, summer of 1923.

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Edna Mitchell Francis (piano, vocalist)

b. circa 1901 (New Orleans)¹ / .d. December 10, 1942 (New Orleans)²

Al Rose and Edmond Souchon described Edna Mitchell Francis as, “A gifted soloist who entertained in the cabarets as a piano-playing balladeer.”³

Louis Armstrong remembered working with her in Anderson’s Restaurant on Rampart Street in 1918. Her husband, drummer Albert Francis, thought it was 1919.⁴ This would have been around the same time that Albert Francis and Edna Mitchell were married.⁵ This was during a time period when Armstrong had separated from his first wife Daisy, and was temporarily living with his mother, and working at Tom Anderson’s, a well-known Storyville cabaret, frequented by high-tipping gamblers. Armstrong wrote, “Lots of the Big shots from Lu Lu White’s used to come there – And we made lots of ‘Tips.’” The band was led by Paul Dominguez, Armstrong played cornet, Albert Francis played drums, and Edna Francis, Albert’s wife, played piano. “We played all sorts of arrangements from the ‘Easiest to the Hardest–And from the Sweetest to the Hottest.”⁶

In his oral history, Albert Francis credited his late wife with teaching him most of what he knew about music. He described her as a sight reader who "could change keys" and recalled that she "worked with all the bands around New Orleans."⁷ Morris French recalls that when he played with Kid Rena's band, if the band was going to use a piano, they usually called Edna Francis.⁸

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Little else of Edna Mitchell Francis is known. She died on December 10, 1942, in New Orleans.

Notes:

¹ 1930 U.S. Census.

² Albert Francis, Oral History, August 4, 1961, Interviewed by William Russell, Digest–Retyped, Reel I (of 2), 1, Hogan Jazz Archive; also New Orleans Death Record Index, 1804-1949.

³ Al Rose and Edmond Souchon, *New Orleans Jazz: A Family Album*. Revised edition. Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1978, 87.

⁴ Albert Francis, Oral History, August 4, 1961, Interviewed by William Russell, Digest–Retyped, Reel I (of 2), 1, Hogan Jazz Archive.

⁵ 1930 U.S. Census.

⁶ Louis Armstrong, ed. Thomas Brothers, *Louis Armstrong: In His Own Words* (New York: Oxford, 1999), 83.

⁷ Albert Francis, Oral History, August 4, 1961, Interviewed by William Russell, Digest–Retyped, Reel I (of 2), 2-3, Hogan Jazz Archive.

⁸ Morris French, Oral History, June 24, 1960. Digest--Retyped, Reel I [of 2], 3. Hogan Jazz Archives.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Francis, Albert, Oral History, August 4, 1961, Interviewed by William Russell, Digest–Retyped, I (of 2), 1-3, Hogan Jazz Archive.

French, Morris, Oral History, June 24, 1960. Digest--Retyped, Reel I [of 2], 3. Hogan Jazz Archives.

Secondary Sources

Armstrong, Louis, ed. Thomas Brothers. *Louis Armstrong in his Own Words*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.

Handy, D. Antoinette. *Black Women in American Bands and Orchestras, Second Edition*. Lanham, Mass. and Kent: Scarecrow Press, 1998, 223.

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Rose, Al, and Edmond Souchon, *New Orleans Jazz: A Family Album*. Revised edition.
Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1978, 87.

Discography

No recordings found.

Illustrations

No illustrations found.

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Bertha Gonsoulin (Bookman) (piano)

b. ? / d. ?

Bertha Gonsoulin was a pianist and music teacher about whom little is known, though she shows up in two crucial moments of New Orleans jazz history: both times in San Francisco. The first of these moments came in 1921, when she replaced **Lil Hardin** as pianist in Joseph “King” Oliver’s Creole Jazz Band for a one-year period. The second came over twenty years later when her credentials as an Oliver alumnus brought her to the attention of Rudi Blesh and other movers and shakers of the New Orleans Revival. These enthusiasts of early jazz sought Gonsoulin’s services as an appropriate accompanist for New Orleans trumpet legend, Bunk Johnson, in 1943.

Cornetist and band leader Joe “King” Oliver moved from New Orleans to Chicago around 1918 or 1919.¹ His first Chicago jobs were in Bill Johnson’s Royal Gardens band and Lawrence Duhe’s Dreamland Café band, but by the fall of 1919, he was leading the band at the Dreamland. The band included Honore Dutrey, Johnny Dodds, Ed Garland, Minor Hall, and a recent migrant from Tennessee, pianist Lil Hardin. Business, however, was rocky at the Dreamland. According to Gene Anderson, rumors that the club might be sold were circulating, and so Oliver decided to seize the opportunity for a California tour for which he had been recommended by trombonist Kid Ory.² The band opened at Pergola, a dance hall in San Francisco in June, 1921.

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

The pressure of declining work opportunities caused tension among the band members and leader, and a series of personnel changes ensued. When the Pergola closed, the band was booked into the California Theater, where they encountered difficulties with the aggressive white audience, in the form of racial slurs, and challenges to their authenticity as “Creoles.” Hardin, at this time married to Jimmy Johnson, received an opportunity to return to the Dreamland and play for violinist and band leader Mae Brady. Hardin was but one of the musicians to evacuate the ill-fated tour.³

Bertha Gonsoulin, a pianist with roots in New Orleans, but who lived in San Francisco, became Hardin’s replacement. Promoter Bill Colburn, who lived in San Francisco and knew Gonsoulin well, told William Russell, “When very young, she played in her father’s band in New Orleans. Her father was a violinist who worked on the Southern Pacific Railroad.”⁴ If her father’s name was Gonsoulin, it is possible the family lived in New Iberia, Louisiana where numerous Gonsoulins show up in US Federal Census records.

According to Burton W. Peretti, “For New Orleans jazz musicians before 1917, distant California was as important a market as Chicago.”⁵ Indeed many New Orleans musicians, including Jelly Roll Morton and Kid Ory had moved their career bases to the West Coast as early as musicians in the more often-noted Chicago migration. We know little about Gonsoulin’s role in this movement. She is not mentioned in Tom Stoddard’s history of jazz in San Francisco, *Jazz on the Barbary Coast* (Chigwell, Essex: Storyville, 1982). The details of her life are as scarcely considered by most Oliver scholars as the minutia about other members is actively debated. We do know that her

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

nickname was “Bob” or “Miss Bob.”⁶

We also know that Gonsoulin stuck it out through the year of personnel changes and fickle employment. At one point, a reconfigured band called, “King Oliver’s and Ory’s Celebrated Creole Orchestra,” made up of Oliver, Kid Ory, Baby Dodds, Ed Garland, Johnny Dodds, and Bertha Gonsoulin, played for Mardi Gras Ball in Oakland.⁷ When Oliver brought his band back to Chicago in June, 1922, Gonsoulin was still the pianist. It was she, in fact, not Hardin, who was the working pianist in the Creole Jazz Band when Oliver sent away for a young New Orleans musician by the name of Louis Armstrong to join as second cornet. As Gonsoulin told William Russell in 1940, “the telegram asking Louis Armstrong to join the Oliver band was sent to him on a Sat. evening and he replied Sunday eve. Louis arrived on Tuesday eve., carrying his cornet wrapped in a black bag.”⁸ Oliver took Armstrong to the Dreamland to meet Lil Hardin, and to try and convince Lil to come back to his band at the Royal Garden.

When Armstrong joined the band in August 1922, he did so as a part of a larger reorganization of the Creole Jazz Band, which included more shifting of personnel, such as the return of clarinetist Honore Dutrey and pianist Lil Hardin. When Hardin agreed to re-join the band in December 1922, Bertha Gonsoulin was sent back to San Francisco. As an out-of-towner, Gonsoulin recalled that she had been paid in cash the whole time she was in Chicago, and had amassed so much of it that she “carried it home in a pillow case.”⁹ At some point in the early twenties, either before her departure to Chicago with Oliver, or after her return, she took some lessons from Jelly Roll Morton. Bill Colburn told William Russell that Bertha “couldn’t go to the places where [Morton] played, so he

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

went to her home to teach her. She said he taught her several of his compositions, including 'Kansas City Stomp,' 'the Pearls,' and 'Frog-i-more.'"¹⁰

What happened to Gonsoulin over the next twenty years is, again, sketchy. The 1930 Census lists a Bertha Gonsoulin, age 49, "wife," living in Louisiana. This could very well be her. The age could be right, but by 1940, we find her again in San Francisco. Perhaps she could have moved back and forth between the two cities. We know from a photo and caption in the *Chicago Defender*, that, in 1940, she was a well-respected piano teacher at the Booker T. Washington Community Service Center in San Francisco.¹¹ The paper ran a photograph of her looking very distinguished in a white dress, regal gaze, sitting at a piano, not as an entertainer, but as a "Trainer of Musicians." The caption stated that "Miss Bertha Gonsoulin ... has the enviable reputation of being one of the finest instructors, composers, and trainers of aspiring musicians in the west."¹² Accounts of the 1943 Bunk Johnson concerts and recordings make no mention of her reputation as a "fine instructor," or "composer," but they do suggest that she had become "immersed in church music when she was approached by Rudi Blesh to accompany Bunk on the piano."¹³ Martin Williams adds that she had, in fact, "given up jazz for church music" and "had to be persuaded" to play with Bunk Johnson.¹⁴ Whether or not Gonsoulin herself found church music incompatible with jazz—(had she "given up" jazz, or had she not had opportunities to work as a jazz pianist?)—over the next several months, she played a role in the celebration of New Orleans jazz (pre-1929) that became known as the New Orleans Revival.

In San Francisco in the 1940s, the New Orleans Revival centered around Lu

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Watters' Yerba Buena Jazz Band, a contemporary group of white male musicians who were inspired by the music of "King" Oliver. Christopher Hillman wrote of the atmosphere of excitement, when, "[I]n early 1943, Rudi Blesh, who was on the fringe of the movement associated with the book *Jazzmen*, arranged to give a series of lectures on New Orleans jazz at the Museum of Art in San Francisco." Concerts by "authentic" New Orleans jazz musicians were conceived as part of this popular lecture series. Blesh and other collectors raised money to bring Bunk Johnson appear at one of the lectures, but they had to find musicians to play with him. Blesh located "Bertha Gonsoulin, a lady who had once played with King Oliver in Chicago, but was by then heavily involved in church music."¹⁵ She agreed to accompany Johnson on the piano.

The lecture/concert (April 11, 1943) was an enormous success. In his opening remarks, Blesh shared a letter from Louis Armstrong that praised Bunk's genius, and put in a good word for "Miss "Bob" (Bertha Gonsoulin), expressing hopes that they "could get together for a jam session in the near future."¹⁶ A list of the numbers played by Johnson and Gonsoulin, compiled by Mike Hazeldine and Barry Martyn, includes "Maple Leaf Rag," "Down by the Riverside," "High Society," "Careless Love," "Pallet on the Floor," "Tiger Rag," and "Yes, Lord, I'm Crippled."¹⁷ The concert was recorded, and several of the numbers are currently available on CD (AMCD-016 *Bunk Johnson in San Francisco*).¹⁸ This event was so well received, that a subsequent one was planned for May 9, 1943 at the Geary Theater.

On May 7, 1943, Johnson and Gonsoulin met at the latter musician's home on 1782 Sutter Street in San Francisco to prepare for the forthcoming concert. William

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Russell, who had just arrived from New Orleans, was on-hand to document the session, which, he later recalled, had not been planned as a recording session, but rather as a chance “to get Bunk’s lip in shape.”¹⁹ This rehearsal, however, was, in fact, issued on the American Music label, and is also represented on the aforementioned CD (AMCD-016 *Bunk Johnson in San Francisco*). The May 9th concert little resembled this intimate rehearsal. It did not include duets between Johnson and Gonsoulin. Trombonist Kid Ory and his band had been brought up from Los Angeles, and the concert primarily featured Johnson with Kid Ory’s band. Gonsoulin, who would have known Ory from 1920s concerts with King Oliver, was not much featured, but did play a couple of solos. The next day, she expressed disappointment when she found that her own contributions in the concert were “hardly mentioned in the press.”²⁰ Perhaps in response to her ennui, Russell recorded Gonsoulin re-creating the solo rendition of “The Pearls” she had performed the previous night. This, too, appears on *Bunk Johnson in San Francisco*.

After the Geary Theater concert, several traditional jazz concerts were presented at the CIO, co-sponsored by a coalition of jazz fans and labor union figures, including Harry Bridges. Bunk Johnson and Bertha Gonsoulin were the “special guests” at the first such concert on July 11, 1943.²¹ After Johnson left the San Francisco Bay Area for lack of work, Gonsoulin made at least one further appearance at the CIO, in the spring of 1944.²²

At some point, Russell interviewed Gonsoulin, and his hand-written notes are housed at The Williams Research Center.²³ I have drawn heavily from these notes, as one of the few sources of information on Gonsoulin, but must add that these notes are

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

sketchy, focus entirely on her year with King Oliver, and include her claim to have been the pianist on the Gennett session of "The Chimes," which is incorrect. Future research should continue to seek information on Bertha Gonsoulin for years other than 1921-22 and 1943-44. Future research should also explore the possibility that Gonsoulin may have been thinking of a different recording session, other than her discredited claim to have been on the Gennett session, when she told Russell she recorded with Oliver.

Notes

¹ Gene Anderson, "The Genesis of King Oliver's Creole Jazz Band," *American Music* (Fall 1994), v. 12 no3, 283(21). (get page number)

² See Gene Anderson, "The Genesis of King Oliver's Creole Jazz Band." *American Music* 12.3: 238 (21).

³ Accounts of this tour appear in numerous places, including James Dickerson's *Just For A Thrill*, which, unfortunately, has not proven a very reliable source. I have fact-checked all information that I've taken from Dickerson's book. A detailed and well-researched account of this tour can be found in Anderson's article, above, which incorporates a compendium of meticulously documented sources. See also Lillian Hardin Armstrong, Oral History, July 1, 1959, Reel I [of I]–Digest–Retyped ,3.

⁴ William Russell, "Oh, Mister Jelly" *A Jelly Roll Morton Scrapbook* (Denmark: JazzMedia Aps, 1999), 571.

⁵ Burton W. Peretti, *The Creation of Jazz: Music, Race, and Culture in Urban America*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1992, 41

⁶ William Russell, "Bertha Gonsoulin 1940s," handwritten notes from "California Notes", MSS 536 F15. The Williams Research Center. Also, see mention of her as "Miss Bob" in letter quoted in Mike Hazeldine and Barry Martyn, *Bunk Johnson: Song of the Wanderer* (New Orleans: Jazzology Press, 2000), 94.

⁷ Anderson, "The Genesis of King Oliver's Creole Jazz Band."

⁸ William Russell, "Bertha Gonsoulin 1940s," handwritten notes from "California Notes", MSS 536 F15. The Williams Research Center.

⁹ Russell, "Bertha Gonsoulin 1940s."

¹⁰ Russell, "Oh, Mister Jelly Roll", 571.

¹¹ "Trainer of Musicians." *Chicago Defender* February 3 1940: 9.

¹² "Trainer of Musicians."

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

¹³ Christopher Hillman, *Bunk Johnson: His Life & Times* (New York: Universe Books, 1988, 55-56.

¹⁴ Martin Williams, *Jazz Masters of New Orleans* (New York: MacMillan, 1967), 235.

¹⁵ Christopher Hillman, *Bunk Johnson: His Life & Times* (New York: Universe Books, 1988, 55-56.

¹⁶ Mike Hazeldine and Barry Martyn, *Bunk Johnson: Song of the Wanderer* (New Orleans: Jazzology Press, 2000), 94.

¹⁷ Hazeldine and Martyn, 95.

¹⁸ Hazeldine and Martyn, 95. For more information on these recordings, see <http://www.weights.scarlet.nl/430510.htm>

¹⁹ William Russell, Oral History Interview, Reel I, Feb. 2, 1975, 2.

²⁰ Hazeldine and Martyn, 101.

²¹ Hazeldine, 106.

²² Hazeldine, 120.

²³ William Russell, "Bertha Gonsoulin 1940s," handwritten notes from "California Notes", MSS 536 F15. William Russell Collection, The Williams Research Center.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Armstrong, Lillian Hardin, Oral History, July 1, 1959, Reel I [of I]–Digest–Retyped, Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University.

Russell, William. "Bertha Gonsoulin, 1940s," handwritten notes from "California Notes", MSS 536 F15. The Williams Research Center.

Russell, William Russell, Oral History digest, Reel I, Feb. 2, 1975, 2, Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University

Secondary Sources

Anderson, Gene. "The Genesis of King Oliver's Creole Jazz Band." *American Music* 12.3: 238 (21).

Dahl, Linda. *Stormy Weather: The Music and Lives of a Century of Jazzwomen* (New York: Limelight Editions, 1989), 23.

Handy, D. Antoinette. *Black Women in American Bands and Orchestras, Second Edition*. Lanham, Mass. and Kent: Scarecrow Press, 1998, 223.

Hazeldine, Mike, and Barry Martyn, *Bunk Johnson: Song of the Wanderer* (New Orleans: Jazzology Press, 2000).

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

- Hillman, Christopher. *Bunk Johnson: His Life & Times* (New York: Universe Books, 1988).
- Peretti, Burton W. *The Creation of Jazz: Music, Race, and Culture in Urban America*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1992.
- Placksin, Sally. *Jazzwomen: 1900 to the Present, Their Words, Lives and Music* (London and Sydney: Pluto Press, 1985), 44.
- Rose, Al, and Edmond Souchon. *New Orleans Jazz: A Family Album*. Revised edition. Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press,
- Russell, William. "Oh, Mister Jelly" *A Jelly Roll Morton Scrapbook* (Denmark: JazzMedia Aps, 1999)
- "Trainer of Musicians." *Chicago Defender* February 3 1940: 9. Photo and caption of Miss Bertha Gonsoulin, piano teacher at Booker T. Washington Community Service Center, San Francisco.
- Williams, Martin. *Jazz Masters of New Orleans* New York: MacMillan, 1967, 235, 238.

Discography

Available:

AMCD-016 *Bunk Johnson in San Francisco* (These are the recordings from the museum concert, the rehearsal at Gonsoulin's home, and the final intimate session at Gonsoulin's home the day after the Geary Theater concert).

Illustrations

I have only found one photograph, the *Chicago Defender* clipping, included in the accompanying file.

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Antonia P. Gonzales [Gutierrez?] (cornet, vocalist, entrepreneur)

b. ? / d. ?

In the early 1900s, the glass door of her four-story mansion was engraved with the words, “Gonzales, Female Cornetist.”¹ The fact that Antonia Gonzales, or “Miss Tonia,” was also one of the most famous madams in New Orleans did not need to be posted. Located on the corner of Customhouse (Iberville) and Villere, the well-appointed house was clearly one of the higher class brothels in Storyville, the most notorious red-light district in the U.S., and unique in that it was established not only through informal channels, but by a series of city ordinances. While prostitution was no more legal in Storyville than it was anywhere else in the country, it was treated as such between 1897 and 1917 within the boundaries of Basin Street North, Robertson Street, St. Louis Street, and Customhouse/Iberville.

That Miss Tonia’s status as a “cornetist” was emphasized, not only on her door, but in advertisements in the notorious *Blue Books* (or guidebooks to Storyville brothels), is a testament both to the importance of having a memorable special feature to attract customers in such a highly concentrated marketplace, and of the value placed on music in the sex industry in turn of the century New Orleans. Other madams also advertised music (though not their own cornet skills). The presence of piano “professors” such as Jelly Roll Morton and Tony Jackson heightened the status of a house, and increased

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

the price, since these pianists received, and expected, large tips. Houses without pianists had coin-operated player pianos. Lulu White, perhaps the most famous of all Storyville madams, advertised that in her establishment, there were "always ten entertainers who get paid to do nothing but sing and dance."² The prostitutes at Minnie White's establishment at 221 Basin Street could sing "bawdy ballads."³ Prostitutes danced to live music for customers. Clients and prostitutes danced together in the ballrooms or in parlors. And at 1535 Customhouse (later Iberville), the madam sometimes played her cornet in duet with ragtime "professor" Tony Jackson.

Gonzales, like so many Storyville figures, has acquired a status somewhere between legend and complete obscurity. Researching the occupants of brothels has its singular challenges. Though census takers did stroll house-to-house through the streets of Storyville, collecting data on "heads of household" and "boarders," the evidence of such reports is even more tenuous than the already sketchy census reports of residents of neighborhoods where people were less likely to wish to conceal their identities. Incentives to pass as younger than one's years were magnified. Married women may have passed as single to census takers. Spanish or French surnames could indicate heritage, or they could be marketing strategies of light-skinned black women passing for Creole—meaning, in this case, mixed European and African ancestry—in order to boost their social and economic capital. Creoles of color in New Orleans had a higher economic and social status than English-speaking or "American" blacks.⁴ Antonia Gonzales advertised herself as an "Octoroon," as did many madams and prostitutes in Storyville, but this did not mean she was literally one-eighth black.

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

“Octoroon,” as many scholars have pointed out, had become more of an erotic fantasy about New Orleans held by white men at the turn of the century, than an actual description of genealogy.⁵

The surname “Gonzales” may indicate Antonia Gonzales’s identify as a Creole of color, and suggest that she, like so many Gonzales’s in turn of the century New Orleans, was descended from the Canary Islanders who migrated to Louisiana in the late 1700s. There were at least three Antonia Gonzales’s in New Orleans who could have been the cornet-playing madam, all of whom were descended from the *Islanos*. I have not been able to trace any of these three women, however, to the properties run by the Antonia Gonzales whose cornet expertise was etched on the door to her brothel.⁶ It is also possible that “Antonia Gonzales” was a self-selected name fashioning Creole identity to benefit from culture capital not available to “colored” identity, (as Phil Pastras speculates was the case with another Gonzales, Jelly Roll Morton’s friend, Anita Gonzales, whose birth name was Bessie Johnson).

Gonzales’s establishment moved at least twice during the Storyville years. Her first house was located at 217 Basin Street between 1895 and 1900, estimated Al Rose, though the Soards Directory continues to list her at that address through 1903.⁷ The *Blue Book* listing shows that when Gonzales was at 217 Basin Street, running a house specializing in “Octoroons,” she shared a two block stretch with other famous “Octoroon” madams, Lulu White and Willie Piazza.⁸ Like the related term “Quadroon,” “Octoroon” was one of many terms referencing a “mixed-race, but light skinned black woman, in a historical context in which affluent and well-respected white men routinely

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

purchased sexual relations with light women who were legally defined as black (by having any known African ancestry). Monique Guillory, in writing about the practice of Quadroon Balls, fancy events in which white men selected their light-skinned black mistresses during the time of slavery, notes the “moral hypocrisy of a city which by day, sells these women as chattel, and by night, toasts their beauty, their charm and their whiteness.”⁹ Not disconnected from this history, the customers at these Storyville brothels were white men, often affluent and well-respected, selecting light-skinned black women to fulfill their desires for so-called “exotic” sex, during the same period in which Jim Crow—the legal and mandatory system of segregation—was being consolidated in the South. White women also worked as prostitutes, but only in houses where the madam was also white. Black women worked in houses run by black women. Black men were not allowed as customers, but they were frequently present as musicians.

We know little about Antonia Gonzales’s place in this history, but we do know that her business was housed at 217 Basin Street during the years that Jelly Roll Morton recalled having his piano playing talent requested by all the “highest class landladies,” naming “Willie Piazza, Josie Arlington, Lulu White, Antonia Gonzales, Hilma Burt, and Gypsy Schaeffer.” Said Morton, “Their houses were all in the same block on Basin Street, stone mansions with from three to seven parlors and from fifteen to twenty-five women all clad in evening gowns and diamonds galore.”¹⁰

At some point, “Miss Tonia” ran a house at 1308 Conti Street (Conti and Franklin), which was, according to Rose, one of the few places on Conti between Franklin Street and the cemetery, St. Louis N. 2, that offered music.¹¹

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

But it was at 1535 Customhouse (Iberville), at Villere, where Gonzales achieved her greatest renown both as a madam and as a proprietress with high musical standards, "playing the cornet in duets with pianist Tony Jackson."¹²

Al Rose described the house on Customhouse/Iberville and Villere as, "one of the most spectacular architectural specimens to be found in the District." In that "ancient wooden affair with a multitude of galleries and columns"¹³ one heard "Antonia P. Gonzales, 'the only Singer of Opera and Female Cornetist in the Tenderloin,'" as well the "ragtime singing"--often by the great Tony Jackson, when he was in town. Miss Antonia herself is said to have been surprisingly proficient as an instrumentalist and often joined in duets with the professor."¹⁴ That Rose found her proficiency "surprising" tells us something about socially conditioned expectations of trumpet players, women, and prostitutes, reminding us that historians, even those who include women in history books, are not exempt from historical processes!

The duets of the "female cornetist" and ragtime "professor" are noted by other historians and musicians as well. Composer and pianist Spencer Williams recalled, "My old friend, Tony Jackson, who composed 'Pretty Baby' and 'Some Sweet Day,' used to play piano at a house run by Miss Antonia Gonzales, who sang and played the cornet."¹⁵ It is notable that her cornet playing was only one aspect of her musical importance to the Storyville scene. The fact that she procured the talents of pianist Tony Jackson are also much hailed in accounts of her house. In a 1948 article for the jazz magazine, *Record Changer*, Roy Carew described an inspiring evening in the winter of 1904/1905 that he spent standing outside of her house:

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

As I neared the front of the Gonzales establishment, I could hear the sound of piano playing with someone singing, which my ears told me was coming from the Villere side of the house. Always very fond of popular music, I immediately walked to the side of the house and got as close to the music as possible; with the banquette going right up to the side of the house, I found myself standing under one of the windows of what probably was Madame Gonzales' parlor listening to the "professor" playing and singing. It was the most remarkable playing and singing I had ever heard.¹⁶

An article from one of the Storyville's newspapers, the *Sunday Sun* (the other being the *Mascot*) confirmed the serious musical reputation of Miss Tonia's house,

Among the swell houses in the district there is none more popular or attractive than the one which is operated by Miss Antonia Gonzales, on Customhouse Street corner of Villere. All summer this resort has done good business notwithstanding the prevailing dull times. This place is filled with beautiful young women all the time, and a visit to the tenderloin is incomplete without enjoying a good time here. This place is what we might properly term a modern music casino.¹⁷

The Soards Directories list her at the Customhouse address in 1904 and 1906.

The Third Edition (1906) *Blue Book* carried the following elaborate ad:

Miss Antonia P. Gonzales. Corner Villere and Iberville Streets. Cornetist Songstress Dancer. The above party has always been a head-liner among those who keep first-class Octoroons. She has also has the distinction of being the only Singer of Opera and Female Cornetist in the Tenderloin. She has had offers after offers to leave her present vocation and take to the stage, but her vast business has kept her among her friends. Any person out for fun among a lot of pretty Creole damsels, here is the place to have it. For ragtime singing and clever dancing and fun generally, Antonia stands in a class all alone. Remember the Number. PHONE 1974.¹⁸

This advertisement seems to epitomize the delicate balance between "sexual services and uninhibited fun," and "respectability and sophistication" that Alecia P. Long has argued was the key to success for some octoroon madams, including Willie Piazza, Lulu White, and Antonia Gonzales.¹⁹

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

I have not been able to determine how long Gonzales remained at the Customhouse address. The U.S. Navy officially closed down Storyville as a legally zoned red-light district in 1917. There is a 1911 listing in the Soards' Directory for Antonia Gonzales, occupation "cook," at 636 Bourbon Street, but, again, I have not been able to confirm whether this is the same person.

Notes

¹ Martin Williams, quoting George Hoeffler (quoting Roy Carew). *Jazz Masters of New Orleans*. New York: MacMillan, 1967. 16-17.

² Al Rose, *Storyville, New Orleans: Being an Authentic, Illustrated Account of the Notorious Red-Light District* (University of Alabama, 1974), 144.

³ Rose, *Storyville*, 103.

⁴ This is greatly oversimplified. See Shirley Elizabeth Thompson, *The Passing of a People: Creoles of Color in Mid-Nineteenth Century New Orleans* (Ph.D. dissertation, 2001), and Arnold R. Hirsch and Joseph Logsdon, *Creole New Orleans: Race and Americanization* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1992).

⁵ See Alecia P. Long, "Chapter 3, 'As Rare as White Blackbirds': The Case of the Countess Willie Piazza and the Disappearance of the Octoroons," *The Great Southern Babylon: Sexuality, Race, and Reform in New Orleans, 1865-1920* (Ph.D. diss., 2001), 178-233.

⁶ For more information on this migrant community, see Gilbert C. Din, *The Canary Islanders of Louisiana* (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1988). Roy Tucker did an extensive search for the name "Antonia Gonzales" in the 1859, 1860, 1870, 1880, 1900, and 1910 US Censuses, and found three possibilities, one born in 1874, and married to Albert Gutierrez, one born in 1876, and one born in 1853; all three descended from the Canary Islanders or *Islaños*.

⁷ Rose, *Storyville*, 98. Tami Albin tracked Antonia Gonzales in the Soard's Directories at the New Orleans Public Library and found her listed at 217 Basin Street in 1902 and 1903.

⁸ n.d., Blue Book, Williams Research Center, MSS 536, District, f. 23.

⁹ Monique Guillory, *Some Enchanted Evening on the Auction Block: The Cultural Legacy of the New Orleans Quadroon Balls* (Ph.D. dissertation, 1999), 4-5.

¹⁰ Rose, *Storyville*, 115.

¹¹ Rose, *Storyville*, 95.

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

- 12 Rose, *Storyville*, 98.
13 Rose, *Storyville*, 100.
14 Rose, *Storyville*, 103.
15 Nat Shapiro and Nat Hentoff. *Hear Me Talkin' To Ya: The Story of Jazz by the Men Who Made It*. New York and Toronto: Rinehart & Company, Inc., 1955, 7.
16 Rose, *Storyville*, 111-113.
17 Rose, *Storyville*, 131-132.
18 Rose, *Storyville*, 138 and 143.
19 Long, *The Great Southern Babylon*, (diss), 206.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Soards City Directories, New Orleans Public Library.
U.S. Census: 1859, 1860, 1870, 1880, 1900, 1910.

Secondary Sources

Guillory, Monique. *Some Enchanted Evening on the Auction Block: The Cultural Legacy of the New Orleans Quadroon Balls* (Ph.D. dissertation, 1999).
Hirsch, Arnold R., and Joseph Logsdon, *Creole New Orleans: Race and Americanization* Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1992.
Long, Alecia P., "*The Great Southern Babylon*": *Sexuality, Race, and Reform in New Orleans, 1865-1920* (PhD. diss., University of Delaware, 2001).
Murray, Nicolas Russell. "Orleans Parish Louisiana 1830-1900." *Computer Indexed Marriage Records* Hunting for Bears, Inc.: 729.
Rose, Al. *Storyville, New Orleans: Being an Authentic, Illustrated Account of the Notorious Red-Light District*. University of Alabama, 1974.
Shapiro, Nat, and Nat Hentoff. *Hear Me Talkin' To Ya: The Story of Jazz by the Men Who Made It*. New York and Toronto: Rinehart & Company, Inc., 1955, 7.
Thompson, Shirley Elizabeth. *The Passing of a People: Creoles of Color in Mid-Nineteenth Century New Orleans* (Ph.D. dissertation, 2001).
Williams, Martin. *Jazz Masters of New Orleans*. New York: MacMillan, 1967. 16-17.

Discography

No recordings.

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Edna Goodson (Johnson) (pianist)

b. February 4, 1904 / d. 1986¹

Edna Goodson grew up in a musical family in Pensacola, Florida. See entries on her sisters: **Ida Goodson**, **Sadie Goodson**, and **Billie Pierce**, for additional information on the contributions of the Goodson sisters to jazz piano.

Born in 1904 or 1905, Edna Goodson was the fourth of six piano-playing daughters of Hamilton Madison Goodson and Sarah Jenkins Goodson of Pensacola, Florida. Of the six sisters: Mabel, Della, Sadie, Edna, Wilhelmina (Billie), and Ida (a seventh sister, Maggie, died young), four defied their religious parents to play ragtime, blues and jazz (Edna, Sadie, Billie, and Ida). Hamilton and Sarah Goodson played in church, where Hamilton was a “piano-playing Baptist deacon.”²

Although their parents forbade them to attend dances, Edna would sometimes slip out of the house with her next youngest sister, Billie, to hear local and traveling jazz bands. Oftentimes, they would be surprised to find their sister Sadie playing with the band³ When Billie was fifteen and Edna was about eighteen, the two sisters went on the road with the Mighty Wiggle Carnival.⁴ Their mother and older sister Mabel both died in 1918, and their father died in 1924, so the remaining daughters scrambled to find ways to earn a living.

The Mighty Wiggle Carnival was owned by a man named Jack Shaffer. Edna

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

danced and played in the band in the “colored minstrel show,” and Billie played organ, sang, and danced. Later Billie would move to New Orleans, first to substitute for her sister Sadie in Buddy Petit’s band, then to lead her own bands. Edna continued to play, but remained primarily based in Pensacola, and other nearby towns.

According to Billie, Edna mostly worked in “show business,” throughout the Gulf Coast: towns like Atmore, Alabama; Flomaton, Alabama; Molino, Florida; and Century, Florida; but that she sometimes worked in New Orleans between shows.⁵ Billie’s husband De De Pierce recalled that Edna worked four or five months with his band at the Cat a the Fiddle, on Dauphine in the French Quarter.⁶

Notes

¹ Social Security Death Index contains information on an Edna Goodson who was born February 4, 1904, died January 1986.

² Bill Grady, “Kid Sheik and Sadie: Partners in Jazz.” *The Times-Picayune* Saturday, April 28 1990: A-10.

³ Billie and De De Pierce, Oral History, October 7, 1959, also present: Ernest Trepagnier, PRC and RBA., Reel I–Summary–Retyped, 3.

⁴ Billie and De De Pierce, Oral History, April 2, 1959, interviewed by William Russell and Ralph Collins. Reel I (of 2)–Digest–Retyped, 3.

⁵ Billie and De De Pierce, Oral History, April 2, 1959, interviewed by William Russell and Ralph Collins. Reel II (of 2)–Digest–Retyped, 13.

⁶ Billie and De De Pierce, Oral History, April 2, 1959, interviewed by William Russell and Ralph Collins. Reel I (of 2)–Digest–Retyped, 4.

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Billie and De De Pierce, Oral History, April 2, 1959. Also present: William Russell, Ralph Collins. Reels I and II–Digest–Retyped. Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane.
Billie and De De Pierce, Oral History, October 7, 1959, also present: Ernest Trepagnier, PRC and RBA., Reels I-IV–Summary–Retyped. Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane.

Secondary Sources

Charles Chamberlain, "The Goodson Sisters: Women Pianists and the Function of Gender in the Jazz Age," *The Jazz Archivist* vol. XV (2001), 3.
"Grady, Bill. "Kid Sheik and Sadie: Partners in Jazz." *The Times-Picayune* Saturday, April 28 1990: A1 - A10 (2). Vertical files, Hogan Jazz Archives, Tulane.

Discography

No recordings found.

Illustrations

No illustrations found.

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Ida Goodson (pianist, organist)

b. November 23, 1909 (Pensacola, Florida) / d. January 5, 2000 (Pensacola, Florida)

Ida Goodson grew up in a musical family in Pensacola, Florida. See entries on her sisters: **Edna Goodson**, **Sadie Goodson**, and **Billie Pierce**, for additional information on the contributions of the Goodson sisters to New Orleans jazz.

Ida Goodson was the youngest piano player in a family of pianists. Her mother Sarah Jenkins Goodson and father Hamilton Madison Goodson played piano in church, where her father was a deacon.¹ Of the six piano-playing daughters—Mabel, Della, Sadie, Edna, Wilhelmina (Billie), and Ida (a seventh sister, Maggie, died young)—four defied their religious parents to play ragtime, boogie woogie, blues and jazz (Edna, Sadie, Billie, and Ida). Ida Goodson often told a story of playing jazz while their parents were out of the house, then “when her parents showed up unexpectedly, they easily made the transition to gospel without missing a beat.”² There is excellent footage of Ida telling this story in the documentary, *Wild Women Don't Have the Blues* (1989). The sisters did not wholly rebel from their parents' devotion to religious music, however. Though she played ragtime, Della primarily played church music. And in the 1950s, Ida also largely gave up jazz in order to play religious music.³

Born in 1909, Ida was the youngest of the Goodson sisters. By the time she was nine, her older sister Sadie was already playing jazz piano professionally in New

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Orleans. Local and traveling jazz bands frequently played in Pensacola. Included among the New Orleans bands that came through town, Ida remembered hearing Papa Celestin.⁴ Her mother and her sister Mabel died when she was nine (1918), and then, six years later, her father died (1924). Ida was compelled to quit school and go to work. She did a variety of jobs, including working as a babysitter, cook, and maid, and began playing piano professionally with traveling bands for dances and medicine shows.⁵

In an interview with Richard Allen on May 6, 1961, Ida recalled that her first band job was with R.D. Jordan, a drummer who led a six or seven piece band. She then played with Wally Mercy [?] for about 16 years. Her sister Billie Pierce recalled that Ida played in Pensacola bands, including a band with the great Pensacola saxophonist Wallace Rankin.⁶ She also played in the bands of Carl Davies and Hal Andrew.

A self-taught pianist with her own approach to chords, Ida began with ragtime, then boogie woogie, swing, and gospel. While she learned the traditional styles, Pensacola bass player Harold Andrews said, “She wasn’t an old-timer. She changed with the times.”⁷ Her sister Sadie Goodson recalled that unlike herself and Billie Pierce, who played in a traditional New Orleans style, Ida played modern jazz.⁸ Also differentiating her career from that of her two New Orleans based sisters, Ida chose to remain in the Pensacola area. She visited New Orleans, but did not play there.⁹

In her later years, she often played piano at Seville Quarter in Pensacola, a tavern called Rosie O’Grady’s. In 1950s, gave up jazz and primarily played church music. Her own church was the Mount Olive Baptist Church in Pensacola, but she also played in several others.

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Ida Goodson died in January of 2000. In March of that year, the Paraplui Dance Company performed a piece choreographed by John Parks, of the Alvin Ailey Dancers, based on Ida Goodson's life.¹⁰

Notes

- ¹ Bill Grady, "Kid Sheik and Sadie: Partners in Jazz." *The Times-Picayune* Saturday, April 28 1990: A-10.
- ² Angela Y. Davis, *Blues Legacies and Black Feminism: Gertrude "Ma" Rainey, Bessie Smith, and Billie Holiday* (New York: Random House, 1999), 6.
- ³ Charles Chamberlain, "The Goodson Sisters: Women Pianists and the Function of Gender in the Jazz Age," *The Jazz Archivist* vol. XV (2001), 3.
- ⁴ Ida Goodson, Oral History, interviewed by Dick Allen, May 6, 1961. Transcript. Hogan Jazz Archive.
- ⁵ "Al Burt's Florida: A Strut and a Smile," unidentified Pensacola newspaper, 1985, 1-2. Vertical file, Ida Goodson, Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane.
- ⁶ Billie and De De Pierce, Oral History, October 7, 1959, also present: Ernest Trepagnier, PRC and RBA., Reel I–Summary–Retyped, 3.
- ⁷ "Bye and Bye ...," *New Orleans Music* vol. 8, no. 5, March 2000, 16.
- ⁸ Sadie Goodson Peterson, interviewed by film-maker Kay D. Ray, with Nathaniel Peterson, for *Lady Be Good: Instrumental Women in Jazz*. Video # 925, in possession of Kay D. Ray.
- ⁹ Billie and De De Pierce, Oral History, April 2, 1959, interviewed by William Russell and Ralph Collins. Reel II (of 2)–Digest–Retyped, 15.
- ¹⁰ Pat and Ernie Pinson, "Paraplui, A Shower of Dance," *Mobile, Alabama Harbinger* April 11, 2000.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Ida Goodson, Oral History, interviewed by Dick Allen, May 6, 1961. Transcript. Hogan Jazz Archive.
Billie and De De Pierce, Oral History, April 2, 1959. Also present: William Russell, Ralph Collins. Reels I and II–Digest–Retyped. Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane.

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Billie and De De Pierce, Oral History, October 7, 1959, also present: Ernest Trepagnier, PRC and RBA., Reels I-IV–Summary–Retyped. Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane.
Sadie Goodson Peterson, interviewed by film-maker Kay D. Ray, with Nathaniel Peterson, for *Lady Be Good: Instrumental Women in Jazz*. Video # 925, in possession of Kay D. Ray.

Secondary Sources

"Al Burt's Florida: A Strut and a Smile," unidentified Pensacola newspaper, 1985. Vertical file, Ida Goodson, Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane.
"Bye and Bye ...," *New Orleans Music* vol. 8, no. 5, March 2000, 16, Hogan Jazz Archive.
Chamberlain, Charles. "The Goodson Sisters: Women Pianists and the Function of Gender in the Jazz Age," *The Jazz Archivist* vol. XV (2001).
Davis, Angela Y. *Blues Legacies and Black Feminism: Gertrude "Ma" Rainey, Bessie Smith, and Billie Holiday* (New York: Random House, 1999).
Grady, Bill. "Kid Sheik and Sadie: Partners in Jazz." *The Times-Picayune* Saturday, April 28 1990: A-10.
Picard, Jacques. "Longtime Piano Player Dies at Age 90," *Pensacola News Journal*, Friday, January 7, 2000. Vertical file, Ida Goodson, Hogan Jazz Archive.
"Sadie Goodson, Last Surviving Goodson Sister Dies in Detroit." Press release, Jazz Society of Pensacola. (Accessed 11 June 2002) <www.jazzpensacola.com> vertical files Hogan Jazz Archives.

Discography

Ida Goodson Sings and Plays Church-Music and Songs from the South, recorded August 30 and 31, 1973, New Orleans.
Recording of Ida Goodson playing Gospel and Blues on the Piano, recorded by Doris Dyen and Merri Balland, Pensacola, Florida, August 21, 1980. Series 1576, *Audio recordings of Florida Folk Festival performances and other folk events*, CD-T-80-87, Box 61. (This recording is available from the Florida Folklife Archive, Florida State Archives, R.A. Gray Building, 500 South Bronough Street, Tallahassee, FL 32399-0250. Telephone: (850)245-6700)

Videography

Ida Goodson is featured in a documentary entitled *Wild Women Don't Have the Blues* (1989).

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Sadie Goodson (Foster, Peterson, Colar) (pianist, vocalist, band leader)

b. 1900 (1903?)¹ (New Orleans) / d. June 9, 2002 (Detroit)

Sadie Goodson grew up in a musical family in Pensacola, Florida. See entries on her sisters: **Edna Goodson**, **Ida Goodson**, and **Billie Pierce**, for additional information on the contributions of the Goodson sisters to New Orleans jazz.

Sadie Goodson and her six piano-playing sisters were well-known in Jackson County, Florida, their home, as well as in New Orleans, where two of the sisters, Sadie and Billie (Pierce) became important players in 1920s and 1930s. Though all of the sisters were admired for their playing, Sadie often told interviewers that she was the best, and that people would say, “We want Sadie!”² Their parents, Hamilton Madison Goodson and Sarah Jenkins Goodson, played piano in church, but of their six (living) piano-playing sisters—Mabel, Della, Sadie, Edna, Wilhelmina (Billie), and Ida (a seventh sister, Maggie, died young)—four defied their religious parents to play ragtime, boogie woogie, blues and jazz (Edna, Sadie, Billie, and Ida). Sadie was the only one of the Goodson sisters to take formal piano lessons.³ She was also the first of two sisters to strike out for New Orleans (the second was Billie).

Sadie began playing piano in the family’s Pensacola, Florida, home at an early age (some sources say three, others say six).⁴ She began working professionally at a very early age, though the dates vary widely in her own accounts. She first worked

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

locally, with Pensacola bands and traveling bands on their Florida stop-overs, then began going out on the road. She was often the pianist that her younger sisters Billie and Edna heard when they snuck out of the house to go hear jazz.⁵ She worked primarily with Mack's Merrymakers, led by Thomas Mack, (not to be confused with Mack and Mack, the group led by Billy and Mary McBride).⁶ Thomas Mack, a trumpet player, was from New Orleans, though the rest of the band was made up of musicians from the Pensacola area. The band spent most of its time on the road. Sadie had many opportunities to play with acts that traveled through Pensacola. When she was 16, she accompanied Bessie Smith. The same year, she was heard by the highly acclaimed New Orleans trumpeter Buddy Petit, who told her, "You play too much piano to be in Pensacola. You come on to New Orleans.' So I did. I came there on a train by myself. Sure did! I was 16 years old."⁷

In the 1920s, Sadie Goodson was one of the two female piano players who worked with Papa Celestin prior to Jeanette Kimball's tenure in the band. The other was Emma Barrett. Celestin's band included drummer Abbey "Bebe Chinee" Foster, whom she married.⁸ She and Foster both played with Buddy Petit on the *Steamer Madison*, then, when Petit left the band to take work elsewhere, Sadie took over, leading the band throughout the twenties. Her sister Billie filled in for her throughout an illness in 1929. She resumed the leadership of the band in 1930, and later with Kid Rena.

In the mid-1930s, Sadie moved to New York, where she worked as a musician, trained to be a registered nurse, and struggled to make it as a single mother.⁹

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

In the 1950s, she married Thomas Peterson, a supervisor at Ford Motor Company, and moved to Detroit. In the Motor City, Sadie continued playing with New Orleans musicians, including Manny and Percy Gabriel. Her marriage lasted for 26 years, ending with Peterson's death in 1982. The same year, an old friend, George "Kid Sheik" Colar lost his spouse. "Sheik," a trumpet player, had known Sadie Goodson in the 1920s, when they had played together in New Orleans. They married in 1982, and Sadie returned to New Orleans, where she and Colar played at Preservation Hall.¹⁰

Sadie Goodson is one of many 1920s musicians who enjoyed a successful comeback in New Orleans due to the New Orleans revival, which saw the emergence of venues dedicated to traditional music—notably Preservation Hall. Benjamin Jaffe, whose parents founded Preservation Hall, described Sadie's playing to film-maker Kay D. Ray as having a "driving force," adding that she was "a loud pianist. Loud and extremely musical."¹¹ Bruce Raeburn commented that she was one of the few female pianists of that generation who improvised.¹² She recorded several times in the 1980s and 1990s. In 1990, Sadie was interviewed on ABC's "Good Morning America," as one of the "musicians without whom there wouldn't be a jazz festival."¹³ In 1994, she and her sister Ida appeared together at the New Orleans Jazz Festival.

In the mid-1990s, Sadie and "Kid Sheik" moved to Detroit. "Sheik" preceded her in death. She died in Detroit at 101 years of age, five days after making a trip to New Orleans to attend a presentation at Preservation Hall. She had planned to attend a tribute to the Goodson Sisters presented by the Jazz Society of Pensacola on May 26, 2002, but had been too ill to attend. She died knowing that the Goodson Sisters would

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

continue to be remembered and celebrated for their musical contributions.

Notes

¹ 1910 Census indicates she was seven years old, which would put her birth year at 1902 or 1903. Her obituaries, however, gave 1900 as her birth year, which was the year that she gave interviewers.

² Sadie Goodson, interviewed by film-maker Kay D. Ray for *Lady Be Good: Instrumental Women in Jazz*. Video # 925, in possession of Kay D. Ray.

³ Billie Pierce, Oral History, November 20, 1963. Interviewed by Richard B. Allen. I (only)–Digest–Retyped, 2.

⁴ Handy says 3, Grady says 6.

⁵ Billie and De De Pierce, Oral History, October 7, 1959, also present: Ernest Trepagnier, PRC and RBA., Reel I–Summary–Retyped, 3.

⁶ Billie and De De Pierce, Oral History, October 7, 1959, also present: Ernest Trepagnier, PRC and RBA., Reel I–Summary–Retyped, 3.

⁷ Bill Grady, "Kid Sheik and Sadie: Partners in Jazz." *The Times-Picayune*, April 28 1990: A-10.

⁸ Billie and De De Pierce, Oral History, April 2, 1959, interviewed by William Russell and Ralph Collins. Reel II (of 2)–Digest–Retyped, 14.

⁹ Sadie Goodson, interviewed by film-maker Kay D. Ray for *Lady Be Good: Instrumental Women in Jazz*. Video # 925, in possession of Kay D. Ray.

¹⁰ Grady, A-10. Christopher Hillman dates the marriage as 1983. Hillman, "Obituaries: Sadie Goodson," *Jazz Journal International* 55:11 (November 2002), 21.

¹¹ Benjamin Jaffe, interviewed by film-maker Kay D. Ray for *Lady Be Good: Instrumental Women in Jazz*. Video # 315, in possession of Kay D. Ray.

¹² Bruce Raeburn, interviewed by film-maker Kay D. Ray for *Lady Be Good: Instrumental Women in Jazz*. Video # 311, in possession of Kay D. Ray.

¹³ "Morning' Jazz Talk," *The Times-Picayune* May 1, 1990. Vertical files, Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Sadie Goodson, interviewed by film-maker Kay D. Ray for *Lady Be Good: Instrumental Women in Jazz*. Video # 925, in possession of Kay D. Ray.

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Billie and De De Pierce, Oral History, April 2, 1959. Also present: William Russell, Ralph Collins. Reels I and II–Digest–Retyped. Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane.
Billie and De De Pierce, Oral History, October 7, 1959, also present: Ernest Trepagnier, PRC and RBA., Reels I-IV–Summary–Retyped. Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane.
Billie Pierce, Oral History, November 20, 1963. Interviewed by Richard B. Allen. I (only)–Digest–Retyped. Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane.

Secondary Sources

Chamberlain, Charles. "The Goodson Sisters: Women Pianists and the Function of Gender in the Jazz Age," *The Jazz Archivist* vol. XV (2001), 3.
Charters, Samuel Barclay, IV. *Jazz: New Orleans 1885 - 1957*. Belleville, N.J.: Walter C. Allen, 1958, 94, 96, 123 [spells her name "Gootson"].
Grady, Bill. "Kid Sheik and Sadie: Partners in Jazz." *The Times-Picayune* Saturday, April 28 1990: A1 - A10 (2). Vertical files, Hogan Jazz Archives, Tulane.
Handy, D. Antoinette. *Black Women in American Bands and Orchestras, Second Edition*. Lanham, Mass. and Kent: Scarecrow Press, 1998, 222, 236.
Hillman, Christopher. "Obituaries: Sadie Goodson," *Jazz Journal International* 55:11 (November 2002), 21.
Koenig, Karl. *The Jazz Lectures*. Running Springs, California: Basin Street Press, 1996. 21-23.
Rose and Souchon, 50.
"Sadie Goodson, Last Surviving Goodson Sister Dies in Detroit." Press release, Jazz Society of Pensacola. (Accessed 11 June 2002) <www.jazzpensacola.com> vertical files Hogan Jazz Archives.
Wyckoff, Geraldine, "Fourth Annual Jazz All-Stars," *New Orleans Magazine* April 1993, 64. Vertical files, Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane.

Discography

Sadie Goodson with Sammy Rimington (GHB Records, BCD 298).
A Jazz Gumbo Volume One (recorded during 1993 French Quarter Festival) (Jazz Crusade Records, JCCD 3004).

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Illustrations

There are several good photographs of Sadie Goodson at Hogan Jazz Archive.

Sadie Goodson
No accession number
Hogan Jazz Archive.



A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Edna Hicks (nee Landreaux [aka Mae Alix, Lila Vivian] Benbow Hicks)
(blues singer)

b. October 14, 1895 (New Orleans, Louisiana) / d. August 16, 1925 (Chicago, Illinois)

Born to Rena and Victor Landreaux in 1895, Edna Landreaux (later Hicks) was the paternal half- sister of singer **Lizzie Miles**, seven months her junior. Edna married vaudevillian William Benbow when she was 15, and took to the road as Benbow and Landry.ⁱ Like many performers in the U.S. with non-Anglophone names, she adopted a stage name American audiences were more likely to remember and be able to pronounce: “Landry,” instead of “Landreaux.”

After a year on the road, Edna convinced Lizzie to join the couple on the road. Lizzie would later describe Edna as a “coon shouter,” and tell about Edna’s superior ability to roll her eyes while singing. Though identified as Creole in New Orleans, Edna and Lizzie were defined black in the U.S. at large. Like other black performers in the early twentieth century, they inherited the performance traditions of minstrelsy.ⁱⁱ Lizzie’s recollections of her half-sister are meant to be complimentary, though they also serve as reminders of the performance context in which they grew up. Most music historians and critics have described Edna Hick as more of a blues singer on the spectrum of blues and vaudeville blues, with Lizzie Miles on the vaudeville end—though both singers performed blues and traveled on vaudeville.

Lizzie married J.C. Miles, a band leader and producer of minstrel shows in the

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

“colored annex” of circuses. Both sisters were on the road throughout the teens—Edna on TOBA—Theater Owners Booking Association—vaudeville, and Lizzie with the circus. They apparently kept in touch, as suggested by a note in a newspaper column on June 27, 1914, in which Lizzie wrote that she would like to hear from her sister, “Edna Benbow, of the team Benbow and Landry.”ⁱⁱⁱ

Edna traveled and appeared in shows in new York between 1916 and 1919, then moved her base to Chicago, though she continued to travel the TOBA circuit. In the early twenties, she married her second husband John Hicks.

Edna Hicks began a brief but prodigious recording career. In New York, she recorded with Porter Grainger in December 1923, and in 1924, with Fletcher Henderson. By the spring of 1924, she had moved back to Chicago where her career showed no sign of slowing. She recorded once with **Lovie Austin**, then died in a fire in a household accident when she was only 29. All of her recordings except for the Austin dates are available on CD as of this writing.

Notes

ⁱ Lynn Abbott, liner notes, *Lizzie Miles* vol. 1 (Document Records, DOCD-5458). Lynn Abbott and Doug Seroff. “Lizzie Miles: Her Forgotten Career in Circus Side-Show Minstrelsy, 1914-1918,” *78 Quarterly* vol. 1, no. 7, 1992, 62.

ⁱⁱ Lizzie Miles, Oral History, January 18, 1951. Also present: Richard B. Allen, Robert W. Greenwood. Summary—1 [of 2], 2. Hogan Jazz Archive.

ⁱⁱⁱ Lynn Abbott and Doug Seroff. “Lizzie Miles: Her Forgotten Career in Circus Side-Show Minstrelsy, 1914-1918,” *78 Quarterly* vol. 1, no. 7, 1992, 62..

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Miles, Lizzie, Oral History, January 18, 1951. Also present: Richard B. Allen, Robert W. Greenwood. Summary–1 [of 2] and 2 [of 2]. Hogan Jazz Archive.

Secondary Sources

Abbott, Lynn. "Brown Skin, Who You For?: Another Look at Clarence Williams's Early Career," *The Jazz Archivist*, Vol. VIII, 1-2 (December 1993), 1-7.

Abbott, Lynn, and Doug Seroff. "Lizzie Miles: Her Forgotten Career in Circus Side-Show Minstrelsy, 1914-1918," *78 Quarterly* vol. 1, no. 7, 1992, 62.

Abbott, Lynn, liner notes, *Lizzie Miles* vol. 1 (Document Records, DOCD-5458).

Harris, Sheldon. *Blues Who's Who: A Biographical Dictionary of Blues Singers* (New Rochelle, NY: Arlington House Publishers, 1979), 226-7.

Rye, Howard. "Hicks, Edna," *The New Grove Dictionary of Music Online* ed. L. Macy (Accessed 20 January 2004).

_____. Liner notes, *Edna Hicks: Complete Recorded Works in Chronological Order, Volume 1 (1923)* Document Records, DOCD-5428.

_____. Liner notes, *Edna Hicks, Hazel Meyers, Laura Smith: Complete Recorded Works in Chronological Order, Volume 2 (1923-1927)* Document Records, DOCD-5431.

Discography

Edna Hicks: Complete Recorded Works in Chronological Order, Volume 1 (1923)
Document Records, DOCD-5428.

Edna Hicks, Hazel Meyers, Laura Smith: Complete Recorded Works in Chronological Order, Volume 2 (1923-1927) Document Records, DOCD-5431.

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Rosalind Johnson (piano, song writer, vocalist)
b.. circa 1890 (New Orleans) / d. ?

Rosalind Johnson grew up on Gasket Street (now Cleveland Street). After her parents died, she was raised by her mother's sister and her husband in a very musical family that included several piano playing cousins. Although her interview does not specify the names of her family, a Rosa Johnson (born January 1890) appears in the 1900 Census, living with her aunt and uncle, Patrick and Emma Winford, on 1218 S. Robertson Street in the 2nd Ward.ⁱ

Rosalind played piano throughout her childhood, and studied piano at Straight University on Canal Street. As she explained to William Russell, she became interested in playing in Storyville when a girl she knew by the name of Ossie found such work and told her about it. Her friend found her a job at May Tuckerman's sporting house on Conti Street in Storyville. Her aunt and uncle were furious and threw her out of the house, expecting her to abandon the idea and come home. Instead, "Miss May," Tuckerman fixed her a room so she could keep working at her establishment.

"Finally, my aunt came and got me. I was loaded with money, all my tips and salary. So I went back home and they agreed to let me come into the world and play."ⁱⁱ

While she was playing at May Tuckerman's in about 1911 or 1912, she struck up a friendship with Jelly Roll Morton. She sometimes played in theaters, which closed at 11:00 pm, then played in the District from 11:30 until morning. She also played at

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

sporting houses of Gypsy Shafer, May Evans, Hilma Bart, and Eloise Blankenstein.

Although Lulu White usually only hired white entertainers, she would sometimes have Johnson play at her establishment. “Sometimes I could get a job where a Negro man couldn’t, because they were very partial at one time.”ⁱⁱⁱ

Johnson also played for touring shows on vaudeville, traveling extensively on the rugged TOBA (Theater Owners Booking Association) circuit.

In her interview with William Russell, Johnson spoke very positively about the work she found as a pianist in the sporting houses. “I didn’t have to worry about no job. If they made me mad in the theater, the red light district would beckon to me.”^{iv}

She recalled the rules as very strict in the big sporting houses. “A girl could not curse in those parlors. You couldn’t smoke a cigarette ... and you couldn’t get drunk.”^v Music was needed for dancing, and it was needed in private parlors. Lulu White’s Mahogany Hall, and other high class establishments, would have several private parlors, each with a piano and piano player.

Johnson remembered some other women entertainers in Storyville, including May Wilson and Daisy Toledo, neither of whom played piano, but both of whom she admired. Johnson, herself, could sing and play, but did not dance. She was also a song writer, claiming to be the author of “I’m So Glad I’m Brownskin.”

By the 1970s, she was working as a maid. It is through her employment as a maid for Larry Borenstein, founder of Preservation Hall, that the interview with William Russell was arranged.

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Notes

- i Federal census, 1900. HeritageQuest.
- ii William Russell, *“Oh, Mister Jelly”: a Jelly Roll Morton scrapbook* (Denmark: JazzMedia Aps, 1999), 149.
- iii Russell, *“Oh, Mister Jelly,”* 150.
- iv Russell, *“Oh, Mister Jelly,”* 152.
- v Russell, *“Oh, Mister Jelly,”* 151.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Rosalind Johnson, interview transcript, February 23, 1970, 8. Williams Research Center, MSS 519, Johnson, Rosalind, f.1.

Secondary Sources

Russell, William. *“Oh, Mister Jelly”: a Jelly Roll Morton scrapbook* (Denmark: JazzMedia Aps, 1999).

Discography

No professional recordings exist, but apparently Rosalind Johnson can be heard playing her composition, “I’m so glad I’m Brownskin,” at the beginning of the tape of William Russell’s interview with her from February 23, 1970. Williams Research Center.

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Jeanette Salvant Kimball (piano, organ)

b. December 18, 1908 (Pass Christian, Mississippi) / d. March 29, 2001 (Charleston, South Carolina)

Jeanette Salvant was raised by her mother, Susan “Susie” Salvant, a cook for a private family, and her father Julius “June” Salvant, a carpenter, along with her older sister, Octavia, and two younger brothers, Julius and Gaines. Listed in the U.S. census variously as “B” for black and “Mu” for mulatto, the Salvants were English speakers, with French Creole of color heritage. Both Susan and Julius Salvant had been born in Louisiana, but had relocated to Pass Christian, in Harrison County, Mississippi.

Located less than 70 miles east of New Orleans, Pass Christian was a logical stop along the way for New Orleans bands on Gulf Coast tours, making the small town conducive to an introduction to jazz in the early 1900s. Jeanette’s strict upbringing prevented her from attending public dances where these traveling groups played—even in her late teens—but she was able to hear these bands, including Sam Morgan’s, Kid Rena’s, Tom Albert’s, and, later, Papa Celestin’s when they would *ballyhoo* their way through town. To *ballyhoo* is to advertise a band’s wares by playing from the backs of trucks. It is doubtful that she heard the role of the piano in these bands, or saw the pianists (who were frequently women) since pianos were not generally carted along on these mobile previews-of-coming attractions.¹ But she did gain a familiarity with the music of New Orleans jazz bands from hearing their piano-less ensembles, quite

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

literally as they traveled through town.

Jeanette's own musical life began quite early, despite the fact that she was the only person in her family whose interest in music was more than casual.² In addition to hearing jazz bands on the backs of trucks, she gained exposure to music from the Catholic church, social, and school events, from the records that her family had at home, and from piano lessons. Her sister Octavia, who was three years older, took piano lessons, but only Jeanette became a serious musician.³ Her mother decided to get her a music teacher when Jeanette proved her talents by playing the piano when they visited other people's houses.⁴ She began taking lessons at age seven, and was teaching music by the time she was fourteen.⁵ In one interview, she told of a music class she taught to children and adults at the age of eleven.⁶ Throughout her life, she would continue to study music, and to play at home alone. She enjoyed all kinds of styles besides jazz, including classical, semi-classical, and opera.⁷

Kimball regularly credited her piano teacher with giving her the training that would solidify her reputation as a player who could sight-read anything and transpose on the spot. "I had a good teacher," she wrote to historian D. Antoinette Handy. "Her name was Anna Stewart, a graduate of Boston Conservatory. And I just loved music always and had a natural talent from God, which my deceased mother recognized--God bless her soul."⁸ In another interview, she said that Stewart was a graduate of the New England Conservatory, rather than the Boston Conservatory.⁹ In either case, it seems that Stewart was a conservatory trained musician, who did not only teach her gifted student classical piano technique, but instructed her in music theory, transposition,

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

bass, and harmony.¹⁰ In fact, Stewart's method, which Kimball would continue to uphold, began with a strong foundation in music theory.¹¹ Kimball told William Russell that she "lived at the piano" when she began taking lessons from Anna Stewart, that she took three lessons a week, for which Stewart charged a weekly total of fifty cents. She recalled that while boys as well as girls took piano lessons in her home town, there were more girls. She also remembered another talented piano student, Ruby May Townsend, who became a public school music teacher later on.¹² Jeanette gained ensemble experience as a child, when she played in a string band consisting of Harry Watson, mandolin and leader; Eddie Watson, guitar; Henry Watson, banjo; Murray bass, and herself on piano.¹³ This band played at a hotel, the Inn by the Sea.¹⁴

Though some accounts say 1925, and others 1926, it was probably the summer or fall of 1925 when Papa "Oscar" Celestin stopped long enough on one of his trips through Pass Christian to audition a new pianist for the band he was in the process of reorganizing.¹⁵ Celestin had parted ways with his longtime co-leader of the Original Tuxedo Orchestra, trombonist William "Bebe" Ridgely, who had managed to retain the name of the band, plus many of the musicians, including the pianist, **Emma Barrett**.¹⁶ Celestin worked with several pianists after that, including Manuel Manetta, but was seeking a permanent person for the band. On the recommendation of a friend of the Salvants' in New Orleans, Celestin, along with his alto saxophonist Paul Barnes paid a visit to audition Jeanette in her home. She had just graduated from high school. Although she was accustomed to sheet music scored specifically for piano, she was able to sight-read the orchestrations that Celestin put in front of her. The orchestra

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

leader made the same promise he had previously made Emma Barrett's mother: if her daughter could join his orchestra, he would personally look out for her safety. There had been at least two women pianists in Celestin's band before Salvant, including Barrett and Sadie Goodson. Even though Jeanette was in her late teens and had never been far from home, her mother allowed her to join the band, in part because of Celestin's promise, and also because the family had many relatives and friends in New Orleans. In fact, Jeanette would live with a friend of her mother's until she married Narvin Kimball in 1929.¹⁷

Celestin's new eight-piece band was called the Tuxedo Jazz Orchestra, and competed with Ridgely's Original Tuxedo Jazz Orchestra for what were known as "society" jobs. Jeanette Kimball would recall her first job with Celestin as an engagement at the Pythian Temple Roof Garden where Manuel Perez's band was also playing. Mercedes Fields was Perez's pianist, and remembered this job as being September 19, 1926. However, as Jempe de Donder points out, this may be a few months off, since her first recording with Celestin took place in April 1926.¹⁸ Besides Celestin, on trumpet and cornet, the band included Paul Barnes (alto sax), Sidney Carrere (tenor sax), John Marrero (banjo), Simon Marrero (bass or tuba), August Rousseau (trombone), Abbey "Chinee" Foster (drums), and Jeanette Kimball piano. The band played mostly stock arrangements, though sometimes Paul Barnes and John Marrero wrote for the band. This band played society jobs, Carnival balls for both black and white organizations, and on the *Capitol* river boat. More recordings would follow, also for Columbia, in 1927 and 1928.¹⁹ Among the tunes she recalled recording with

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

the band were "Station Calls," written by John Marrero, and Paul Barnes's "My Josephine."

Two or three years after she joined, Celestin switched to a larger 14-piece band format. The larger band did not perform stock arrangements as had the previous group, but played special arrangements by alto saxophonist Cecil Thornton. Jeanette remembered enjoying Thornton's arrangements because the piano parts were challenging. John Marrero and Paul Barnes had left by this time. Banjo player Narvin Kimball, whom Jeanette would marry in 1929, was hired to fill the vacancy left by Marrero. The personnel changed frequently at this point. Jeanette, who sang as well as played piano when she lived in Pass Christian, also sang some with the big band.²⁰

Celestin's larger band toured a great deal. Narvin Kimball recalled that in 1929 or 1930 the band began playing at hotels in Biloxi, Mississippi.²¹ Narvin recalled that Jeanette's skills were well suited for traveling. "One thing that she could do at sight ... when you'd go in certain places the pianos weren't tuned correctly. She would make immediate transposing. She was a very good musician."²² Jeanette Kimball told William Russell that the band was kept constantly busy, and traveled throughout the South.²³ The band toured Mexico in 1932.²⁴

Jeanette played in the big band until 1935. She quit to raise her two daughters, but continued to take college courses, in music and other subjects. This is not to say that she quit playing during this period altogether. On the contrary, she taught music and took what playing jobs that she could do while raising her children. She became the organist and choir director of the Holy Ghost Catholic Church. In 1946, she played

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

with a six-piece group led by Buddy Charles at the Dew Drop Inn. Then from 1949-53, she played with Herbert Leary's dance band. She referred to these bands as "stationary" bands since they didn't require her to travel.²⁵ She and Narvin co-composed "My Memphis Baby." The marriage to Narvin did not last, but she retained the name Kimball. She also taught her own girls piano during this time period, but interestingly, did not want them to be professional musicians.

After a nineteen year break from Celestin's orchestra, Jeanette rejoined his band in 1953.²⁶ On May 8, 1953, Jeanette was at the piano when Papa Celestin's band played at the White House for President Dwight D. Eisenhower. She recorded several times in the 1950s for the Southland label: including the sides issued on l.p. as *Papa Celestin's Golden Wedding*, which included the popular recording of "Marie Leveaux," named for the famous vodoun priestess of New Orleans.

Celestin died in December 1954. The band continued under the leadership of Eddie Pierson, then Albert "Papa" French, though it continued to be called the Celestin band. Jeanette played with this band until 1977, while also playing and recording with other groups. She traveled a great deal while playing in the Celestin "ghost" band, including tours of the British West Indies, France, Germany, Switzerland, Belgium, Denmark, Sweden, and Finland.²⁷

In the 1970s she was one of the pianists most in demand in New Orleans, for both gigs and recordings. In 1979, she became a member of the newly formed Original Camillia Band, led by English trumpeter Clive Wilson. She became one of the regular players at Preservation Hall with two different bands: Clive Wilson's Original Camillia

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Jazz Band, and Kid Sheik. She traveled to Paris with the Preservation Hall Jazz band in 1979. According to Benjamin Jaffe, Kimball was “highly regarded as a musical innovator in New Orleans traditional jazz.” He recalled her as “a very dignified person. Always very well-dressed. A stickler for doing things the right way.”²⁸

In February and March of 1980, Jeanette recorded an album under her own name, *Sophisticated Lady* (New Orleans NOR 7208). Primarily a trio and quartet setting with her colleagues from the Originally Camillia Jazz Band, this album leaves an excellent record of her piano style. One reviewer wrote, “Jeanette Kimball’s style is unique. Her very extensive background in all styles of music has allowed her to move a considerable distance from the usual New Orleans style of jazz piano. She plays in a clipped, staccato manner with a very unusual approach to the rhythm.” The reviewer praised her ability to “build tension and interest” by varying her relationship to the beat, a little ahead, or a little behind.²⁹

When Kimball began having health problems In the late 1990s, her daughters Barbara Massey and Evangeline Kimball Donnelley convinced her to retire. Kimball left New Orleans to divide her time between her daughters and their families in Ohio and South Carolina.

She died at the age of 94 on March 29, 2001.

"She only retired three or four years ago when I removed her from New Orleans bodily," Massey said.³⁰ She only missed two things about New Orleans: Preservation Hall and the Holy Ghost Catholic Church.

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Notes

- ¹ Bruce Raeburn confirms that the photographic evidence would indicate that pianos were not placed on trucks for the purposes of advertising a band, even if the band's instrumentation included piano. Pianos were hard enough to keep in tune in the Louisiana (and Mississippi) humidity without driving them around in the backs of trucks on bumpy roads! Email correspondence with Bruce Raeburn, 12-15-2003.
- ² Jeanette Salvant Kimball, Oral History, interviewed by William Russell, February 10, 1962. Oral History Digest--Retyped. 1 [of 2], Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane.
- ³ Jeanette Salvant Kimball, Oral History. Also present, Lars Edegran Barry Martyn, Richard B. Allen. Property of Barry Martyn. Oral History Digest, June 16, 1969, Reel 1, Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University.
- ⁴ Jeanette Salvant Kimball, oral history, June 16, 1969, 1.
- ⁵ Jeanette Salvant Kimball, interviewed by film-maker Kay D. Ray for *Lady Be Good: Instrumental Women in Jazz*. Video # 301, in possession of Kay D. Ray.
- ⁶ Jeanette Kimball, interviewed by William Russell, February 10, 1962, I (of 2)–Digest–Retyped, 3-4. Also mentioned in Jempe de Donder, "The First Lady of New Orleans Piano," Appeared in Dutch in *Doctor Jazz Magazine* (Sept. 86) 26-28, but is in English in Old Mint vertical file, 9.
- ⁷ Jeanette Kimball, oral history, June 16, 1969, Reel I (only), 4.
- ⁸ From correspondence from Jeanette Kimball to D. Antoinette Handy, January 11, 1978, quoted in Handy, *Black Women in American Bands and Orchestras*. 2nd Edition. Lanham, MD and Kent, England: Scarecrow Press, 1998. 236-7.
- ⁹ Jeanette Kimball, oral history, June 16, 1969, Reel I (only), 3.
- ¹⁰ Jeanette Salvant Kimball, Oral History Digest, June 16, 1969.
- ¹¹ Jeanette Salvant Kimball, Oral History, interviewed by William Russell, February 10, 1962, II of (2)–Digest–Retyped, 8.
- ¹² Jeanette Salvant Kimball, Oral History Digest, February 10, 1962, 4.
- ¹³ Jeanette Salvant Kimball, Oral History Digest, June 16, 1969.
- ¹⁴ Jeanette Salvant Kimball, Oral History Digest, February 10, 1962, 4.
- ¹⁵ While Salvant recalled that her first job with Celestin was September 19, 1926, Jempi de Donder points out that she must have joined earlier since she made her first recordings with Celestin in April 1926 on Columbia. de Donder, 10.
- ¹⁶ Samuel B. Charters, *Jazz: New Orleans: 1885-1963*, (New York: Oak Publications, Revised Edition, 1963), 69, 137.
- ¹⁷ de Donder, 10.
- ¹⁸ de Donder, 10.
- ¹⁹ There is much disagreement on the personnel of these recordings. They are currently available on CD, Jazz Oracle, BDW 8002, *Oscar 'Papa' Celestin Recorded in New Orleans 1925-1928: The Complete Recordings in Chronological Order* and Azure AZ CD-12.

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

- ²⁰ Jeanette Kimball, oral history, June 16, 1969, Reel I (only), 3.
- ²¹ Narvin Kimball, oral history, interviewed by William Russell, November 25, 1961, II (of 2)–Digest–Retyped, 7.
- ²² Oral history, Narvin H. Kimball. Interviewer, Barry Martyn. December 21, 1998, New Orleans, LA.
- ²³ Jeanette Kimball, oral history, interviewed by William Russell, February 10, 1962, II (of 2)–Digest–Retyped, 7.
- ²⁴ “Celestine Band to leave for Mexico,” *Louisiana Weekly*, February 13, 1932, 8.
- ²⁵ Jeanette Kimball, oral history, interviewed by William Russell, February 10, 1962, II (of 2)–Digest–Retyped, 8.
- ²⁶ While Jeanette said that she rejoined Celestin in 1953, Jempi de Donder suggests that she was already playing with the band again in 1951.
- ²⁷ Wiegand, Bill. “Jeannette (Sic) Salvant Kimble (Sic), Much Traveled Pianist is Native of Gulf Coast.” *States-Item* February 6 1964: unknown, Old Mint vertical file.
- ²⁸ Lynn Jensen, “Jeanette S. Kimball, pioneer jazz pianist,” *Times-Picayune*, April 4, 2001, B-4. Newcomb vertical files.
- ²⁹ Duke Darnell, Record Review, *Sophisticated Lady*, NOR 727, published in *Second Line* Summer 1982. Old Mint.
- ³⁰ Lolis Eric Elie, “Jazz World Loses a Luminary,” *Times-Picayune*, April 4, 2001, page unknown. Vertical file, Hogan Jazz Archive.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

- Kimball, Jeanette Salvant, interviewed by film-maker Kay D. Ray for *Lady Be Good: Instrumental Women in Jazz*. Video # 301, in possession of Kay D. Ray.
- Kimball, Jeanette Salvant. Oral History Digest. Interviewed by Lars Edegran Barry Martyn, and Richard B. Allen, June 16, 1969. Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University, New Orleans.
- Kimball, Jeanette Salvant. Oral History Digest–Retyped. Interviewed by William Russell, February 10, 1962. Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University, New Orleans.
- Kimball, Narvin H. Oral history. Interviewer, Barry Martyn. December 21, 1998, New Orleans. Video. New Orleans Jazz National Historical Park Office, New Orleans, Louisiana. Also available at Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University, New Orleans, Louisiana.
- Kimball, Narvin H. Oral history. Interviewer, William Russell, November 25, 1961. Reel II (of 2)–Digest–Retyped. Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University, New Orleans, Louisiana.

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Secondary Sources

- “Celestin Band to Leave for Mexico,” *Louisiana Weekly* February 13, 1932, 8.
- Charters, Samuel B. *Jazz: New Orleans: 1885-1963*, (New York: Oak Publications, Revised Edition, 1963), 69, 137.
- de Donder, Jempi. "The First Lady of New Orleans Piano." Unknown source. Vertical file, Old Mint. (This article appeared in Dutch in *Doctor Jazz Magazine* Sept. 86, 26-28, but the English language version in the Old Mint files has no publication information, though the pages numbers are: : 9-15).
- Elie, Lolis Eric. "Jazz World Loses a Luminary." *Times-Picayune*, April 4, 2001, page unknown. Vertical file, Hogan Jazz Archive.
- Handy, D. Antoinette. *Black Women in American Bands and Orchestras*. 2nd Edition. Lanham, MD and Kent, England: Scarecrow Press, 1998. 236-7.
- Jensen, Lynne. "Jeanette S. Kimball, Pioneer Jazz Pianist." *Times-Picayune* April 4 2001: B-4. Vertical file, Newcomb.
- “Papa Celestin’s Original Tuxedo Band Back from Europe,” *The Second Line*, November-December, 1964, vol. XV, no. 11 and 12, 18.
- Rose, Al, and Edmond Souchon. *New Orleans Jazz: A Family Album*, third edition, revised and enlarged (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1984), 67.
- Vacher, Peter. "Jeanette Kimball, New Orleans Pianist Who Played Dixieland Jazz with Key Bands for 70 Years." *The Guardian*, <http://www.guardian.com.co.uk> April 20 2001: no page numbers listed on website.
- Wiegand, Bill. "Jeannette (Sic) Salvant Kimble (Sic), Much Traveled Pianist is Native of Gulf Coast." *States-Item* February 6 1964: unknown, Old Mint vertical file.

Discography

New Orleans Records NOR 7208

Sophisticated Lady: Trios and Quartets, Jeanette Kimball (piano), with Clive Wilson (trumpet), Herb Hall (clarinet), Waldron “Frog” Johnson (trombone), Les Muscutt (guitar and banjo), Frank Fields (bass), Freddie Kohlman (drums).

With Don Albert

Southland SLP239, “Roses of Picardie,” “Lily of the Valley,” “Holding My Savior’s Hand,” “After the Ball is Over.” New Orleans, September 1962. Don Albert (trumpet), Frog Joseph (trombone), Louis Cottrell (clarinet), Jeanette Kimball (piano), Placide Adams (bass), Paul Barbarin (drums), Sister Elisabeth Eustis and Choir (vocal on “Lily of the Valley” and “Holding My Savior’s Hand”). (Bruyninckx, A69.)

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

With Oscar "Papa" Celestin

Jazz Oracle, BDW 8002, *Celestin's Original Tuxedo Jazz Orchestra/Sam Morgan's Jazz Band* (CD includes Jeanette Salvant's first recordings with Celestin, 1926-28), also Azure AD CD-12.

Filmography

Cinerama Holiday, 1953. Celestin's band plays "Tiger Rag." (Jempi de Donder, 12.)

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Illustrations

The Hogan Jazz Archive has several photographs of Jeanette Kimball.

Jeanette Kimball
Hogan Jazz Archive



Blue Lu Barker - standing
Jeanette Kimball - seated
Accession number: 152.7600
P000076.03
Hogan Jazz Archive



Jeanette Kimball (piano) and Blue Lu Barker
Accession number: 52.7484
Hogan Jazz Archive



A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Margaret A.V. Marshall Maurice Kimble (Kimball, Anita Margaret Isabelle Marshall) (pianist, music teacher)

b. July 14, 1885 (ca 1886,1896)¹, New Orleans / d. ?

Little is known of pianist Margaret Kimble, except that she was well regarded as the pianist in violinist John Robichaux's Lyric Theater Orchestra in the 1920s. The Lyric Theater, located at 201 Burgundy Street, was a black vaudeville theater on the Theater Owner's Booking Association (TOBA) circuit. The acts traveled through town, but the pit orchestra stayed put, and was led by John Robichaux from the opening of the theater in 1918 to 1926. We do know that when Margaret joined the band *circa* 1923, she was Margaret Maurice. When she left the orchestra in 1925 or 1926, she was Margaret Kimble, married to Robichaux's cornetist, Andrew Kimble.

While researching the Lyric Theater, historian Lynn Abbott made some pertinent discoveries regarding Margaret Kimble. One of these was the spelling of her name. References to Andrew and Margaret Kimble had been routinely transcribed from oral histories as "Kimball," do doubt due to other well-known Kimballs in New Orleans jazz, including Narvin Kimball, Jeanette Kimball, and Henry Kimball. Narvin Kimball's oral history further confused this matter with the story of why he thought he might be related to Andrew Kimble. While consulting the "digest" of the oral history tape, the story seems like a point of fact, but on listening to the tape itself, Abbott found the story to be inconclusive. Andrew's brother was named Henry, and Narvin's father and grandfather

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

were both named Henry, but the connection remains mysterious.² City directories, as well as a signed note in the John Robichaux Collection at Hogan Jazz Archive, clearly spell Andrew's last name as "Kimble."³

Additionally, Abbott determined that Margaret Kimble's maiden name was probably Marshall, a fact that is confirmed by the Census.⁴ Her mother was Frances Sheldon (or Shelden) Marshall and her father was Joseph Marshall, to whom she was one of at least six daughters.⁵ Drummer Alfred Williams recalled in his 1961 oral history that she was from a large family.⁶ In 1910, she was living with her parents as Margaret Maurice, along with her husband, Raoul Maurice, and two daughters, Ellen and Geraldine. Soon afterward, as Margaret M. Maurice and Margaret Marshall-Maurice, she ran elegant advertisements for her services as a concert pianist, accompanist, and piano teacher, from her studio at 1419 Burdette Street, in the 1912 and 1914 issues of the *Woods Directory: Being as Colored Business, Professional and Trade Directory of New Orleans, Louisiana*.⁷ Both ads feature photographs of her wearing a long white dress, sitting at an upright piano in what appears to be a living room or parlor. Crisp sheet music catches the light from a nearby window. Raoul Maurice shows up in the city directories, as an inspector at the Custom's House, and sharing the 1419 Burdette Street address in 1913. A search of marriage license records confirms that Margaret A. V. Marshall married Raoul Maurice on December 24, 1906. Her age was given as 21, and his as 28.⁸ In the 1916 and 1918 city directories, Raoul appears to be living at 1419 Burdette alone. In 1920, the city directory lists Raoul on Burdette, while Mrs. Margaret Maurice is listed as a musician living at 2225 Valence. The 1920 Census,

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

however, shows Margaret Maurice, music teacher, age 34, to be living with her parents, Joseph Marshall and Frances Sheldon (or Shelden) Marshall at 2530 Cadiz. Also living with them are Margaret's two daughters, Helen Maurice, age 12; and Geraldine Maurice, age 10.⁹ In 1924, the city directory lists Margaret Maurice as a musician at the Lyric Theater, living at 2530 Cadiz; Andrew Kimble is listed in 1924 also as musician at the Lyric Theater, living at 7701 Oak. It seems likely that Margaret separated from Raoul Maurice around 1915, and married Andrew Kimble around 1925, during the time they both played in John Robichaux's highly acclaimed orchestra at the Lyric Theater.

Reviews of Robichaux's orchestra identify Margaret Maurice by name when praising the group. A reporter for the *Chicago Defender* October 20, 1923, wrote.

Prof. John P. Robichaux, violinist, has gotten together five of the best musicians beside himself, and jazz is their middle name. With Mrs. Margaret Maurice at the piano they simply walk their ways into hearts of a music mad city, the New York of the South."¹⁰

On April 4, 1925, the *Chicago Defender* called Robichaux's orchestra "one of the best in the city," and praised "Miss Morese [sic] at the piano" as "a marvel."¹¹

Alex Bigard remembered the Robichaux's Lyric Theater Orchestra of those years as consisting of John Robichaux, leader and violin; Andrew Kimball, trumpet; Margaret Kimble, piano; Johnny Lindsay, trombone; "Red Happy" [Bolton] drums; and "Big Eye" Louis Nelson, clarinet. He also recalled that Robichaux was a rigorous leader, who rehearsed the band, yet expected the players to sight-read well enough to bring them different music to the performance than what they had rehearsed. The orchestra never appeared as an act on the stage, but played for all the acts, as well as performing their

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

own numbers from the pit.¹²

The post-Lyric years are sketchy. Margaret Kimble left the Lyric with Andrew Kimble around 1925 or 1926. The couple took a job in Hot Springs, Arkansas. According to trumpet player Charlie Love, this was a two or three month job, and when Lucius Wilson hired the Kimbles, Robichaux replaced them with Love and pianist May Neely. The Kimbles later moved to the Shreveport.¹³ Some accounts say that Andrew died shortly thereafter, but the public records show that he died in New Orleans, February 1942.¹⁴ Andrew Kimble (musician) and Margaret (whose occupation is not listed) appear in the 1940 *Soards Directory* as living at 3313 Baronne in New Orleans

In 1942, the directory lists only Margaret Kimble, 3313 Baronne, working as a maid.¹⁵

Notes

¹ Al Rose and Edmond Souchon list her birth year as *ca.* 1896, but Census and Marriage License records both indicate that she was more likely born in 1885 or 1886. Rose and Souchon. *New Orleans Jazz: A Family Album*. Revised edition.. Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1978, 67.

1920 Census, and New Orleans Marriage Records.

² Lynn Abbott, personal correspondence, June 6, 2003; June 25, 2003; Narvin Kimball, Oral History, November 25, 1961, 1 (of 2)–Digest–Retyped, 2-3, Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane.

³ Lynn Abbott, "'For Ofays Only': An Annotated Calendar of Midnight Frolics at the Lyric Theater," *The Jazz Archivist*, vol. xvii (2003), footnote 6.

⁴ 1920 Census.

⁵ U.S. Census, New Orleans, 1900, 1910, 1920.

⁶ Alfred Williams, oral history, Reel I – Summary–Retyped, February 3, 1961, 2.

⁷ *Woods Directory: Being as Colored Business, Professional and Trade Directory of New Orleans, Louisiana* 1912; 1914. Many thanks to Lynn Abbott for making this information available for this report.

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

⁸ New Orleans Marriage Records.

⁹ 1920 Census.

¹⁰ Chicago Defender quoted in Lynn Abbott, "'For Ofays Only': An Annotated Calendar of Midnight Frolics at the Lyric Theater," *The Jazz Archivist*, vol. xvii (2003). ..

¹¹ Chicago Defender quoted in Lynn Abbott, "'For Ofays Only': An Annotated Calendar of Midnight Frolics at the Lyric Theater," *The Jazz Archivist*, vol. xvii (2003).

¹² Alex Bigard, Oral History, also present, William Russell, Ralph Collins, Richard B. Allen, Reel II [of 5] –Digest–Retype April 30, 1960,8, Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane.

¹³ Charles Love, Oral History, January 16, 1960, Reel I–Summary–Retyped, 4.

¹⁴ Samuel Charters, *Jazz: New Orleans, 1885-1957* (Belleville, N.J.: Walter C. Allen, 1958), 37; Rose and Souchon write that Andrew Kimball (sic) died in Pascagoula, Miss, ca. 1929, *New Orleans Jazz*, 67. Lynn Abbott found listing for Andrew Kimble, living in New Orleans, in the 1940 *Soards Directory*. Lynn Abbott, personal correspondence, June 25, 2003. The New Orleans Death Index lists an Andrew Kimble dying in February 1942.

¹⁵ Lynn Abbott, personal correspondence, June 25, 2003. *Soards Directory*, 1940 and 1942.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Bigard, Alex, Oral History, also present, William Russell, Ralph Collins, Richard B. Allen, April 30, 1960. Reel II [of 5] –Digest–Retyped, Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University, New Orleans.

Love, Charles, Oral History, January 16, 1960, Reel I–Summary–Retyped, Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University, New Orleans.

New Orleans Marriage Records.

Polks New Orleans City Directory, 1940, 1942.

Robichaux, Joe, Oral History, interviewed by William Russell, March 19, 1959, Digest III [of 4]–Retyped, 8, Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University, New Orleans.

Soard's Directory, 1910, 1913, 1916, 1918, 1920, 1921, 1924, 1926.

U.S. Census, 1920.

Williams, Alfred, Oral History, February 3, 1961, Reel I – Summary–Retyped, Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University, New Orleans.

Woods Directory: Being as Colored Business, Professional and Trade Directory of New Orleans, Louisiana (1912, 1914)

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Secondary Sources

Abbott, Lynn, "'For Ofays Only': An Annotated Calendar of Midnight Frolics at the Lyric Theater," *The Jazz Archivist*, vol. xvii (2003).

Charters, Samuel Barclay, IV. *Jazz: New Orleans, 1885-1957* (Belleville, N.J.: Walter C. Allen, 1958),

Handy, D. Antoinette. *Black Women in American Bands and Orchestras, Second Edition*. Lanham, Mass. and Kent: Scarecrow Press, 222.

Rose, Al, and Edmond Souchon. *New Orleans Jazz: A Family Album*. Revised edition.. Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1978.

Discography

No recordings. According to Samuel Charters, John Robichaux "refused to record, considering it 'canned music'." (Charters, 9).

Illustrations

Illustrated advertisements in the *Woods Directory* from 1912 and 1914, included in accompanying file.

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Lizzie Miles ([nee Elizabeth Mary Landreaux] Miles Pajaud [aka Mandy Smith]) (vocalist, song writer)

b. March 31, 1895 (New Orleans, Louisiana) / d. March 17, 1963 (New Orleans, Louisiana)

Elizabeth Mary Landreaux is the given name for the singer better known as Lizzie Miles; also known as “the Creole Songbird,” and, internationally, as the “Black Rose of Paris.” Lizzie was born in 1895 to Victor Landreaux and Ramise Fazende in New Orleans, most likely at 1508 Bourbon Street.¹

The year after she was born, the U.S. Supreme Court would decide against a case brought by another Creole of color from New Orleans, Homer Plessy; in the disastrous ruling that launched the legally mandated black/white segregation that would be known as Jim Crow. While Lizzie’s parents grew up with a strong sense of themselves as Creole, Lizzie entered a world that would see her as black, and as a member of a class of segregated second-class citizens, a factor that would greatly affect her life as a traveling entertainer in the first decades of the twentieth century.

Lizzie grew up in the Seventh Ward, part of an impressive generation within an extended musical family. At least three of her siblings were active participants in early New Orleans jazz. Her paternal half-sister, only seven months older than Lizzie, was Edna Landreaux (later Edna Hicks), who would become a great blues singer and whose brief but brilliant career would help to launch Lizzie’s own. In her oral history, she

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

recalled that her mother sometimes sang Creole songs in public settings.²

When Lizzie was four, her mother married another man named Victor, who also lived in the Seventh Ward: Victor Morand, with whom she had several children. Lizzie would spend the remainder of her childhood growing up in a family that included her younger maternal half-brothers, Herb Morand, who would become a renowned New Orleans trumpeter and leader of the Harlem Hamfats, and drummer, Morris (Maurice) Morand.³

Earlier in this report, the important role of the Catholic church in New Orleans musical life was noted. This is certainly apparent in the early musical life of Lizzie Miles, which began, in fact, as an off-shoot of her early religious training in the Catholic faith. As one writer put it, “she strengthened her powerful voice each day by chanting sacred hymns in catechism classes, plus shouting robust ditties during the evenings at house parties, lawn dances and traditional Saturday night fish-fries, sizzling with ragtime dance bands.”⁴ Her catechism teacher, Mrs. Atkins, taught singing and also produced concerts at which the children made money. Lizzie sang, at first in lawn parties, but later in pre-ball concerts held at Franc Amis Hall, L’Equite Hall, Artisan Hall, and other halls, in the process working with Joe (later “King”) Oliver, Kid Ory, Alphonse Picou, Manuel Perez, and Bunk Johnson. She also sang in concerts in public parks and at theaters, such as the Pythian Theater. In an interview with Richard B. Allen, she recalled that she made fifty cents at first, but that her wages increased.⁵

Another place where she was exposed to music was at the French opera, where her aunt, Corinne Levieller Fazande, was a maid for actresses, and where Lizzie sold

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

candy when she was 12 or 13.⁶

In 1910, Lizzie's half-sister Edna Landreaux left New Orleans with a vaudeville troop and beckoned Lizzie to follow. According to the 1910 Census, fifteen-year-old Lizzie was living on Claiborne Street that year with her mother, her step-father, and their children.⁷ But soon thereafter, she would be on the road with her half-sister who was now married to a vaudevillian named William Benbow. Lizzie traveled with them on the Tri-State Circuit, the first black vaudeville route.⁸

By 1914, Lizzie had married J.C. Miles, a band leader and minstrel show producer, and was traveling with him in a troupe called the Alabama Minstrels. Some sources mistakenly claim that J.C. Miles was her father, but Lynn Abbott and Doug Seroff have corrected the record: J.C. Miles was Lizzie's first husband. In April 1914, Lizzie and her husband joined up with Jones Bros and Wilson's Three-Ring Circus, where J.C. Miles was in charge of the circus minstrel band and show. It was not uncommon in the teens and 1920s for white circuses in the U.S. to include a black minstrel show as a part of the side-show.⁹ Lizzie performed in the "colored annex" of circuses in minstrel shows from 1914-1918.¹⁰

As a black performer in the side-show of a white circus, Lizzie did not simply sing, but also acted in the black minstrel show, sometimes performing the role of the interlocutor. She also performed a variety of circus staples, including a slack wire act, danced, and working with animal acts, including the elephants. One of her specialties was singing while riding a horse bareback as pigeons landed on her shoulders.

Lynn Abbott and Doug Seroff described the behind-the-scenes working

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

conditions as “a grueling succession of one night stands, working six nights a week, traveling by rail living out of a Pullman coach.”¹¹ The work was seasonal, so the performers, including Lizzie and J.C. Miles, had to scramble for other work during the winter months. In 1918, disaster struck. While on a train headed for Shreveport for the winter season, Lizzie and her husband and all of the train’s passengers, for that matter, fell victim to the Spanish flu epidemic. Tragically, J.C. Miles died on October 19, 1918. Lizzie was placed in a sanatorium in a small town, where she promised God that if she survived the Spanish flu, she would “never set foot on a stage again.”¹² She returned to New Orleans to recuperate. Lizzie would keep her promise to God, but apparently didn’t consider singing with bands in cabarets or dance halls to be the same as the theatrical stage. In 1919, she was singing with Arnold Metoyer’s band at the Pythian Temple Roof Garden. She traveled to Chicago, where she worked at the Dreamland with Joe “King” Oliver, singing in his band that included Louis Armstrong and Lil Hardin.¹³ In Chicago, she also worked with Freddy Keppard at Entertainers, and at the Deluxe. She then traveled to New York, where she encountered the problem of New Orleans musicians always being expected to play Dixieland.¹⁴

In 1922, Lizzie Miles made her first record in New York City, “Muscle Shoals Blues” (Okeh), launching what became an impressive, if chronologically concentrated, recording career. She made dozens of recordings in New York in the 1920s.

She said that her singing style was inspired by Sophie Tucker, whom she saw perform at the Palace Theater, and by Tillie Johnson, a New Orleans blues singer. Her repertoire would encompass the range of vaudeville offerings, including vaudeville blues

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

and ragtime material, but also French Creole songs. She once told Carey James Tate, “I sing love songs—sad songs—torchy songs better. I guess it’s because I had such a hard, sad life from as far back as I can remember. Most of these songs bring memories.”¹⁵ In her study of the classic blues singers of the 1920s, Daphne Duval Harrison categorizes Lizzie Miles as one of the “cabaret blues singers such as Lucille Hegamin” who “deserve credit for popularizing and standardizing blues performance so it became a staple in American song repertoire.”¹⁶

Her international popularity was secured when she made the first blues record released in England, with her 1923 recording, “You’re Always Messin’ Around With My Man.” In 1924, Lizzie Miles traveled to Paris. Billed as the Black Rose, or “La Rose Noire,” Lizzie worked in a night club called Chez Mitchell, operated by an American, Louis Mitchell, where she sang in both English and in Creole French. As a songwriter, she co-wrote “Haitian Blues” with Spencer Williams.

She returned to New York in 1927, where she made several more records. She recorded with King Oliver in 1928. In 1929, she found very few opportunities to record, but among them were records that she had Jelly Roll Morton made together, “Don’t Tell Me Nothin’ Bout My Man” and “I Hate a Man Like You” (Victor-38571).¹⁷ , Zutty Singleton said that Lizzie Miles was Jelly Roll Morton's favorite vocalist.¹⁸

With the Depression, Lizzie Miles fell on hard times, finding it difficult to get recording dates throughout the 1930's. Some sources state that she was employed as a domestic worker during part of this time. She finally began to record again in Chicago in the late 1930s, but returned to New Orleans in 1942 when her mother became ill.

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

She worked as a barmaid while caring for her mother until she died on May 15, 1945.

Lizzie Miles was an avid letter-writer throughout her life. In the 1940s, she focused her letter-writing on revitalizing her career. She wrote to *Ebony Magazine* in the late 1940s trying to get publicity. Fortunately, she was still writing letters and still trying to get work as a singer, when the post-war New Orleans Revival hit, bringing a new audience hungry for music from the 1920s. In 1951, a New Orleans disk jockey helped her to make her comeback.¹⁹ With nothing else to wear in the spotlight, she costumed herself in dramatic 1920s dresses she had purchased for her mother in Paris. She began recording again, making some extremely popular albums for the Cook label. Jon Newlin described her 1950s recordings as “saloon-sporting-house-boarding house-parlor repertoire delivered by a singer who seems complete at peace.”²⁰ A rapid-fire correspondence between Lizzie Miles and George Hoefer, collected at the Institute for Jazz Studies, well illustrates how seriously she pursued her desire to take an active role in her career during her come-back. Now in her sixties, she became a darling of the media, with features in *Hue*, *Time*, and, finally, *Ebony*, which ran a two-part feature on her in 1955.

Lizzie Miles performed at Tony Almerico’s Sunday afternoon jam sessions on Royal Street in 1957. New Orleans revivalist fans loved her performances, they loved her wardrobe, and they loved news about her eccentricities. They loved her when the 72-year old star checked into the YWCA instead of a hotel while on a New York tour in 1957.²¹ In 1958, she turned down Joe Glaser when he wanted to put her in a Broadway Show.²² She told the powerful agent about her promise to God that she wouldn’t

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

perform on stage if he would deliver her home from the deadly flu epidemic that brought her off the road in 1918. But the flu epidemic story was no mere eccentricity, and she seems to have embraced it at a new level at the end of the decade. When she was invited by the New Orleans Jazz Club to sing in 1959, she said she wouldn't do it unless she could sing from the audience. Again, her reasons was her promise to God in 1918 that if He let her live, she would never sing on the stage again.²³ She appeared with Celestin's band at Tulane University on April 5, 1959, giving a performance described by one reviewer as "what was probably the finest jazz session ever heard on Tulane Campus." The reviewer claimed that Lizzie Miles "was in rare, rare form. She gave out that powerful shouting voice as we have not heart for many years! Probably the spirit which the band had established worked its way right into her soul, for she has never sung better or more generously."²⁴

In 1960, she refused Bill Russell's request to conduct an oral history with her.²⁵ She was living alone at 1214 N. Tonti, and working with the nuns two blocks away at the Lafon Catholic Old Folks Home of the Holy Family, and did not wish to talk about jazz anymore. In 1961, she declined an invitation to the Grand Opening of the New Orleans Jazz Museum with the following explanation:

"I have chosen to live the life of a nun. Not a modern one, but an old-fashioned Godly one, and have given up the outside world...It's my way of thanking Him for all His wonderful blessings."²⁶

On March 17, 1963, she wasn't feeling well. She went over to the Lafon home, where she read her prayer book, then went to sleep, and died at the age of 67.

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Her obituary in the *Times-Picayune* stated, "Famed blues singer Lizzie Miles, who devoted her final years to 'prayers for these troubled times, died at 9:30 a.m. Sunday, at the Lafon Catholic Old Folks Home of the Holy Family."²⁷

Notes

¹ Lynn Abbott and Doug Seroff, "Lizzie Miles: Her Forgotten Career in Circus Side-Show Minstrelsy, 1914-1918," *78 Quarterly* vol. 1, no. 7, 1992, 61.

² Lizzie Miles, oral history, January 18, 1951. Also present: Richard B. Allen, Robert W. Greenwood. Summary-1 [of 2], 1, Hogan Jazz Archive; Daphne Duval Harrison, *Black Pearls: Blues Queens of the 1920s* (Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1990), 236.

³ 1910 Census, Series T624, Roll 521, 91. HeritageQuest

⁴ Carey James Tate, "Famed Lizzie Miles' Death Ends Era of Blues Singing." *Louisiana Weekly*, March 30. 1963. MSS 536, f. 16. The Williams Research Center.

⁵ Lizzie Miles, oral history, January 18, 1951. Also present: Richard B. Allen, Robert W. Greenwood. Summary-1 [of 2], 1. Hogan Jazz Archive.

⁶ "Old Days," *States-Item* ca 1953, vertical file, Hogan Jazz Archive.

⁷ 1910 Census, Series T624, Roll 521, 91. HeritageQuest

⁸ Lynn Abbott, liner notes, *Lizzie Miles: Complete Recorded Works in Chronological Order* Vol. 1 (Document Records, DOCD-5458).

⁹ Abbott and Seroff, 60.

¹⁰ Lynn Abbott and Doug Seroff. "Lizzie Miles: Her Forgotten Career in Circus Side-Show Minstrelsy, 1914-1918," *78 Quarterly* vol. 1, no. 7, 1992, 62.

¹¹ Abbott and Seroff, "Lizzie Miles," 61.

¹² Lynn Abbott and Doug Seroff. "Lizzie Miles: Her Forgotten Career," 67.

¹³ Lizzie Miles, Oral History, 1[of 2], 3. Hogan Jazz Archive.

¹⁴ Lizzie Miles, Oral History, II [of 2], 9, Hogan Jazz Archive.

¹⁵ Carey James Tate, "Famed Lizzie Miles' Death Ends Era of Blues Singing." *Louisiana Weekly*, March 30. 1963. MSS 536, f. 16. The Williams Research.

¹⁶ Daphne Duval Harrison, *Black Pearls: Blues Queens of the 1920s* (Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1990), 12.

¹⁷ "Lizzie Miles Joins Seraphic Choir." *The Second Line* XIV.3/4: 3-4, 23, 25.

¹⁸ Zutty and Marge Singleton, Oral History." February 2. 1969, Reel I, Track I, Summary, 7. Hogan Jazz Archives. Tulane University,

¹⁹ "Music: Lizzie's Return." *Time* October 3 1955: 51-52.

²⁰ Jon Newlin, "Remembering Lizzie," *Wavelength*, June 1988.

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

²¹ Bob Williams, "On the Air," *New York Post*, September 30 1957. Vertical files, Institute for Jazz Studies, John Cotton Dana Library, State University of New Jersey, Rutgers.

²² Ralph J. Gleason, "Lizzie Miles Has Really Quit Show Business," *Milwaukee Journal*, October 23. 1958. MSS 536, f. 11. The Williams Research Center.

²³ "Lizzy (sic) Miles Will Sing, But Only in Audience," unknown publication, n.d., 1959, Hogan Jazz Archive.

²⁴ "Welcome Home Pete, Rug and All!" *The Second Line* 9.5/6: 7.

²⁵ Lizzie Miles, correspondence to Bill Russell, June 3, 1960. MSS 536, f. 6. Williams Research Center.

²⁶ "Lizzie Miles Joins Seraphic Choir." *The Second Line* XIV.3/4: 3

²⁷ Clarence Doucet, "Famous Blues Singer Expires: Lizzie Miles Gives Last Years to Church," *Times-Picayune*, March 18. 1963.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Barker, Blue Lu and Danny, Oral History, April 30, 1980. Interviewed by Milt Hinton. Transcript. Institute for Jazz Studies, Rutgers.

Hoefler, George. Personal Correspondence to Lizzie Miles: May 20 1954, June 6 1954, July 4 1954, September 2 1954, and October 26 1954. Vertical files, Institute for Jazz Studies, John Cotton Dana Library, State University of New Jersey, Rutgers.

Miles, Lizzie, Oral History, January 18, 1951. Also present: Richard B. Allen, Robert W. Greenwood. Summary-1 [of 2] and 2 [of 2]. Hogan Jazz Archive.

Miles, Lizzie. Personal correspondence to George Hoefler: May 7 1954, May 24 1954, June 13 1954, July 13 1954, September 7 1954. Vertical files, Institute for Jazz Studies, John Cotton Dana Library, State University of New Jersey, Rutgers.

Miles, Lizzie. Personal correspondence to Bill Russell, June 3. 1960. MSS 536. F. 6. The Williams Research Center.

Singleton, Zutty and Marge, Oral History, February 2. 1969. Summary, Reel I, Track I, 7. Hogan Jazz Archives. Tulane University.

Secondary Sources

Abbott, Lynn, and Doug Seroff. "Lizzie Miles: Her Forgotten Career in Circus Side-Show Minstrelsy, 1914-1918," *78 Quarterly* vol. 1, no. 7, 1992, 57-70. Hogan Jazz Archive.

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

- "Blues Singer Makes Comeback." *Ebony* 11.2: December 1955, 66- 67.
- "Death Claims Blues Singer Lizzie Miles," *Louisiana Weekly* March 23, 1963, 1, 7.
- Doucet, Clarence. "Famous Blues Singer Expires: Lizzie Miles Gives Last Years to Church," *Times-Picayune*, March 18. 1963. MSS 536, f. 14. The Williams Research Center.
- Jones, Max, and Sinclair Traill. "Collectors' Corner." Unknown publication, April 24 1948. Vertical files, Institute for Jazz Studies, John Cotton Dana Library, State University of New Jersey, Rutgers
- "Famed Blues Singer Dies." Associated Press obituary, March 19 1963. Vertical files, Institute for Jazz Studies, John Cotton Dana Library, State University of New Jersey, Rutgers.
- Gleason, Ralph J. "Lizzie Miles Has Really Quit Show Business," *Milwaukee Journal*, October 23. 1958. MSS 536, f. 11. The Williams Research Center.
- Goreau, Laurraine. "An Evening With Lizzie Miles." (1958): 8 - 10. Vertical files, Institute for Jazz Studies, John Cotton Dana Library, State University of New Jersey, Rutgers.
- Griffin, Thomas. "'Lagniappe" column, *New Orleans States-Item* May 20, 1957, MSS 536, f.8. The Williams Research Center.
- "The Grim Reaper." *The Second Line* XVI (March/April 1965 1965): 38.
- Harris, Sheldon. *Blues Who's Who: A Biographical Dictionary of Blues Singers* (New Rochelle, NY: Arlington House Publishers, 1979), 372-4.
- Harrison, Daphne Duval, *Black Pearls: Blues Queens of the 1920s* (Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1990).
- "Lizzie Miles, Blues Singer, Rites Slated (Obit)," *New Orleans States-Item*, March 18. 1963. MSS 536, f. 15. The Williams Research Center.
- "Lizzie Miles Joins Seraphic Choir." *The Second Line* XIV.3/4: 3-4, 23, 25.
- "Lizzy (sic) Miles Will Sing, But Only in Audience," unknown publication, n/d, 1959, Hogan Jazz Archive.
- "Music: Lizzie's Return." *Time* October 3 1955: 51-52.
- "New Orleans Re-Discovered 'Washed Up' Lizzie Miles." *Ebony* 11.2: ?-73.
- Newlin, Jon. "Remembering Lizzie," *Wavelength*, June 1988. MSS 536, f. 18. The Williams Research Center.
- Tate, Carey James. "Famed Lizzie Miles' Death Ends Era of Blues Singing." *Louisiana Weekly*, March 30. 1963. MSS 536, f. 16, The Williams Research; also vertical file, Hogan Jazz Archive.
- "The Master's Hand Again Lays Heavy (Reports on Eight Recent Deaths)." *The Second Line* XIV.3/4: cover (photo of Lizzie Miles).
- Tovey, Michele, "Miles, Lizzie [Pajaud [Nee Landreaux], Elizabeth Mary]." *New Grove Dictionary of Jazz*. Ed. Barry Kernfeld. MacMillian, 2001, 759.
- "Welcome Home Pete, Rug and All!" *The Second Line* 9.5/6: 7-9.
- "What Happened to Lizzie Miles?" *Hue* 2.6 April 1955: 61-62.
- Williams, Bob. "On the Air," *New York Post*, September 30 1957. Vertical files, Institute for Jazz Studies, Rutgers.

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Discography

Her early material is available on CD:

Lizzie Miles: Complete Recorded Works in Chronological Order (c. 24 February 1922 to 25 April 1923) Vol. 1 (Document Records, DOCD-5458).

Lizzie Miles: Complete Recorded Works in Chronological Order (c. 25 April 1923 to 29 February 1928) Vol. 2 (Document Records, DOCD-5459).

Lizzie Miles: Complete Recorded Works in Chronological Order (c.2 May 1928 to 7 October 1939) Vol. 3 (Document Records, DOCD-5460).

1950s “come-back” l.p. recordings include:

Cook 1181, *Queen Mother of the Rue Royale*

Cook 1182, *Moans and Blues*

Cook 1183, *Hot Songs My Mother Taught Me*

Cook 1184, *Torchy Lullabies*

Capitol, *A Night in New Orleans*

Filmography

Lizzie Miles apparently appeared in two short films described in her oral history with Richard B. Allen: *The Stardust Ring*, starring Bessie Love, in which she sings and dances “Walkin’ the Dog,” and a film possibly called *Tick Tack Toe*, in which Lizzie sidelines at the piano (pretends to play, but the pianist is actually dubbed), and sings “Three is a Crowd.” See Lizzie Miles Oral History, Summary, Reel II (of 2), 12.

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Illustrations

Advertisement, "Mighty Lizzy Miles!" (1954) Vertical files, Institute for Jazz Studies,
John Cotton Dana Library, State University of New Jersey, Rutgers.

There are some excellent portrait photographs of her at the Hogan Jazz Archive:

Lizzie Miles
Accession number 84.4.
Hogan Jazz Archive



Lizzie Miles
Accession number 84.6F
Hogan Jazz Archive



A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Camille Lucie Nickerson (pianist, composer, music educator, music historian, administrator)

b. March 30, 1888 (New Orleans, Louisiana) / d. April 27, 1982 (Washington, D.C.)

While not a jazz musician, Camille Lucie Nickerson is an extremely important figure in New Orleans music history. She was born in New Orleans to Aurelie Duconge and William Joseph Nickerson, in 1888. Her mother died when Camille was eight. In 1902, Professor Nickerson, a renowned music teacher and violinist, married Julia Ellen Lewis, also a music teacher and musician (cello and voice). Lewis joined the all-woman concert group founded by her new husband, the Nickerson Ladies' Orchestra, in which her stepdaughter, Camille, had been pianist since she was a child, (Kennedy says nine-years-old, Handy says 1900, which she would have been twelve).¹

Camille Nickerson became one of New Orleans's most influential music educators, an important musicologist of Creole of color songs, and a founder of the B-Sharp Club, an organization dedicated to appreciation and support of "Negro Music." While the club was not so interested in jazz in its early days, it promoted interest in African American music including classical music, spirituals, and Creole of color songs. It also raised money to support causes of interest to African Americans, such as the scholarship fund of the National Association of Negro Musicians, the NAACP, and the Anti-Lynching Fund.²

Camille Nickerson's father, William Joseph Nickerson, was a violinist and

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

composer, as well as an extremely important music teacher in turn-of-the-century New Orleans. While not a jazz musician, many of his pupils became important figures in New Orleans jazz, including Jelly Roll Morton, Emma Barrett, Henry Kimball, and Manuel Manetta. In an interview, Manetta recalled that around 1905, "...I was taking lessons from Professor Nickerson on the piano.... his son played violin, and his daughter was a pianist, greatest pianist they had around here." ³

In 1912, Camille Nickerson left the Nickerson Ladies Orchestra to attend Oberlin Conservatory of Music in Ohio, where she received a BA in Music in 1916. She returned to New Orleans, where she taught with her father from 1916 until 1926 at the Nickerson School of Music and founded the B-Sharp Music Club in February 1917. In 1921, the club gave its first recital, and joined the National Association of Negro Musicians, becoming that organization's New Orleans Branch. The next year, they started giving monthly free concerts. In 1951, the club started granting scholarships for college music students. Mostly classical, but the program of the Friday, April 2, 1976 concert at the New Orleans Theatre of the Performing Arts includes spirituals, gospel, ragtime, jazz, blues, and soul. ⁴

During the time period in which she taught with her father in New Orleans, she returned to Oberlin for a year in 1923. In that year, she was elected as a member of the Board of Directors of the National Association of Negro Musicians. In 1926, she was elected as Secretary, and in 1930, she was elected Vice president, and in 1944, she was elected President.

In 1926, she accepted a position at Howard University, and moved to

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Washington D.C. where she taught piano, organ, and teaching methods until 1962.

In 1930, concerned that the Creole songs were dying, she pursued and received a fellowship to travel for a year and collect and transcribe Creole music. She published many Creole songs, and wrote a masters thesis: *Africo-Creole Music in Louisiana* (masters thesis, Oberlin, 1932). In 1932, she received a Master of Music degree from Oberlin. She began to perform Creole songs as "The Louisiana Lady," in order to educate the public about Creole songs and to keep them alive.

On April 22, 1982, she died of pneumonia at Howard University Hospital.

Notes

¹ Al Kennedy, *Chord Changes on the Chalkboard: How Public School Teachers Shaped Jazz and the Music of New Orleans* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2002), 8-11; D. Antoinette Handy, *Black Women in American Bands and Orchestras*, Second Edition, (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 1998), 227-228.

² "Some Facts Concerning The B-Sharp Music Club," ca. 1925. B-Sharp Club Collection, Box 1, Folder 3. Amistad Research Center, Tulane.

³ Manetta, Manuel. "Fess Manuel Manetta Talks About Jelly Roll," Manuel Manetta, f.1, MSS 519. Williams Research Center.

⁴ B-Sharp Club Program, April 2, 1976. B-Sharp Club Collection, Box 1, folder 6. Amistad Research Center, Tulane.

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Bibliography

Primary Sources

- Large holdings at the Amistad Research Center. Hogan Jazz Archive also has a vertical file on the B-Sharp Music Club.
- B-Sharp Club Program, April 2, 1976, Amistad Research Center, B-Sharp Club Collection, Box 1, Folder 6.
- “Constitution of the B Sharp Music Club of New Orleans,” no date, Amistad Research Center, B-Sharp Music Club Collection, Box 1, Folder 1.
- Nickerson, Camille Lucie, *Africo-Creole Music in Louisiana: A thesis on the plantation songs created by the Creole Negroes of Louisiana* (Master of Music Thesis, Oberlin Conservatory of Music, May 23, 1932). Amistad Research Center, Louisiana Music Collection, #230, Box 2, Folder 20.
- Scope Note, “Camille Lucie Nickerson,” Louisiana Music Collection #230, Box 2, Folder 21.
- “Some Facts Concerning The B-Sharp Music Club,” ca. 1925, Amistad Research Center, B-Sharp Club Collection, Box 1, Folder 3

Secondary Sources

- Handy, D. Antoinette. *Black Women in American Bands and Orchestras*, Second Edition, (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 1998).
- Kennedy, Al. *Chord Changes on the Chalkboard: How Public School Teachers Shaped Jazz and the Music of New Orleans* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2002)
- McGinty, Doris. “Conversation with Camille Nickerson, the Louisiana Lady,” *The Black Perspective in Music* (Vol. 7, no. 1, spring 1979), 81-88.
- Shannon, Sandra G. “Camille Lucie Nickerson Remembered: The Role of ‘The Louisiana Lady’ in Preserving Louisiana’s Afro-Creole Folk Music,” *Louisiana Literature* Fall 1990, 62-77.

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Illustrations

At Amistad Research Center:

Sheet music, *Five Creole Songs Harmonized and Arranged by Camille Nickerson* (Boston, MA: Boston Music Company) MCMXLII. Original at Amistad Research Center, Louisiana Music Collection #230, Box 2, Folder 21.

At Williams Research Center:



Nickerson's Ladies' Orchestra, New Orleans.
Prof. W.J. Nickerson, leader.
MSS 516 f. 848
New Orleans Collection
Williams Research Center

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Billie Pierce (nee Wilhelmina Madison Goodson) (pianist, vocalist)

b. June 8, 1907 (Marianna, Florida) / d. September 29, 1974 (New Orleans, Louisiana)

Wilhelmina “Billie” Goodson was born on June 8, 1907, in her mother’s hometown of Marianna, Florida, and raised in Pensacola where she became a key member of a large musical family, famous for its piano-playing daughters. There were six children in the family, all girls, all pianists (a seventh daughter, Maggie, died young): Mabel (b. 1899), Della (1901), Sadie (1903), Edna (1904), Billie (1907), and Ida (1909). Only one sister, Sadie, had lessons. The others learned piano from their very religious parents, Madison H. Goodson and Sarah Jenkins Goodson, who played hymns and sang in the choir in the Baptist church where Madison Goodson was a Deacon.¹ See entries on **Edna Goodson**, **Ida Goodson**, and **Sadie Goodson**, for additional information on the contributions of the Goodson sisters to New Orleans jazz.

As the second to the youngest Goodson sister, the piano legacy was well established by the time Billie came along. Even though Madison and Sarah Goodson disapproved of ragtime, blues, and jazz, Billie recalled that she could pick out the blues on the piano before she could talk.² According to Billie, the greatest piano player of the sisters was Mabel, then the next greatest was Sadie.³ Mabel, who died at age 19, didn’t play with bands, but played piano at house parties. Della played mostly for church, but also played ragtime.⁴ Though her parents only played religious music, Billie

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

and her sisters were drawn to ragtime jazz, plentiful in Pensacola when the girls were growing up. Their father wouldn't let them go hear the bands, but Billie and Edna would sometimes slip out of the house to listen to jazz. Sometimes, they would spot their sister Sadie playing in the band.⁵ As with many Gulf Coast towns of the teens and twenties, local bands and traveling bands played year round. Pensacola bands playing in the ragtime jazz style included those led by George Douglas Orchestra and Joe Jesse. Traveling groups from New Orleans included the bands of Papa Celestin, Buddy Petit, and Kid Rena.⁶

There were locally grown jazz bands in Florida in those days that used the same instrumentation as the New Orleans bands, but Pierce told Bill Russell that the New Orleans bands had something special. There were, she recalled, about two bands a week from New Orleans coming through Florida, notably the one led by the celebrated cornetist Buddy Petit.⁷ As a teenager Billie worked with traveling shows on the Florida legs of their tours, and also filled in for piano players at Pensacola's Belmont Theater, as did her sisters (though by 1916, Sadie had moved on to New Orleans). At the age of 15, Billie was traveling her older sister Edna on a Florida tour with The Mighty Wiggle Carnival, owned by Jack Shaffer. The Show traveled widely across the south, but Billie recalled working only in Florida. Billie played organ, sang, and danced, and Edna danced and played with the band in the "colored minstrel show." In Pensacola, Billie remembered working with Mack's Merrymakers (led by trumpet player Thomas Mack—her sister Sadie worked primarily with this band) and Mack and Mack (Billy and Mary Mack), with whom she appeared at the Belmont Theater in Pensacola.⁸ She sat in with

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

“Papa” Celestin when he came through Florida.⁹

Billie’s opportunity to accompany Bessie Smith occurred while she was working in the chorus of Smith’s show in Florida when she was 15. The pianist was Clarence Williams, but he suffered a heart attack, and Billie sat in. She recalled that Bessie sang “Whoah, Tillie, Won’t You Take Your Time” and “Gulf Coast Blues.” Billie liked very few singers. In one interview, she recalled liking both Ma Rainey (for her voice and power) and Bessie Smith (for her feeling), but no other singers. In another interview, she was ambivalent about Ma Rainey, but recalled liking Ida Cox and Bessie Smith.¹⁰

In 1929, Billie was working in a nine-piece band called the Nighthawks Orchestra in Birmingham, Alabama, when she received word that her older sister, Sadie, who was working on the steamer *Madison* with trumpet player Buddy Petit, had fallen ill and needed a replacement. Billie took off for New Orleans, where she played in the band on the *Steamer Madison* until Sadie rallied. Also in the band was Sadie’s husband, Abbey “Chinee” Foster (drums). After Sadie’s return, Billie worked briefly with trumpet player Lawrence Toca, then returned to Birmingham to rejoin the Nighthawks. She also toured Florida with Mack’s Merry Makers.

Around 1930, Billie came back to New Orleans. Along with Lawrence Toca, she played with Alphonse Picou’s five-piece band (along with Johnny Dave, banjo; Ernest Milton, drums; Picou, clarinet; Toca trumpet; Billie piano) at the Rialto Nightclub on Jefferson Davis Parkway.¹¹ She would stay with Picou for a couple of years.

Billie met De De Pierce when they were working in nearby clubs in the French Quarter. De De became the trumpet player for Sadie’s band on the boat when Buddy

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Petit left to take another job. Sadie's band was playing at a club called Corinne on Decatur and Ursulines. At the very same intersection, Billie was leading a band that included clarinetist George Lewis at a club called the King Fish. Billie became interested in De De, but checked with Sadie first to make sure De De wasn't her boyfriend. Then she told him she liked him.¹² They married soon after that. De De told Bill Russell that he and Billie were inseparable, even before he lost his eyesight.¹³

Billie and De De married on March 28, 1935. Clarinetist George Lewis was the best man at their wedding, at St. Peter Claver Church.¹⁴ The couple worked together after that, traveling with Ida Cox at one point. They played Decatur Street clubs with George Lewis (clarinet), Klebert Cagnolatti (drums), among others.¹⁵ Billie worked with A.J. Piron at the Absinthe House. During World War II, they played at the Club Playtime in Bunkie, Louisiana. As with so many New Orleans musicians, De De had another trade to earn his living: he was a brick layer.

Billie led the band at the popular Marais Street dance spot, Luthjen's, off and on for 24 years. Describing Billie and De De's playing at Luthjen's, Edward Pleasants wrote,

The husband and wife team, generally with a drummer but quite often alone, settled down into a very fine musical combination. The specialty was the blues; De De's cornet tone was excellent and Billie's shouting blues voice and rolling boogie beat were, at their best, in the top rank of blues performances."¹⁶

Tom Stagg heard their style as "strengthened by De De's background with the marching bands and Billie's vocals which were influenced by her days with the blues singers."¹⁷

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

In 1951, Billie made her first record on a New Orleans label owned by William Russell (American Music 641). The band included De De and Lawrence Toca on trumpet.¹⁸ Studs Terkel, reviewing the recording for the *Chicago Sun-Times* was struck by the vocals contributed by “lady piano player, Billie Pierce,” which he found “vigorous, though tender.”¹⁹

Hard times fell on the couple in the 1950s. Billie had a stroke, which paralyzed her for several months. Around the same time, De De contracted glaucoma, which cost him his vision, as well as his ability to work as a brick layer.²⁰ As Billie regained her faculties and De De coped with his vision loss, the couple tried to earn a living by playing in bars as a cornet/trumpet/piano duo. When they became involved with the Preservation Hall Jazz Band in 1961, they enjoyed what William Russell called, “one of the most remarkable comebacks in New Orleans history.”²¹ As band leaders at Preservation Hall, they worked throughout the 1960s and early 1970s, touring widely, and riding the revival of interest in traditional New Orleans music, what one reviewer hailed as “unmodified music of another era. It was like a renaissance in reverse”.²²

When De De died in November of 1973, he received one of the largest jazz funerals of that era. Four bands played: Preservation Hall Band, and the Olympia, Eureka, and Young Tuxedo brass bands.²³ Billie continued playing at Preservation Hall, even making one last tour, but never seemed to recover from losing De De. She eventually spent much of her time in Florida. After a brief illness, Billie Pierce died on September 29, 1974, at the age of 67, less than a year after De De’s death.

During Billie Pierce’s jazz funeral procession, on October 3, 1974, the Olympia

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Brass Band played “Just A Closer Walk With Thee,” and paused in front of the house at 1619 Galvez where Billie and De De had lived for thirty years.²⁴ At Corpus Christi Church, Narvin Kimball played banjo and sang, “Where He Leads Me I Will Follow,” and Sweet Emma Barrett sang “Just a Closer Walk With Thee.” After Billie was buried next to De De, the procession left St. Louis No. 2 Cemetery while the band played “Hello, Dolly.”²⁵

Notes

¹ Billie and De De Pierce, Oral History, April 2, 1959, interviewed by William Russell and Ralph Collins. Reel II (of 2)–Digest–Retyped, 10, Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane.

² Billie and De De Pierce, Oral History, April 2, 1959, interviewed by William Russell and Ralph Collins. Reel I (of 2)–Digest–Retyped, 3, Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane.

³ Billie and De De Pierce, Oral History, October 7, 1959, also present: Ernest Trepagnier, PRC and RBA., Reel I–Summary–Retyped, 1, Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane.

⁴ Billie and De De Pierce, Oral History, October 7, 1959, also present: Ernest Trepagnier, PRC and RBA., Reel I–Summary–Retyped, 4, Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane.

⁵ Billie and De De Pierce, Oral History, October 7, 1959, also present: Ernest Trepagnier, PRC and RBA., Reel I–Summary–Retyped, 3, Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane.

⁶ Billie and De De Pierce, Oral History, October 7, 1959, also present: Ernest Trepagnier, PRC and RBA., Reels I–Summary–Retyped, 2, Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane.

⁷ Billie and De De Pierce, Oral History, April 2, 1959, interviewed by William Russell and Ralph Collins. Reel I (of 2)–Digest–Retyped, 6, Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane.

⁸ Billie and De De Pierce, Oral History, October 7, 1959, also present: Ernest Trepagnier, PRC and RBA., Reel I–Summary–Retyped, 4, Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane.

⁹ Billie and De De Pierce, Oral History, October 7, 1959, also present: Ernest Trepagnier, PRC and RBA., Reels III–Summary–Retyped, 20, Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane.

¹⁰ Billie and De De Pierce, Oral History, April 2, 1959, interviewed by William Russell and Ralph Collins. Reel II (of 2)–Digest–Retyped, 13; Billie and De De Pierce, Oral History, October 7, 1959, also present: Ernest Trepagnier, PRC and RBA., Reel IV–Summary–Retyped, 24, Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane.

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

¹¹ Billie and De De Pierce, Oral History, October 7, 1959, also present: Ernest Trepagnier, PRC and RBA., Reel II–Summary–Retyped, 10, Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane.

¹² Billie and De De Pierce, Oral History, April 2, 1959, interviewed by William Russell and Ralph Collins. Reel I (of 2)–Digest–Retyped, 7, Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane.

¹³ Billie and De De Pierce, Oral History, April 2, 1959, interviewed by William Russell and Ralph Collins. Reel I (of 2)–Digest–Retyped, 8, Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane.

¹⁴ Billie Pierce Rites Planned,” *Times-Picayune*, October 2, 1974. MSS 536, Pierce, Billie and De De, f. 19. Williams Research Center.

¹⁵ Billie and De De Pierce, Oral History, October 7, 1959, also present: Ernest Trepagnier, PRC and RBA., Reel II–Summary–Retyped, 12-13, Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane.

¹⁶ Pleasants, Edward, “The End of the Blues for Billie Pierce,” *States-Item*, October 5, 1974. MSS 536, Pierce, Billie and De De, f. 19. Williams Research Center.

¹⁷ Stagg, Tom, “Billie Pierce: Blues Power,” *Melody Maker*, October 19, 1974. Vertical files, Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane.

¹⁸ Billie and De De Pierce, Oral History, October 7, 1959, also present: Ernest Trepagnier, PRC and RBA., Reels IV–Summary–Retyped, 22.

¹⁹ Studs Terkel, “Jazz Septet Oozes Blues,” *Chicago Sun-Times* April 9, 1952, section 2, 16. MSS 356, Billie and De De Pierce, f. 17, Williams Research Center.

²⁰ Billie Pierce Rites Planned,” *Times-Picayune*, October 2, 1974. MSS 536, Pierce, Billie and De De, f. 19; and “Jazz Funeral Scheduled for Bill Pierce,” *States-Item*, Tuesday, October 1, 1974, MSS 536, Pierce, Billie and De De f. 8, Williams Research Center.

²¹ William Russell, Preservation Hall Album notes, MSS 536, Pierce, Billie and De De f. 13, Williams Research Center.

²² Scoop Kennedy, “Jazz on Sunday Afternoon.” *The Second Line* vol. XV (July-August, 1964), no. 7/8: 15.

²³ “Last Bars,” *Courier* December 5, 1973. Vertical files, Pierce, De De. Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane.

²⁴ John Amos, “Billie Pierce goes home to strains of ‘Just a Closer Walk’,” *States-Item* October 3, 1974. MSS 536, Pierce, Billie and De De, f. 20. Williams Research Center.

²⁵ “Jazz Funeral Scheduled for Bill Pierce,” *States-Item*, Tuesday, October 1, 1974, MSS 536, Pierce, Billie and De De f. 8, Williams Research Center.

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Bibliography

Primary Sources

- Ida Goodson, Oral History, interviewed by Dick Allen, May 6, 1961. Transcript. Hogan Jazz Archive.
- Billie and De De Pierce, Oral History, April 2, 1959. Also present: William Russell, Ralph Collins. Reels I and II–Digest–Retyped. Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane.
- Billie and De De Pierce, Oral History, October 7, 1959, also present: Ernest Trepagnier, PRC and RBA., Reels I-IV–Summary–Retyped. Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane.
- Billie Pierce, Oral History, November 20, 1963. Interviewed by Richard B. Allen. I (only)–Digest–Retyped. Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane.

Secondary Sources

- Amos, John. "Billie Pierce goes home to strains of 'Just a Closer Walk'," *States-Item* October 3, 1974. MSS 536, Pierce, Billie and De De, f. 20. Williams Research Center. Also in vertical files, Hogan Jazz Archive and Old Mint.
- "Billie Pierce, 67, Jazz Pianist Dies." *New York Times* October 3, 1974.
- "Billie Pierce Rites Planned," *Times-Picayune*, October 2, 1974. MSS 536, Pierce, Billie and De De, f. 19. Williams Research Center. Also Old Mint.
- Burton, W.C., "New Orleans Jazz: Water from an Upturned Pitcher," *Greensboro Daily News* January 5, 1969. Vertical files, Pierce, Billie. Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane.
- Charles Chamberlain, "The Goodson Sisters: Women Pianists and the Function of Gender in the Jazz Age," *The Jazz Archivist* vol. XV (2001), 3.
- Flake, Carol, "The Mourning of Billie Pierce," *Courier-Bozart*, October 1974. Old Mint.
- Handy, D. Antoinette. *Black Women in American Bands and Orchestras, Second Edition*. Lanham, Mass. and Kent: Scarecrow Press, 1998, 235-6.
- Harris, Sheldon. *Blues Who's Who: A Biographical Dictionary of Blues Singers* (New Rochelle, NY: Arlington House Publishers, 1979), 419-21.
- "Jazz Burial in New Orleans for Billie Pierce, Pianist," October 4, 1974. vertical files, Institute for Jazz Studies, John Cotton Dana Library, State University of New Jersey, Rutgers.
- "Jazz Funeral Scheduled," *Times-Picayune* September 30, 1974. MSS 536, Pierce, Billie and De De, f. 19, Williams Research Center.
- "Jazz Funeral Scheduled for Bill Pierce," *States-Item*, Tuesday, October 1, 1974. MSS 536, Pierce, Billie and De De f. 8., Williams Research Center. Also Old Mint.
- Kennedy, Scoop. "Jazz on Sunday Afternoon." *The Second Line* vol. XV (July-August, 1964), no. 7/8: 15.
- "Last Bars," *Courier* December 5, 1973. Vertical files, Pierce, De De. Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane.

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

- "Old Friends," *Newsweek* April 10, 1961, 6. Vertical files, Billie and De De Pierce, Hogan Jazz Archives, Tulane.
- Pierce," obit. *States-Item* October 2, 1974. Vertical files, Hogan Jazz Archives, Tulane.
- "Pierce Jazz Rites Planned," *States-Item*, October 1, 1974. Old Mint.
- Pleasants, Edward, "The End of the Blues for Billie Pierce," *States-Item*, October 5, 1974. MSS 536, Pierce, Billie and De De, f. 19. Williams Research Center. Also at Old Mint.
- Reed, Roy, "For DeDe Pierce: 'Jazz Funeral' With 4 Bands," *New York Times* L-43. MSS 536, Pierce, Billie and De De f. 8, Williams Research Center.
- Rose, Al, and Edmond Souchon. *New Orleans Jazz: A Family Album* (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1984 [first published 1967]).
- Rousseau, John. E., "Billie Follows 'De De' Pierce home in Death," no date or publication info. Old Mint.
- Stagg, Tom, "Billie Pierce: Blues Power," *Melody Maker*, October 19, 1974. Vertical files, Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane.
- Terkel, Studs, "Jazz Septet Oozes Blues," *Chicago Sun-Times* April 9, 1952, section 2, 16. MSS 356, Billie and De De Pierce, f. 17, Williams Research Center.
- Wynn, Pat, "Last Respects to Billie," *The Second Line*, 1975, 28. Old Mint.

Discography

[From Bill Russell and Barry Kernfeld, "De De Pierce," *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians Online* ed. L. Macy (Accessed 20 December 2003)]

As leader, with De De Pierce

Billie and De De Pierce at Luthjen's, Center 15 (1953)

New Orleans Jazz, Folk Lyric 110 (1959)

Blues in the Class Tradition, Riverside 9370 (1961)

Jazz at Preservation Hall, Atlantic 1409 (1962)

Billie and De De, Preservation Hall 3 (1966)

with Emile Barnes

Emile Barnes 1946: the Very First Recordings, American Music CD 102 (1946-53)

American Music, American Music 641 (1951)

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Illustrations

At Williams Research Center:

There is a business card that reads: "Billie and De De Pierce at Preservation Hall," MSS 536, cards, f. 151. Williams Research Center

At Hogan Jazz Archive:

There are several good photographs of Billie Pierce at Hogan Jazz Archive.

Billie Pierce
Photographers: Fraser and Fletcher
Accession number: 4296519
Hogan Jazz Archive



Billie Pierce
Accession number: 161.232
Hogan Jazz Archive



A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

De De Pierce and Billie Pierce
Accession number: 161.264
Hogan Jazz Archive



De De and Billie Pierce
Photographer: Grauman Marks
Accession number 161.256
Hogan Jazz Archive



De De and Billie Pierce
Photographer: Grauman Marks
Accession number: 161.257



A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Billie Pierce
Photographer: Grauman Marks
Accession number: 161.226
Hogan Jazz Archive



De De Pierce, Willie Humphrey, and Billie Pierce
Photographer: Grauman Marks
Al Rose Collection
Hogan Jazz Archive



A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Olivia L'Ange Porter Shipp (bassist, cellist, pianist)

b. May 17, 1880, New Orleans/d. June 18, 1980, New York City¹

Though born in New Orleans, Olivia L'Ange Porter Shipp spent most of her professional life in New York, where she worked as a bassist, cellist, and pianist from 1900 through the 1950s. She is best known for organizing the Negro Women's Orchestral and Civic Association in New York (circa late 1920s-1930s.)

Born Olivia Sophie L'Ange in New Orleans in 1880, her early musical experiences included playing her family's pump organ, and accompanying the church choir. Her only formal musical training as a child came from Abbey Lyons, who gave her voice lessons. Lyons was a former member of the Fisk Jubilee Singers, who married a New Orleans minister.

Olivia and her sister May wished to work in the entertainment industry, but their father objected. May joined Black Patti Troubadours in New York, later forming Bob and Kemp vaudeville team as May Kemp. When May invited Olivia to New York around 1900, Olivia changed her last name to Porter in order to save her father the embarrassment of dragging the family name into show business² and accepted her sister's offer to use her vaudeville connections to get her work as a pianist. While working as a pianist, Olivia took cello lessons. She also studied violin and bass beginning in around 1916. At some point she married a man named Shipp.

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

In 1917, as a bassist, Olivia joined Marie Lucas Lafayette Theater Ladies Orchestra. Soon after, Local 802 of the American Federation of Musicians (one of the few integrated locals of the AFM) helped her to start the Negro Women's Orchestral and Civic Association. This impressive group became an important orchestra during Harlem Renaissance.³ The NWOCA included Gladys Bell Seals, a saxophonist and founder of the Gladys Seals Symphonette in Harlem; Leora Meoux Henderson, trombonist Della Sutton, and her daughter Corrine Schyver, a drummer.⁴ She also led the "Olivia Shipp's Jazz-Mines Famous Female Orchestra" in the late 1920s.⁵

In the early 1930s, when Lil Hardin Armstrong was slated to appear at the Apollo Theater with an all-woman band, Shipp's Negro Women's Orchestral and Civic Association supplied the musicians.⁶ Armstrong's musicians for that appearance included Alma Long Scott (saxophone), Leora Meoux Henderson and Dolly Jones Hutchinson (trumpets). Scott, incidentally, was the mother of jazz pianist Hazel Scott, Henderson, the wife of Fletcher Henderson, and Hutchinson, the daughter of jazz trumpet player Dyer Jones.

Olivia Shipp freelanced in multiple genres, from dance bands, to chamber ensembles, to orchestras throughout World War II.

She died in NYC 1980.

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Notes

- ¹ D. Antoinette Handy, *Black Women in American Bands and Orchestras, Second Edition*. Lanham, Mass. and Kent: Scarecrow Press, 1998, 91.
- ² Handy, *Black Women*, 91-93
- ³ Olivia Shipp notes from Sc. Photo Olivia Shipp Collection, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library.
- ⁴ Notes, Sc. Photo Olivia Shipp Collection, Schomburg Center, New York Public Library.
- ⁵ Handy, *Black Women*, 92-3.
- ⁶ Olivia Shipp Photograph Collection, Schomburg, New York Public Library.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Olivia Shipp Photograph Collection, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library.

Secondary Sources

Handy, D. Antoinette. *Black Women in American Bands and Orchestras, Second Edition*. Lanham, Mass. and Kent: Scarecrow Press, 1998, 91-93.

Discography

No recordings.

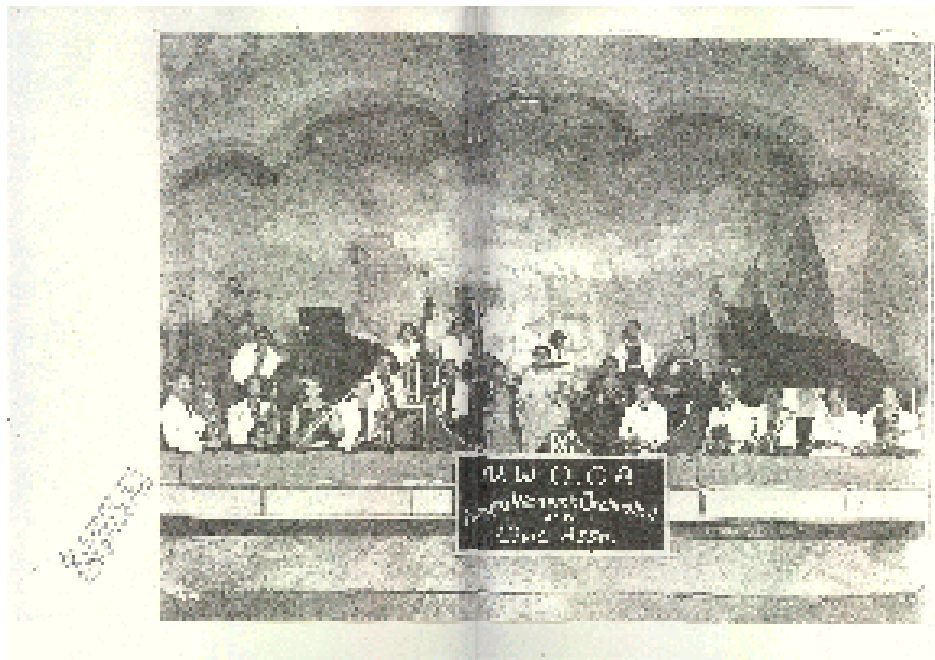
A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Illustrations

The Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture:

Group portrait, Negro Women's Orchestral and Civic Association.
Sc. Olivia Shipp Photograph Collection, Schomburg Center, New York Public Libraries.

This is a much better photograph than this scan of a photocopy indicates.



A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Camilla Todd (Haynes) [Camille] (pianist, piano teacher, organist, choir director)

b. December 1892 [ca. 1888], New Orleans / d. 1969 New Orleans.¹

Camilla Todd is but one of several women pianists in early New Orleans jazz bands whose career managed to cross borders between secular and sacred music, classical and jazz, performer and teacher. For Todd, it was even possible to maintain a reputation of respectability as an educator and church musician alongside a jazz career that included playing in the red light district—a place where, according to Mahalia Jackson, “no decent Negro—no church-going Negro, at least—would be caught dead.”² Todd was a church-going African American, yet, according to trumpet player Punch Miller, both Camilla and her brother Clarence played piano in the Storyville bordellos,³ a fact that did not seem to harm her status as “one of the city’s foremost music teachers.”⁴ The extent to which such divisions were crossed by musicians, and specifically by “piano women,” is a project deserving further study. Todd’s career does not *answer* these questions, but the bits and pieces of what we know about her life do suggest that, for some women, playing in a jazz band did not exact the price of respectability as a church woman, church musician or music teacher in the community.

Many factors could be responsible for Todd’s acceptability in all of these realms at once. One is that her place in the community as a prominent music teacher was already well established at the time of her jazz career—indeed the band-leader with

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

whom she had the most lasting association, cornetist Hyppolyte Charles—was one of her students. Oral histories indicate that her fellow musicians in early jazz bands certainly knew of her reputation as a classically trained pianist, prominent music teacher, and church musician. It could also be that while classical music may have more readily signaled feminine respectability and upward mobility for many black women in early twentieth century New Orleans, Todd's community would realize the enormity of obstacles facing a classically trained, working class African American woman who wished to be a concert pianist. There could have been more leeway for poor and working class black women to have their jazz careers seen as suitable alternatives to menial labor. Family connections have also eased the way for many women jazz musicians. New Orleans jazz musicians would have known her brother Clarence, who was a pianist and singer, as well as a porter, and who had served in the Army with trumpet player Ernest "Punch" Miller during World War I.

Camilla Todd was born in December of 1892 in New Orleans, to Charles Todd and Cora Martin.⁵ Her younger brother, Clarence, was born in February 1895, and three younger sisters, Geneva, Helen, and Dorothy, were born around 1901, 1904, and 1907, respectively. The 1900 and 1910 Census have Camilla, her parents, and siblings living at 1931 7th Street, near Dryades, in the Central City neighborhood. The family moved across the street sometime between 1910 and 1912, to 1916 Seventh Street. According to the 1910 Census, her father worked as a railroad car cleaner, her mother was a servant (and had, indeed been employed as a domestic or laundress from childhood), and 18-year-old Camilla was a musician and music teacher, accepting

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

students at the rented house in which the family resided. Her ad in the 1912 *Woods Directory*, read: "Miss Camilla Todd, Music Teacher, 1916, Seventh Street."⁶

Colleagues remembered "Miss Todd" as a classically trained concert pianist. I have not been able to discern where she obtained her training or whether or not she was able to have a concert career at any point. My guess would be that she was studying somewhere in New Orleans during the same time period that she was giving music lessons, as her teaching career began when she was in her late teens. According to Karl Koenig, cornetist Hyppolyte Charles studied piano with her as early as 1909,⁷ when she would have been 17 years old.

Pianist Octave Crosby also remembered studying with Todd, whom he remembered as a long-time church musician who played for the First Street Methodist Church just a few blocks from her family's home. Crosby recalled that "Miss Todd" also played with dance bands, notably the versatile band led by Hyppolyte Charles at the New Orleans Country Club. Crosby already played by ear, and engaged the services of "Miss Todd" for a year or more, specifically to learn "standard methods," including learning to read music. According to Crosby, men had been discouraged from playing the piano, and less frequently received training in how to read music, so when piano jobs opened up that required reading musicians, women were often hired.⁸ The piano in early jazz bands was primarily used to play block chords, and didn't take solos. Horn players needed to be able to improvise. Pianists needed knowledge of chords, and the ability to read. In other words, women who had been encouraged to take piano lessons (without the punishment of being called "sissy"!) and who played for church choirs, were

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

well equipped with the skills needed in early jazz bands that used pianos. They were not only often called to fill such jobs, but were important teachers to early jazz and dance band pianists, both female and male.

Camilla herself is not listed among her family in the 1920 Census.⁹ At some point between 1919 and 1922, she married Leroy Haynes, so it is possible that she was living elsewhere with him, though they were nowhere to be found in the 1920 Census. They reappear in the 1930 Census, both living with Camilla's parents again, only this time on Magnolia Street.¹⁰ It is also possible that Camilla's busy dance band career kept her a jump ahead of the Census takers in 1920.

The late teens and early twenties was the time period in which Todd was in the midst of a remarkable early jazz career, that included stints with the Original Maple Leaf Orchestra ("one of the city's greatest early jazz bands," according to Koenig¹¹), the Hyppolite Charles Orchestra, bands led by Kid Rena, A.J. Piron, Buddy Petit, and the NOLA band—all important early New Orleans bands. According to trumpet Punch Miller, she also sang and played piano for a time in the Tuxedo Orchestra.¹² Trombonist Maurice (Morris) French recalled that when he played with Kid Rena's band, when the band used a piano, they usually used Edna Francis (wife of drummer Albert Francis), but sometimes used either Manuel Manetta or Camilla Todd.¹³ Punch Miller recalled that when John Robichaux's society orchestra played the Lyric Theater, he sometimes used Camilla Todd (and also Jeanette Kimball).¹⁴ At some point in the 1920s, she also played in the Nola Band with trumpet player Peter Lacaze.¹⁵

The chronology of Todd's jazz career from 1919 to the mid-twenties is packed,

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

and goes something like this: In 1919, Tom Gaspard, a bassist, and his brother Vic (trombone and baritone) were playing with John Robichaux's Orchestra at the Lyric Theatre, when the leader became ill. The brothers organized the Maple Leaf Orchestra for a location job at the Eurey Hotel in Shreveport, Louisiana. The personnel included Emile Bigard (violin), Lorenzo Tio Jr. (clarinet), Camilla Todd (piano) Hyppolite Charles (cornet) and Louis Cottrell, Sr., (drums). The band worked in Shreveport from July to September, 1919, then returned to New Orleans.¹⁶ Drummer Alex Bigard remembered playing with Todd in the Original Maple Leaf Orchestra, as well, with slightly different personnel. Instead of Lorenzo Tio and Louis Cottrell, the band included; Sidney Vigne (clarinet), Alex Bigard (drums), and Willie Bontemps (banjo).¹⁷

Several months after returning to New Orleans, Hyppolite Charles formed a band of his own, taking with him two of the Maple Leaf musicians, Emile Bigard and Camilla Todd. Charles's new orchestra played at the Moulin Rouge on Bourbon Street and Bienville. At that time, A.J. Piron was the leader of the house orchestra at Tranchina's Restaurant at Spanish Fort. But when Piron had a chance to go to New York, Charles's orchestra took over that regular booking.

Eddie Dawson, who played tenor banjo with the Hyppolite Charles' band, recalled that all of the Charles band members read music. Musicians included: Sunny Henry, trombone; Camilla Todd, piano; Emile Bigard, violin; Charles, trumpet; Joe Welch, drums; Clarence Hall, saxophone. He recalled that after the Tranchina's job, the band played at the New Orleans Country Club, the historic San Jacinto Hall on Dumaine Street, and the "colored Lions Club (Liberty Street near Francis Amis Hall)."¹⁸ According

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

to Dawson, the Hyppolite Charles Orchestra played a variety of styles, and that Charles himself wrote most of the arrangements. Their regular job at the New Orleans Country Club included playing Wednesday and Saturday nights, plus a Sunday matinee.¹⁹

In 1925, Hyppolyte Charles collapsed with a ruptured spleen after playing a tea dance, and was forced to retire.²⁰ Octave Crosby recalled that Todd's "regular band" was with Hyppolyte Charles but that she worked with "almost everyone, including Kid Ory." He recalled that she played with A.J. Piron until she was replaced by Steve Lewis. Also says that she later gave up playing for anything except the church.²¹

By the 1930s, her name ceased to appear in band rosters, but she continued to be listed as a musician/music teacher in New Orleans. Her brother, Clarence, on the other hand, had left New Orleans for New York in the mid-1920s-1930s, where he pursued a career as an entertainer and song-writer. He co-wrote "Papa-De-Da-Da" (1925) with Clarence Williams and made fourteen recordings between 1924 and 1934.²²

Camilla Todd died in 1969.

Notes:

¹ December 1892 birth date comes from the 1900 US Census. The "ca 1888" birth date comes from Rose and Souchon. I take the 1892 date to be more reliable, though there is some confusion later on in the Census reports when the entire Todd family seems to have lost track of their ages, or have given younger ages.

² Mahalia Jackson, with Evan McLeod Wylie, *Movin' On Up*, (New York: Hawthorn Books, Inc, 1966), 30.

³ Punch Miller interview, September 1, 1959, quoted in Charles Chamberlain, 4.

⁴ Mary Gehman and Nancy Ries, *Women and New Orleans: A History* (New Orleans: Margaret Media Inc., 5th printing, 2000), 76.

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

⁵ 1900 US Census.

⁶ *Woods Directory*, 1912, 44. Thanks to Lynn Abbott for finding this.

⁷ Koenig, Karl. *The Jazz Lectures* (Running Springs, California: Basin Street Press, 1996), 24.

⁸ Octave Crosby, Oral History, March 26. 1959. Also present: William Russell, Ralph Collins. I [of 2]--Summary--Retyped, 3. Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University.

⁹ 1920 US Census.

¹⁰ The 1930 US Census indicates that Camilla and Leroy Haynes, who are living with Camilla's family, now on Magnolia Street, married when Camilla was 26, which would be 1919. But the Census of 1930 finds Camilla listed as born three years later than in earlier reports. It seems more likely to me that at some point, she found it advisable to subtract a few years (perhaps to be younger than her husband, who is listed in the 1930 Census as age 36). As a 34 year-old in 1930, who had been married since she was 26, she would have been married in 1922.

¹¹ Koenig, *The Jazz Lectures*, 24.

¹² Punch Miller, Oral History, April 4. 1960. Also present: Richard B. Allen, Paul R. Crawford, Lionel Robinson. Summary--Retyped, Reel II, 9. Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University.

¹³ "Morris" French, Oral History, June 24. 1960. I [of 2] Digest--Retyped, 3. Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University.

¹⁴ Clarence "Little Dad" Vincent, Oral History, December 3. 1959. Reel II [of 5]--Digest--Retyped, 9. Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University.

¹⁵ Rose and Souchon, *New Orleans Jazz*, 122.

¹⁶ Samuel Barclay Charters, IV. *Jazz: New Orleans, 1885-1957* (Belleville, N.J.: Walter C. Allen, 1958), 31-2.

¹⁷ Alex Bigard, Oral History, April 30. 1960. Also present: William Russell, Ralph Collins, Richard B. Allen. Reel IV [of 5]--Digest--Retyped, 28. Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University.

¹⁸ Eddie Dawson, Oral History, June 28. 1961. Also present: William Russell, Ralph Collins. Reel II--Digest--Retyped, 6. Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University.

¹⁹ Eddie Dawson, Oral History, January 31. 1962. Reel I--Digest--Retyped, 3. Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University.

²⁰ Charters, Samuel Barclay, IV. *Jazz: New Orleans, 1885-1957* (Belleville, N.J.: Walter C. Allen, 1958), 70.

²¹ Octave Crosby, Oral History, March 26. 1959. Also present: William Russell, Ralph Collins. I [of 2]--Summary--Retyped, 1. Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University.

²² Tom Lord, *Jazz Discography* on-line, <http://www.lordisco.com/musicians/T6.html>, accessed September 6, 2003.

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

Bibliography

Primary Sources

- Bigard, Alex. Oral History, April 30, 1960. Reel IV [of 5]--Digest--Retyped, 28. Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University.
- Crosby, Octave. Oral History, March 26, 1959. I [of 2]--Summary--Retyped, 1-6. Hogan Jazz Archives, Tulane University
- Dawson, Eddie. Oral History, January 31, 1962. Reel I--Digest--Retyped, 3. Hogan Jazz Archives, Tulane University.
- Dawson, Eddie. Oral History, June 28, 1961. Reel II--Digest--Retyped, 6. Hogan Jazz Archives, Tulane University.
- French, Morris. Oral History, June 24, 1960. I [of 2] Digest--Retyped, 3. Hogan Jazz Archives, Tulane University
- Miller, Punch. Oral History, April 4, 1960. Summary--Retyped. Reel II, p. 9 and 10. Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University.
- _____. Oral History, September 1, 1959. Present: O.O. "Mac" Fairhurst, Richard B. Allen Reel 3--Summary--Retyped, 19. Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University.
- Vincent, Clarence "Little Dad." Oral History, December 3, 1959. Reel II [of 5]--Digest--Retyped, 9. Hogan Jazz Archives, Tulane University.
- Woods Directory* (1912), 44.

Secondary Sources

- Charters, Samuel Barclay, IV. *Jazz: New Orleans, 1885-1957* (Belleville, N.J.: Walter C. Allen, 1958).
- Handy, D. Antoinette. *Black Women in American Bands and Orchestras, Second Edition*. Lanham, Mass. and Kent: Scarecrow Press, 1998.
- Koenig, Karl. *The Jazz Lectures*. Running Springs, California: Basin Street Press, 1996.
- Rose, Al, and Edmond Souchon. *New Orleans Jazz: A Family Album*. Revised edition. Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1978.

Discography/Illustrations

No recordings or photographs found.

More Women in New Orleans Jazz

There are many more women in New Orleans jazz history whose stories must be collected. Following is a list of women important to New Orleans jazz, about whom little is known at present, but who would make excellent studies for researchers who wish to contribute to our knowledge of jazz history. This list is not comprehensive; just a suggestion regarding excellent subjects for further research on women and New Orleans Jazz.

- 1 Mrs. B.W. Alcock (organist)
- 2 Rose Anderson (organist)
- 3 Lois Andrews (contemporary Grand Marshal)
- 4 Helen Arlt (New Orleans Jazz Club president)
- 5 Beatrice Arnheim (organist)
- 6 Germaine Bazzle (bass, piano, vocal)
- 7 Esther Bigeou (vocalist)
- 8 Claire Black (vocalist)

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women:
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

- 9 Yvonne Busch (music educator, trumpet player). Betsy [Mrs. Hebert, Mrs. Herbert?] Cole, lawn party entrepreneur.
- 10 Storme DeLarverie (vocalist, male impersonator)
- 11 Mabel Elaine (minstrel entertainer)
- 12 Carmen Fernandez (piano, drums and guitar)
- 13 Eva Gauthier (vocalist)
- 14 Alberta Hunter (vocalist)
- 15 Sandra Jaffe (co-founder, Preservation Hall)
- 16 Tillie Johnson (vocalist)
- 17 Doreen Ketchens (clarinet)
- 18 Joan Lunceford (stage name for Daisy Lowe, singer, dancer, band director)
- 19 Nellie Lutcher (pianist, vocalist)
- 20 Mary Mack (vocalist, vaudeville entertainer)
- 21 Myra Semmes Walmsley Loker Menville (New Orleans Jazz Club President, founding member) b. circa 1913 /d. February 15, 1979
- 22 Monette Moore, vocalist.
- 23 May Neely (pianist)
- 24 Charmaine Neville
- 25 Lois Perry (drummer)
- 26 Bernadette Peterson (Kerrigan) (drummer, nightclub owner)
- 27 Maeceil Peterson (Silliker) (saxophone, drummer, pianist)
- 28 Maxine Phinney (bassist)

A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women:
A NOJNHP Research Study by Sherrie Tucker, University of Kansas

- 29 Pinettes, contemporary all-woman brass band.
- 30 Ione Golden Rasmussen (reeds, educator, member of Victoryettes)
- 31 Imelda Raye (organist)
- 32 Barbara Reid (one of the founders of Preservation Hall)
- 33 Mattie Louise Robards (pianist, saxophonist, vocalist)
- 34 Wanda Rouzan (vocalist, jazz funeral grand marshall)
- 35 Dorothea "Dodie" Simmons
- 36 Olivia Sophie L'Ange Porter Shipp (bassist, cellist, pianist)
- 37 La Vergne Smith (vocalist)
- 38 Ellyna Tatum. Gospel and jazz singer, first Grand Marshall for jazz funerals.
- 39 Lottie Taylor (pianist)
- 40 Edna Thomas (pianist)
- 41 Blanche Thomas (singer)
- 42 Miss Eva Tinsdale (organist)
- 43 Marva Wright

Contacts for fees/permissions

Amistad Research Center

Contact: Heidi Dodson, Reference Archivist
Tilton Hall, Tulane University
New Orleans, LA 70118-5698
(504) 865-5535

Louis Armstrong Archives

The fee for using a photograph from the collections of the Louis Armstrong Archives for exhibit purposes is \$125

Contact: Peggy Alexander, Curator
Louis Armstrong Archives
Queens College
65-30 Kissena Boulevard
Flushing, NY 11367-1597
718-997-3670
www.satchmo.net

Chicago Jazz Archive

Regenstein Library, University of Chicago
Deborah L. Gillaspie, Curator
1100 E. 57th Street JRL361
Chicago, IL 60637-1596
Phone (773) 702-3721
Fax (773) 702-6623

Frank Driggs

1235 E. 40th Street
Brooklyn, NY 11210

Hogan Jazz Archive

Contact: Bruce Raeburn
304 Jones Hall
Tulane University
New Orleans, LA 70118
(504) 865-5688

Institute of Jazz Studies

Contact: Dan Morganstern
John Cotton Dana Library
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey
185 University Avenue
Newark, New Jersey 07102
Phone: 973/353-5595
Fax: 973/353-5944

Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture

Contact: Mary Yearwood
Photographs and Prints Division
New York Public Library
515 Malcolm X Blvd.
New York, NY 10037-1801
(212) 491-2200
scphotoref@nypl.org

Williams Research Center

Contact: Alfred Lemmon
William Russell Jazz Collection
Historic New Orleans Collection
410 Chartres Street
New Orleans, LA 70130
(504) 598-7171