

EMANUEL SAYLES  
I [of 2]--Digest--Retyped  
January 29, 1961

Also present: Barry Martyn  
William Russell

Emanuel Sayles began playing professionally about April, 1924. [ES's use of the term "professionally" means making a living playing music, having no other means of support]; when he was attending school, he would play two or three nights during a weekend. He and many of his cohorts were studying with Dave Perkins (who lived on Sixth Street, between Dryades and Baronne); ES was about fifteen or sixteen years old when he studied with Perkins. His father, George Sayles, played guitar, viola and bass; he played [guitar] in the Silver Leaf Band (a trio?) of which Albert Nicholas, who played violin and saxophone, was leader; there was also a bass player in the group. The father showed ES, his oldest brother and his brother Joe a few chords on the guitar; ES showed the most ability. The first tune he learned to play was "Go Feather Your Nest." (Bradford Furniture Company still uses it as a theme song). ES learned a few chords then. George decided ES should study violin (a more-worthwhile instrument), so he persuaded his friend, Perkins, who was primarily a teacher of brass instruments, to give ES lessons. ES made about seventy-five cents a week doing odd jobs; his lessons with Perkins cost that sum. ES studied with Perkins about two years. He did earn some money with Perkins, who rented instruments to other musicians, especially around Carnival time; ES would clean, polish, replace corks in water keys, etc. Perkins had many students, both white and colored. His color was very light. He played sousaphone, trombone and sometimes baritone horn in brass bands. (BM says Baby Dodds studied with Perkins.) When ES was about eighteen (and in the 9th Grade at McDonogh 35), he was rehearsing every Sunday with a band: George Morris, trombone; Thomas Mack, trumpet; [Edmund--Edmond?] Washington, clarinet; ES's cousin [Peter] Raphael, drums. Joe Wynn came to town, looking for a band; heard about the one mentioned; had job in Pensacola, Florida, but was

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a drummer himself, so Raphael out, with promise from friends to get him on the job as soon as possible. ES's mother objected to his going, but father said

OK--April, 1924. Got woman pianist in Pensacola. Worked for Dr. Burgundy [Lester] <sup>Prince</sup> and Aaron Long (meat market proprietor), who ran a baseball park [Morris]

Castle Park in Pensacola; they had a colored ball team which played there and in the vicinity. (ES began playing and learning banjo while teaching his oldest brother, who worked at Werlein's and had the instrument to play; the brother gave up the instrument shortly.) The band mentioned (Morris, Mack, et al) was called the All-Stars, and was the first band ES played with; they played in Milneburg, and in Paillet Lane (area around Gentilly Boulevard and St. Bernard Avenue), and all studied with Perkins. The band played the standard jazz tunes ("Tiger Rag", "Bucket's Got a Hole in It", etc.), and the popular tunes of the day, which they learned from stock arrangements, as they all could read. ES learned his style on the banjo by listening to the good banjo players of the time: John Marrero, and the uncle of [Lester] "Blackie" Santiago, [i.e., Willie Santiago] who worked at the Elite, which was [even then] run by "Beansy" [Fauria]. The most popular band at that time was that of Kid Rena, who played at the Bulls's Club; there were also bands [at places where ES went] at the Sans Souci, and at the Bucket of Blood (popular name) on Amelia Street. "Son" [Thomas?] played banjo sometimes for Rena, and sometimes a man from the [Caribbean] islands, "Jamaica" (pronounced "Jew-maker"), played banjo with that band. Besides the banjo players and Rena, trumpet, others in that band were: Zeb [Leneries], clarinet; Abbey "Chinee" Foster, drums; Simon Marrero, bass. Sometimes Rena's brother, Joe Rene [sic], played drums. The band with ES, Morris, Mack, et al went to Pensacola, where the

public gave them the name, Pensacola Jazzers. Another New Orleans band was working for a Pensacola undertaker named Prince Morris; in it were: Lee Collins, trumpet and leader, Earl Humphrey, trombone; Edmond Hall, clarinet; Al Morgan, bass; Joe Strohter, drums; Caffrey [Darensbourg], banjo. Because of some financial trouble with the undertaker, the band was at liberty, so Wynn, leader of ES's band, got Hall and Morgan from Collins's band, and replaced his own female pianist, named Beck, with another Pensacola woman [Prob. Florion Beck] JOE 21016.84 Sadie Goodson 12.01.61 named Helen Jackson. Edmond Hall had just bought a brass C-melody saxophone; he couldn't read, but Edmund Washington could, and would play the third alto part for Hall, who learned it instantly; Hall also played clarinet on some numbers, especially one feature. The band [sometimes in conjunction with the baseball team] played in Pensacola, Mobile, Montgomery [and other places]; the band made a trip to Jacksonville, Florida, being booked by Aaron Long. Business was not so good, so Morris, the trombonist, suggested they go to Miami, or even Panama [cit/or country of?]; nobody else wanted to go (which ES says was a mistake, because there weren't any bands down that way which were as good for dancing as that New Orleans styled band; there was the Tuxedo Brass Band [led by John Pope] [Compare Mobile interviews]; in Mobile, and a dance band called Eagle Eye band in Jacksonville, [Shields's] [dance or brass?] plus other brass bands, and people danced to them, but there were no other bands like the Pensacola Jazzers around the area). They returned to Pensacola, then went to Mobile; there was a union there, which kept them from working some places, but they were popular at the Battle House Hotel, which had previously hired the bands of Buddy Petit and Sam Morgan, of New Orleans. In 1926, Edmond Hall got a message from Eagle Eye, in Jacksonville, requesting

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that Hall, Al Morgan and ES join his band; Morgan had already returned to New Orleans, and ES didn't want to go, so Hall got Cootie Williams [of Mobile] and a banjo player, Frank Jackson, to go with him to Eagle Eye. Cootie Williams had learned the New Orleans style. Williams and Hall stayed with Eagle Eye until the tour they were on reached New York, where the two remained [and gained their fame]. [Compare Edmond Hall, reels ?] When ES returned to New Orleans (1926), he joined Bebe Ridgley's band at the Pelican (George Sayles was a good friend of Ridgley; Ridgley had just split with Papa Celestin); Ridgley's brother, Manuel Ridgley, was running the Pelican [Cafe?] for Fabacher; the place was running dances three nights a week. When ES joined, the musicians were: Bebe Ridgley, trombone and leader; Shots Madison and Bat Brown, trumpets; Joe Watson, Robert Hall (brother of Edmond), one other, reeds, [Black] Happy Goldston, drums; Emma Barrett, piano; John Porter, bass (who had just joined, replacing the previous bass player), who had just come [back] to town from a road show. A little later, Davy Jones was hired. The band, called the Pelican Band, worked at that place about a year, and then moved to Jack Sheehan's Surburban Garden, where they remained until Sheehan closed it because of raids [probably by the United States Treasury Department]. Then the band went to the Club Plantation (which was to become Pete Herman's Club later), where the size of the band was reduced: Louis Cottrell [Jr.] joined the band; Emma Barrett remained on piano; Shots on trumpet; Davy Jones. John Handy played with the band occasionally, playing saxophone which he had just started playing. When ES left that band, (c. 1927-28) he went with Fate Marable, on the steamer Capitol; some of the members of that band were: Albert Snaer, and Eckerhart [spelling?]

(from St. Louis), trumpets; "Geechie" (from South Carolina), (BM suggests Geechie Fields), trombone; Marable, piano; Gene Hill, drums; Al Morgan, bass; ES, banjo (replacing Willie Foster); Willie Humphrey [the younger], Horace Eubanks and [Rollins?], saxophones and clarinets. ES played one winter and until September of the following year, being replaced (on the way back from St. Louis) in Memphis by a predecessor, "Red". Returning to New Orleans, ES rejoined Ridgley, jobbing around town. He then joined Sidney Desvigne, remaining with him over a year; some of the personnel were : Desvigne, trumpet and leader; Gene Hall, [Check this, this is the name of a pianist] trumpet; Louis Nelson, trombone; Theodore Purnell, Davy Jones (tenor) and Adolphe "Tats" Alexander, [Jr.], (lead [alto]), saxophones; Osceola Blanchet [piano]; Ransom Knowling, bass; [Ward] [Crosby] "Bucket", (from Chicago) drums; ES, banjo and straight [i.e., unamplified] guitar. The year was 1930, (the place one of the Streckfus boats, probably Capitol); ES remembers it because there was a new lock above Red Wing [Minnesota], on the way to St. Paul. Before the Desvigne job, however, was the job with Lee Collins--John Marrero, banjo, had a job at the La V<sup>i</sup>da dance hall; in the band besides Marrero were: Lee Collins, trumpet; Theodore Purnell, alto saxophone and Davy Jones, tenor saxophone; Joe Robichaux, piano; Albert Martin, drums; ES replaced Marrero. The Lyric Theater closed about this time, and Beansy [Fauria] decided to take the Lyric show personnel, have the band led by Collins and Jones, and put them all at his place, the Astoria Roof (or Gardens?); it was while the band was at the Astoria that they made the Jones-Collins recording session. Lee Collins was the contact for the recordings, through his friendship with [Paul] Mares; the Victor company did the recording, issued on Bluebird, at Italian Hall, on Esplanade Avenue. The weather was rainy (hence, the title of one tune, "Damp Weather"); it

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the band had been playing two of the tunes ("Astoria Strut" and "Duet Stomp") at the Astoria Roof, but they made up the other two (including "Tip Easy Blues", so-named because there was some bootleg whiskey around). Albert Martin had gone with Don Albert's band; ES had an offer, but <sup>he</sup> had already agreed to go with Desvigne), so Joe Strohter was brought in on drums. When ES went on the boat with Desvigne, he recommended Danny Barker for his spot; he says the name of Rene Hall was used on the records, and that Hall may have played with the Jones-Collins some, but that he, ES, was on all the records. Lee Collins took the band to Chicago, on an excursion; there they met Louis Armstrong, who had Paul Barbarin, an uncle of Danny Barker, in his band; Barbarin encouraged Barker to make his move to New York. ES remained with Desvigne about a year and a half; until 1933. About this time, Piron had disbanded. There was a band called the Southern Syncopaters; the personnel: Eddie Pierson, trombone; Leo Dejan and Lawrence Doroux, trumpets; Elliott Taylor, Arthur Derbigny and Joe Rouzan, saxophones; Sidney Montague [drums]; "Allegretto", <sup>[Alexander?]</sup> piano; Booker Washington (he believes), bass; someone, perhaps [and perhaps, Sidney Pflueger], banjo. When Piron took dates [after disbanding his older, smaller band], he used the Southern Syncopaters. ES was out of Desvigne's band, having been replaced by Rene Hall (who lived just across the street from ES, at LaHarpe and Lapeyrouse [Streets]); he joined the Syncopaters, who were working Friday-Sunday at the New Orleans Country Club, under the direction of Piron, violinist. At this time MS was doing some arranging. The other personnel: saxophones as listed before; Allegretto, piano (and arranger); Alfred Williams, drums; Simon Marrero, bass; ES, banjo and guitar; brass [same as before?]. ES mentions Crawford Ellis got Piron the job at the club.

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ES continues about the [later]Piron band [ex-Southern Syncopaters], and about the band's getting work on a Streckfus boat via Captain Verne Streckfus. The job ran from 1933 until [or through?] 1938, the year Piron himself didn't go on the boat [make the long excursion upriver?]; at the request of Captain Verne, Peter Bocage became leader of the band; it evolved that Eddie Pierson became sort of the business manager. Instead of closing the summer season in New Orleans that year, as was usual, the job was finished in St. Louis, the latter part of August. ES went to Chicago, to visit a friend, with whom he remained [as a roomer] until 1940 or 1941 or 1943--sometime during the war. He got married during that time. ES had quit playing with big bands, preferring three and four piece combos; as he played electric [i.e., amplified] guitar then, he was in demand for spot jobs, as he was one of few who played amped. A trio to which ES belonged came into being when the three of them were members of Oliver Bibbs band, a large band which was rehearsing for an out-of-town job; the trio had a few jobs before the big band, and when it did leave, they decided to remain in Chicago, as a trio. They got a job through the union, and seemed to please the public with their playing and singing. Then they got another job, at the Bar of Music; the proprietor, a woman, helped them decide on a name, the Chocolate Bars of Music. They then worked for a hotel chain, playing various cities in Ohio and Indiana; otherwise, they worked places around Chicago. They disbanded about 1946. After a period of idleness, ES organized his own group: ES and Sam Casimir, guitars; Art Terry, piano; Johnny Lindsay (ex-trombonist from New Orleans) bass. That group stayed together about one year. About 1947, he played



electric guitar in a trio with a saxophone player and a bassist. When he finished with that group, in about 1948, he quit playing, got a job in a plant, where he worked four or five months, until laid off--sometime in 1949. Returning to New Orleans about August, 1949, to visit his family, he saw many friends his age playing music for a living (in Chicago, the men his age had turned to day jobs), so he decided to move back. He moved back after Labor Day, 1949, he met some of his old friends--Jimmy Davis, Earl Williams, others--and worked with Jimmy Davis (piano) at the Sho Bar, the work period beginning about three or four in the morning. Leaving Davis, he worked with Williams, and also at some club uptown, and various other spot jobs. In about 1956, he went into the Paddock [Lounge] with Snookum Russell [leader and piano] and Stewart Davis (~~M~~bass), remaining there about three years. The Paddock houseband was Bill Matthew's; the trio, <sup>which relieved the houseband for c. 20 minutes of the band</sup> stayed there until about 1958. Then ES began jobbing around again; in 1959, he played the Mardi Gras season with Herbert Leary's band. In 1960, he rejoined Jimmy Davis, with Andrew Johnson on drums and Blanche Thomas, vocalist. They worked at the Offshore Lounge, Court of Two Sisters, Guy's Place (on Gentilly [Highway]). His sister died in San Francisco in July, 1960, so ES went west to bury her; he also managed to hear Earl Hines at the Hangover, and Kid Ory at On The Levee; he did not play with them. He came back through Chicago, returning to New Orleans about September, 1960; played about two weeks more with Jimmy Davis, went to Florida with Earl Williams. Returning to New Orleans, he began jobbing with Emma Barrett, Paul Barbarin, "Noon" Johnson (and his bazooka band), Bill Matthews, others. He is still free-lancing today.

\*RBA, Nov. 30, 1977.



John Marrero was a fine banjo player; ES remembers hearing him in Bebe Ridgley's band, when Papa Celestin was the trumpet player, Emma Barret played piano, Simon Marrero played bass, Paul Barnes played saxophone and clarinet, and Abbey "Chinee" Foster played drums. ES says John Marrero's playing on the [Celestin] records is representative of Marrero as he really played; Marrero wrote a lot of tunes, too. Marrero was the one ES replaced at the La V<sup>i</sup>da, with the Jones-Collins band, at which time Marrero went to New York, where he subsequently died. Lawrence Marrero, a younger brother, played [banjo] with the Young Tuxedo Band, or a band with a similar name; the pianist in that band was Dwight Newman, father of the [ex-Basie] trumpetplayer, Joe Newman. ES says Lawrence was almost strictly a 4/4 [rhythm] player, and he did not consider him the soloist his brother John was. [IM did not consider himself a solist. RBA].

ES met George Guesnon in about 1926, when ES returned from Florida; it was at the Entertainers Club, where musicians would gather to play, among other things.

ES today plays about the same style banjo as he did when he played on the boats; the musicians on the boats were [almost] all readers; usually the banjo player would be called on to play a specialty solo. The banjo players with rougher bands (e.g., Buddy Petit, Chris Kelly, etc.) had their own styles; in some of them, the leader wouldn't even permit a banjo player to take a solo, much less encourage it. Two of the banjo specialties in those days were "The World is Waiting For the Sunrise" and "Tiger Rag." Caffrey Darensbourg was about the best "picking" banjo player around New Orleans; he played with Manuel Perez on the [Pythian Temple] Roof Garden: Perez, trumpet and leader; Earl Humphrey, trombone; Willie Humphrey [the younger]

[saxophone and clarinet]; Mercedes Fields, piano; (perhaps) Alex Bigard, drums; others. [Compare Alfred Williams, reel?] ES mentions "Red" and Robertson as being fine banjo players. ES says John Marrero was the best banjo player around New Orleans; Percy Severe, with Sidney Desvigne, became a very good player after arriving in New Orleans; in the Thirties, good banjo players were Homer Eugene, Paul [redacted], Rene Hall, Sidney Pflueger.

ES was with the Chocolate Bars the longest he has been with any one group; they organized about 1940 [see earlier, this reel] and disbanded perhaps as late as 1946; the same three men were together the entire time. ES played electric guitar in the group; he had quit playing banjo when (or before) he went to Chicago, and didn't take it up again until the middle Fifties, at the Paddock.

ES's oldest brother, [check interviews for name] taught banjo by ES, played with the Robert Clark ten-piece band in the Thirties, playing in New Orleans and on a few out-of-town dates.

Louis [Armstrong] is mentioned; ES remembers him from about 1916.

Piron's bands, even the small ones, played mostly from music; the large band used mostly all stock arrangements. On the boat the captain [Verne Streckfus] did not want the band to play [special] arrangements, [by members of the band]. He wanted a society band [sound].

ES remembers that Buddy Petit had been to Pensacola, Florida, even before he went there; in 1924, when ES arrived, Petit had gone on to Montgomery, Alabama.

ES had composed numbers, but modestly admits that none has ever gotten anywhere. His name is on one of the Jones-Collins recording session tunes, but he says all the musicians contributed to those tunes, that composer credits were assigned individuals for the records. "Duet Stomp" and

"Astoria Stomp" were well-rehearsed, as the band used them at the Astoria; the two others were just thrown together at the recording session. [Compare reel I, p. 5., above]. "Beansy" [Fauria], proprietor of the Astoria, had a lot of white friends he would sometimes bring to the club, but it was primarily for colored; the Entertainers Club, run by Pete Lala [ES thinks] ✓ [Check this. RBA. Perhaps John Lala], was the same way. ES remembers seeing whites as guests at the old Elite, also run by Beansy. Sidney Arodin, the white clarinetist, was a good friend of Lee Collins; ES says Arodin may have been on the recording date because of [Paul] Mares [see Reel I]; Arodin fitted in the band fine. ES describes the operation at the Astoria--the acts, M.C., etc. Most of the band could read, but they didn't do much at the Astoria. They played jazz standards and also many tunes recorded by Armstrong.

ES mentions Armstrong, and says New Orleans had a lot great trumpet players in those days [Astoria days]; Guy Kelly; a man over the river, who looked like a Mexican; [Kid] Howard; Kid Rena. ES says after the Jones-Collins left the Astoria, Rena's band was hired; ES thinks Rena had his brother, [Joe Rene--sic] on drums]; he doesn't know if Zeb [Leneries] was still alive then.

Chinee Foster was a terrific drummer in the early Twenties; ES says he saw Foster in Florida in 1924, where Foster had gone to get away from someone who had cut him badly in New Orleans; Pensacola was where Foster met Sadie [Goodson], pianist [later his wife]. He replace Joe Wynn there.

ES learned how to read music from Dave Perkins, who taught him from ✓ the Otto Langey method, which Perkins used for all instruments [various books in the series for the appropriate instrument]; ES studied violin (he played some reading violin with Ridgley on the Pelican) with him for about two years.

ES talks about his banjo, and the banjos he has played; he has always played only tenor banjo. His style on this instrument has not changed.

When ES returned to New Orleans in 1949, musicians still playing banjo were Harrison Verrett, George Guesnon, Fred "H. E." Minor [and others--e.g. Lawrence Marrero]. In the Thirties, there was a fine banjo player named Penn, who died in the late Forties or early Fifties; Penn was a "terrific picker"; he played with the W.P.A. Band.

End of Reel II