

CHARLES LOVE  
December 9, 1959  
Reel I--Summary--Retyped

Summary: Betty B. Rankin  
First Check: Marjorie T. Zander  
Second Check: Richard B. Allen

Interviewer: William Russell

Charles E. Love was with Harry Walker's band in Alexandria, called "Alexander['s] Ragtime Band." They used to play dances at Oakdale, Louisiana. There was a sawmill near Oakdale at a place called [McNair? Current maps give McNary near Oakdale.]. In order to keep the workers at the sawmill on the job, they [the bosses?] hired a piano player. When Alexander's Ragtime Band came to play for a dance at Oakdale, there was no place there for them to sleep, so they were sent by hack, "something like an old stage," to McNary, where there was a boarding house where they could eat and sleep. When the band went back to McNary after the dance, they heard the piano player playing for the workers there to dance, everyone having a good time. Love pulled out his horn and began playing cornet with the piano player, who was pretty good. Played a lot of numbers, enjoyed it. Next morning the band took the hack back out to catch the train.

About a week later the band got another job in Oakdale. After they got off from the dance, they went back to McNary, joined the piano player, had a few drinks. Sometimes the violin [and/or?] sax player would join in, too. The piano player had a funny name, which Love couldn't remember, did not see him again, although they went to many other sawmill towns and did the same thing. After they got through a dance they had to go down into the colored neighborhood, where they had a piano player, join in and have a good time. Tioga was one place like this, where he met a piano player.

Love left Alexandria, went to Shreveport and played a while, came back to Alexandria years later and made the same trip again. He met another piano player there, but couldn't think of his name.

In 1922, Love came to New Orleans. In 1924, he met the piano

player from McNary again. Bootsy Fernandez had a place on Gravier and Franklin [now what street?], right across from the old First Precinct police station [223 Saratoga Street at that time]. Bootsy hired Love to work there from 9 at night until 2 or 3 in the morning. It was a bad corner; the fellows used to drink a lot in that neighborhood. The musicians would play a few numbers; then the place would empty and they would come out, stand around the corner and joke. Steve Lewis, piano player with [A. J.] Piron's band, came by, would meet Judge [Samuel E.--Soards, 1929] LeBlanc, who would take Steve on out with him, drive him home. Steve went out and got full [of alcohol], came back and joined Love, Ernest Trepagnier, Udell [Wilson, no doubt], [Manuel] "Fess" Manetta. One night when they were drinking and talking, the name of Papa De-Da-Da came up. Love realized that this was the man he had played with in McNary. They decided to play his tune, "Papa De-Da-Da." Steve started it on the piano; the rest of the band fell in with him. The place got crowded. Then the crowd left and the musicians started drinking again. Somebody said "Papa De-Da-Da" was Piron's number. Steve, full of liquor, would have none of this. He knew it was Papa De-Da-Da's number, that Piron had just gotten hold of it. "When he [Steve] get full of liquor, you know, he wants everybody to know he's right." Turned out that Papa De-Da-Da was across the street in jail. Ernest Trepagnier bet \$5 that "Papa De-Da-Da" was Piron's number; Steve put up \$5 on Papa De-Da-Da. Steve had another drink, went over to Common Street to the judge [LeBlanc], persuaded the judge to let Papa De-Da-Da out of jail in Steve's care just for the night. Steve agreed to return Papa De-Da-Da to the jail, but not necessarily sober.

Steve brought Papa De-Da-Da over to Bootsy's place. Bootsy was [Steve's?] brother-in-law. Love recognized him from McNary,

remembered him telling about the piece. John Evans was serving the drinks for Bootsy; Steve got John to bring some gin for Papa De-Da-Da. Papa "picked" one or two choruses, then started singing, then went to talking, telling them all about where he had played and how the people liked that piece. Love asked Papa if he remembered the cornet player who sat in with him at McNary, from Alexander's Ragtime Band. Papa De-Da-Da recognized Love as "that little big-eyed fellow."

Papa asked Love to sit in with him, to show the rest of them how he knew that piece. So they sat right there in Bootsy's place and played.

Bootsy liked Love. Used to carry Love around with him in his car so Love could play little tunes while Bootsy shot pool.

They used to sit up all night so about daylight Steve took Papa De-Da-Da back to jail, loaded. Steve was loaded, too. The jail was at Tulane and Gravier, by Elks Place, right across the street from the [Pythian Temple] Roof Garden where Love used to play on Sunday nights with Piron's big band--about eleven pieces.

After that Bootsy opened up another little place on Common Street at Rampart Street, right around the corner [from his other place?]. He hired a band there, including Love. They went to work at midnight, knocked off at 5 or 6 a.m.. That's where Judge LeBlanc used to bum with his friends. It was a small band: Big Eye Louis on clarinet; Red Dugas on drum; Henry Martin on banjo; [!! Not drums!! Possibly his brother "Coochie" on banjo] Love on cornet; Walter Decou on piano. The place was a speakeasy, with gambling upstairs. They had to push a button, be inspected through a peephole before being admitted. They would not play at first--gamblers wanted quiet. Then the judge would come in, request Bootsy's number (the

blues). They would play a few numbers, then the judge would say, "That's enough of that noise. What kind of band is this anyhow? Go on in there and get you a drink and go lay down somewhere and go to sleep." The band would sleep an hour or so, get a drink or so. The judge would come in and wake them up, kid them, get them to play again, then stop them again, tell them go get a drink and go back to sleep.

Judge LeBlanc was a sport; everybody knew him. He used to take Steve Lewis out with him; Steve would sing coon songs.

William Russell plays record, "Papa De-Da-Da". Love recognizes it when vocalist begins on chorus, thinks Punch Miller is on cornet. Mr. Russell says that it is Louis Armstrong on cornet, with Clarence Williams's Blue Five. Vocalist is Eva Taylor, Clarence's wife, in New York. Mr. Russell thinks the record was made about 1924 which Love says again was when Papa De-Da-Da was arrested. [Please check label and no. on this record.]

Papa De-Da-Da didn't come from New Orleans; Love doesn't know where he came from, but knows he used to be at those sawmill switches all the time. The pay for a sawmill switch piano player was about \$15 a week plus what he could pick up around there--he probably made \$30 or \$40 a week easy. The fellows would knock off from work at night, come in and clean up, go right into the dance hall. They would tip the piano player to play special pieces for them. He also got his board and lodging. Everywhere--places like McNary, Bogalusa--you saw a sawmill, there was a sawmill switch piano player. Love used to play dances for the white people at all those little towns

like Tiga and Fullerton, would have to go back to the sawmill switch to sleep because there would be no place in town for a colored man to sleep. At the sawmill switch they had little houses for the colored help, like the quarters on a sugar farm.

The band traveled by train all the time. On the way back from Oakdale to Alexandria they'd stop off and play a dance at Mr. [Pringle's?] Turpentine farm. Love lived in Alexandria close to the station, but he had so much work he sometimes didn't have time to go home between trips. His wife would come to the station, bring him a good meal, on a cracked plate, tell him to throw the plate out the window when he finished the meal. He would sleep on the train. After the dance date, instead of sleeping at the sawmill switch, he would play and drink with the sawmill switch piano player. Out of every two or three dances his band would play, they would catch one at a sawmill switch. Love sometimes made a little change, too, playing with the sawmill switch piano player. People would get up, come to the dance hall when they heard the music. If sawmills didn't hire piano players, the workers would leave and go to town when they got paid on Saturday.

Love tells how lumbermen go through the swamps in pirogues, cutting trees. Description of the lumber industry around Plaquemine in Love's youth. There was a lot of cypress between Plaquemine and Morgan City in Grosse Tete Bay.

Love was working in a sporting house over on the bayou [in Alexandria] once when a big lumber man, [names restricted], came to the house and shut it up, bought it for the night. The lady charged them \$400 for the night. The

men had the band play one piece, then they went upstairs to the private room where all the guests sat around. When they wanted music, they would come downstairs and call for numbers, especially "Alexander's Ragtime Band." [Restricted] was a rich man, a devilish fellow. When he got high, his hobby was to break up a bass drum. Baby Lovett (the drummer) was a little bitty fellow who lived in Alexandria, a friend of Charlie Love's. [Restricted] would get to looking at Baby's drum. Will Nolan, the trombone player, warned him. Baby would slip his new drum out, take it across the street, leave it with a fellow in another house, take an old drum back for [Restricted] to break up. [Restricted] would walk around the floor, beating the drum, then he'd get mad and put his fist through the head. Then he'd throw it down on the floor and jump in it, sit down in it. Then he would pay for it. It would be an old drum, worth almost nothing, but the drummer would tell him he paid \$50 for it, and [Restricted] would give him \$50, tell him to go buy a new one. The drum was the only instrument [Restricted] would break up; that was his hobby.

[Restricted] owned a sawmill out from Alexandria somewhere.

One time these men [Restricted] ordered two extra coaches from Alexandria, came down to New Orleans for a good time. They called themselves the Monroe Boost Club. Love was with the Williams Brothers Orchestra then. All the old rich men got on the train, asked them to fix the orchestra, convert it into a brass band so they could march to their meeting in New Orleans. They ordered two coaches for Alexandria, on the Mountain [ ? R.R.] picked up a coach at Ruston, Louisiana, and picked up two coaches at Baton Rouge. The band was in the vestibule of the train, [all fell asleep?]

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Love continues with the story (from Reel I) of the rich men from around Alexandria who hired the Williams Brothers Orchestra for a train trip to New Orleans. *FEW SECONDS IN*

was a flute player in his early days. He was very partial to the Williams Brothers Band--it was a good band. He told the band, "Well, boys, we're going to give you a chance to make some money." There were a lot of old sawmill men on the train who wanted to sleep. The younger men were full of devilment. They provided plenty of everything the band might want---whiskey, sandwiches, oranges, between Baton Rouge and Alexandria. But every fifteen minutes they wanted the band to make the rounds--start from band quarters and play to the end of the train to make a little extra money. Wanted them to play nothing but "There'll Be a Hot Time in the Old Town Tonight," to make all the noise they could. The leader, Ed Williams, who had a watch, was to check the time. They were to play to the end of the train and back, then look at the watch, fifteen minutes later start on the rounds again.

There was one man, Dan Tucker, especially to wait on the band, get them everything they wanted. He also beat on the bass drum. He could play a little cornet. They had four or five tubs of beer, all the whiskey they wanted. The older men, who wanted to sleep, got mighty tired of hearing "Hot Time in the Old Town Tonight!" every fifteen minutes.

The train stopped up at Carrollton. The men told the band they could go on to town if they wanted to; the coaches would be at Union Station. Ed was to meet the men at the Grunewald Hotel [now the Roosevelt] every morning, because they didn't know exactly when they would leave.

Love came out on the platform--tied a bow necktie for Old [unclear] gave him \$5 for this service.

[unclear] came along and had Ed Williams and Love tie a big sign on the train, running along the side, from one end of the car to the other, "Monroe Boost Club."

\$5 apiece to put up a sign on both sides of the coach. They told

[unclear] they were going downtown to Rampart Street. He told them to go ahead, the coaches would be down at the Union Station, Dan Tucker would have the beer cold in the baggage car. They could bring their friends aboard there, have their fun in the baggage car.

The band went on downtown on the [street] car. Love stopped at the barber shop, saw Jim Wilson and some others. They wanted to hear the band; Love agreed to bring the band up later in the evening, when Ed Williams would see fit for them to come. Frankie Duson, Willie Cornish, Peter Bocage--all of them waited on Rampart Street.

The band went on aboard the coaches, started practicing in the baggage car. That band used to practice every time they got a chance. While they were practicing,--You'd think we were

playing for somebody,"--along came Frankie Duson, Pete [Bocage?]. After a while, along came Joe Howard. In less than a half hour, they were all aboard. They filled the New Orleanians up with liquor, cigars, etc. Those old fellows used to really throw some money away.

Ed Williams had to go over the hotel every morning before nine o'clock to find out when they were leaving. They stayed here four days, doing nothing but practicing, playing, having a good time. They made plenty of money. *7 1/2 million (157)* \$20 apiece to have fun with in the city. Love didn't know what to do with money then--he had some fun, spent some of it, but pocketed most of it.

On the fourth morning, they told Ed to have everybody aboard the train by eleven o'clock [p.m.]. They were to go on to sleep; the men didn't know exactly when they would leave. The band ran all around Rampart Street, everywhere they wanted to go, came on back to the train and went to bed. Love came back to the train about nine p.m. and went to bed. They had cots in the baggage car--every man had a cot of his own. Love hadn't been home to Plaquemine for a long while, wated to see it, but he went to sleep and didn't wake up until he got to Alexandria. They had changed engines at Baton Rouge junction from the T-P Railroad to the Mountain [?] Railroad. He got off in Alexandria, went on home. Rested, [I] went down to Lee Street that night.

It was daytime when they got to Monroe;

off there, told them they sure did have a nice band.

[On the way down,] when they stopped in Baton Rouge, "Toot Johnson and all them got on board, and we treated them nice." The band stopped over two days in Baton Rouge. They made a parade to bring the employers down to the hotel in Baton Rouge, then they were through. So Toot Johnson fixed them up with a dance date. They made nice money on that. They came on down to New Orleans from Baton Rouge, were paid off in Monroe on the way back.

There was no liquor in Shreveport at that time, which was during Prohibition; all of them got big "Dago baskets," brought beer and stuff in. Shortly after that, they passed a city ordinance; you couldn't bring over a quart of liquor into Shreveport. A detective would get on [the train], ask you what you had in your cornet case of whatever you were carrying. "If they catch you with more than one quart, you had to tell where you got it from or go to jail."

Ed Williams had a big house; all the musicians used to room there with him. He would give parties. He had liquor hidden around there. The musicians would order their quart from Monroe, when it came they would give it to Ed.

They passed a city ordinance that if you were caught with liquor, you had to drink it and stay sober or go to jail. Policeman caught Love on Texas Avenue with a pint of liquor one night. He had drunk part of it, but had about a half-pint in the bottle. Policeman told him if he drank up the evidence, he could go, but

if he didn't drink it, it would be evidence on which Love would be arrested. Love didn't really want it, but he had to drink it up or get arrested. Love drank it all. Policeman told him then if he couldn't walk straight, he would arrest him. Love buttoned his coat up, started off kind of slow, said "Good night, Cap," and started to run. Ran so he wouldn't fall down, didn't dare try to walk slowly. When he got way down on Sprague Street, he could hear the policeman laughing. The policeman saw him the next day, told him he sure could drink liquor, policeman said he would put him in jail if he saw him with liquor again. (Lc)

There was a set of teen-age boys there who would board the trains coming in from Monroe at the junction just before Shreveport, would pretend to be detectives, search the baggage, and confiscate whiskey. (One fellow had been caught coming from Monroe with a bass violin full of liquor.) Love was working at the Star Theatre at this time. The teen-age boys would come along and hire the band after work at the theatre, called it making a little "hot shot." It was playing on the side road out of the city, They would want a small band, a cornet, fiddle, guitar, something like that. Band would charge \$15 a man for three hours. Boys would pick them up in a car when they got off, at about 10:30. They would also "steal them girls out of the houses." They would go out in the country, down a side road off the highway, have a regular picnic dance. They would get to fighting. They would ask the band to play another hour, for which the band would charge \$3 a man. This

kind of job would come up once or twice a week. Band didn't realize the boys were stealing the whiskey until the boys were caught, and the thing broken up. "Man, musicianers see some funny things."

Hutchinson, a fine musician, came from British Honduras to New Orleans on a visit. He wanted to play, but had no instrument with him. He had learned to play the baritone [horn] in school. Love and Willie Humphrey, the younger, had a little band then, with Walter Pichon on piano. They borrowed a mellophone for Hutchinson, who sat in with them. Hutchinson played from an alto sax part. Willie was playing clarinet then; he could play tenor, too. They were using music. "Man, that boy played one of the sweetest mellophones I ever heard, put his hand in it and everything, you know, getting those different tones." Hutchinson kept wishing they had a baritone. The next night "Guyé" (Butler Rapp) who was later killed by Walter Decou, had his baritone there--he had just made a funeral--lent his baritone to Hutchinson who really played it well in the orchestra.

Punch Miller sat in with them one night, "Get up, Love, let me play something, get me lip waked up here." Louis Dumaine had been in earlier, sat in for Love. It was at a jitney dance. Dumaine played about an hour, while Love went off and got [coffee ?]. Love came back and sat down, but before he got a chance to play, here came Punch. Hutchinson was just looking at all these changes. They played "Panama." (Scats.) Punch cut loose with some of his wild runs. Hutchinson, who came from that part of the world

[near Panama] got up and said, "Music has gone to hell."

Shortly after that Manuel Manetta got a job next door, at Bootsy Fernandez [Martinez ?] place. Bootsy and Beansy (Edwin Fauria) were partners. They hired Hutchinson over there to play alto--he got an alto. They had a nice little band over there, [Louis "Kid" Shotz] [Madison] on trumpet. Hutchinson got drunk one night. He had seen how bad the trombones played, had seen a couple of funeral bands. He came over to Earl Humphrey and demanded that Earl give him his trombone, "Let me show you how to play a trombone." Hutchinson blasted on the trombone, making everything out of key. Everyone laughed at him. He was high that night.

Hutchinson gave up music and went back home disgusted, shortly after he heard Punch and said, "Music has gone to hell." [something is wrong with the sequency of events--the above two paragraphs are contradictory.] This was at a taxi dance hall on Iberville, owned by Bootsy and Beansy.

Punch "would make some funny stuff on the cornet. Band playing something--he'd play 'Yankee Doodle' or anything, and it would come out right, you know. It sounded so peculiar. Man, he'd cut loose there . . . he'd miss a few there , , , them high notes, you know. Hutchinson looked at him, said 'Well, music has gone to hell.' And the next week he went homw. He left here."

Braden used to have the Astoria Hotel; he was about to lose it and Beansy saved him. Beansy has a good bit of money. Love says Beansy, who is as light as a white man, got his nickname

because he used to sell beans and rice. "He got rich seeling beans."

Mr. Russell has heard Beansy did a lot of gambling. Love says he's a real gambler, "He knows the percentage of it." Beansy's older brother invented some kind of awning to put on houses. Beansy used to work for his brother during World War II.

Love worked at the Navy Yard, landed a job there after he had worn his shoes out=going around to the WPA office. Love had worked at the Navy Yard when he was just a kid, when he was playing music with Tom Albert and Eddie Vincent. They used to practice right over the way from the Navy Yard gate.

Eddie Vincent was a good musicianer. When Love was a kid and first met Vincent, Vincent and Tom Albert lived in the first house down [*John Sox's Lane* - Southlawn ? See map], over in Algiers, "down the coast," right at the west gate of the Navy yard. There's a little church on the corner, and a big=old house way back--you can't see it for the reed canes--it's falling down, but a rich old man, Mr. Ward, lives there. Eddie and Tom Albert lived in a little double house, right across the street, back in the yard. [Not clear whether they both lived in one side, or one in each.] Love used to go down there and join them every day. They practiced every day. They had a bass viol player called "Ti." When Love first came here, he could play the bass, but Tom wanted a cornet player, told him to get a cornet and they would all show him how to play. Eddie Vincent played valve trombone; he would drill Love through what they were going to play. The [Navy] lieutenants

would hear them from over in the [Navy] yard. They didn't have but one building [in the Navy yard ?] then, and Love worked on that building. The Navy officers hired them one Saturday night to give a dance out there. "We played such good music . . . they gave us three nights: Thursday, Friday, and Saturday. And I got busy on the horn and I taken lessons from everybody. I used to go around to Old Man Allen [Henry Allen, Sr.]'s house--son wasn't born then--Georgie Hooker used to play cornet in a band then--I'd get George to teach me what he knew. I might go around to a baritone player's house, George [Sim's?], he's teach me; he was a fine musician." Love also went to Charles Deverges for lessons. Mr. Russell says he thinks "Fess" [Manetta] took lessons from him, too. Charlie Love says, yes, and Pete [Bocage?] did, too. All Love wanted to do was to blow the horn and play. He got good.

Then Love and Tom [Albert] commenced playing out in Plaquemines Parish "where all them mosquitoes are at." Love was good, wanted his father and the home folks to hear him. His father had said Love wasn't going to play the cornet. When he was a little bitty boy he would play it too loud. His father told him that wasn't the way to study music, "Learn how to get a tone, and play soft. If you play soft, you can play loud when you want to." Love was playing pretty fair when he went home, though not really good, but his father though it was great. "That's my boy." Love had gone out with Frankie Duson, [Peter ?], Jor Oliver on cornet. They had a dance at the Odd Fellows. Love went up there and worked all day

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with those fellows for nothing. He wasn't getting paid, just wanted to play to learn from them. His father was proud of him, wouldn't let him come back down here, made him stay home. Father got himself a ~~tr~~bone. They had a little band at home, called it Love's Orchestra. Clarence Williams's brother played bass in the band. George Lewis [strings ?] also played with them, and a fellow named Buddy Brunson [sp.?]. Brunson had a funny lip, and a funny trombone-- Love thinks it may have been an E flat tenor, a little, high one, a ~~valve~~ trombone. "He didn't know even how to tune it, but he could play it. . . . We would sound an A on the violin . . . he'd finger any one of them valves, and he'd be flat thataway, he'd blow it up . . . he'd blow it up a half a tone without fingering nothing." He was a natural musician, could blow up into tune, a tail-gate trombonist. He used to come down to New Orleans, hear the fellows here, go right back up home and do the same thing.

Vincent could read. Love hadn't started reading when he played with Eddie Vincent. Used to wish he was great, like Vincent. Vincent was playing valve, could really take solos and all.

Finally, Love got down to business. His cousin, Henrietta, who lived in Gretna, was married to a bass horn player, the one who taught Eddie Jackson. He (the husband of cousin Henrietta) told Love where to go to get good lessons, sent him to George Williams, who used to stay right by the old brewery in Algiers. Williams was a trick trombonist. Used to winter here when he came off from a show.