



Bunk Johnson. Information

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The Swedish Bunk Johnson Society

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Bunk.Johnson.Information is an international newsletter
for members of the Swedish Bunk Johnson Society

Editorial office:
Håkan Håkansson
Tillemoravägen 25
184 91 ÅKERSBERGA

President:
Claes Ringqvist
Baldersvägen 14B
852 34 SUNDSVALL

<bunk.info@telia.com>

EDITORIAL

The material in this number made it very difficult to keep to the old format with two columns. One would need a proper DTP program for that and such luxury is way beyond the budget of SBJs. I feel, however, that we can offer you some interesting and varied reading.

With this issue we conclude the chapter "Bunk in New York", but we plan to continue the series with "Bunk in Chicago" in the Fall, unless we get massive demonstrations outside the editorial offices!

We continue with another interview by Jesse Lindgren, which we hope this will become a regular feature. The interview with Michael Cogswell was made almost a year before the Louis Armstrong House opened to the public, in October 2003. As Jesse mentions, it isn't easy to get there. We welcome tips from any reader who has visited LAH about the best way to get there; we will publish these in the next issue as a service to any members who plan to visit New York.

Dr Rainer E. Lotz gave a much appreciated speech at our last annual meeting and we only wish we could show those of you who weren't there more of the fascinating illustrations he presented and of course we would like to be able to share the music samples. There are references in the text, if you want to pursue this part of our music's history.

Barry Martyn, writing in the latest issue of NOM, reports that the complete Bunk Decca session is about to be issued. He writes that the master copies "came to me directly from Decca's vaults, so the fidelity is first class. It sounds like you are actually sitting there in the room. This listing pre-empts all previous discographies. There are three takes of "Maryland", two takes of "Alexander's Ragtime Band", 6 takes of "Tishomingo", 8 takes "You Always Hurt The One You Love", including all false starts, incomplete titles, and incidental talking. I am now getting to work on the issuing of this complete session which will appear as AMCD-116.

Some of the takes are very different, especially when Baby Dodds takes a woodblock tag on the last take of "You Always Hurt". No doubt much to the annoyance of Bunk. As I said it is just like you are sitting in the studio." This is, of course, sensational news and will undoubtedly be the CD of the year (if not the decade) for Bunk fans.

For those of you who don't know your editor, I admit that modern poetry makes my head spin. Solid bone from the neck up, some describe me. Luckily, we have a president who actually enjoys modern poetry and such stuff. I have often thought that the rich grey stuff he carries around on his face isn't beard but brain matter that has leaked from the seams. Anyway, he persuaded me that to properly instruct, elevate and amuse, we needed to include William Carlos Williams. Enjoy!

Our members in the Swingsters have released a new CD titled Creole Belles. Review in New Orleans Music. I play it a lot. It keeps me happy.

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European Perspectives on Black Music prior to World War I

Rainer E. Lotz:

A "multi-media chat" delivered at the Swedish Bunk Johnson Society, Saturday, January 8th 2005, Svensk Visarkiv, Norrtullsgatan 6, Stockholm

The following presentation is not about jazz. Rather, it is an attempt at archeology, an attempt to find out what sort of Afro-American music was played when Bunk Johnson was still a young man - in the US and over here in Europe.

The presence of African-American entertainers in Europe, the impact of African-American music in Europe around the turn of the century as well as aspects of cross-fertilization remain largely unresearched. Most of the early authors of scholarly books and discographies on blues and jazz were Europeans, whose only contact with the music was through recordings. They had no first-hand impressions of Chicago, or New Orleans, or Clarksdale.

Perhaps I should be more precise by saying: the early writers on jazz and blues depended on recordings available to them in Europe from the 1920s up to the 1960s. Very little authentic jazz was made available by UK record companies, hardly any in the rest of Europe, and virtually no blues. Technologies such as the phonograph cylinders, player pianos or musical boxes were at best vaguely remembered by a past generation. The pre-history of jazz and blues has tended to disappear from history. Record collectors are guilty of the neglect of areas of musical tradition which are under-represented or un-represented on record.

Today we write the year 2005. It is about time that we ask ourselves: Is it really true that no early tangible, factual evidence exists to discuss the prehistory, protohistory, origins, and development of Afro-American musical phenomena? Could the son and the choro, the beguine and matchiche, cakewalk, ragtime, blues, jazz and - dare I say it - the tango suddenly have surfaced some 100 years ago, out of nowhere? Do we really have to rely on hearsay, speculation, and the blurred recollections of octogenarians?.

In the absence of recorded sound documents we need to examine other sources to determine early repertoires and performance styles. Potential sources of information would be photos and etchings, notations, printed music, manuscripts. Unfortunately folk traditions are rarely documented, oral traditions do not find their way into printed music. We now know that the first printed composition with a 12-bar-blues structure was published in St.Louis in 1904 ("One o'them things", a Ragtime-Twostep by James Chapman and Leroy Smith), but songsters, minstrels, vaudevillians do not normally make use of printed material, and only rarely do we find tangible artifacts. But they do exist if we look for them.

I'll give you an example. What do we know about tub, jug and washboard bands? When did spasm bands appear on the scene, and what sounds did they produce? Let me quote from the entry in the "New Grove Dictionary of Jazz" (1986, page 483): "Spasm Band - An ensemble consisting largely of homemade instruments.. They generally included a chord-playing instrument, such as a ukulele or

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guitar, a kazoo or comb-and-paper, and various percussion instruments – for example washboard or tambourine ... also the boom-bam, a broom handle on which metal bottle-tops are nailed... Spasm bands were active in New Orleans during the first three decades of the 20th century, and performed a repertory of blues, ragtime, and the popular songs of the day”

Now have a look at this postcard [**Illustration 1: “Coon Creek Rehearsal” in Florida**]: Obviously it is not a snap-shot but a staged or posed scene of the “water melon and alligator” variety. But the card shows a spasm band if there ever was one. The location is Florida, not New Orleans. And the date is not the 1930s, not the 1920s, not the 1910s: The card is copyrighted and postmarked 1893; a German traveller sent it back home. The fact that such cards had been on sale during the early 1890s is a strong indication, to me at least, that this was a familiar, or typical sight, and that this must have been the case for quite a while, perhaps for decades.

Summing up: There is both photographic and printed evidence, and we should make a more serious effort to look for it...

And is it really true that the Europeans were first exposed to such musical forms during the 1920s?.

You may be surprised to hear that German musicians played to entertain American audiences up to the First World War. Vast parts of Germany were extremely poor. Poverty and overpopulation in the marginal agricultural hinterlands left people with three choices: to emigrate, to become either a home worker (or out worker), or else to survive in some itinerant activities. Many became itinerant musicians, earning their living in England and the US. Stretches of Germany became known as the “musicians’ belt”. Believe it or not: I have plenty evidence that itinerant professional German musicians played rags and cakewalks by both white and black composers - in the US and to both white and black audiences - during the 1890s. [**Illustration 2: Kapelle Backes aus Jettenbach/Pfalz spielt für Gefängnisinsassen um 1900**]. Other musicians, who did not leave their villages, earned their living as home workers. In the black forest and other poor neighbourhoods they spent the winter manufacturing mechanical music instruments for export. It is fascinating that those people, who had not even heard of St.Louis or Sedalia, arranged and manufactured authentic Cakewalks and Ragtime for piano rolls and metal disc Symphonions [**Illustration 3: A Symphonion metal disc**]. On German-made metal discs you can hear a cakewalk composed in 1895 by the the Afro-Caribbean comedian, Bert Williams, and dedicated to the greatest of all cake walk dancers, Dora Dean, who toured Europe for decades [**Track 1: “Dora Dean Cake Walk” - Bert Williams (1895) from BLACK PEOPLE CD #2**]. To the best of my knowledge, this “Dora Dean Cakewalk” was never recorded - not on piano rolls, not on cylinders, not on flat disc shellacs, not on LPs, since the time it was composed, and that was before the end of the second-to-last century, come to think of it: in the past millenium. To say that this tune was never recorded is not entirely correct, though. In 1896 - one year after Williams saw his original composition in print - one Charley Sydney O’Brien published “Ma Angeline”, which is a note-for note, word-for-word theft, except that the reference to “Dora Dean” was replaced by “Ma Angeline” (it still rhymes), and the music was recorded under this name by an unnamed orchestra in that same year 1896.

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Scott Joplin composed his masterpiece, "The Entertainer", in 1902. Again, it was never recorded on either cylinder or shellac disc, but a contemporary music box metal disc did exist - in the slow tempo that Joplin prescribed [**Track 2: "The Entertainer" - Scott Joplin (1902) from BLACK PEOPLE CD #4**]. I have documented an impressive number of cakewalks and coon songs on German made metal discs, and I do hope someone, somewhere will make them available on CD for scholars to study. "Dora Dean" and "The Entertainer" are played slow, but there are certainly also fast cake walks, and the highly syncopated "Whistling Rufus" (written by a white composer) even combines a slow and an uptempo arrangement on the same disc, with bells added. [**Track 3: "Whistling Rufus" Part 1 & 2 - Kerry Mills, from BLACK PEOPLE CD #1**].

We can thus draw the conclusion that Europeans had been exposed to black music, even knew how to perform it, and even knew how to arrange it for mechanical music, already in the 19th century. By the time the early writers got interested in blues and jazz, the memory had faded, many important tunes were not even recorded on cylinders or discs although they were widely distributed in middle class households both as sheet music and on mechanical media.

My starting point was: we need to examine other sources since there are no sound documents of Afro-American music styles. I have just proven that this working hypothesis is not true: there was musical evidence based on mechanical music.

Let us now examine the validity of the assumption that African-Americans left no trace on early analog recorded sound documents.

Contrary to wide-spread belief, black artists not only recorded, they were actually among the pioneers of recorded music. Banjoist Louis 'Bebe' Vasnier Jr. was a New Orleans housepainter who also ran his own "Johnson and Vasnier's colored minstrel company". By January 1891 the Louisiana Phonograph Company made and marketed musical cylinders by Vasnier. The company was undoubtedly the very first to record New Orleans musicians and music. And Louis Vasnier, born a free Creole of color in 1859, probably became the first black recording artist in the world. [**Illustration 4: Advertisement for the Louisiana Phonograph Company, 1891**] His „Brudder Rasmus Sermons" and minstrel songs were actively promoted. A July 1892 'Price List of Musical Records Etc', which appeared in "The Phonogram", a short-lived journal of the affiliated Edison phonograph companies, shows for sale five "Negro Sermons" by "Brudder Rasmus" at \$1 each. And the small print reads: "All of these are very popular and good for the blues: Try them!". According to one Phonogram advertisement, "These sermons, while very humorous, are characteristic Negro delineations and are faithful reproductions of a dusky style of pulpit oratory that is rapidly passing away"... Also available by Vasnier were banjo versions of eight 'plantation negro songs', presumably in the minstrel tradition, including "Black Pickin'ny", "Coon with a Razor", "Good Bye, Susan Jane", "Hide Away", "Put Away dat Straw", "Thompson's Old Grey Mule", "Rock dat Ship", and "Turkey in de Straw". The advertisement concluded with the comment "The sermons are very popular among both whites and blacks and have proved among the most profitable of exhibition records."

At least one of the Vasnier cylinders has survived but is in extremely poor shape. Other notable

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recordings took place in New York: the Unique Quartette in 1890; the Standard Quartette in 1891, the Dinwiddie Quartet in 1902. The surviving recordings show distinctive Afro-American characteristics, although the sound quality leaves much to be desired. Nevertheless, I am going to treat you to a duet recording made by Cousins & DeMoss taken in 1897 for Emil Berliner. Two singers alternate verses in the black gospel tradition to fervent banjo accompaniment. You will notice how the speed is accelerating throughout the record **[Track 4: "Poor Mourner", Cousins & de Moss(1897) from TOO LATE TOO LATE CD #1]**. Blues Singer Frank Stokes was born shortly after Cousins and de Moss recorded "Poor Morner"; three decades later, in 1927, Stokes selected this tune as his first choice for a recording session for the Paramount label!. By 1909 the recording technology had advanced to a degree that I dare to play a cylinder by the "Old South Quartette" which demonstrates call-and-response patterns (the white impresario, Polk Miller, plays the guitar and sings) on this upbeat number **[Track 5: "Watermelon Party" - Polk Miller & Old South Quartet (1909) from STOMP AND SWERVE CD #16]**

We can thus draw the conclusion that African American musicians were among the pioneers of recorded music. As was to be expected, all those recordings I just mentioned were made in the US. But for some 100 years the cylinders and discs represented "lost sounds". Only over the past few years have they been re-discovered and are now accessible to researchers.

Let us now examine whether African-Americans may have recorded in Europe. Let me remind you that the Ku-Klux-Klan was founded only two years after abolition, and discrimination in the US reached such intensity by the 1890s, that an astounding number of African-Americans pursued their livelihood overseas - including instrumentalists and bands, musical clowns and dancers, singers and theatrical performers, minstrels and eccentric acts. **[Visitors to Europe: illustration 5: Foote's Minstrels; illustration 6: Frenchs Neger Ensemble]**. Considering the vast number of African-Americans touring Europe, wouldn't it be surprising if they did not cut cylinders and discs over here? And once again, the answer is: Yes, they did record.

The first were probably the African-Canadian banjoists brothers Bohee in Liverpool, as early as 1898. However, the most recorded American visitor to Europe, black or white, was an African-American: Pete Hampton. He left well over a hundred cylinders and discs. Since I published his biography and discography (notably in: "Black People", Bonn, 1997), a world-wide search has been going on and many have been located to date. Like many of his fellow song & dance artists he heavily relied on "coon songs" written by white composers, but he performed them in a distinctively black style. What is more, he also performed his own compositions, such as "Dat Mouth Organ Coon". Dating from 1904, "Dat Mouth Organ Coon" has an interesting ragtime piano introduction, Hampton sings a few stanzas of a typical ragtime song, suddenly he doubles the tempo and the piano accompaniment gets into a frenzy. Right in the middle of the performance Hampton abruptly takes out the tempo. He switches to harmonica, hence the title "Dat Mouth Organ Coon". He quotes - would you believe it - "The Last Rose Of Summer". Hampton's specialty was playing the harmonica through his nose, but on this cylinder, after stating the melody, he performs at such a break-neck speed, that this is difficult to believe. He bends the melody, he adds blue notes, he produces all sorts of queer

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sounds that must make Thomas Moore rotate in his Irish grave, and he adds shouts and vocal interjections just like recorded blues singers would do decades later [Track 6: **"Dat Mouth Organ Coon/It's The Last Rose Of Summer(1904) - Pete Hampton - from BLACK PEOPLE CD #6**] [Illustration 7: Pete Hampton, harmonica, and his common wife Laura Bowman, banjo (1906)]. Some recordings by Hampton are clearly in the minstrel tradition, while others are inspired by gospel and camp-meetings, such as "When You Die You Are A Long Time Dead" [Track 7: **"I'm Going To Live Anyhow Till I Die"(1904) - Pete Hampton - from BLACK PEOPLE CD #7**]. A jumpy and truly swinging tune, performed to piano accompaniment.

Other artists featured songs written by some of the most prominent temporary African-American composers: Theodore Walton Wilson was from Philadelphia and his wife Lavina from New Orleans. In 1906 the Wilsons recorded at least eight duet and solo titles by the black composers Tim Brymn, Will Marion Cook, Alex Rogers and James Vaughn for an obscure record company at Hanover, Germany [Illustration 8: Excerpts from a Globos records catalog (1906)]. No copies of any of these discs have been found as yet, but surely they must exist, somewhere...

We can thus draw the conclusion that African American musicians were among the pioneers of recorded music not only in the US but also in Europe. I do hope that, perhaps also as a consequence of my research, record collectors will make another serious effort to locate those elusive artifacts. Judging from those that have turned up, and considering the titles of those that still need to be located, we may have to rewrite the chapters on early black music.

Finally, let us have a look at motion pictures. The motion picture technology was developed at about the same time as the sound recording technology. And I ask: could it really be that black visitors to Europe left no trace on film?: And indeed, black artists were also among the pioneers of the fledgling movie industry. A surprising number of films had been shot in Europe prior to The First World War, demonstrating what was then known as "nigger song and dance". I shall show you three very brief excerpts: First a French music hall act, with blacks and whites performing on stage at the same time; next a British film showing a dancer performing "black steps" to banjo accompaniment; and lastly a series of three equally short "takes" featuring Belle Davis and her pickaninnies presumably in Germany. [Tracks 8-12 (DVD): Stage performances at the Nouveau Cirque, Paris(1903) - Banjo & stepdance (date unknown) - Belle Davis & Pecs(1906) from LOTZ DVD #1,#2,#3,#4,#5] The underlying banjo and ragtime orchestra music is not original, I added it myself.

But given the fact that film and sound were developed in parallel - wouldn't it have been possible to produce sound movies? The history books tell you the first sound film was "The Jazz Singer", featuring Al Jolson in blackface in the late twenties. But, in actual fact, sound movies had been a common entertainment in music hall and variétés prior to The First World War. In Germany alone well over one thousand sound movies, perhaps 2000, were made. Sometimes a film was shot and matching sounds were recorded on discs afterwards, or else a commercial recording was used and a

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suitable film taken afterwards. In either case the tricky part for the operator was to synchronise the moving images and the disc records. Unfortunately the novelty wore off after a few years and, in consideration of the imperfect technology, nobody cared to preserve either film or discs. The sad situation to-day is that for some films we lack the sound tracks, for some discs we lack the matching films, but in most cases neither film nor disc are known to have survived. A search is now going on to locate those artifacts, and to match surviving discs with their film counterparts.

The obvious question is: Could it possibly be that sound movies exist of black performers? The answer is, you guessed it: Yes, a surprising number of black vaudeville acts were featured on European sound films. In Germany alone about 10 to 20 are of interest to us as they feature black dancers, entertainers, minstrel troupes, and musicians. Only recently it was brought to my attention that the black minstrel veteran Will Garland and his "Negro Operetta Troupe" recorded a sound film in Berlin in 1910. Let me close my presentation by playing an even earlier disc of 30cm diameter from 1907, for which we still lack the film. The sound quality of the copy available to me is unfortunately poor, but the recording engineers nevertheless did a remarkable job. Remember: at that time they had to record through an open horn. It was already quite difficult to capture the sound of an individual singer or instrumental soloist. But in this case they had to cope with a rousing performance by a troupe known as The Georgia Piccaninnies. The engineers had to cope not only with an entire orchestra but in addition with a troupe of several lead singers, and a responding chorus, and step dancers, and all of them used to wildly gyrate on stage. "Get your partners for this ragtime dance" [**Track 13: "Coontown Ragtime Dance" - Georgia Piccaninnies (1907) from LOTZ CD #14**] [**Illustration 9: Label reproductions for Messter Biophon disc #878 "The Black Warblers" and Messter Biophon disc #879 "Coontown Ragtime Dance". / Illustration 10: Georgia Piccaninnies Troupe #1(1905) -Illustration 11: Georgia Piccaninnies Troupe #2(1907)**]

In closing let me say this: Continental European audiences were not free from prejudices and stereotypes, and people of African descent were certainly often also disregarded and despised as a racial minority also in the Old World. Nevertheless, racially mixed stage acts - often performed by husband-and-wife teams - were common, and socially acceptable. True, Polk Miller toured the US with the Old South Quarttette, but he owned the troupe as he would have owned a group of monkeys trained to ride bicycles. The situation in Europe was markedly different.

Black performers - singers, dancers and musicians - made their living as rural songsters and urban minstrels and vaudevillians. The latter in particular had to provide what the mainly urban, white lower and middle class audiences expected. All blacks travelling overseas had to bear in mind that they performed for exclusively white audiences. Their niche in vaudeville entertainment was twofold: by exotic appearance and by eccentric performances. Exotic they were on account of their dark skin and facial features, and eccentricity was achieved by posing as knockabout clowns and by introducing African-American elements in dancing, singing and playing instruments - even though many, if not most - may not have had any affinity for African-American musical traditions. They had to provide a carefully balanced selection of popular tunes and Tin-Pan-Alley coon songs, spiced with both European elements - recognizable by their audiences - and black elements.

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Just how continental European audiences reacted to black performance styles we shall probably never know. Although, in contrast to Britain, the language barrier seems to have been much of a problem on the European continent, and in countries such as Germany, there had nevertheless been an ever increasing demand for what was then often advertised as "nigger song and dance" until the War dramatically changed the situation. Many of these performances found their way on recorded cylinder and disc recordings, and on film. Thanks to their recent rediscovery we now have a much better understanding than only a few years ago. We shall have to amend the Blues, Gospel, Country, Music Hall and Ragtime discographies, and rewrite chapters of the early black music research literature.

Ed:s note: Due to lack of space we can only show here a few of the aforementioned illustrations.

[Illustration 2: Kapelle Backes aus Jettenbach/Pfalz spielt für Gefängnisinsassen um 1900]

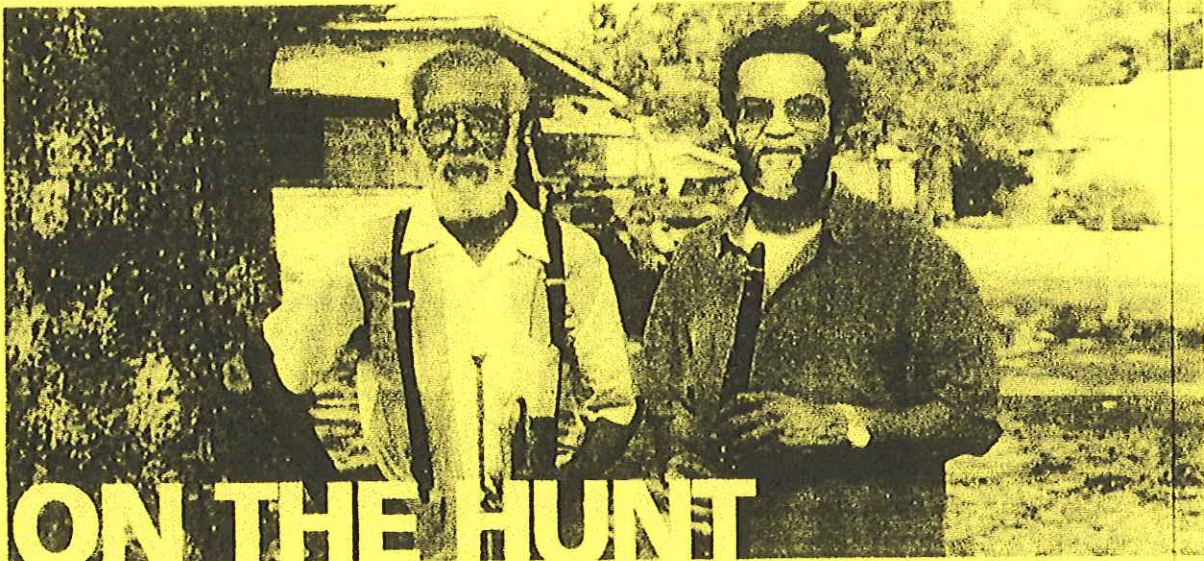


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[Illustration 7: Pete Hampton, harmonica, and his common wife Laura Bowman, banjo (1906)]



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ON THE HUNT FOR HISTORY

AUSTIN SONNIER JR. HOPES TO COMPILE THE DEFINITIVE PHOTOGRAPHIC ACCOUNT OF THE HISTORY OF JAZZ IN SOUTHWEST LOUISIANA IN THE EARLY DECADES OF THE 20TH CENTURY.

Editor's Note: The following is an excerpt from the book, "Til the Butcher Cut 'Um Down!, being assembled by Lafayette resident Austin Sonnier Jr., as well as his comments on the importance of such history.

When a new dance music (that would later be called jazz) first began to surface in its uptown environs in New Orleans at the turn of the last century, a similar type of music was incubating in southwest Louisiana. Although it has been an often proven fact that New Orleans is the birthplace of jazz, it is also safe to assume that the influences that contributed to its birth were not restricted to that one area alone. Ragtime (a root of jazz) filtered down indiscriminately from the East and Midwest and the blues (another root of jazz) were, by this time, firmly established throughout the South. Musical parallels, it seems, existed between the urban, which was New Orleans, and the rural, which was considered by some during those early years, everywhere else in Louisiana. Musicians and society in general, from both of these areas, loved the sounds of this dance music.

While cornetist Charles "Buddy" Bolden played his newfound improvisational "jass" in New Orleans, baritone horn player August Charles played a similar music in Parks. Both contained elements of the same influences, ragtime and the blues. So when August's son, Hypolite, moved to New Orleans in 1908, he found the music to be close in style to what he had played in Parks. The same held true for a large number of area musicians who moved to New Orleans and, because of their prior training, were able to go to work as members of some of the best ensembles in that city.

There were many, like drummer Roy Evans from Lafayette, reed-man/violinist Beauregard Adam from Cade, clarinetist Morris Dauphine from New Iberia and bassist Chester Zardis, also from New Iberia, who moved to New Orleans when they were young men and already proficient in music. There were also many, like trumpeter Evan Thomas (Crowley), orchestra leader Gus Fortnet (New

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Iberia), trumpeter Hypolite Potier (Parks), and drummer/bassist John Saunders (Berwick) who chose to stay at home and make a living playing with local bands.

Some of these local musicians led their own ensembles and regularly employed jazzmen who were from New Orleans. Clarinetist George Lewis and trumpeter Willie "Bunk" Johnson played in the Black Eagles Band in Crowley. New Iberia's Banner Orchestra offered steady work to clarinetist Lawrence Duhé, who had settled in Lafayette, and Bunk Johnson, who had made New Iberia his new home. Countless New Orleans stalwarts journeyed to various parts of southwest Louisiana to play music in local ensembles. And exceptionally talented musicians from various parts of southwest Louisiana travelled to New Orleans to play.

When I was a young boy coming up in Lafayette, I would hear talk of Louis Armstrong playing at Sam's Star Club (a local nightclub/restaurant/etc.) and of Evan Thomas advertising a dance at a hall on "The Block" by blowing his horn out of a second floor window in the early afternoon, just like Buddy Bolden, years before, would "call his children home" to Lincoln Park in New Orleans.

When I got older and more involved in playing jazz and researching its history, I can remember trumpeter Harold Potier talk about "King" Joe Oliver playing a school dance in New Iberia with local musicians, and Louis Armstrong's excitement on finding out that Hypolite Charles was in the audience at one of his performances in Lafayette.

I am presently putting together a collection of vintage photographs if as many of these area jazzmen as possible. In addition to photos of individual musicians, I am also interested in vintage photos of ensembles, nightclub scenes, family members or anything else related to the jazz experience.



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I also intend to travel to different towns to meet family and friends of these practitioners. I will photograph the houses they lived in, nightclubs, sheet music, business cards, instruments, posters, burial places, etc. . . anything "the butcher didn't cut down." I plan to write short biographical sketches of each musician. A search of vital statistics records will also be a part of my work.

These musicians are totally ignored in early accounts of the state's jazz history. They deserve, and should get, the same exposure and respect afforded the New Orleans contingency. This project is designed to give recognition to their dedication, talent and involvement in the continuum of jazz music in Louisiana. Every history book on the subject repeats the same information about jazz's birth and development in New Orleans. Hardly anything is ever mentioned about other parts of the state.

Austin Sonnier Jr. is a jazz saxophonist and the author of four books. To comment on this article, e-mail: timesedit@timesofacadiana.com.

Help Make History

Or at least, help record history, by contacting author Austin Sonnier Jr. if you have information - and especially photos - to add to his book-in-the-works, 'Til the Butcher Cut 'Um Down! The book will be a photographic account of jazz in Southwest Louisiana from the early 1900s to the 1940s. He says he would like to complete this project within a year and invites anyone with any information or leads to contact him at 1119 W. Gilman Road, Lafayette, LA 70501.

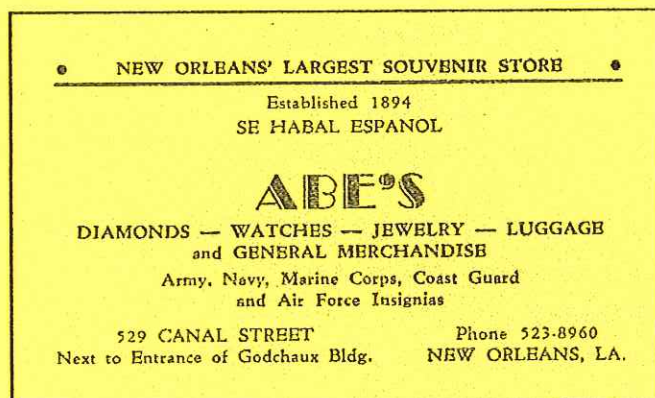
Reproduced from The Times, Lafayette.

Caption 1 -

Author Austin Sonnier Jr. (right) with the late Harold Potier of Parks. Sonnier is at work on a book that will recount the history of jazz in Southwest Louisiana.

Caption 2 -

Left to right: Austin Sonnier, Harold Potier, Mike Hazeldine and John Fortinet (son of the trombonist-bandleader, Gus Fortinet)



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RECENT BUNK JOHNSON RELEASES

by Fred Eatherton

In September 2004 the British company **Upbeat** released a George Lewis compilation called 'A Portrait of George Lewis from Burgundy Street to Berlin'.

This CD (**URCD197**) includes nine Bunk tracks: Bunk's Original Superior Band playing *Yes Lord*, *I'm crippled* and *Weary Blues*; the Jazz Information recordings of *Thriller Rag*, *Sobbin' Blues no.2* and *Sobbin' Blues*; and the four tracks by the Street Paraders, *Tiger Rag*, *Weary Blues*, *Pallet on the Floor* and *Careless Love*.

On the CD the track shown as *Sobbin' Blues #1* is matrix 4661-5A (*Sobbin' Blues no.2!*) and *Sobbin' Blues #2* is matrix 4661-5B). The Gus Statiris recordings are incorrectly dated 17 February 1945. The sound quality, however, is good and a marked improvement on the recent Jasmine release. All nine tracks have previously been issued on CD.

Over the late couple of years the Sidney Bechet - Bunk Johnson sides, recorded for Blue Note on 10 March 1945, have been re-issued many times. **Chronological Classics CD954** and **Music Memoria 724384146825** have been out for some time and both contain all five tracks. Here are some further CDs that have recently come to my notice:

- (1) **Definitive DRCD 11134**, a Spanish CD entitled 'Dear Old Southland; The Quintessential Blue Note Recordings - Sidney Bechet';
- (2) **Definitive DRCD 11198**, a Spanish 3 CD boxed set called 'Sidney Bechet - Complete 1939-1951 Blue Note Master Takes';
- (3) **Past Perfect 205447**, a German 10 CD boxed set called 'Sidney Bechet Portrait';
- (4) **Proper Box 18**, a British 4 CD boxed set called 'The Sidney Bechet Story';
- (5) **EMI/Virgin 8508522**, a French 4 CD boxed set called 'Les 100 plus grand succès de Sidney Bechet';
- (6) **Blue Note 8358112**, a 4 CD boxed set entitled 'Hot Jazz on Blue Note';
- (7) **EPM Musique 158862**, a French CD in the Jazz Archives series (102) entitled 'Talking and Preaching Trombones';
- (8) **Trilogie 205895-349**, a German 3 CD Boxed set called 'Sidney Bechet - Bechet's Fantasy'; and
- (9) **Gemini 220420** is identical to the **Trilogie** set above, but comprises the first 2 CDs only. It has the same title.

<i>Milenberg Joys</i>	2,3 4,8 and 9.
<i>Lord, Let Me In The Lifeboat</i>	2,3,5,8 and 9.
<i>Days Beyond Recall</i>	2,3,6,8 and 9.
<i>Porto Rico</i>	1,2,3,8 and 9.
<i>Up In Sidney's Flat</i>	2,3,4,7,8 and 9.

Jasmine JASBOX 4-4 is a British 4 CD boxed set that includes the four Bunk sides issued on Jasmine JASCD 635 (see SBJS Spring 2004).

Sounds of Yester Year DSOY644

This new British CD is a reissue of Swing House SWH-42, and is called 'New Orleans Masters - Volume 1'. This compilation includes *I Can't Escape From You* from Bunk's 6 January 1946 'V'Disc

Bunk Johnson.

recordings. This track is already available on Document DOCD 1001.

Kid Ory fans are a little more fortunate as DSOY644 also includes five Ory numbers from the AFRS Jubilee Transcription programmes, and these are appearing on CD for the first time.

Documents 220680 325 is a German 10 CD boxed set distributed by TIM (The International Music Company AG) called 'The Best of Dixieland Jazz'. There's just one Bunk side, Bunk's Brass Band playing *Just A Little While To Stay Here* (AM 900).

Catfish KAT219 is a UK release entitled 'The Roots of Lonnie Donegan'. Again, there's just one Bunk side, *Ace In The Hole* by Bunk with the Yerba Buena.

American Music has reissued the complete Jazz Information session on AMCD-119. Every reader knows the titles.

And finally, the Danish company **Music Mecca** has issued a CD dedicated to the late Milton Batiste called *Jazzly Yours (CD 3077-2)*. On the second track Milton can be heard reminiscing about brass bands, and three of Bunk's Brass Band recordings have been incorporated as illustrations. There's just a little over thirty seconds of *Oh Didn't He Ramble* (AM 898), a larger extract of *Nearer My God To Thee* (AM 902) and all of *Just A Little While To Stay Here* (AM 900). These three sides are all on **American Music AMCD-6**.

MORE DISCOGRAPHY

Several people have suggested that updates to the George Lewis discography 'Hymn to George' should be published in Bunk.Info and I have asked Lennart Fält to take care of this. This first installment deals with the new issues on Japanese Delta. These records can't be bought in shops but members of the society can contact Lennart who is willing to help you acquire copies. Write to Lennart Fält <lekamake.falt@swipnet.se>.

GEORGE LEWIS AND HIS NEW ORLEANS ALL STARS

63-11-17 Yoichi Kimura's house, Ashiya, Japan

Punch Miller(tpt) Louis Nelson(tbn) George Lewis(clt)
Joe Robichaux(pno) Emanuel Sayles(bjo) Papa John Joseph(sbs)
Yoichi Kimura(dms)

After You've Gone

Darktown Strutters Ball(ES) Delta:DLCD-1004

Savoy Blues Delta:DLCD-1004

I'll See You In My Dreams Delta:DLCD-1004

Bunk Johnson.

GEORGE LEWIS AND HIS NEW ORLEANS ALL STARS

63-11-23 Diamond Hotel, Tokyo, Japan

Louis Nelson(tbn) George Lewis(clt) Joe Robichaux(pno)

Emanuel Sayles(bjo) Papa John Joseph(sbs) Joe Watkins(dms)

Ciribiribin

Stereo:(J)128.Delta:DLCD-1001

Add Punch Miller(tpt)

On A Coconut Island

Stereo:(J)128.Delta:DLCD-1002

Add Yoshimasa Kasai(clt). Akira Tsumura replaces Emanuel Sayles

You Are My Sunshine

Stereo:(J)128.Delta:DLCD-

1001,1004

Bugle Boy March

Omit Yoshimasa Kasai. Emanuel Sayles replaces Akira Tsumura

Peanut Vendor(PM)

Stereo:(J)128.Delta:DLCD-1002

Lazy River(ES)

Stereo:(J)128.Delta:DLCD-1002

Boogie Woogie

Stereo:(J)128.Delta:DLCD-1002

Frankie And Johnny

Stereo:(J)128.Delta:DLCD-1002

Down By The Riverside

Delta:DLCD-1001

Muskrat Ramble

Delta:DLCD-1002

Make Me A Pallet On The

Delta:DLCD-1002

Floor

At A Georgia Camp Meeting

Careless Love

Delta:DLCD-1001

Doctor Jazz

Delta:DLCD-1001

Swanee River

Delta:DLCD-1001

Tin Roof Blues

Delta:DLCD-1001

Savoy Blues

Delta:DLCD-1002

It's A Long Way To

Delta:DLCD-1001

Tipperary

Mack The Knife

Delta:DLCD-1001

See See Rider

Milenberg Joys

I'll See You In My Dreams Delta:DLCD-1001

Recorded at the farewell party for the band.

Due to technical reasons the first 2:34 of 'Savoy Blues' had to be

Bunk Johnson.

left out on the Delta issue.

The Stereo issue was limited to 20 copies.

LOUIS NELSON BIG FOUR

64-08-01 Nightclub Hanabusa, Tokyo, Japan

Louis Nelson(tbn) George Lewis(clt)

Joe Robichaux(pno) Emanuel Sayles(bjo)

Tulane Swing	Delta:DLCD-1004
Tulane Swing	GHB:BCD-26.Delta:DLCD-1004
Goodnight Ladies	GHB:26,BCD-26
Marie	GHB:26,BCD-26
When I Grow Too Old To Dream	GHB:25,BCD-26
Sentimental Journey	GHB:26,BCD-26
Dippermouth Blues	GHB:25,BCD-25
When Your Hair Has Turned To Silver	GHB:25,BCD-25
Summertime(incomplete)	Delta:DLCD-1004
Summertime(incomplete)	Delta:DLCD-1004
Summertime	GHB:BCD-25.Delta:DLCD-1004
Dardanella	GHB:26,BCD-26
Wait 'Til The Sun Shines Nellie	GHB:26,BCD-26
I Wonder Who's Kissing Her Now	GHB:26,BCD-26
Yearning	GHB:25,BCD-25
My Josephine	GHB:25,BCD-25
West Indies Blues(ES)	GHB:BCD-25
You Broke Your Promise	GHB:25,BCD-25
Shanty In Old Shanty Town	GHB:25,BCD-25
Don't Go 'Way Nobody	GHB:26,BCD-26
I Wish I Was In Peoria	GHB:26,BCD-26
Indian Love Call	GHB:25,BCD-25
Ballin' The Jack	GHB:BCD-25
Ballin' The Jack	GHB:BCD-25
Bye Bye Blackbird(ES)	GHB:BCD-25

Eiji Yamamoto(tpt) Louis Nelson(tbn) George Lewis(clt)

Yoshimasa Kasai(tsx) Joe Robichaux(pno) Emanuel Sayles(bjo)

Kiyoshi Arai(sbs) Yoichi Kimura(dms)

Bunk Johnson.

Lady Be Good	GHB:BCD-26.Delta:DLCD-1004
Muskrat Ramble	Delta:DLCD-1004
Now Is The Hour	GHB:BCD-26.Delta:DLCD-1004

'Goodnight Ladies' was corrected to 'Goodnight Sweetheart' on the CD issue.

GEORGE LEWIS AND HIS NEW ORLEANS JAZZ BAND

65-08-06 Yokota U S air base, Fussa, Tokyo, Japan

Kid Thomas Valentine(tpt) Louis Nelson(tbn) George Lewis(clt)
Charlie Hamilton(pno) Placide Adams(sbs) Alonzo Stewart(dms)

Basin Street Blues	Dan:VC2012.Delta:DLCD-1003
George Lewis Talks	Delta:DLCD-1003
Royal Garden Blues	Dan:VC2012.Delta:DLCD-1003
Bill Bailey	Dan:VC2012
Tin Roof Blues	Dan:VC2012.Delta:DLCD-1003
Say Si Si	Dan:VC2012.Delta:DLCD-1003
Hello Dolly(PA)	Dan:VC2012
Yellow Dog Blues	Dan:VC2012.Delta:DLCD-1003
Tiger Rag	Dan:VC2012.Delta:DLCD-1003

GEORGE LEWIS AND HIS NEW ORLEANS JAZZ BAND

65-08-07 Yokota U S air base, Fussa, Tokyo, Japan

Kid Thomas Valentine(tpt) Louis Nelson(tbn) George Lewis(clt)
Charlie Hamilton(pno) Placide Adams(sbs) Alonzo Stewart(dms)

Basin Street Blues	Dan:VC2011
Hindustan	Dan:VC2011.Delta:DLCD-1003
Bill Bailey	Dan:VC2011.Delta:DLCD-1003
Tin Roof Blues	Dan:VC2011.Delta:DLCD-1003
Tiger Rag	Dan:VC2011.Delta:DLCD-1003
Hello Dolly(PA)	Dan:VC2011
Say Si Si	Dan:VC2011
Yellow Dog Blues	Dan:VC2011
St Louis Blues	Dan:VC2011.Delta:DLCD-1003
When The Saints	Dan:VC2011
Muskrat Ramble	Dan:VC2011.Delta:DLCD-1003

Bunk Johnson.

PAUL LARSON'S COLLECTION

Cut from The Historic New Orleans Collection Quarterly Volume XXIII, Number 1, Winter 2005:
(thanks to Björn Bärnheim)

Janet Larson of Sea Girt, New Jersey, has donated a vast collection of jazz records, memorabilia, and research materials assembled over the course of 50 years by her late husband, Paul Larson. Born in 1931, Mr. Larson began collecting jazz records at about the age of 10 and continued his interest in jazz throughout his adult life. In addition to owning and operating an automobile dealership, Mr. Larson hosted a jazz music radio program for WJLK in Asbury Park.

As early as 1949-50 Paul Larson began collecting material on New Orleans trumpeter Bunk Johnson. A member of the legendary Eagle Band from ca. 1910 to 1914, Bunk reputedly had a strong influence on Louis Armstrong and a number of other musicians before drifting into obscurity in the 1930s. By 1934, forced into retirement as a practicing musician by dental problems, Bunk had settled in New Iberia where he taught music and did odd jobs for a living. While researching a chapter on Louis Armstrong for the 1939 book *Jazzmen*, historian and collector William Russell became acquainted with Bunk's work; shortly thereafter Russell and Johnson began a lifelong correspondence and friendship. Believing Bunk's music to be some of the most authentic early jazz worthy of preserving, Russell created his own American Music label in an attempt to market Bunk's work and revive his career as a musician. Bunk Johnson's brief comeback in the 1940s initiated great interest in exploring the murky history of early jazz.

Seeing Bunk as a link to the origins of the music that he so loved, Paul Larson set out to document every aspect of the trumpeter's life. Mr. Larson's meticulously compiled scrapbooks include photographs, newspaper clippings, and other memorabilia relating to Bunk's comeback and the revival of New Orleans-style jazz. Among the extensive subject files in the collection is one entitled "New Iberia" which contains correspondence from Larson to the mayor's office asking that photographs be taken of Bunk's various residences in the area and that his former music students be located. Audio tapes of Bunk's performances, a broad assemblage of records, a substantial library of biographies and discographies, and obscure jazz periodicals enhance Mr. Larson's donation.

Mark Cave

THE SIXTH ANNUAL BILL RUSSELL LECTURE

by Björn Bärnheim

On April 8 The Historic New Orleans Collection arranged the Sixth Annual Bill Russell Lecture. This year the subject was "**Celebrating a Jazz Master's Centennial**" as Bill Russell should have been celebrating his 100th birthday February 26.

The lecture enticed about a hundred persons to the reading room at Williams Research Center on Chartres Street. A panel discussion was arranged for the evening. It was led by Dr. Bruce Raeburn, director of Tulane University's Hogan Jazz Archive, at which Bill Russell was the first curator between 1958 and 1965. Dr. Raeburn was assisted in the panel by Bill Russell's brother Dr. William

Bunk Johnson.

Wagner, Don Gillespie and Barry Martyn.

Dr. Raeburn opened the lecture with a brief introduction of Bill Russell and his unique and valuable contribution for nearly 60 years to preserve the New Orleans jazz traditions to future generations. Dr. William Wagner talked about his brother's background and childhood. He also mentioned how devoted and serious Bill Russell made his research work. He further gave the audience examples of some personal memories of his brother.

Don Gillespie talked about Bill Russell's early work as a composer. It was in the 1980's that Bill Russell showed Mr. Gillespie some of his compositions from the 1930's that had yet to be performed. That led to the idea to organize a concert that would present Bill Russell's entire compositional output. The concert was held in New York February 24, 1990 and has been released on a CD. Some examples from the CD was played.

Barry Martyn, who produced the CD output for GHB Jazz Foundation of Bill Russell's original American Music recordings, talked about his personal memories of the close work together with Bill Russell in the preparing of the CDs.

The Historic New Orleans Collection is to be congratulated to the initiative to arrange these annual lectures based on the material housed in their Bill Russell Jazz Collection, the enormous heritage that Bill Russell collected during his lifetime about New Orleans and its musicians.

BILL RUSSELL CENTENNIAL EXHIBITION (SWEDEN)

Bill Russell (1905-1992), who should have been 100 years on February 26 this year, devoted over 60 years of his life to preserve the history of the jazz traditions in New Orleans. The Museum of Jazz in Strömsholm, Sweden, celebrates this unique man with a special Centennial Exhibition this year.

The exhibition presents Bill Russell and his background as well as his career as a composer, researcher, record producer and the Bill Russell Jazz Collection now housed at the Historic New Orleans Collection in New Orleans.

The exhibition has been prepared by Björn Bärnheim at the Museum of Jazz with valuable help from Dr. William Wagner (Bill Russell's brother), the Hogan Jazz Archive, the Historic New Orleans Collection, the GHB Jazz Foundation and Claes Ringqvist.

On July 13 there will be a special concert celebrating Bill Russell and George Lewis (his 105th birthday) played by the Swedish band Gota River Jazzmen. The first half of the concert will be devoted in speech and music to Bill Russell and the second half to George Lewis.

The Museum of Jazz was opened in May 1999 and has an exhibition area of about 500 square meters. It displays the history of jazz from Buddy Bolden over the different styles to the history of jazz in Sweden. From mid May to the end of August there will be about 60 concerts held at the Museum of Jazz, which also includes the Royal Garden Café & Restaurant.

Bunk Johnson.

For more information about the concert program see www.jazzmuseum.com
<<http://www.jazzmuseum.com>> .

BUNK AT THE BBC

I've been doing some research in the BBC's Written Archives and found a memo from the assistant Director of Variety dated 15 November 1945, where they had planned to 'record Bunk Johnson and the New Orleans Veterans in place of Benny Goodman' as part of a series on their Home Service the following January. They arranged to broadcast a special concert with Duke Ellington as a 'super trailer' to the series on December 28. As far as can be discovered Bunk's contribution never happened. Perhaps due to the changing situation at the Stuyvesant? The series, starting on January 4, in which he would have appeared, was to include 'Django Reinhardt live to start the series in week 1' followed by British bands and, according to the memo, 'We will then place the New Orleans Veterans as the second American contribution, and end the series with the second performance of the Duke Ellington programme.'

Mike Pointon

Editor's note: Part of the confusion might have been that the BBC discovered that band were due to finish at the Stuyvesant on January 3rd and were not aware that the engagement had been extended until January 12. (See the opening page of *Bunk in New York, Part 3*). Certainly, when the second programme was due to for transmission (January 11) the band were still at the Stuyvesant. However, the real reason was probably that relationships within the band had deteriorated to the point that Bunk would have refused the offer anyway.

NOBILITY RECORDS ON CD

by Per-Olof Karlström

In the 1960s and the early 1970s Preservation Hall was not the only haven for great traditional jazz in New Orleans. On Bourbon Street Alfred Grayson "Al" Clark operated Dixieland Hall where you could enjoy many of the top New Orleans bands of those halcyon days. Al, who was born in Alexandria, Louisiana and came to New Orleans to study law at Tulane University, also formed his own record company to permanently preserve the Dixieland Hall musicians. The name of the company, Nobility, came quite natural since Al, a former cryptographer of the U.S. Army, was a great fan of the comic strip Prince Valiant. Very few LP records were pressed and most of them were sold right in Dixieland Hall. Today they are of course collectors' items, very hard to get. But now we all have a chance to complete our record collections. Al Clark's niece Pam Clark has re-issued 10 out of 11 Nobility LPs on CD. The name of her label is Aesthetics and the CD numbers are the same as the original Nobility LP numbers. Here we find the bands of Papa French (702 Vol. 1 and 702 Vol. 2), Louis Cottrell (703), Frog Joseph (704), Blanche Thomas & Papa French (705), Kid Howard (706), Paul Barbarin (707), Onward Brass Band (709 = Nobility 708 and 709), George Lewis (710), and Emma Barrett (711). If you can't get the records through your usual channels, contact Pam Clark's Aesthetics, 2631 General Pershing Street, New Orleans, Louisiana 70115.

Bunk Johnson.

BUNK

in

NEW YORK

PART 3

Last Two Weeks!

Closing January ~~31~~ 1 & 2

BUNK JOHNSON AND HIS NEW ORLEANS BAND

Featuring:

GEORGE LEWIS	BABY DODDS
JIM ROBINSON	SLOW DRAG
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345

*A final selection
of press reports,
magazine articles
and other
ephemera from
Bunk's
New York
engagements
1945-6*

Left: The final leaflet from Bunk's first Stuyvesant engagement. When the closing date was extended Gene Williams altered each leaflet by hand.

Bunk Johnson.

DOWNBEAT – 15 September 1945

Bunk Johnson Bringing Band to NYC For Job

by Ralph J. Gleason

Plans to bring a New Orleans band led by Bunk Johnson, 65-year old legendary trumpeter, to this city for an engagement are about set, according to Gene Williams. Latter is sponsoring band in a series of dances at Stuyvesant Casino in Manhattan's lower east side, beginning September 28.

Present plans call for dances Tuesday through Friday nights and Sunday afternoons for at least a month.

Personnel of Band

Personnel will be roughly that of the band Bunk used on American Music records: Bunk, George Lewis, clarinet; Jim Robinson, trombone; Lawrence Marrero, banjo; Alcide Pavageau, bass. Bunk is trying to get Baby Dodds as drummer.

In an exclusive Down Beat interview, announcing his plans, Williams said the reason he is bringing the band to New York, is "There seems to be a lot of discussion about Bunk Johnson and his music – all we want to do is give everyone a chance to hear it."

First N.Y. Appearance

This will be Bunk's first appearance in new York except for a session at Jimmy Ryan's played just before opening in Boston with the short lived Sidney Bechet band. And it will be the first appearance in New York for the rest of the members of the band.

Bunk has been back at his old job as a truck driver in the rice fields of New Iberia since he left the Bechet band early last spring.

rallies, has recently installed upon its bandstand a group of New Orleans hot musicians led by Bunk Johnson, a trumpet player as far along in years as the Casino and much more of a legend. Except for a brief appearance in Boston last winter, Mr. Johnson, so far as I know, has never before been visible in this part of the world. He is, as I have said, a very old man, and occasionally his powers of invention, which seem as fresh as ever, run a little ahead of his executive ability. One or two of his compatriots are as white-haired as he is, and they, too, falter now and then. These inconsequential lapses are easily excused, and they are overcome, too, by the drummer, Baby Dodds, whose fancy it is to work in his shirtsleeves and whose thumpings keep the band in stride. Mr. D's tremendous doings with his drums seem to me one of the events of the season. The men like best to play the music they grew up with, and they are at their best when playing it, especially that Early American monograph on frustration called "I Wish I Could Shimmy Like My Sister Kate." And, as jazz bands did thirty years ago, when the boys have finished playing a piece, they stop, wait modestly for the applause, and then do a reprise. The Casino indecorous – the audience is mostly well-behaved youngsters – and simple, in ornamentation as well as in operation. You pay a dollar at the door, go upstairs, sit at whatever table or bench is vacant, and listen. If music is not sufficient food, there are beer and sandwiches, which you fetch for yourself from the bar or buy from the Casino's only waiter, the politest and most thoughtful man of his breed I have encountered in some time.

There are, in fact, only two real drawbacks to the whole thing. The piano on the stand is in such a state of decay that Carmen Cavellero shouldn't even have to play "Till the End of Time" on it, and on some nights there is a gathering of intelligentsia that is so intense and audible about this careful reconstruction of another way of life that it is a considerable handicap to those who would rather just listen to the music. Watching these dedications, I was moved to wonder again why it is that people who know more about hot music than the men who make it can't keep time to it when they get on the dance floor.

THE NEW YORKER – November 17, 1945

What is happening these evenings at the Stuyvesant Casino, down on Second Avenue at Ninth Street, is as rigidly stylized as the dismal pageant at the Club London, but it refers back to a much earlier tradition. The Casino, one of those neighborhood catchalls customarily devoted to weddings and political

Bunk Johnson.



TIME - 5 November 1945

Jazz? Swing? It's Ragtime

In tall and feathery words, an ecstatic aesthete in the *New Republic* called it "New York's most important musical event of several decades." The music of Bunk Johnson was not as good as all that, but by last week it had become Manhattan's undiscovered hot jazz sensation of the year.

Four nights a week, in a barren, gym-like hall called Stuyvesant Casino on Manhattan's tawdry Lower East Side, Bunk and his six fellow jazzmen from New Orleans gave out with rocking hymns like "When the Saints Go Marching In", drum-heavy parade music like "High Society" and "Maryland, My Maryland", and the quick-paced "I Wish I Could Shimmy Like My Sister Kate" ("she shakes like jelly on a plate"). Their tunes were old; their playing was steady beat, banjo-plunking, authentic New Orleans - and meant to dance to. Bunk and his bandmen couldn't understand why almost no one got up to dance.

Instead, the audience of three or four hundred sat with mouths agape, listening. Mostly the audience was in its thirties; they

didn't swoon and scream, like bobby-soxers; they talked about the art of it. Many had the conspiratorial smugness of insiders.

Willie ("Bunk") Johnson is a 65-year-old steel-wool-haired Negro cornetist who was a New Orleans hit 30 years ago when the great Louis ("Satchmo") Armstrong was just a kid following him around, carrying his cornet, getting lessons from him. Bunk played in the sporting houses on Basin Street, in the saloons above Canal Street, and in the band wagons that rode around town with the slidehorns hanging out over the tailgate. He went barnstorming for as little as \$5 a week and tips. Twelve years ago Bunk lost his teeth and gave up playing. A Pittsburgh jazz fan found him, a toothless stooped laborer in the rice fields at New Iberia, La., got him some false teeth and raised money for a horn (*Time* May 24, 1943). Said the *New York Herald Tribune's* highbrow critic Virgil Thompson: "[Bunk] is the greatest master of blues or off-pitch notes . . . an artist of delicate imagination."

Clarinetist George Lewis, 45, who stopped the show with long cadenzas that few contemporary jazz clarinetists could match, has been working as a longshoreman in New Orleans about five days a month - when the coffee boats come in. Trombonist Jim Robinson, 53, a crack tailgate man (he calls it "cellar-playing") worked in a New Orleans shipyard during the war. His last job: picking up nuts and bolts. Drummer Warren ("Baby") Dodds, New Orleans alumnus, played drums for 20 years in Chicago, helped teach such top drummers as Gene Krupa, George Wettling, Ray Bauduc, Dave Tough, and quit steady work because it gave him high blood pressure.

Together, without rehearsals, they get through a nightly repertory of about 20 old pieces, along with an occasional unfortunate stab at such contemporary favorites such as "Bell Bottom Trousers". If the audience - or the band itself - likes a number, Bunk plays it again, sometimes for a third time, each version entirely different. Bunk calls their style of playing ragtime ("they call it jazz, swing, they change the name. It's ragtime").

Last week the two white jazz aficionados who brought Bunk to Manhattan (they have barely broken even on their investment) rented the hall for six weeks. Bunk signed a recording contract with Decca. Bunk Johnson, at 65, was apparently about to discover that there was money in his music - whatever the longhairs wanted to call it.

Bunk Johnson.

DANCING
BUNK JOHNSON'S BAND
Admission

WED. THURS. FRI. and SAT. NITES
EST. PRICE 83¢ FED. TAX 17¢ TOTAL \$1.00

A hand-painted advertising sign used during Bunk's first engagement at the Stuyvesant Casino

Bunk Johnson.

Simon says...

I WISH I could have heard Bunk Johnson play when he was in his prime. They say he was pretty sensational then. Naturally, at his advanced age, he's somewhat less than that now, but thirty years ago he must have been magnificent because (1) he must have had better control of his horn, and (2) by the standards of thirty years ago he was a modern trumpeter whose playing very likely was unrivaled then.

These nights he's playing not in his native Louisiana but in New York where he is being bravely sponsored by Gene Williams, his most ardent booster, in a magnificently run-down meeting-hall on the Lower East Side called the Stuyvesant Casino, whose atmosphere must be somewhat like that to which Bunk and his compatriots were limited in their hey-day.

Bunk's seven-piece band gives you an excellent idea of what jazz must have sounded like twenty, thirty and even forty years ago. And, serving as a museum-piece, Bunk and his men must be credited with doing a superb job.

Unfortunately, however, some folks are trying to credit the Bunk Johnson band with much more, and by doing so I think they're missing the idea of its being entirely. While I was listening to the band, some frantic character came up to me, cognisant of the fact that I was reporting for METRONOME, and started insulting not only me but just about every modern swing band. All the others were just nothing; this was "the real thing, the REAL jazz, the ONLY REAL jazz."

To me he was completely wrong on several counts. In the first place I have tremendous respect and admiration for bands like Ellington, Herman, Goodman, etc., and to say that they are "nothing," is a stupid way of dismissing them with prejudice.

In the second place, the Bunk Johnson type is not the ONLY REAL jazz. There are other types of jazz that are every bit as REAL. What my insulter should have said, and what I believe most of the intelligent followers of Bunk Johnson mean, is that his type of music is the only ORIGINAL jazz. With that statement I have no argument because (1) the music Bunk plays certainly sounds about as primitive as anything I've heard in jazz, and (2) I don't profess to know the various origins of jazz anyway and don't believe anyone living today does either.

And, in the final place, I don't think it's either necessary or even possible to compare the two types of jazz and arrive at any sensible conclusion. Columbus, if you'll recall your third grade history, sailed the Atlantic in a sailboat called the Santa Maria. Recently most people in travelling across the Atlantic used boats like the Queen Elizabeth. The Santa Maria and the Queen Elizabeth are both ships, one somewhat more modern than the other. For all I know, some people would still prefer sailing across the Atlantic. It's certainly more glamorous. But just because you prefer sailing across, that doesn't mean that the Queen Elizabeth isn't a boat.

It's just that sort of fallacious reasoning that has widened the breach between the followers of modern, more advanced jazz and those who prefer the original.

And just as man went ahead and discovered steam and other types of engines and put them to use, so have musicians gone ahead and produced more advanced types of music which they have applied to jazz. Personally, my leanings are all toward the latter group, but I must say I have no argument to find with those who honestly and for some sane reason prefer the former type.

I do, however, have much fault to find with most of the Bunk Johnson lovers, who refuse to listen to modern bands, who know nothing at all about the basic ingredients of music, and who worship at his shrine just because they think it's the thing to do. At the Stuyvesant Casino there are so many of those adolescents present that you can't help feel un-comfortable. Instead of *listening* to Baby Dodds drum, they want to watch Baby Dodds drum. They like Lawrence Marrero, not because he happens to play good banjo, but because he plays banjo. Their inability to judge (because they know no music and therefore possess no standards) and their appropriate demonstrations remind me very much, I'm sorry to say, of the antics of the bobby-soxes.

For Bunk Johnson's band, judged musically, is certainly not great. Bunk, himself, now and then phrases with tremendous feeling and he has certain drive to his playing but he is handicapped by an inability to get everything through and out of his horn. Baby Dodds, when he plays for the band instead of for the crowd (which is very seldom) is the great drummer I'd always heard he was. But even more so than Krupa ever did, he goes through all sorts of antics and gyrations, constantly messing up the beat with all sorts of explosions of tom-toms, cow bells, rims, etc., that detract tremendously from the basic drive that characterizes the music Bunk and his band are trying to play. To me, the most impressive man in the band is the banjoist (much as I hate the sound of the instrument), because Lawrence Marrero, more than anyone else in the band, produces a truly infectious, pulsating drive on his instrument. There has been a great deal of talk about clarinetist George Lewis and I give you my word I did my best to like his playing, but he played so consistently flat all night long that despite flashes of real feeling, I couldn't be convinced. It's quite conceivable that playing flat is part of that style, but if it is, then that's one phase of the ORIGINAL jazz that I'll never be able to stomach. The rest of the band impressed me not at all, Slow Drag slapping his bass morbidly and Jim Robinson playing uninspired trombone. In defense of pianist Alton Purnell I must state he was handicapped by a horrible piano.

That, then, is an appraisal of the musical worth of the Bunk Johnson band. I admit that musical proficiency isn't nearly so important in a band of this type as in those that play more advanced jazz. For the spirit and the feel of the old days is there, and though fifteen-minute versions of the same tune in the same key may pall on people like me, Bunk's group is a genuine museum-piece, and as such, worth raving about.

George Simon, Metronome, November 1945

Dated: December 21, 1946

Dear Sir (or Sirs):

The following is the agreement between us:

1. I hereby employ you as my sole and exclusive manager and representative, and also for my orchestra, throughout the world, with respect to the services, appearances, and endeavors of myself, or my orchestra, or both, in all matters and things in any and every capacity as a musician. This agreement refers to and includes the orchestra now conducted and being presented by me known as Bunk Johnson's New Orleans Band and any and all orchestras which I may conduct, present, use or be the leader thereof, at any time during the term of this agreement being known by said name or any other name. The term of this agreement, and subject to Paragraph 6 hereof, shall be for a period of One year 000. (not exceeding three years)
2. You hereby accept said employment and agree to use reasonable efforts to perform the following duties: To advise, aid and guide me with respect to my professional career, interests, services and talents, and with respect to my orchestra; seek to promote, publicize and commercialize the name, talents and artistic qualities of myself and also those of my orchestra; in my behalf to negotiate the terms of engagements and agreements offered for myself and/or the orchestra; carry on business correspondence; and generally to assist and advise me in managing and handling the business affairs of myself and/or my orchestra. You may render similar services to others and you may also operate other businesses and ventures at all times.
3. I hereby irrevocably and exclusively authorize you, while this agreement is in effect, to execute and deliver all contracts in my behalf for the services or appearances of myself and/or the orchestra. You are not to accept any engagements for me and/or the orchestra without my prior approval, which approval, however, I agree not to unreasonably withhold. All verbal or written communications or requests relating to the services or appearances of myself and/or my orchestra shall be referred promptly by me to you.
4. In consideration of the services agreed to be performed by you hereunder, I agree to pay you a sum equal to 10% of the net monies or other considerations earned or received by myself and/or my orchestra, directly or indirectly, and in instances wherein said net monies or other considerations amount to at least double the Federation scale or more, I agree to pay you an additional 5% of the said net monies or other considerations. However, I agree to pay you a sum equal to 20% upon any and all engagements to be performed by myself and/or the orchestra at one or more places for three days or less. These percentages are to be paid you, as and when said net monies or other considerations are received by me or the orchestra or by anyone else on my behalf upon any and all contracts or engagements now existing, entered into or negotiated during the term hereof or any extension thereof, and said percentages are to be paid you thereafter for so long a time as I and/or the orchestra receive payments upon such contracts or engagements and under any modifications, substitutions, extensions or renewals thereof. Said percentages to be paid you hereunder shall be computed upon the net contract prices, including any and all other monies received for the services or appearances of myself and/or my orchestra. However, commissions are not due you on any engagement if the payment of same would result in myself and/or the orchestra receiving less than the Federation scale for our services.
5. You shall have the right to use or permit others to use, during the term of this agreement, the name and likeness of myself, as well as that of my orchestra, in any advertising or publicity matter regarding our services or appearances in such manner as you may deem advisable. During the term hereof, I will not permit anyone else to submit, use or advertise my name or that of the orchestra, or any name which I may hereafter adopt with respect to the services or appearances of myself and/or my orchestra, without your written consent. I agree not to engage during the term of this agreement, in any competitive business with you except by and with your written consent. I agree not to engage any other manager, representative or agent in any way relating to the interests, services, appearances or publicity of myself and/or the orchestra, or to engage any person, firm or corporation to perform any or all of the services to be performed by you hereunder, except by and with your written consent. I hereby permit you to advertise the fact that you are my exclusive manager and representative, and make such fact known wherever possible. I agree that neither I nor the orchestra will perform or appear or offer or agree to perform or appear, in any professional capacity or otherwise, except through you or with your written consent first had. I acknowledge that you are entering into this agreement by reason of the special, unique, unusual and extraordinary character of the talents of myself individually and in conjunction with said orchestra.
6. In the event that I and/or the orchestra are not offered or you do not execute contracts for engagements on behalf of myself and/or orchestra as provided in Paragraph 3 hereof either for:
 - (a) At least twenty (20) cumulative weeks of engagements, to be performed during each of the first and second six months of the first year hereunder, or
 - (b) At least forty (40) cumulative weeks of engagements, to be performed during the second and during the third year hereunder, or
 - (c) If during either such specified period both the orchestra and I were able, ready and willing to perform, then this agreement may be terminated, either by me or you immediately after the expiration of a period in excess of seven (7) consecutive or cumulative weeks of unemployment under (a) above or immediately after the expiration of a period in excess of thirteen (13) consecutive or cumulative weeks of unemployment under (b) above, provided either of us give written notice to the other to that effect by registered mail by no later than two (2) weeks after the expiration of the said total required number of weeks of unemployment as above specified. Failure to give said notice of termination within the times above stipulated shall constitute a waiver of any and all right to terminate this agreement under (a) or (b) above for any previous unemployment.
7. For the purpose of computing employment under paragraph 6 (a) and (b) above, any of the following shall constitute a full week's work during the entire calendar week that the engagement or engagements are performed, or are offered to be performed:
 - (1) During the week that I and/or the orchestra are to perform an engagement or engagements for at least four consecutive or cumulative days or more;
 - (2) During the week that I and/or the orchestra are to perform an engagement or engagements for less than four days, and the gross contract price or prices for said engagement or engagements total an amount equivalent to at least the minimum gross weekly earnings of myself and/or my orchestra during any one week of the preceding six (6) weeks;
 - (3) During the week that I and/or the orchestra are to perform only a commercial radio, concert or television engagement or engagements and the gross contract prices for same total at least three times the Federation scale then prevailing therefor.
8. You agree that you are now and will at all times, during the life of this agreement, remain a licensee of the American Federation of Musicians as provided in Standing Resolution No. 61 of said Federation and that otherwise this agreement shall terminate upon the cancellation of such license by the Federation or its surrender by you, and my orchestra and I are thereby to be released of and from all obligations and liabilities to you under this agreement for any contract and engagement made thereunder except as to commissions already accrued and which became payable before the date of such cancellation or surrender.
9. Neither this agreement or any provision hereof can be temporarily or permanently modified except by mutual agreement, subject to the constitution, by-laws, rules and regulations of the American Federation of Musicians. If you are a Corporation any temporary or permanent alteration or waiver of this agreement, or any provision hereof mutually agreed upon shall be ineffective unless signed by your President, or by one of your Vice-Presidents. The entire agreement shall enure to the benefit of your successors or assignees and to any Corporation resulting from your reorganization, consolidation or merger. Wherever the term "year" is used it shall be deemed to mean fifty-two (52) weeks commencing with the month and day mentioned in Paragraph 1 above.
10. I represent that I and all members of my orchestra are members in good standing of the American Federation of Musicians and will remain in such good standing therein during the term of this agreement. The by-laws, rules, regulations and resolutions of the American Federation of Musicians, now or hereafter existing, are hereby made a part of this agreement, and any stipulations herein in conflict therewith shall be null and void.

Your signature herein below shall constitute this a binding agreement between us.

Accepted and agreed to:

Willie Bunk Johnson Seal
Orchestra Leader

638 Franklin St. New Orleans
Address

This form of contract is drawn and approved by the American Federation of Musicians.

COPY RECEIVED:

W.B. Johnson
Orchestra Leader

Bunk Johnson.

NIGHT IN NEW ORLEANS

Under the auspices of the American Committee
for Yugoslav Relief

SAM JAFFE - CHAIRMAN GREENWICH VILLAGE COMMITTEE
ORSON WELLES - Master of Ceremonies

PART I

BUNK JOHNSON'S NEW ORLEANS BAND---Street Parade
a. Maryland, My Maryland
b. Darktown Strutters Ball

CHARITY BAILEY---Creole Concert & Congo Square
a. Lolotte
b. Aurore Pradere

Storeyville and Jellyroll Morton
ALBERT NICHOLAS TRIO
Hank Duncan, Albert Nicholas, Freddie Moore
a. Milneburg Joys
b. Blueblood Blues

BUNK JOHNSON'S NEW ORLEANS BAND---Spirituals
a. O Lord I'm Crippled (Slow Spirit.)
Mme. Ernestine B. Washington---Gospel Singer

BIG BILL --- Blues

I N T E R M I S S I O N

PART II

SAMUEL L.M. BARLOW

CLARENCE WILLIAMS WASHBOARD BAND
Ed Allen, Albert Nicholas, Freddie Moore
Slow Drag Marrero, Williams
a. Baby Won't You Please Come Home---Freddie Moore
b. Sugarfoot Stomp
c. Everybody Loves My Baby

JOSH WHITE---Of Cafe Society Downtown
a. House of Rising Sun
b. Careless Love

HENRY "RED" ALLEN RIVERBOAT BAND
"Red" Allen, Ednund Hall, Kaiser Marshall, Hank Duncan,
Wellman Braud

BUNK JOHNSON'S NEW ORLEANS BAND
a. Sister Kate
b. Careless Love
c. Saints Go Marching In
d. High Society
George Lewis
Ed Hall
Omer Simeon

The typed running order for the "A Night in New Orleans" concert at New York's Town hall, January 1 1946

Bunk Johnson.

BUNK BACK AT CASINO



Mr. & Mrs. Johnson, Bunk & Maude.

18

On April 10, Bunk Johnson reopened at the Stuyvesant Casino in New York and began stomping 'em down, much to the delight of the East Side Chowder Eating, Jazz Appreciation and Marching Men's Society. Bunk has the slite of it these days and he really goes.

The New Orleans band's personnel has been somewhat altered since its dispersal in January. However the great front line remains intact with Jim Robinson on trombone and George Lewis on clarinet. Alcide Pavageau (Slow Drag) also made the trip up from New Orleans. He lays down the beat on his string bass, and the youngsters pick it up.

A newcomer to the group, Don Ewell, whose home is slightly north of New Orleans, but whose piano style isn't, plays very raggy, deriving his inspiration from Jelly-Roll Morton. Drummer Kaiser Marshall joined the band in New York. Lawrence Marrero had to be left behind due to the penny-pinching policy established by the new entrepreneurs who figured that if Art Hodes could have a six man band, why should Bunk have seven. Just wait until Stuyvesant manager, Sam Augenblick, hears about the King Cole Trio. Look out, pops!

With the return of Bunk Johnson to New York, the various companies who recorded the band a few months ago are issuing their discs. The Victor album is already out. Jubilee is issuing the records of Sister Ernestine Washington accompanied by the band, which is something new in the recording activities of Bunk. Decca will soon come out with their sides and these should hold the second-liners for a while.

It is regretted that Williams-Russell-Gleason are not in charge of the dances any more. Further it is hoped that the present manager will see his way clear to sending Marrero carfare up to New York.

At any rate, the stuff is there and every one loves it. You know that if it's exciting enough to make even jazz collectors dance, then as Louis Armstrong once said, "It's got to be a groovy affair."

—AHMET ERTEGUN

THE RECORD CHANGER

Bunk Johnson.



Above, Leadbelly sits in with Bunk's band.
Below, the New Orleans band now playing at the
Stuyvesant Casino (Photos by Bill Gottlieb).



Bunk Johnson.

A jazz trumpet virtuoso for fifty years, Bunk Johnson knows he's good. "Me and Louis Armstrong," he says, "are the only men that succeed on this horn."



OLD MAN JIVER

BY JAMES DUGAN

At sixty-six, Bunk Johnson, for fifty years one of the great trumpet players of the jazz age, has finally been "discovered".

The latest item in jazz discoveries is a thin gent named Bunk Johnson who started to shave four years ago. A few months ago Bunk blew into New York from New Orleans carrying a trumpet held together by tire tape. On this dented machine he magically plays a repertoire drawn from the hit songs of 50 years ago, as well as more recent works like Ice Cream! Ice Cream! We All Scream for Ice Cream!

When the patrons have pulled up their bobby sox and rushed forward to congratulate the artist he is usually found reassembling his collapsible instrument and shaking the moisture out of it. All he will say is, "Me and Louis Armstrong are the only man that succeed on this horn."

William Gary "Bunk" Johnson is a rather bewildering discovery. He is sixty-six years old. He is also the father

of jazz trumpet playing. The way he played a half century ago is the way Louis Armstrong, 20 years his junior, has been playing all these years, Bunk is a spare, erect, gray-haired figure with a stomach as tight as a drum, who got himself discovered on the golden anniversary of his career in music.

The Johnson family of Louisiana doesn't run on the same timetable as the rest of the human race. "I'm halfway through my life," says Bunk. "The Lord say I'm going to live my other 66 years. Ma grandma, Rose Jefferson, live to be 114 years of age. My mamma, Theresa Johnson, passed a hundred. Grandma Rose had eleven boys and eleven girls. My mamma had seven and seven. I got six and six. My papa skin me by two so far. But I can't tell yet." Bunk scratches the gray shoots on his chin and hints that when he comes of age much can be expected of him. "I only start shavin' when I was sixty-two," he explains.

Bunk has been an All-American trumpet player for fifty years, as well as a discoverer and teacher of three

Bunk Johnson.

generations of jazz greats including King Oliver, Louis Armstrong, Tommy Ladnier, and Sidney Bechet. During the thirty years since the Original Dixielanders arrived at Reisenweber's Cafe on Columbus Circle, Bunk's native stuff has been arriving at regular intervals in the music of his pupils. Now the original has arrived in person.

Bunk hasn't been hiding. William Russell, the man who discovered him this time, had been hearing about Bunk for years. Sidney Bechet, the clarinetist, talked about Bunk's playing in the Eagle Brass Band before World War I. Miff Mole heard him play in Missouri in 1931. Baby Dodds, the Chicago drummer, talked about Bunk. Louis Armstrong, if you stirred deep into his big memories, would say, "Bunk Johnson! That's the man they ought to talk about!" Wherever Bill Russell went on his extensive travels there was an old-timer whose eyes lighted up when he talked about Bunk.

The Secret of the Jazz Trumpet

Bunk plays the fundamental New Orleans trumpet style, which King Oliver and Louis Armstrong have made famous. It is simple, clear and melodious, not at all like the tortured growling and screaming off-key stuff that passes for trumpet virtuosity today. Bunk always plays with the orchestra, leading and driving the band. He plays around the beat, hesitating and getting behind the pulse. The secret of the jazz trumpet is this continuing suspense, in which the listener unconsciously anticipates the coming note. Bunk uses no mutes. His tone is not forced. It is plain, poetic trumpet playing, without stunt solos. You have to listen to Bunk, not overhear him. His inventiveness is legendary among the old-timers.

Bunk's band averages nearly 50 years of age. Nathan "Jim" Robinson, fifty-three, the trombone player, is a former shipyard worker, who learned his instrument in an Army band in France in 1918. George Lewis, forty-five, clarinet, is a New Orleans stevedore. Lawrence Marrero, forty-five, the little banjo player, is a pants presser and furniture mover. Warren "Baby" Dodds, forty-six, is the model of many famous jazz drummers, including Gene Krupa, George Wettling and Dave Tough.

The bass player is a gray-haired "Slow Drag" who is fifty-seven years old. A roofer and slater by trade, Slow Drag learned his rhythm in "Rootin' Tootin'" bands — street serenaders who played on homemade instruments. His real name is Alcide Louis Pavageau. The baby of the band is a piano-pounding moppet named Alvin Purnell, who is only thirty-four. Purnell is an ex-newsboy who has been playing the piano in New Orleans tonks the last few years.

The preposterous scene when these seven gaffers mount the stand resembles a blue-ribbon jury going into the box. Dressed in street clothes the dignified gray-haired men take their places. Bunk, in a tasteful brown

tweed and high-top shoes, does some last-minute spot welding on his eccentric instrument. His lean left hand with its three gold rings fixes a white handkerchief in place around the piston. No New Orleans trumpet player could make a sound without a handkerchief around the pistons.

Bunk's skinny elbows rise, he leans stiffly back on his chair, and he beats his long foot three times on the stand. The riot starts on the third beat.

If the crowd likes the tune, which is standard operating procedure, the boys play another chorus of the same with variations. If the crowd likes the encore, Bunk signals another round. Bunk believes in pleasing the customers.

The library of tunes, filed in their seven gray heads, is a startling farrago of rags, marches, hymns, pop tunes, blues and stomps. I Wish I Could Shimmy Like My Sister Kate, a tune King Oliver wrote thirty years ago, comes on top of You Always Hurt The One You Love, a Tin Pan Alley creation. The Sheik of Araby follows We Will Walk Through the Streets of the City, a venerable hymn. Bell Bottom Trousers, one of Bunk's contemporary favorites, is coupled with Maryland, My Maryland. The estimable feature of Bunk's music is that any tune comes out like a strutting street-parade tune of fifty years ago. For Bunk Johnson fans, this is all any tune needs.

Likes Dance Music Best

Bunk is baffled by the jazz intelligentsia in New York. He maintains that he plays "dance music", not jazz, or swing, or hot jazz. When the ensemble opened in the beginning, nobody got up to dance during the first set. It rattled the artists. They thought nobody liked them.

The clients sat frozen in rapture as though they were listening to the Gettysburg Address. A little later several unreconstructed nations arouse out of the assembled statues and set foot to Muskrat Ramble. Bunk plays best when fifty couples are weaving about and clashing in mid-air.

William Russell, the instigator of the Bunk Johnson revival, started looking for him six years ago, while digging facts for a chapter on New Orleans music in his book, *Jazzmen*. The old-timers had eulogized Bunk but did not remember his last name. Russell asked Louis Armstrong if he knew Bunk. Louis did. In his dressing room at the New York Paramount, Louis cupped his hands and hummed through them, demonstrating how Bunk played. "He has my style," Louis explained. "My tone, my vibrato." Furthermore Louis had seen Bunk alive and well at a dance in New Iberia, Louisiana, the previous year.

The old-timer sat on the bandstand beside Louis. He could not play because his teeth were gone, but he hummed and stomped happily beside his star pupil.

Bunk Johnson.

Russell wrote to the postmaster of New Iberia, enclosing a letter to be delivered to "an old trumpet player named Bunk."

A week later Russell received the first of an outpouring of exuberant letters telling him about the early days of jazz and signed, Willie 'Bunk' Johnson. Excited by the slim chance that the old man could still play, Russell raised money among his friends to get Bunk some store teeth and a trumpet.

The teeth were made by Dr. Leonard Bechet of New Orleans, whose brother Sidney, the noted clarinet player, had been given his first band job by Bunk Johnson. Bunk says, "I went to Sidney Bechet's mother's house and ask her to let him play clarinet with me in the Eagle Band. She told me yes, but here is what I would have to do. 'You'll have to bring Sidney home after he is through playing each and every job. That would be the only way I could let him go in your care.'"

Russell visited Bunk in New Iberia in 1942 and fund him living in his own home, driving sugar-cane trucks and teaching music to Negro school children in the parish. The teacher of Armstrong is proud of his newest class. "You should hear Edna Mae Thompson on trumpet," exclaims Professor Johnson. "She's in the New Iberia Elementary School Band. She's only seventeen but, man, can she go!"

Bunk is the only Negro Mason in the parish. One of his rings signifies the thirty-second degree of the order. "I'm a qualified truck and trailer driver," he says. "I was the first Negro in Louisiana to drive a motor car. I have an old car back home I have a lot of fun with.

"Saturday afternoon I'll be out in the back yard grindin' the valves. My monkey – I got a Cuba money – will help me. He'll hand me tools and parts. When he can't figure out the right tool he'll run up the pecan trees and bring me down some nuts. I got seven pecan trees and six acres of land of my own.

"I been in two wars, the Santiago War and World War I. Bandmaster both times in the Army. In the Santiago War, I was with Teddy Roosevelt at San Juan Hill. Teddy say to me, 'Bandmaster, blow the charge!' I blew, I blew the charge and them soldiers went up San Juan Hill like cats with mustard on their seat.

"In World War I, I was bandmaster with Company A in France. One hundred and seventy-six pieces. I don't remember what division except they was formed at Fort Leavenworth.

"When you know so hell-fired much as I know, when you try to remember, one object gets in another object's way. My band played for the soldiers to drill. Then I had a twelve-piece band out of the big one. We played dances all over France. I was the first man to bring dance music to France.

"They wouldn't take me in this war although five of my sons is in the Navy – all bandmasters. I could go up to Great Lakes right now as bandmaster.

"I got many pupils in this war. Ernest Comier play

the bass drum in the Army. Clifton Davis – I taught him at Jeanerette Junior High – play the trumpet in the Navy. Carlton Peceau – a mighty fine drummer – he's in the Navy. Warren Dixon – he's just eighteen – play a world of trumpet. Then there's Rima Yober, a girl trumpet player. All good, real good boys and girls. I gave the Army and Navy many a good musician this time."

The Teeth Did the Trick

After Bunk's store teeth had been delivered, Russell was delighted to find that the old master's embouchure, his dental pressure on the mouthpiece, was firm as ever. Bunk practiced for a long time to get back his prowess. His first appearances were in Boston and San Francisco.

When he was six years old, Bunk got his nickname. His father was then a teamster for Jax's Beer in New Orleans. One day he and young Willie met an Irish drayman named "Bunk" Flynn in a New Orleans pub. Flynn surveyed the bright-eyed boy and said, "You should call that kid 'Bunk' on account that he is going to be as powerful as me when he grows up."

Bunk was born two days after Christmas, 1879, in the rowdy Irish Channel district of uptown New Orleans. Both of his parents were former slaves. Within sixteen years after emancipation his mother had acquired three restaurants. His grandmother, Rose Jefferson, the matriarch who died at 114, was an American Indian who had been a slave of the Landry family.

Professor Wallace Cutchey, a Mexican teacher, started giving Bunk music lessons when he was seven. Soon Professor Cutchey advised Theresa Johnson to buy her talented son a cornet. When he got his first cornet Bunk was an excited tot. He told Russell, "When I did get the slite of it, oh, boy, I really went!"

When skinny Willie Johnson was still a youngster, his fame was so great that he was invited to join the Adam Olivier Band as second cornet.

Then at sixteen Bunk joined the big league – the electrifying brass band of Buddy "King" Bolden himself. Buddy Bolden was barber, bookmaker, scandal columnist – and in his spare time the greatest corner player of the nineties.

New Orleans was a city that enjoyed itself. Music was everywhere. Brass bands were as prevalent as Juke boxes are today. The world's first jazz bands were uniformed semimilitary brass bands – The Diamond Stone Brass Band, the Old Excelsior Brass Band, the Algiers and Pacific Brass Band, Henry Allen's Brass Band, and the greatest of them all, the Eagle Band, Bunk's alma mater.

Hymns, Marches and Stomps

The players were as famous as football stars in a college town. Bandmasters tried to lure ace musicians from one another like football coaches finagling for

Bunk Johnson.

players. The bands played for all the good times – parades, picnics, boat excursions, concerts in the park, Mardi Gras, dances and funerals. They played marches, stomps, rags, hymns, dirges and semiclassical music. The three musical elements which make up jazz came together in New Orleans – the European hymn and march, and the stomp rhythm of African inspiration.

In the early 1900s Bunk played with John Robichaux's orchestra, the society ensemble of the Crescent City, which played French quadrilles as well as native rags for the white people in Antoine's world-famous restaurant. Bunk is the only member of his present band who reads music.

In his room in Greenwich Village he keeps a music stand near his bed. On it is blank score paper for ideas which may strike him in the night. He is the author of one published tune, *Spicy Advice*.

The chorus goes:

*"Needles and pins, needles and pins,
When a man marries his troubles will end –
Sugar and spice and all things nice,
Get a girl in your arms – is spicy advice."*

"All the school children in Iberia Parish know this," says Bunk.

In 1913, Bunk, Sidney Bechet and the pianist, Clarence Williams, took the first New Orleans jazz band into Texas.

The same year also saw Bunk fathering the career of Louis Armstrong. Thirteen-year-old Louis was a recent graduate of the Waifs' Home, a corrective institution, in which he had been placed to cool off after he was caught firing a gun into the air during the New Year's celebration of 1913. Louis had run along beside Bunk in the street parades, begging to carry the great man's instrument even before he was "corrected" in the Waifs' Home. Bunk had taught him *Ballin' The Jack*, *Circus Day*, *Take It Away*, *Salty Dog* and the blues. In the home, Louis had learned to read music from Captain Jones. Now he was ready to finish his apprenticeship under Bunk. And he learned so well that he took, Bunk's place when the master left Tony's.

"I'm descended from Congo royalty," says Bunk. "Nobody can take advantage of me. Back home in New Iberia they know Bunk for a respectable workingman. Ask anybody. When I'm not doing blackboard work for the U.S. government I drive truck and trailer. Man wants to hire me to haul cane I say, 'Don't curse me: don't hit my children.' I'll never work for a man that curse me.

"You should see some of those old fellows down in New Orleans I grew up with. My, they're old! Shuffling along, can't remember nothin'. Couldn't play a chorus to save their life. Whisky got some of them." Bunk pauses in his imitation of the old musicians shuffling along, and looks back over his shoulder. "Whisky heads are all dead! Bunk is still here!"

"Of my degrees and diplomas I could mention B.M. – Bachelor of Music from Tuskegee. I taught at Tuskegee around 1900. Run the band, coached baseball, I'm a good stickman. Could run like the devil around the bases. Still can.

Time Out for Reminiscing

"When I look back over the objects in my life, why I can remember back to when there was no discrimination in Louisiana. When I was a boy you got on a mule car in New Orleans and walk up and put your nickel in the bandbox and sat down. Discrimination came in in 1889. Too much prejucry in the South since then.

"When I was out in San Francisco, Harry James was playin' at the Civics Auditorium. I knew his papa, a fine man, bandmaster in the circus.

"Young Harry say to me, 'Pops, I don't have to tell you. You and Louis, only man that can play this horn.' That was right nice of young Harry, but he play real good trumpet himself. I told him so. Never catch a real good musician knock a musician.

"I ain't no bigshot. Boys in the band live together here in New York and hire a cook. I don't need no cook. Bunk can cook for hisself. I go out and buy fish and rice. I make my own sauce. I'm independent.

"Met John L. Sullivan in New Orleans. He like my music. Met Joe Louis in Sedalia, Missouri. He like my music. I've played for 'em all. I've seen 'em all. All my good friends.

"Take my boy Louis. Anybody in this world knows any more about playin' that trumpet than Louis Armstrong – show him to me. And I'll show that doubter! I'll run 'im!

"And if I can't run 'im – Man, I'll sure talk him down!"

*Reproduced from Collier's magazine, New York.
9 February 1946*

WE LISTEN so much to what's happening in music today that we're likely to forget that there was a yesterday. A lot of yesterday's jazz can stand up and be counted right now . . . today. Yes, we're likely to forget that—after all, you hardly hear any of it, except on occasion, like when company comes, and you drag old gramp out, dressed up.

I know one can't hear music by reading words, but let me spin this tale about a bit of yesterday, about some music and a musician.

Bunk Johnson and his band were to open at the Stuyvesant Casino. Of course I'd been hearing about this because I was very close to the scene. The *Jazz Information* boys, Gene Williams and Ralph Gleason, were involved; Bill Russell was in there.

Those were the days when it wasn't enough to just follow jazz—if you didn't do more, it wouldn't be there when you turned around. *Jazz Information* editors did all they could to further this music. Besides putting out the magazine, they reissued records that were dandies, plugging away for the music and musicians they believed in.

The word had gone out. Bunk Johnson, the last link between the past and the present. Bunk Johnson, who'd worked alongside the legendary Buddy Bolden, reputedly one of the greatest of trumpet blowers. Bunk, who'd influenced Louis Armstrong.

The publicity had been terrific; the bandwagon was crowded. Stuyvesant Casino was—may still be—a Jewish catering hall on the east side of New York City. Why this place? I'd guess that it was the best deal available. As I recall, the promoters were to get the admissions; the income from drinks went to the house.

Stuyvesant Casino . . . one flight up, a great big hall, bandstand at the opposite end of stairs . . . old type of bandstand . . . four feet high. And don't tap your foot—I mean dust. But you could get hundreds of people into that hall, and Bunk did.

Six nights a week they came. They came and they danced. I know; I sat in the balcony night after night. I came to listen—and I heard. Old Bunk, with his store teeth plus a new horn. Here was a man who'd been working days, in the fields, and hadn't been playing professionally when "rediscovered." How old was he? Don't know. Close to 68, I'm sure. He didn't sound old.

How'd it happen? Bunk wasn't a popular attraction, a poll winner, no hit record. No 10 percenter dug him up, but it didn't just happen.

There was a guy out on the West Coast, Dave Stuart. Back in '42 he'd been writing to Bunk. At that time Dave had a record company and was interested in seeing that B.J. was re-

corded before he died. In June, 1942 Stuart and several other jazz lovers drove to New Iberia, La., and visited Bunk, talked with him, listened to him play. Within days they were in New Orleans, hunting musicians and a studio (and if you think this last bit was a breeze, you've got another think coming), finally improvising by turning a loft into a studio and settling for whatever equipment was available. No retakes or overtime . . . "Let 'em roll." The job got done. Bunk was recorded. (Editor's note: see page 28 for a review of the recordings, which recently were re-issued.)

The engagement at Stuyvesant Casino was a follow-up. They keep telling me that our forebears saved, preserved things for us, and I keep taking it all for granted. . . .

So there I sat. Opening night. Looked

sittin' in

By ART HODES



BUNK JOHNSON AT THE STUYVESANT CASINO

like Baby Dodds on drums . . . added attraction. Who're the other guys? I never saw them. But listen; clarinet sounds awful good. George Lewis? He's all right, sings it right out. Banjo? Well, I'm not a banjo fan, but this guy fits the band. Marrero? Yeah. That trombone . . . sensible, no wasted notes. If he's anything like he plays, he must be a real groovy guy. Jim Robinson? Never heard of him.

I get a kick out of how these New Orleans bands set up—drums at one end, piano at the other, band in between. That's the way Baby and Johnny Dodds set up at Kelly's Stables back in Chicago. As usual, the piano leaves much to be desired. I mean the instrument itself. So they don't dust it, shine it—but it can be tuned.

Piano player's doing his share, Bass man seems to be telling the truth. And the repertoire. . . Is nothin' sacred? Not to New Orleans bands. Like the tune they're playing now: *You Scream, I Scream, We All Scream for Ice Cream*.

People are dancing to it. Haven't seen this in New York for a while. The beat. . . . They could keep this up all night. The people ain't gonna get tired. Isn't that *Tiger Rag*? How about that—I mean the tempo. And listen to the crowd applaud. They're going to play it again. . . . I'm learning.

Yeah, I'm pretty sure I didn't miss a single performance. Up there on that balcony, listening. Never sat in but once that I recall. It was happy birthday night (could have been Bunk's). Red Allen was there. Big Bill Broonzy and Leadbelly did a duet on *The Saints*.

But aside from that occasion, I felt that this band was a together thing . . . made me feel like I was listening to a street-parade band. A sound all its own. Couldn't compare them to any other group I'd heard. And I had no desire to "experiment." I dug them as a group—no one should change that sound by sitting in.

I don't know what night it happened, but I was listening and suddenly realized that they were playing without a lead horn. No Bunk. A quick look. There's Bunk, all right—sitting (they used chairs), chair tilted back and sound asleep. Band playing away, and the leader asleep onstage. It was something to see.

Nobody was sweating it. I didn't know somebody'd been sent for, not till Wild Bill Davison got there. Wild Bill stood up and blew, and Bunk still sat there sleeping—right through to the end. The damndest thing I ever saw. No question about it—Bunk could sleep, anytime, anywhere. (One time I caught him sleeping two rows from up front where Red Allen and band were performing. And let me tell you something, Red and his band, with J. C. Higginbotham and Don Stovall, could be heard.)

Bunk Johnson. . . . Like the song says: "he's been here and gone." Tough man. Yes, sir, if I have as much to say and am as able to say it as he was at his age, I'll be all right. Wish you could have heard Bunk whistle his chorus on down, then pick up his horn and play the same bit on out.

You know there are lots of people who play music but can't play by hear. Yeah, I said by hear. I mean it's doubtful if they're hearing it coming out—or even before. Bunk Johnson heard his music. It sang out of him, from inside out. All he had to do was put the horn to his mouth. The stuff was there. I know, there's more to it than that—you have to be able to play the horn. But please, not if you're speechless.

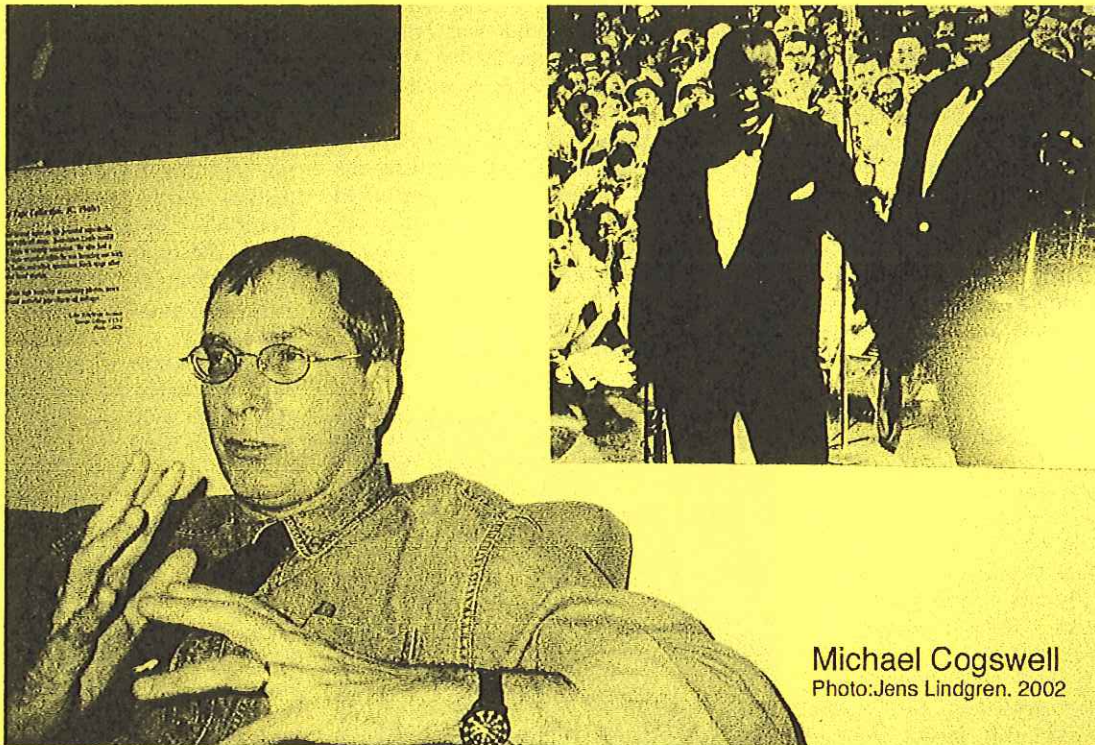
So you ask, "What was dad like?" Son, he was quite a man, one hell of a blowing man. You need never be ashamed of him. He certainly enriched many of us.

EB

Bunk Johnson.

THE LOUIS ARMSTRONG HOUSE AND ARCHIVE

This interview between Jens Lindgren and the Curator of the Louis Armstrong House, Michael Cogswell, took place on October 31st, 2002 at Queens College, New York. Transcription by Nils-Gunnar Anderby.



Jens Lindgren: May I ask when and where you were born?

Michael Cogswell: I was born September 13, 1953 in Buffalo, N.Y.

J.L.: What did you do before you were put in charge of the Louis Armstrong House and Archives?

M.C.: Well, that's a long story. I'll see if I can put it in a few sentences. Basically, at nineteen years of age I dropped out of the University of Virginia to play saxophone for a living, and did that for ten years. And then went back to school and fell in love with musicology, and libraries and archives, and eventually ended up getting a Masters in Jazz History and a Masters in Library Science and working in academic music libraries, especially with archival materials and especially with jazz materials.

J.L.: So you were well qualified for this task.

M.C.: Actually I feel very lucky, because I pursued these dual loves of jazz and of libraries and archives . . . I mean, I worked my way through graduate school still performing and I didn't know whether there would be a job for me, so when this job was advertised I said: "Gosh, that's my dream job. That's exactly what I would like to do". I was very fortunate to be given this

Bunk Johnson.

responsibility.

J.L.: So can you tell me a little about the house, the archives and when it opened?

M.C.: Louis and Lucille Armstrong bought this little house in Corona, Queens, in 1943 and lived there for the rest of their lives. Louis passed away in 1971. Lucille continued to live in the house and she passed away in 1983. After Lucille passed on the house was discovered to be a treasure-trove of material - 5,000 photographs, 85 scrapbooks, 650 home recorded tapes, five gold-plated trumpets and on and on and on.

The Louis Armstrong Educational Foundation is the organisation that controls the Armstrong estate. They had the good sense to realize something needs to be done to preserve this, the house and the contents, so they arranged for Queens College to do that. They gave Louis' scrapbooks, tapes and photos, trumpets and so forth to the college under the provision that the college preserve the material and catalogue them and make them available to the public.

They gave the house to the City of New York and arranged for Queens College to administer the house, so the college administers the house under a long term licence agreement.

All that happened during the 1980s. As for the Archives, I was actually hired in 1991 and my first day of work was in July of that year. I came into the archival centre here and this whole place was empty, except for a couch and a desk, and there were 72 shipping cartons of Louis' materials piled up. I had to borrow a pad of paper and a pencil to begin work and that's where we started from, and we opened three years later.

The Louis Armstrong Archives opened to the public in May 1994 and now most of my efforts go towards opening the house as a museum. If all goes according to schedule, the house will open in fall 2003. [**The Louis Armstrong House** opened on October 15, 2003].

After Lucille Armstrong passed away in 1983, the house remained unoccupied - frozen in time - all the furnishings, the linens on the bed, everything, remained exactly as it was on the day Lucille died.

The housekeeper that used to work for Mrs. Armstrong, Bessie Williams, has continued to work at the house. At first the Armstrong estate paid her and when Queens College took over, Queens College paid her.

So the house has been preserved all that time. Today [2002] we are in the middle of construction works that are needed to convert what is essentially a private home to open it to the public as a museum. So the first thing that happened was to have fine-art shippers come in and pack up every piece of furniture and every oil painting and every chandelier and take it all to a climate-controlled warehouse, so, as of today, right now, the house is totally empty.

After the construction work is completed, everything will come back to the house and be reinstalled and it will open to the public as a Historic House Museum.

J.L.: When the work is finished and it opens, what can we expect?

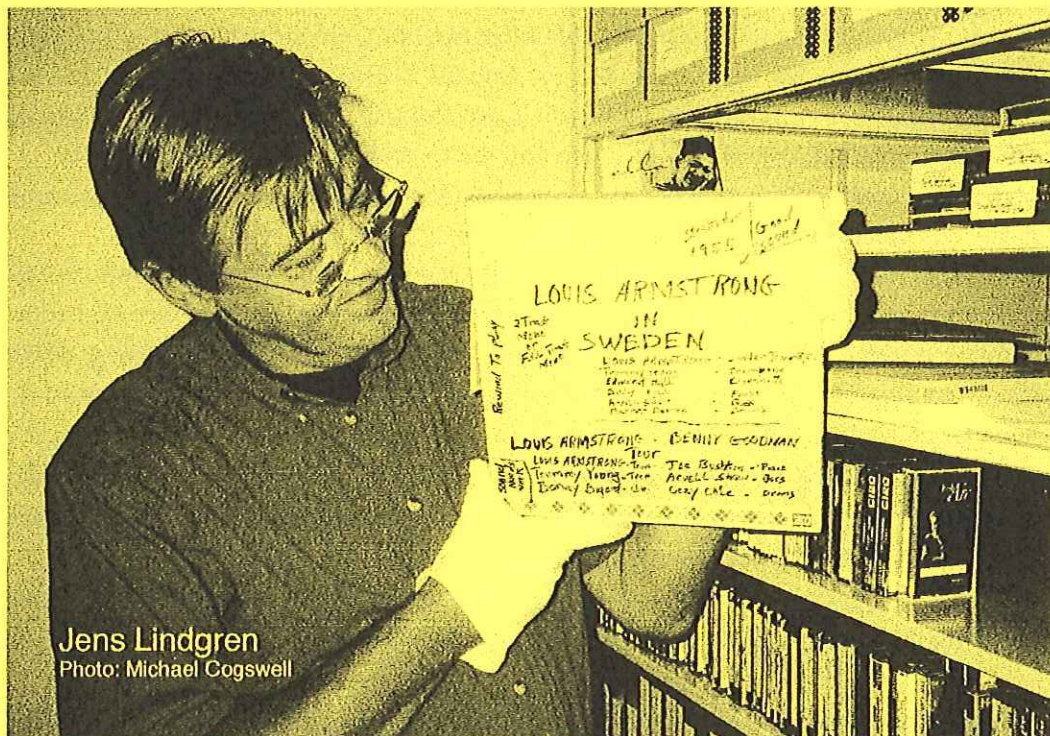
M.C.: Our primary program will be the Historic House Tour. People in small groups of no more than eight people can go through the house with a guide and see how the Armstrongs lived. The House will be furnished exactly as it was when the Armstrongs lived there and it's very moving - you really get a sense of who Louis was and how he lived his life. Louis off stage, Louis at home.

One of the really neat things we're doing as part of our Historic House Tour, as you know, we have hundreds of reel-to-reel tapes that Louis recorded himself. Half of those tapes are spoken

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word tapes, Louis visiting with friends and neighbours and telling jokes and stories. We are incorporating those spoken word tapes into the Historic House Tour. In three rooms, the living room, the dining room and Louis' den there will be a hidden audio system, with speakers hidden in the ceiling and plastered over. The tour guide will bring a group into the room, give them an orientation to the room and then move a hidden switch and you will hear Louis in the room telling jokes and stories. So that promises to be a very exciting part of our house tour.

J.L.: Louis Armstrong sure means a lot to us who saw him and remember him as a live entertainer, somebody entertaining our generation, but how will you attract future generations?



M.C.: We will do targeted outreach to schools in the region. We already have a very successful school program called "Pops is Tops". Every spring we bring in children from the neighbourhood into the beautiful garden of the Armstrong House and give them a free jazz concert.

We do two shows a day for three days and at each show we can seat two hundred and fifty children, so that's 1,500 schoolchildren that we bring in over the course of three days to the Armstrong House. There's a beautiful garden - they sit in the garden and they hear the music.

The band that we've been using for the last five-six years since I've been running the concerts is Arvell Shaw and the Louis Armstrong Legacy Band. Of course, Arvell was Louis' bass player on and off for 25 years. It's intimate enough, where the children get to interact with the musicians. We have a question-and-answer session, they can raise their hands and ask questions and after the performance many kids go up and get autographs from Arvell and the guys in the band, so it's a very lovely event. The school outreach program that we do is very successful. And we will do more programs like that for people to come to the house.

J.L.: Like most tourists and visitors to New York, I stay in Manhattan. I must admit I had some difficulties in getting out here. Have you any plans for organized tours from Manhattan?

M.C.: That's an excellent question and you're right that is important. People in Manhattan are

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reluctant to cross the East River and come out to Queens. Public transportation is not as easy as it is in Manhattan. You can't just walk out here, you have to come in a car or come on the subway. Yeah, we are addressing that, we will have a "Satchmobile" - a natural gas powered van that was donated to us by Keystone Energy Corporation and we've decorated it with photos of Louis Armstrong.

The Satchmobile will make a regular loop between the subway station and the Armstrong House and the Armstrong Archives. So that will help people, if they can just get on the Number 7 train.

Once they get to the subway stop the Satchmobile can pick them up and take them to the House. It is also possible that we may extend the loop of the Satchmobile to go into Manhattan. You could get on the Satchmobile at Times Square and come out to Queens to see the Armstrong House. That's one way of addressing that.

There is a very successful tour group now called the Queens Jazz Trail that people can start at Flushing Town Hall and they get taken around the different jazz sites in Queens. More than fifty great jazz musicians lived here in Queens at one time or another, and we're one of the stops on that tour. We will make more collaborative programs like that with the Queens Jazz Trail. But you're right, we'll have to make an effort to get people out. The problem is not unique to the Louis Armstrong House and Archives but applies to all the other cultural attractions here in Queens.

J.L.: As for the collections here at Queens College they are expanding all the time. I guess more and more visitors are coming. Can you please give me a history of how this has been used throughout these years?

M.C.: The Louis Armstrong Archives opened to the public in 1994. People who come in, show an ID, register, fill out a little form and get hands-on access to the collections. You don't have to be a professor so-and-so or from this university to work with the collections.

We have public school students come in, we have photo researchers, from record companies - we have lots of different people come to research here, but pretty consistently we get about 35 researchers per year.

The visitorship, on the other hand, has steadily increased every year. The first year we were open we had approximately 400 visitors. Last year our average was around 1350, and it has increased every year from 400 up to 1350. I'm happy with those numbers. However, the Archives are in a library on a college campus and you have to really know where we are to get here.

One of the ideas that we are exploring is to move the Archives across the street from the Louis Armstrong House. We acquired, several years ago, an empty lot almost directly across the street. It was covered with weed and trash and had a fence with graffiti on it. After we acquired the property we cleaned it up and put up a nice new fence. Then we hired a museum planning firm to do a planning study for what can go in those lots - what kind of visitor centre, what kind of services can we have across the street, and one of the ideas we're exploring is to move all of the Archives over across the street and have everything on one location. At present the house and the Archives are about ten minutes apart by car and about forty-five minutes apart by public transport. There's no easy way to get from the college to the house or the house to the college, except by driving.

J.L.: But there must be a certain advantage of having it here in the academic surroundings?

Bunk Johnson.

M.C.: Yes there is. We get a lot of support from the college, its nice for researchers who come here to come into the college environment to do their research. I keep the College informed of our plans. We're now in the planning stage trying to decide what this Visitor Centre would be and what would best serve all the stakeholders, all the interested parties.

What may very well happen is that the Archives stays here and we have some sort of study collection over across the street from the house where people can listen to copies of the tapes. The people who really need to do hands-on, in-depth research, whether it's Ken Burns making a film or Joshua Barret writing a book on Louis Armstrong or whoever, would come here to the College and register and do work here in this reading room where we're sitting, and that the casual visitor who just wants to listen to some tapes and look at some photos could look at them over there.

J.L.: Do you think that the definite book and/or work on Louis Armstrong is done by now, or is it yet to come?

M.C.: That's a great question. The definitive narrative biography of Louis Armstrong has not yet been done. There are several narrative biographies and they each have their own benefits and their own flaws. For somebody to do it would be a major project. One of the things I've observed from the existing literature is that writers have trouble forming a narrative for the last decades of Louis' life. The early decades - it's a wonderful story. It's a screenwriter's dream where Louis is born in New Orleans and around the age of twelve he fires off a pistol in the street and goes to the Waifs' Home, you know, and acquires a trumpet and then goes to Chicago and then joins King Oliver and makes his first record. I mean, it's a wonderful, wonderful story, but once you get into the forties and fifties and sixties, what is your story, what's your narrative?

Louis' life is a never ending procession of one nighters and recording sessions and television appearances and so on. How do you make that into a story? I think it can be done, but that's one of the challenges that has faced biographers. I've noticed that in some of the biographies that the early decades are covered in some detail and then the final thirty years of Louis' life is covered in twenty pages.

J.L.: Yes. But if his life was of that nature, the books should be of that nature too.

M.C.: No, there is a lot of stuff to write about in the last years of his life.

J.L.: There are good things and bad things to be said about all the books that have been written. For example, take Giddins' book - what's good and what's less good with his book?

M.C.: Gary Giddins' book "Satchmo" is one of the books that I first recommend to people who, if you're only gonna have one book on Louis Armstrong, this is a good one to start with.

Gary Giddins got access to the Armstrong house after Lucille died but before Queens College took over. So, Gary actually went through the house and opened drawers and opened cupboards and opened closets and that's how he found much of the material that's in his book - the photographs and so forth.

Queens College was given responsibility for the collection as Gary was finishing up his book. So, many of the photographs that are in Gary's book are now here in The Louis Armstrong Archives. They've now all been arranged and catalogued and so forth; they weren't at the time. And Gary's

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such an insightful writer and writes so beautifully I think it's a wonderful introduction to Louis Armstrong. Again, it's not the narrative biography, you know, Louis' life start to finish but it's a wonderful book about Louis.

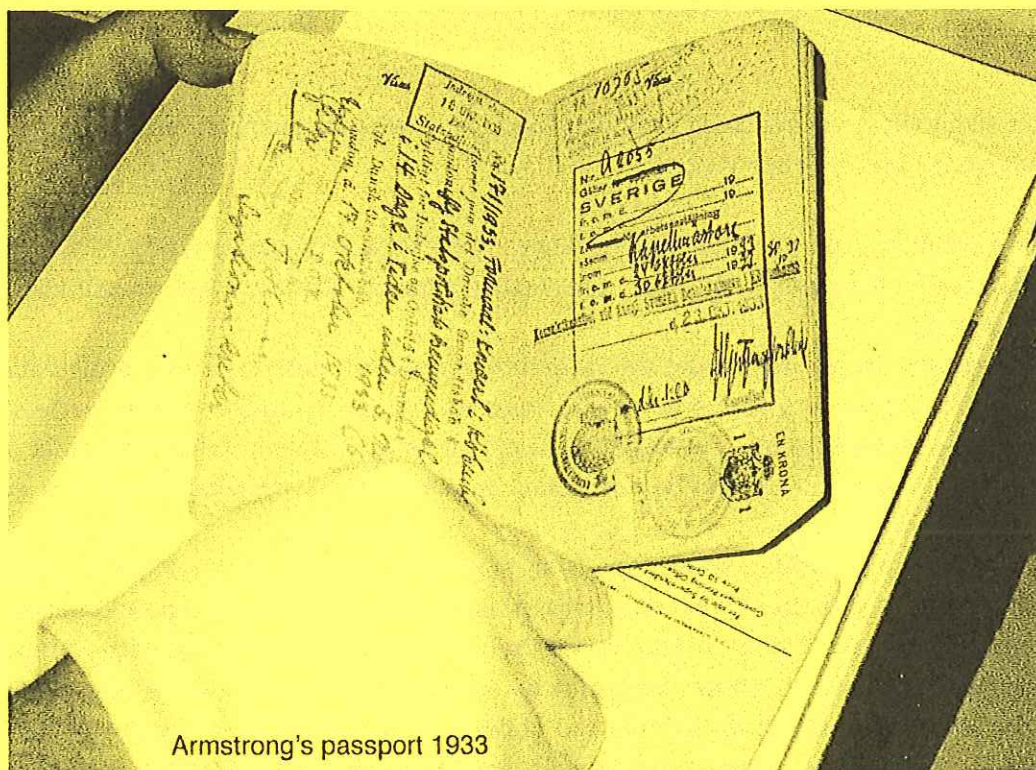
J.L.: Jim Collier?

M.C.: (hesitates) Well, I'm not alone in this opinion - Dan Morgenstern's review of it was - that it is essential reading for somebody studying Armstrong's life. But in my opinion I don't think he grasps who Louis was. I mean there are many mistakes in the book, but as far as who Louis was as a person, I think the book misses the mark.

If I remember correctly, I can almost quote it . . . Jim Collier says that Louis was scarred by a deep-seated sense of insecurity, and he was so emotionally scarred that he craved the applause of his audience, and that's what drove him to perform and constantly be on the road - and that notion is contrary to what the people who knew Armstrong say about him. You know, Louis loved his fans, he loved to perform. He was a giver and that's what made him travel around the world and do all these performances. It wasn't 'cause he craved the applause of the audience through emotional scarring, it's because he really wanted to give.

M.C.: The Ellington book had a similar criticism. One of Collier's theses was that Ellington was not so talented himself and that he stole the ideas of the men in his band. He recycled their ideas into his own compositions. There is some basis to that; Duke incorporated the ideas of the guys in his band but it was definitely Duke Ellington who made that music.

J.L.: What's your view of Larry Bergreen?



Armstrong's passport 1933

M.C.: He did quite a bit of research here, perhaps even more than is indicated in the book. It's a fun read but it's filled with with mistakes, it's riddled with mistakes, large and small. For

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example, he says that Louis on his first visit to the house in 1943 pulled up in front of a three-story brick building. Well, in 1943 it was not. It was a two-story clapboard-sided building. The brick was added in 1971 and the third story was added in 1977, and there are many little things like that

Just to give you one more example, he says, now all this I'm quoting off the top of my head. He says: Astonishingly there was no music at Louis Armstrong's funeral - well, there was music. Peggy Lee sang, Al Hibbler sang. This was broadcast on the evening news, I mean there were many many news articles about it. So if there's so many mistakes like that in the book, then it's a very unreliable source. It's a fun read for somebody doesn't know any better. Where Larry Bergreen excels in talking about the gangsters in Chicago and Louis' use of marijuana. The subtitle of the book is "An extravagant life", and that's what Larry's focussing on - gangsters and marijuana and being a jazz musician, but as far as historical biography it misses the mark.

J.L.: Tad Jones?

M.C.: Tad Jones has not published a biography as such but I understand he's working on one. Tad's the gentleman who discovered the baptismal certificate in New Orleans, and reportedly he's at work on a biography.

J.L.: But you are not cooperating with him here?

M.C.: I believe Tad has been here doing research but although we have a tremendous collection, we really don't have that much new information for Tad. My understanding is that Tad is focussing on early Louis Armstrong, Louis in New Orleans. Louis' ancestry and then his early years in New Orleans but the bulk of our collection dates from after 1943 when Louis and Lucille moved into the house.

J.L.: Let's talk about the Archives itself and your work here. What is your philosophy behind this archive, what's your idea and your vision?

M.C.: We have a mission, part of which is to arrange, preserve and catalogue and make available all the materials we've discovered in Louis' and Lucille's house. That is what we call the Louis Armstrong Collection.

We are trying to collect and make available newly acquired material about Armstrong. We acquire about one hundred new items per year. Louis was a prolific letter writer; letters that Louis has written come back to us, and anything else, you name it: Louis Armstrong dolls or the postage stamp that came out in first-day-of issue, cachets with a postage stamp, we collect anything having to do with Louis.

Another part of our mission is to open Louis' house as a Historic House Museum, and that we're also actively engaged in. In recent years most of my energy has gone to that and not here to the Archives. Peggy Alexander is the administer of the Archives as I concentrate of the house.

We will also is to set up public programs to educate people about Louis Armstrong, to continue his legacy, and we do that through the children's concerts and through the exhibits, through outreach programmes, going out to schools and clubs and colleges. As far as philosophy, we do ask ourselves - how would Louis feel about what we're doing? I mean, are we in fact working within the spirit of Louis Armstrong? I like to think that we are. We are welcoming to

Bunk Johnson.

people, we are helpful to our researchers. Even a Junior High School student who wants to come in here to do research in the reading room - we give them every accommodation. You know, we want them to feel welcome.

Same as our receptions, when we have exhibit receptions we have a soul food caterer from the neighbourhood who lays out barbecue chicken and macaroni and cheese and collard greens and peach cobbler, and by Golly! - you come to the Armstrong Archives you're not gonna have cheese and crackers and a little bit of wine - you're gonna have some food and have a good time!

J.L.: The Armstrong way . . .

M.C.: The Armstrong way, right. So I would like to think that we are headed in that direction, to make...that Louis would approve of what we're doing here.

J.L.: As for the music . . . jazz musicians today, they still play the trumpet, but they go in other directions. Are you working on any educational material - Jazz Armstrong Way - to keep the flame burning?

M.C.: That's a wonderful concept and we have discussed that in our internal meetings and planning meetings. Right now we have our hands full with our current services and programs. I mean, with our little staff and with the funding we get it's all we can do to put on our exhibits, we put on three exhibits per year. To do our outreach programs about who was Louis and to introduce people to Louis Armstrong and then to open the house as a Museum, that's taken a lot of energy and a lot of money to make that happen.

After the house opens, it may very well be that we would have the opportunity and the ability to do more of that: to promote his legacy and his approach. We've played a big role in this, and the nation's perception of Louis has evolved greatly over the past thirty years. Gary Giddins' book played a big role in that, the wonderful writings of Dan Morgenstern have played a role in that. Wynton Marsalis has used Jazz at Lincoln Center as a pulpit to talk about Louis. For Ken Burns' Jazz series, his people did a lot of research here. I have seen the perception of Louis Armstrong change in the last fifteen years. The Archives have contributed to that and I hope that when the house opens you'll see more of that too.

Of course I have a high regard of Louis as a musician. I'm a former musician myself and I studied music and so forth BUT one of the things that we feel strongly about is interpreting the entire Louis Armstrong. The Trumpet Player is the iconic image, that's what we think of, Louis playing the trumpet - but the whole man is very interesting to me. I can make an analogy of Louis being a diamond, and there are different facets. There's the trumpet player, there's the vocalist, there's the composer, there's the writer, there's the actor, there's the philanthropist. I mean, there're all these different sides of Louis, and so that's something that we feel strongly about in our interpretation here - that people should see all those different sides of Louis and get a sense of the man himself, to see what's at the centre of that diamond. It's almost like everything he touched was great, I mean his writing and his singing and his acting. It's all good, it's all good . . .

J.L.: And what he can mean to the Black population of this country perhaps?

M.C.: Oh, that's very true. It is sometimes overlooked that Louis was keenly aware of the Civil Rights struggle. How could he not be? He was a part of it and he contributed to it, not by

Bunk Johnson.

marching and holding signs but by being Louis Armstrong. That is evident by his tapes and by his writings that he knew that he could do more for the struggle by being Louis Armstrong and doing what he did, than he could by marching in a demonstration and holding up a sign.

And that's something that is clear in our programmes. One of our first exhibits here was called "Breaking the Barriers - Louis Armstrong and Civil Rights" and it documented many of Louis' contributions and many of Louis Armstrong's firsts: the first to perform in some of these big hotels in Las Vegas, the first black entertainer to stay in some of these hotels where he was performing and so forth. And that's an inspiration, not just to Black Americans or black visitors, but to everybody.

J.L.: It has been said that young black people have had problems feeling at home in the academic world, and that this aspect of Armstrong could be a topic of research for some ?

M.C.: Of course, it could be a great topic. We, I'm proud that of our researchers here, not all of them have been musical researchers. We had English Majors and sociologists coming here. There are many facets of Louis Armstrong and many ways of looking at him. It doesn't have to be just music people. As far as diversity in Academia goes, we're at an interesting college.

The borough of Queens is a subsection of the city government. There's a New York City government and then New York's divided into five boroughs and each borough has its own government and the borough of Queens is also a county, Queens County, New York State.

Queens is the most ethnically diverse of all the counties in the United States. There are more than a hundred and twenty languages spoken in Queens on a daily basis, that's confirmed by the 2002 census. And if you drive up Main Street, right up here by the College, in this neighbourhood south of the college it's all Orthodox Jewish. You can go another six or seven blocks, it's all Pakistani and Indian. You go another five or six blocks it's all Chinese and Korean and the whole borough is like that. I tell you all this because the population here at Queens College is the same way, I mean the population of Queens College reflects the borough of Queens and the diversity of students is just incredible. So we can talk about Blacks and Whites but you look around Queens and you know it's everybody. There are students from all over the world here at this college and they all respond to Louis.

J.L.: I could see that clearly on my way here on the train . . .

M.C.: Yes, yes, in fact the previous Queens Borough president designated the Number 7 train as the International Express because every stop is a different ethnic neighbourhood. If you get off at 74th Street, that's the largest Little India in Queens, a little five block area with nothing but Sari shops and jewellery stores and Indian restaurants, and you go the next stop it's all Colombian. All the signs are in Spanish and you can get empanadas off street cart vendors . . .

J.L.: I like that

M.C.: Yeah, Yeah, I like it too. I love it.

J.L.: Did you meet Louis Armstrong yourself?

M.C.: I never did. In 1971 when Louis died I had just graduated from high school and was just doing my first gigs as a musician as a saxophone player. And so I never met him in person but I

Bunk Johnson.

feel like I've been meeting him now through working in this house and working with his own stuff.

J.L.: Do you think that we have a Louis Armstrong around today, that in the future there will be a museum or an institution like this to a person living today?

M.C.: Well, I think that requires maybe a two-part answer. I'll answer the second part first. Of course there'll be other great innovators and great artists. I mean that is inherent in human nature. That there will always be another Louis Armstrong, another Mozart, another Beethoven, another Shakespeare, another James Joyce or whoever you want to put in there in that Pantheon.

As far as today, in my opinion there is nobody in the jazz world today, or what we consider jazz, of the stature of a Louis Armstrong or for that matter of a Duke Ellington or a Charlie Parker or a John Coltrane. That raises a huge issue. Why did we have this great succession of innovators - Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington and you know, you name it- Dizzy Gillespie, Ornette Coleman, John Coltrane and so on, and since their days there haven't been any figures of that stature and that influence.

That's a huge topic and I don't know if I have an answer for that. I have some theories on it, but I can't say for sure why that hasn't happened. From what little I know about history I look back at the eighteenth century and here you have Mozart and Beethoven and Haydn and Thomas Jefferson and George Washington all on the planet at the same time. You know, how incredible is that?

J.L.: Would this someone have to be in the entertainment business, to reach a broad message to people?

M.C.: That's true, that's true. Louis arrives at a very interesting time, I mean hand in hand with Louis' great creativity was the birth of the recording industry, the birth of broadcast radio. During Louis' career the rise of broadcast television, the invention and rise of the broadcast television.

J.L.: The Jazz Age . . .

M.C.: The Jazz Age, right.

J.L.: The Roaring Twenties . . .

M.C.: Right, and so the technology and the music all went hand in hand and again, it's a complex relationship that we can't summarize in a few sentences, but with the advent of commercial recordings you didn't have to wait for the Count Basie Band to come to town to hear what Lester Young sounds like, right? You could get the Lester Young 78s and memorize the solos note for note. Jazz evolved quickly and part of that was because of the availability of recordings ; you could hear what people were doing and could copy them. So Louis was part of that, and part of why Louis had the impact that he did was because he was on television and the recordings were available. If we had not had recordings jazz wouldn't have evolved the same way and Louis would not have had the same impact that he had.

So, you know, technology has played a part of that today - it's almost like today everything is so homogenized that it's hard to be an innovator. I mean, radio stations only play what's really packaged and test marketed. It's hard for somebody who is an individual and has a

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unique sound and a different sound to get that exposure.

J.L.: As for the objects here in your collection? Which ones are the most interesting to you?

M.C.: Well, that's a tough question. Now, they're all interesting and some of them make me laugh and some of them make me serious, some of them make me weep. Among the items that speak very forcefully to me are the home-recorded tapes. To be privileged to listen to a tape of Louis and Stepin Fetchit sitting in a room at the Dunbar Hotel in California swapping filthy stories and band stories and that Louis taped it and then I can sit here forty years later, fifty years later and listen to such a tape, that's very remarkable.

So the tapes are very strong format. They really communicate a lot, and of all the items we have I would say the tapes would bring you closest to meeting Louis, actually hanging out with Louis.

J.L.: I have a weekly programme on Radio Sweden called Jazz Classics, and while I'm talking to you here it comes to my mind that I would like to devote one of the programs to this Archive. Would it be possible for me to have examples from those tapes and then insert them in the program?

M.C.: That's something you'd have to talk with Peggy about. I know she's done some of that in the past, and you should ask her about that. The reason I hesitate is that although we own the tapes we don't own the intellectual property rights to the tapes, and so there is a series of permissions that need to go through and so forth.

We're also in discussion with record companies about publishing these tapes and so...the bottom line is, we, because of the restrictions on intellectual property rights have to really control what samples we pass out and how they're used. So, I know it's do-able but you need to clear everything with Peggy.

J.L.: You don't have any sample or . . . that I could sort of . . . so that I could give some example?

M.C.: Yeah, we at one time had a little press kit sampler that we passed out some years back and...again, I'll talk to Peggy. We can FedEx something over to you . . . or on the internet we have half a dozen samples on our website <Satchmo.net> which of course you could use . We'll give you something on a CD so you have CD quality to key up on your program.

J.L.: Peggy visited Sweden two years ago, and she gave a lecture on your work as it was then and she also played some recordings. I remember one recording of "Tears" which brought tears to my eyes. That was one of the strongest musical moments of my life. Will that ever be published, or will I ever have a chance to hear it again?

M.C.: (laughs) I'll be happy to play it for you here. Peggy probably only played the beginning of it. I don't know if she played the whole thing.

J.L.: She did play the whole thing and that was beautiful. I never heard Louis play for three minutes like that and it was absolutely creative from the beginning to the end, and the melody that I had heard with Oliver all my life, and I could hear him . . . Well, the whole thing was

Bunk Johnson.

fantastic.

M.C.: Yeah, it IS fantastic. The answer to your question is, absolutely, we want to get this published. Peggy is working on a project that she and I started together, and she is working on it, to publish a CD or a set of CDs of these spoken word recordings. I naively thought that record companies would be breaking down the door to get to this stuff and it didn't happen. I reached out to some major labels, names that you would recognize, and they're not that interested. Again, back to what we were talking about with the industry . . . They want the next Puff Daddy that they're gonna put on CD and sell two million copies, you know, the first month. Whereas a good jazz recording might sell twenty - thirty thousand copies and be a big hit.

So the record companies haven't been that interested, although we are in conversation with some of them, but one thing we're exploring is to have our own CD, "Louis Armstrong House Records" and, you know, put the best clips on there and package it and we could sell in the gift shop at the Louis Armstrong House. We could give it to members, when you become a member of the Louis Armstrong House and Archives you get one, and this is something that Peggy is actively working on.

J.L.: And a final question and that deals with the future, of course. Please tell me how you want this whole project, if I may call may it that, to develop?



M.C.: Well, I think we're headed in the right direction. The next big arrival point for us is to open Louis' house as a museum. We have some concerns about that, will it be financially stable? I mean, we don't know how many people are gonna go through that house every year, and even with the earned income from admissions to the house, from the gift shop, we're still gonna need

Bunk Johnson.

corporate foundation support, private foundation support and so forth, to do everything we want to do.

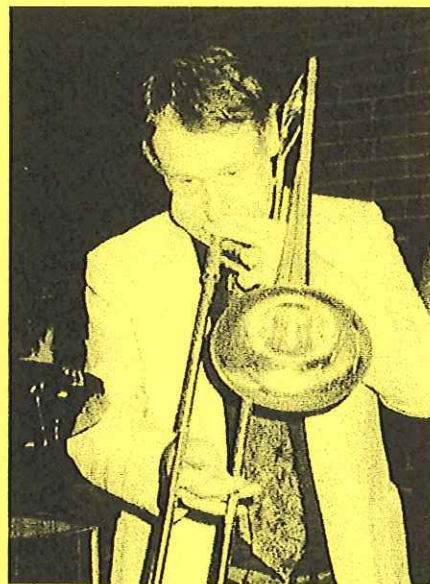
So that's the next big arrival point for us, but once the house is open I think we'll have a solid footing that people can come to the house and see how Louis lived. People can come here to the Archives and see his photos and listen to his tapes, and from there it's just a matter of doing a little more, of better program, reaching more people, a lecture series, a concert series. I mean there are all sorts of other possibilities, but the next big piece of the project is to get the house open. And once the house opens I think other things will fall into place.

J.L.: Thank you very much.

MEET A PROMINENT MEMBER

Mike Pointon

By John Rickard



(This piece first appeared in Just Jazz Magazine and appears here with permission. It has been down edited and slightly changed)

Many of Mike's formative years were spent in Thornton Heath, Surrey, and, together with classmate Bill Stagg, he developed an interest in jazz by listening to the records of Ken Colyer and Chris Barber. He became a regular visitor to Dave Carey's Swing Shop in Streatham, and a keen record collector.

The youthful Pointon soon became hooked on the idea of playing trombone. Mike talked his parents into buying him a second-hand instrument and tried to develop the sounds of such pioneers as Kid Ory, Roy Palmer, and Honoré Dutrey into a style of his own. Later influences included Trummy Young, J.C. Higginbotham and Vic Dickenson.

Mike soon found himself in the company of other budding musicians who evolved into the Perdido Street Six. A turning point for him was hearing George Lewis with Ken Colyer in 1957.

Around this time Mike became a member of the British Bunk Johnson Appreciation Society whose key figure was Graham Russell. Through his influence the Society released several rare Bunk items

Bunk Johnson.

and also introduced Mike to other aspects of New Orleans music.

Other musical landmarks that deeply influenced his playing and appreciation of jazz as entertainment was seeing Louis Armstrong and the All Stars for the first time in 1959 and Kid Ory's Band with Henry 'Red' Allen the same year.

Mike met Sammy Rimington around that time and it soon became apparent that in the wake of the George Lewis Band's 1959 UK tour, both wanted to form a Lewis-style group. They knew of others with similar ambitions such as Clive Blackmore (trumpet), Graham Peterson (piano), John Coles (banjo) and Pete Ridge (drums), and rehearsals began, with various bass players added as and when available. Pete Ridge was soon replaced by Barry Godfrey, who decided to use his middle name of Martyn, and the new band was called Kid Martyn's Ragtime Band.

But Mike, although a lover of New Orleans music, felt that the group was trying too hard to emulate the precise sounds of the Lewis band, and because this view conflicted with those of the other members, he left to join clarinettist Norrie Cox, who led the San Jacinto Jazz Band, which played in the London area, and included Keith Smith.

Following a visit to the Crescent City, Martyn returned and selected a new group which included Pointon, John Defferary and Bill Cole (bass), naming it his Camellia Jazz Orchestra, playing music in the style of Armand Piron, Sam Morgan and Papa Celestin. The band made its first and only recording in the Aeolian Hall, Bond Street.

The period sound they made was not so acceptable to 'Trad boom' audiences at that time, so Barry rejoined his thriving 'Kid Martin' band, which by now included Cuff Billett (trumpet) and Bill Greenow (clarinet/alto), in Mike's opinion now producing a more original New Orleans sound. He was first choice replacement when Pete Dyer was unavailable and the band backed visiting New Orleans guests with whom Mike toured throughout the 60s, including George Lewis, Alton Purnell, Capt. John Handy, Louis Nelson and Albert Nicholas.



It was while playing in Barry Martyn's band at The 51 Club in 1962 that he was spotted by Rudy Balliu of Ghent's Cotton City Jazz Band and invited to regularly guest in Belgium. A Belgian radio

Bunk Johnson.

broadcast was made in 1964 accompanying Mezz Mezzrow, in which Mike participated, followed by a tour of Belgium and England with Kid Thomas Valentine and Emmanuel Paul with the Martyn band.

1972 saw him back in England and becoming interested in radio and television documentary work. An invitation to rejoin Bill Brunskill, who still had a residency in the Lord Napier public house in Thornton Heath, was accepted, and his playing and vocals were to feature in Bill's band for the next 14 years.

The 1980s were eventful years for Mike. Whilst still with the Bill Brunskill band he appeared with them in 'Whatever Happened To Bill Brunskill?', a documentary which was filmed in the Lord Napier, and also continued to work occasionally with Ken Colyer until Ken's death in 1988. Along with Ray Smith he was involved with the Tomas Ornberg/Bent Persson European Classic Jazz Band, with festivals in the UK and Europe; in 1985 he met Dick Laurie and played in the Elastic Band alongside the renowned film animator, cornetist Dick Williams, who was later replaced by Bryan Jones, then by the late Ray Crane; 1989 saw Mike accompany Wild Bill Davison on Bill's last ever UK tour (N. Ireland) with Art Hodes; there were guest appearances with many bands including the Apex Jazz Band (Belfast), Cuff Billett's All Stars, and Andy Dickens' Louis Prima-style band, Jump Jive and Wail.



Complementing Mike's playing is his skill as a writer/broadcaster, and as well as contributions to Dick Larue's 'Allegedly Hot News International' and 'New Orleans Music' (not forgetting 'Just Jazz'), magazines there have been BBC radio documentaries such as 'Swingtime For Hitler', describing how jazz was used as propaganda by the Nazis; 'Bunk & Bill', the story of Bill Russell's re-discovery of the legendary Bunk Johnson, (CDs of these 4 acclaimed programmes were recently donated to the Bunk Johnson Jazz Collection at Iberia Parish Libraries) and also, in association with Campbell Rurnap, '100 Not Out!', the story of The 100 Club, which was produced by Mike.

Bunk Johnson.

In 1993 Mike was invited by Andrew Simons, then curator of the Jazz Section of the British Library's National Sound Archive, to record a number of interviews as part of the Archive's oral history of British jazz project. Mike has additionally donated 10 hours of taped interviews with jazz historian Bill Russell, made in New Orleans. These latter tapes formed the basis of a book which Mike and Ray Smith have compiled, with a working title of 'Bill Russell: Father of the New Orleans Jazz Revival'.

Mike Pointon's trombone style has been variously described as 'passionate' and 'trenchant' and, besides being influenced by the great players already mentioned, perhaps he also owes something to the likes of Joe 'Tricky Sam' Nanton, Sandy Williams and Lawrence Brown. But his sound can most certainly be identified as very much his own, which is as it should be after almost 50 years of playing the music he loves, and his great enthusiasm remains undiminished.

WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS & BUNK JOHNSON

By Claes Ringqvist

The eminent poet William Carlos Williams (1893 - 1963) was a precursor and trendsetter for the whole Beat Generation of poets and writers, like Allen Ginsburg, Jack Kerouac, Gregory Corso, Lawrence Ferlinghetti, Gary Snyder et al. He spent almost all his life in and around the small town of Rutherford, New Jersey, where he was a doctor (a pediatrician and G.P.) Rutherford was not only the setting of his life, it was an ingredient in his poetry, which was to be part of a truly American literature, rooted in its place of origin - unlike the 'rootless' cosmopolitanism of his friend Ezra Pound.

The following passage is an excerpt from a book, written by **Mike Weaver**, lecturer in American literature, University of Exeter in 1971, called "**William Carlos Williams - The American Background**" (Cambridge University Press):

MAN ORCHID

For more than a decade Williams' closest friend and ally was Fred R. Miller, an unknown young writer who edited the American radical story-magazine **Blast** till the late thirties when his commitment to proletarian life gave way to a musical and social concern for the Negro. He had taught himself to play the piano and at the same time has amassed one of the best collections of early jazz records of his day. He was in the vanguard of the white man's interest of classical jazz which was to enjoy a popular revival in the forties.

The revival of classic jazz found its centre in **Bunk Johnson**. Encouraged by collectors Bunk had re-emerged from the obscurity of a small Louisiana town and, with a new set of teeth provided by his benefactors, began to play again in 1942. In the spring of 1945 the New York public heard him at a Sunday afternoon session at which it is likely Miller was present.. Williams ordered some of his records. Miller's plan to educate 'Joe Square', among whom he would have surely numbered his friend Williams, was to offer him something good but modern, and work back to New Orleans jazz by

Bunk Johnson.

stages; 'The longest way "round to Basin Street is the shortest way home" - from New York 1945` His task was soon to be made easier; **Bunk Johnson** was coming to town for a season and Williams responded enthusiastically. Then a handbill advertising Bunk's opening in New York came through the post and Williams, not sure that it had come from Miller and not wishing to be slow, quickly informed him that he was going to the opening on Friday, 28 september 1945.

On 23 November Williams re-visited the Styvesant Casino with his daughter-in-law, Virginia. That second evening there was some discussion of an inter-racial literary magazine. They spoke of buying the established but failing *South Today*, but also of what it would mean if with the best of intentions inferior black writers should find themselves beside better white ones. For Miller it was a disappointing evening as tutor; Williams had waited in vain for Bunk to 'get hot':

He did, after you left! Towards the end of the evening he and the band kicked off with the St Louis Blues and it was so good the customers wouldn't let them quit; dancers stopped dancing to crowd in front of the stand for a better listen, and Moon and Dorais and I grabbed up our beer mugs and joined them. The St Louis went on and for about 20 minutes and it was too bad you weren't there to hear it.

Nevertheless, Bucklin Moon and Bill Dorais would blossom as characters in two stories based on jazz themes; Moon as the hero of '*Man Orchid*', an unpublished and unfinished collaborative novel by Williams and Miller, and Dorais as one of the two protagonists in Miller's short story, *Gutbucket and Gossamer*, eventually published in 1950.

Williams was always keen to collaborate on joint projects.../../. Now Miller proposed the idea of a novel written without a plot; they would write alternate chapters. Within a week Williams sent him a draft of the first chapter:

In his person he was the contract (one might almost say the expanse!) between classic & New Orleans music.

To resolve such a person would be to create a new world, to resolve him in the mind lucidly, dramatically, or as he is - in the flesh - to make the flesh mindful - or the mind fleshful. His flesh - the suburbs of his mind - informed.

Why should a novel *not* wear its skeleton on the outside - our bones open to the air - like a crab. An intelligent crab - a fat intelligent crab - what an advantage it would be.

Next Williams invited a third person to participate in the novel. Lydia Carlin had been brought up in Florida, and was 'told to imagine herself as a fat, light yellow nigger boy and tell us some factual stuff about her childhood background', which she did. But by now Miller was in a quandary. He could not go on with the hero; he felt he did not know enough about him: 'And I can't fake what I don't know. That last is bad. In jazz "faking" is a name for playing by ear or improvising. If I can't fake, what'm I doing trying to help out on a verbal improvisation?' Williams had only met Moon once and therefore felt free to improvise, since he was only superficially committed to his hero's real identity. He suggested Miller should leave Moon to him and that he should develop a separate novel not to touch the Moon novel just yet but to be merely aligned with it: Miller would develop a novel about a woman, 'She, the white, impossible queen'

In June 1946 Williams inter-cut all the available material and sent it to the typist. Miller went on to develop his romance in a jazz setting, *Gutbucket and Gossamer*. Nearly a year later Williams was

Bunk Johnson.

still thinking of their collaborative effort: "... the "novel", for that might easily be a magnificent thing if we can ever get to the writing - the composition; the beauty of the form we are inventing would be its adaptability, something to make the ordinary "story" just a piece of stodge". Nine years later he was still speaking of reaching a novel-length script: "It excites my imagination".

The hero of *Man Orchid* is Cholly Oldham, publisher's reader and trumpet player. As Williams conceived him he was an extremely light-coloured Negro, born of a Greek father and Negro mother. During the day he reads and writes the pseudo-scholastic jargon of the day, and in the evenings he tries to write a novel. But as the "contract" - or expanse - between classical music and Negro jazz he is profoundly frustrated. The mixing of the blood has resulted in an impediment in his speech. Cholly stutters. As Williams rendered the theme much earlier: "White blood and colored blood don't mix" said he nursing his injury. "Doc, I got a hemorrhage of the FLUTE", he said. Similarly, Cholly's problem is one of inarticulateness in the face of literary ambitions. The instrument of his language is inadequate; **Bunk Johnson** is a pure antelope by comparison: "Orchids grow on trees, flaunting (a good word) their complex sexual devices. There it is again, the fluted and bulbous mechanism". Sitting at the stuttering type-writer, he thinks of **Bunk Johnson's** "autochthonous horn" growing like an orchid on the trunk which is his band. Cholly's wife catches him among these thoughts: "You know you're not waorin working on any pay writing. You're working on play writing. And when I say PLAY writing I mean your just playing with yourself. I said playing with yourself. You know what I mean?"

In the essay in *In the American Grain*, "The Advent of the Slaves", Williams suggested that the quality of life that the Negro had brought to America consisted in a poise which no authority could threaten. In Williams' view, the Negro owed his potency to his freedom from the narrow bonds of white morality. He enjoyed the privilege of the damned. It is an attitude which finds sensitive expression in *Paterson*, in the Negress of the scarred belly - a black contrast to the impossible white girl, Phyllis, and the queen of the Unicorn Tapestries. The Negro is nothing, which leaves him free to be something. Cholly Oldham embodies the belief that death is a meaningless blank, and that the real danger, and the cause of our irrational existence, is that the blank should be in our lives. As Cholly says:

And there's religion for you. They know you can't prove nothing so you gotta believe. You gotta believe. And who says you gotta believe? The one who don't eat, don't drink, don't sleep, don't have his woman. You gotta believe. That means all you got don't mean nothing. That means all the laws you got to hold you down is made to make you believe there's something. Yes, sir, SOMETHING! That's what you got to believe, that there is something - because all you got that you think you got is just nothing because your Pappy was a Greek restauranter and your mammy did some cooking.

The ideom of this sermon against religion is very close to the first-draft conception of the sermon in *Paterson* - originally delivered by a Negro preacher and in the printed version by the immigrant evangelist. The Negro preacher in the early version betrays his orchidean inheritance by being convinced that there is a transcendental something, whereas Cholly knows, as do the coloured girls in *Paterson*, that potency of being consists in movement. To enjoy oneself at the typewriter, as Cholly's wife sees it, is to be deviant. In Dora Madsen's terms, it puts both the virgin and the whore out of business. Yet Cholly has no other aim than to appease his primitive hungers by writing

Bunk Johnson.

In the second chapter of *Man Orchid*, Williams returned to a favourite theme; the setback to American poetry which he considered *The Waste Land* to have been in the twenties. He compared it to the setback Negro jazz had suffered with the success of swing in the thirties. In drawing an analogy between the course of American poetry and New Orleans jazz, Cholly - for Williams - gives voice to a dogma current in 1946, which attributed the submergence of classic jazz to the rise of 'sweet music' - the white man's orchestrated version of the black's authentic material. Rudi Blesh's *Shining Trumpets*, written while **Bunk Johnson** was still at the Styvesant Casino, epitomises such an attitude; it was the intellectual culmination of the New Orleans revival. It took no account of the development in modern jazz which *Charlie Parker* first recorded under his own name at just that time, and to whom Robert Creely would later turn for an anthology for poetry, but with purist zeal strictly limited itself to the age of **Bunk Johnson**. Cholly is equally zealous, assigning the somewhat extreme date of 1906 for the displacement of the classic jazz by sweet music. Rather like the jazz revivalists of the early forties with their recording-machines, Williams tried to find what American poetry had escaped the blight of *The Waste Land*. It had been on his mind for some time. He had spoken of a private anthology, 'an ideal anthology of singing American poems',. But had no leisure for its selection.

Ol' BUNK's Band

by William Carlos Williams

These are men! The gaunt, unfore-
sold, the vocal,
blatant, Stand up, stand up! The
slap of a bass-string.
Pick, ping! The horn, the
hollow horn
long drawn out, a hound deep
tone -
Choking, choking! while
the treble reed
races - alone, ripples, screams
slow to fast -
to second to first! These are men!

Drum, drum, drum, drum, drum
drum, drum! the
ancient cry, escaping crapulence
eats through
transcendent - torn, tears, term
town, tense,
turns back off whole, leaps
up, stomps down,
rips through! These are men
beneath
whose force the melody limps -
to
proclaim, proclaims - Run and
lie down,
in slow measures, to rest and
not never
need no more! These are men!
Men!





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